

Johanne Tremblay, journalist

GET READY NOW FOR AN INDEPENDENT RETIREMENT!



Between the ages of 25 and 40, life can change a lot, sometimes dramatically. There's your first promotion and your new home, you have a growing family and you start making plans, including plans for your retirement. Where do you want to be when you're 60? Whatever the answer, you need to plan to get there.

In this special feature, *Mes finances-Ma caisse* looks at how to plan for retirement, offers you some expert advice and shows how Desjardins can accompany you through the planning process. For this issue, the magazine has joined forces with the Régie des rentes du Québec, which also has tools and information to help you plan this new phase in your life.



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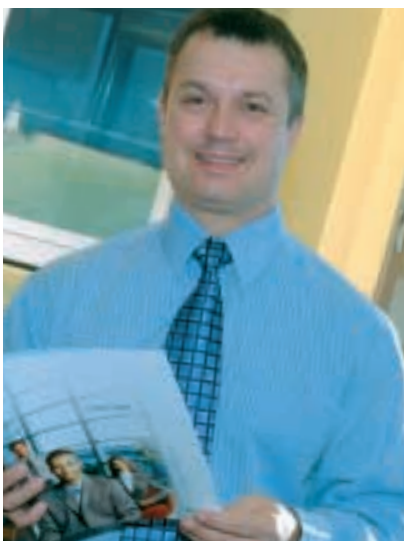
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Ghislain Desrosiers

“Because it’s cooperative by nature, Desjardins plays a leading role in making its members aware of the importance of planning for their retirement,” explains

Martin Chouinard, Manager, Client Segment Strategies at Desjardins



Alain Desjéts

The Régie has developed Web-based tools. The organization took this approach because of the number of requests it was receiving from baby-boomers on the verge of retirement.

Louise Labelle, Manager – Pension Plans at the Régie des rentes du Québec,

The financial health of our members : A social responsibility

The financial aspect of retirement planning has become an important issue, especially in Québec, which ranks second worldwide behind Japan in terms of the aging of its population.

Not only is the population aging, but people are uncertain how much money they will have once they retire. As a result, they don’t really know how much to save.

Now is the time to change things for a better future. “Because it’s cooperative by nature, Desjardins plays a leading role in making its members aware of the importance of planning for their retirement,” explains Martin Chouinard, Manager - Client Segment Strategies at Desjardins.

For its part, the Régie des rentes du Québec did some awareness-raising of its own about retirement planning several years ago. “The object is to encourage people to take specific steps to prepare for retirement,” says Louise Labelle, Manager – Pension Plans. “We want them to know the importance of calculating their retirement income; that’s why we created a computer-based tool called CompuPension.” The RRQ has also set up

various partnerships (see the inset *Question Retraite*), notably with Desjardins. The two institutions are therefore working together to support their customers and help them plan the financial aspect of their retirement.

For Desjardins, business relations between its members and advisors are of the utmost importance. “Today, Desjardins has more than 1,000 advisors who are qualified financial planners, including some 800 in the caisse network. These professionals have all the necessary expertise to talk about retirement and guide our members. In addition, there are also 6,000 group savings representatives,” states Martin Chouinard. “Our advisors and leading-edge retirement planning tools are the cornerstones of the process.” Above all,

According to data from Statistics Canada (1999), 92% of Québécois aged 24 to 54 have started saving for their retirement. However, 81% do not know how much they need to save for their retirement, according to a recent Régie des rentes du Québec survey.

the advisors take a member’s financial life cycle into consideration: retirement planning is part of a new cycle and includes overall retirement planning, preparing an action plan for saving and investing, and following up on this plan.

We can all benefit by starting to plan now to be financially independent after retirement.

United we stand

In order to make Quebecers more aware of the importance of thinking about their financial health after retirement, 18 public and private sector organizations, including Desjardins Financial Security and the Régie des rentes du Québec, have combined their expertise to promote retirement planning. “Each of our partners deals with the public, so the word is getting around,” points out



Jocelyne Houle-Lesarge, President of Question Retraite and Executive Director of the Institut québécois de planification financière (IQPF). “In this day and age, people are retiring at age 60 in good health and looking forward to a lifestyle that will allow them to buy what they want, travel and enjoy themselves. Since public pension plans can provide only part of the retirement income they are going to require, it is essential for them to calculate exactly what they’re going to need, especially if they don’t have a private pension plan.” The rule of thumb is that 70% of salary will cover post-retirement financial requirements.



Question Retraite counts on its diversified network of union, financial, cooperative, employer and entrepreneurial partners from every corner of Québec. “At the end of the month,” Ms. Lesarge points out, “people pay their bills, but forget to pay themselves! If we could get people to pay themselves by putting aside at least \$10 a week, then we will have done something good for society.” Promoting retirement planning among individuals as well as small and medium-sized enterprises is therefore central to the mission of Question Retraite. Its channels of communication include a website (www.questionretraite.qc.ca) and an annual insert distributed in newspapers in October.



Yvan Roy

Françoise Gagnon, Financial Planner, Caisse Desjardins de Rivière-du-Loup

LIVING RIGHT!

What with the demands of raising a family, the dream of a first home and embarking on a career, retirement planning often takes a backseat. And yet early adulthood is a good time to start developing good saving habits.

Geneviève Bastien and Stéphan Fiset are a young professional couple in their late twenties. After completing their studies, they both found steady jobs and started making plans. They recently withdrew

some money from their RRSPs to buy their first home, just in time for the birth of their first child.

Top 10 tips

An analysis of your financial situation means looking at how you manage your assets and liabilities, as well as any corrective measures you need to take. Here are some tips to guide you and help you achieve your short-, medium- and long-term goals, with the assistance of a financial advisor.

- 1 Evaluate your income sources.
- 2 Evaluate your expense sources.
- 3 Set up a savings plan.
- 4 Pay off your debts, bad debts first.
- 5 Make sure you have an emergency fund.
- 6 Make sure your income is protected.
- 7 Manage your taxes.
- 8 Plan for your children’s education.
- 9 Maximize your retirement income.
- 10 Split your retirement income.

Taken from: Assess your financial health, a brochure published for Desjardins members by the magazine *Mes finances-Ma caisse* and available at Desjardins caisses. A related brochure is *Managing your assets and liabilities*.



Geneviève Bastien, Stéphan Fiset
and baby girl Florence.

“If you don’t have a budget, you don’t know how much you have. A budget makes it easier to monitor your spending and see what’s left at the end of the month.”

Françoise Gagnon

“A year ago,” says Geneviève, “we managed to stabilize our financial situation and stick to a budget. Before that, we had a lot of debt to pay off, and we were living like students.” Geneviève and Stéphan also replaced their car last summer. How did they manage to pull it all off? “We planned our choices. We don’t spend beyond our means and we review our budget on a regular basis.”

Making your dreams come true

According to Françoise Gagnon, Financial Planner at Caisse Desjardins de Rivière-du-Loup, this couple’s key to success is staying within their budget. “If you don’t have a budget, you don’t know how much you have. A budget makes it easier to monitor your spending and see what’s left at the end of the month.” Ms. Gagnon acknowledges that saving for retirement is a challenge considering the many financial obligations that go along with family life. “That’s why it’s so important to pay off your debts. That’s the best investment of all!”

“It’s unrealistic to think that people of 25 or 30 are going to be interested in their retirement,” adds Normand Joly, Financial Planner at Caisse Desjardins de Saint-Antoine-des-Laurentides. His first recommendation for young families: “Don’t spend what you don’t have. Of course, you can’t tell people of 25 to 35 not to buy anything, but we can help them spend wisely,” he says, “especially when it comes to using credit.”

Since getting full-time jobs, Geneviève and Stéphan have been able to contribute to a private pension plan. In addition, they have signed up for systematic savings through payroll deduction. “That’s the easiest way for us to save, and the best strategy for making sure that we contribute to our RRSPs every year.”

That’s also how the young couple was able to take advantage of the Home Buyers’ Plan (HBP). Under the HBP, planholders can make penalty-free withdrawals from their RRSP to buy their first home, provided they repay the amount withdrawn within

15 years. “The HBP is an attractive option for young people,” says Françoise Gagnon, “because it encourages them to save up for a concrete goal and save for retirement at the same time.”

One thing’s for certain, getting into the habit of saving for a short- or medium-range objective makes it easier to save for retirement, even when it’s a long-term goal!

BUT WHY SHOULD I THINK ABOUT RETIREMENT NOW?

You say you've got plenty of time. But how about putting time to work for you? Good financial planning gives you the assurance that you will be able to bring your retirement plans to fruition.

To do this, you have to have an idea of what you will receive under public plans, your employer's pension plan (if you belong to one) and the amounts you need to save in an RRSP, as applicable.

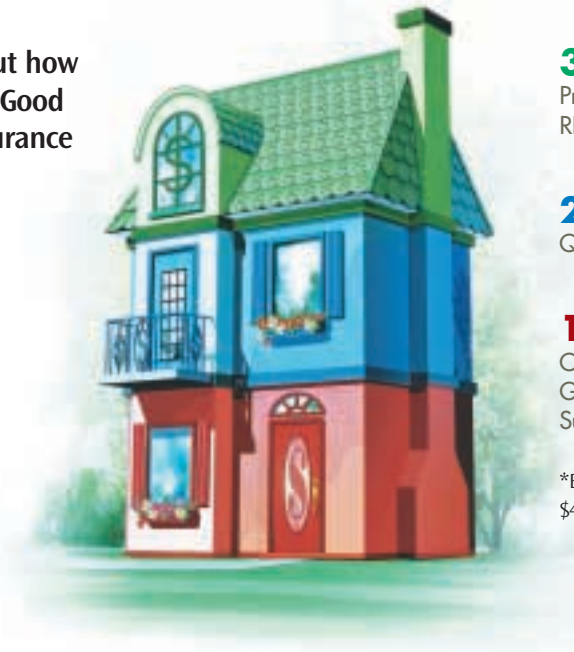
Do you know how much you'll receive from public plans?

The purpose of public plans is to provide basic financial security after retirement. They are designed to replace 40% of your annual income if it corresponds to the average income for Canadian workers. However, the more your income exceeds this amount, the smaller the public plan portion will be: for instance, for an average annual income of \$50,000, public plans will provide something more like 34% in 2003.

The federal Old Age Security (OAS) program

You are eligible for **Old Age Security (OAS)** at the age of 65 if you are a Canadian citizen and have lived in Canada for at least 10 years since your 18th birthday. The monthly OAS benefit is the same for everyone, at \$471.76¹. However, it is reduced when annual net personal income exceeds \$60,806. Unlike the three benefits described below, the OAS benefit is taxable.

- The **Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS)** is chiefly for people who rely exclusively on public plans (QPP and OAS) for their retirement income. The monthly amount is \$560.69¹ for a single person.
- The **Allowance** is paid to low-income persons aged 60 to 64, whose spouse receives OAS.
- The **Survivor Allowance** is paid to low-income widowed individuals aged 60 to 64.



30% and over
Private pension plans, RRSPs and savings

25%
Québec Pension Plan*

15%
Old Age Security pension, Guaranteed Income Supplement, etc.*

*Based on an income of \$40,500 in 2004

Québec Pension Plan (QPP)

The QPP is funded by contributions from Québec workers and employers. Your contribution represents 9.9% of your gross salary (up to a ceiling set at maximum earnings of \$41,100), and half of it is paid by your employer. If you are an independent worker, then you also pay the employer's share.

Your future retirement pension is calculated based on earnings recorded in the QPP, and the length of the contribution period. The plan also offers protection in the form of benefits for disabled contributors and benefits for their dependent children and, in case of death, a death benefit, the survivor's pension and the children's benefit.

- **Pension** You can apply for your pension at age 60 under certain conditions, but it will be reduced by 6% for each year till your 65th birthday until you die. Your pension will be increased by the same percentage for each year if you apply for it after age 65, up until age 70. The maximum monthly pension for someone who applies at age 65 is currently \$828.75.

- **Survivor's pension** In the event of death, a survivor's pension provides basic income for a surviving spouse. The contributions made by the deceased spouse are used to calculate the pension, which is adjusted based on the surviving spouse's age and revised downwards when the spouse reaches age 65.

Check your statement of participation

Your statement shows the amount of employment income recorded in your name to date. It also projects the retirement pension you will be entitled to if you apply at age 60 or age 65. It is sent out every four years (starting at age 24). You can also request it through the Internet or consult it using the CompuPension tool described later on.

1. The amounts indicated are in effect from January to March 2005. They are indexed every three months, except for net personal income, which is indexed once a year.



Pierre Joostin

Monique Maheu, Manager – Contributions and Benefits at the Régie des rentes du Québec

What happens when a legal, civil or de facto union breaks up?

Following a judgment of divorce, legal separation or civil annulment¹, the amount of your earnings recorded for QPP purposes during your union will be divided equally between you and your ex-partner. This division, known as “partition”, could change the amount of pension you will receive after retirement. Unless the partners expressly renounce partition at the time of the judgment or the joint notarized statement, the Régie will automatically partition the earnings. Before renouncing partition, you can ask the Régie for a simulation of the partition. “The simulation can help partners make an informed decision following separation,” states Monique Maheu, Manager – Contributions and Benefits. “This also applies to couples in a de facto union. At the end of their life together, under certain conditions, they can also request a partition of the registered earnings.”

1. Since civil unions came into existence, the judgment of dissolution or annulment of a civil union and the joint notarized statement of dissolution of a civil union also trigger a partition of earnings.

What do you know about your private pension plan?

In Québec, 42% of workers have an opportunity to contribute to one of the 1,900 private pension plans monitored² by the Régie des rentes du Québec. Too few workers know their plan.

This is the case for Geneviève, who has only a vague idea of how her private pension plan works. And yet the income from such a plan is very important in planning your retirement. If you contribute to a private plan, do you know if it will meet your needs after retirement, and to what extent?

The most attractive feature of a private plan is the employer’s contribution, and it guarantees you regular savings reserved exclusively for retirement. Deducted at source, your contributions reduce your taxable income and grow, sheltered from taxes.

A private pension plan is a valuable asset in any financial preparation for retirement. However, not all plans will let you maintain the same lifestyle after you retire. And even if yours will, you need to know! In some cases, additional savings will be necessary to make sure you have the retirement income you’re counting on.

Some defined benefit plans are coordinated with the QPP, which means that the amount you receive after retirement will be adjusted based on your QPP benefits. The difference can be substantial! That’s why it’s a good idea to check with your plan administrator and find out the conditions of your plan and the type of benefits you will receive after retirement. But in the meantime, here are some of the possibilities:

- **Defined benefit plan** Guarantees you a predetermined pension, and your employer is responsible for paying the necessary sums for funding the plan. Your contribution and the contribution made by your employer on your behalf will be paid into a pension fund. Depending on the plan, the pension may be calculated based on a percentage of your salary, multiplied by your years of service. For instance, let’s say that in 20 years of service, you earned an average salary of \$30,000. If

your plan calculates your pension at 2% of your salary (the percentage may differ), then you would have an annual pension of \$12,000 (\$30,000 X 2% X 20 years). Most public and parapublic sector workers in Québec as well as employees of large corporations contribute to this kind of plan.

- **The defined contribution plan** With the defined contribution formula, your contribution (and your employer’s contribution on your behalf) is based on a percentage of your salary. Your future retirement pension will therefore be determined by the amounts you have accumulated, but also by the plan’s investment income and the interest rates applicable.
- **The simplified pension plan** is put in place following a decision by the employer and is managed by a financial institution. It is a defined contribution formula aimed chiefly at small and medium-sized enterprises.

2. The Régie des rentes du Québec monitors private plans and ensures that they are managed in compliance with the Supplemental Pension Plans Act. More specifically, it oversees the funding of plans to ensure that they meet their commitments.

Under the *Supplemental Pension Plans Act*, the administrator of your plan must provide you with a minimum of information, such as an annual contribution statement and a summary of the plan. An annual meeting is also held. Why not attend? After all, it’s your money!

WHAT YOU CAN DO STARTING NOW

Since time is your best ally, you can benefit from exploring some of the strategies that are open to you. Here are two that are simpler than you'd think.

If retirement planning seems like an abstract concept to you, then you haven't heard about simulations yet. There's the kind that financial planners use to draw up a plan for you, carry out a complete financial analysis, and build and monitor the investment portfolio that suits you best (we will return to this later). There are also simulations that you can use on your own, and only you will know the results. We would like to present two which are available free of charge: the Desjardins Financial Security simulation and the CompuPension simulation recently developed by the Régie des rentes du Québec.

1 Web-based simulation with CompuPension

This new tool is available at www.rrq.gouv.qc.ca. Once your identity is confirmed (see inset), you follow six steps for your own retirement planning. The simulator lets you imagine various retirement scenarios (based on the age you would like to retire, your current savings,

Authentication of your identity

Before you can use CompuPension, the Régie des rentes du Québec authenticates your identity. You can make your simulation in complete confidentiality using the most recent data in your file.

how much you expect to save or should save by then, etc.) and then view the results.

"The good thing about CompuPension," says Pierre Bégin, an actuary at the Régie des rentes du Québec, "is that it lets you make various financial projections based on your data and your savings. You can even check the most recent data on your QPP contributions (your statement of participation). It's like a personal retirement planning file you can use to simulate different retirement income and savings scenarios." CompuPension, with its concrete

Alain Desjardis



Pierre Bégin, Actuary at the Régie des rentes du Québec

results, is an excellent starting point for your retirement planning.



Step 6: Simulation results

Mrs. Lamontagne, 31 years old, born June 1972

Summary of information provided

Start of retirement: Age 65 (June 2037)
 Length of retirement: 20 years
 Retirement income desired: \$24,500 / year (70% of \$35,000)

Estimated annual retirement income at January 25, 2005

Presented in today's dollars and before taxes

From age	Income sources					Annual shortfall
	Old Age Security (Canada)	Québec Pension Plan	Pension fund and other pensions	RRSP and savings used	Total retirement income	
65	\$5,652	\$8,472	\$7,260	\$3,116	\$24,500	\$0
66	\$5,652	\$8,472	\$7,260	\$3,003	\$24,387	(\$113)
67	\$5,652	\$8,472	\$7,260	\$0	\$21,384	(\$3,116)

Excerpt from step 6 of the CompuPension screen page from the RRQ website

2 “I am planning my finances” simulation

The Desjardins Financial Security website (www.desjardinsfinancialsecurity.com) has offered the “I am planning my finances – Retirement” simulation tool since 2000. Internet users can analyze their present and future situation in five steps, using a calculator. In addition to projecting their income and the amount of savings they need, users can see how to achieve their retirement goals based on different investment portfolio scenarios. Recommendations come with the results.

Follow-up by a financial planner, someone who makes things happen, including retirement projects

One of the first things Geneviève and Stéphan did after deciding to buy a home was to consult a financial advisor. “We manage our money ourselves, but we still see our planner from time to time to check some of our financial choices,” says Geneviève. But don’t you have to be rich to have a financial planner?

“As a financial planner,” says Normand Joly, of Caisse Desjardins de Saint-Antoine-des-Laurentides, “I’ve always seen my role as someone who makes things happen. Evaluating your retirement means evaluating where you are now, first and foremost. Our lives are constantly changing, so it’s only natural for our planning to change too.” Starting to visit a financial advisor or planner

will put you on track for financial independence, a goal everyone hopes to achieve well before retirement.

An informed approach to retirement

After a first exploratory meeting – after all, it’s important for you and your planner to have a good rapport – the financial planner will analyze your financial situation. “Basically,” says Normand Joly, “all couples need to have a personal



Pierre Bédard

Normand Joly, Financial Planner,
Caisse Desjardins de Saint-Antoine-des-Laurentides

account and a joint account, and they need to make a will and a mandate in case of incapacity. Each person must know and evaluate their personal contribution over the years.”

After that, a financial analysis leads to an inventory of debt and a strategy for eliminating it, as well as a plan for saving based on income, the time they have to devote to it, and their projects, including retirement. Technology tools provide an accurate picture of the situation and can make projections based on it. “With an analysis, we can determine where we are now, versus where we want to be. It’s not a final verdict ! It shows us whether we are on the right track or whether some course correction is needed,” adds Normand Joly.

CompuPension returns both advice and information. These results are for a 32-year-old individual who wants to retire at 65.

That person contributes to a private pension plan and has \$2,000 in an RRSP at the time of the simulation. She wants to have 70% of his present employment income, or \$24,500 (in today’s dollars).

However, the annual shortfall to reach this objective is \$113 at age 66 and \$3,116 at age 67 and all subsequent years until age 85.

The additional savings required each year to reach the objective and maintain it throughout retirement, until age 85, is \$915 per annum starting now. If she wants to retire five years earlier, at age 60, then CompuPension would recommend that she save \$4,473 annually.

THE RRSP, A PLUS FOR YOUR FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE

Geneviève and Stéphan contribute to a private pension plan to which their employer also contributes. This might be enough to meet either all or some of their retirement goals. But what if they had a setback in their professional lives? After all, no one knows the future.

They might get new jobs. And even if the amounts already accumulated in the plan stay in their hands, they may not be enough. It is interesting to note that 58% of workers do not have a private pension plan. They have decided not to settle for a private plan, and contribute to a registered retirement savings plan.

Getting ready for the good life

When you don't have large sums of money on hand, saving systematically in an RRSP, weekly or monthly, is a winning strategy for a number of reasons.

- 1 It guarantees that you'll have savings at the end of the year.
- 2 It reduces your taxable income.
- 3 It is easier to integrate into your budget than a big withdrawal at the beginning of the year.

"Contributing at the beginning of the year or through regular debits rather than at the end of the year has an impact on retirement income," points out Françoise Gagnon, Financial Planner at Caisse Desjardins de Rivière-du-Loup. "First, making monthly contributions means that the investor can take advantage of fluctuations and monitor market trends." Furthermore, you enjoy the compounding of each dollar saved. The tables opposite show how this works.

L'épargne systématique effectuée par retenues à la source sur le salaire brut diminue l'impôt à payer sur chaque paie.

Growing your RRSP

You may invest regularly in your RRSP, but do you really know what's in it and how it's behaving? Will your retirement savings be enough for your retirement goals? A financial planner can analyze your investment portfolio and advise you on the best way to make it grow.

Dealing with a financial planner is a good way to ensure that you're investing with your eyes open. "An RRSP is a vehicle for deferring taxes until a later date, but the taxes do have to be paid eventually," Normand Joly points out. "They are deducted from RRSP withdrawals. That's one of the reasons why it's important to diversify our investments, so that we can maximize the return on our savings." According to a compilation by Morningstar Canada, a portfolio with a mix of 50% Canadian bonds, 35% Canadian equity and 15% foreign equity earned the investor an average annual return of 8.5% in the past 15 years. "During the next 10 years," says Mr. Joly, "I think we can expect an average return of about 6%. We'll have to adjust."



Séphanie Lemire

Marc L'Heureux, Financial Planner, Caisse Desjardins de Lac-Memphrémagog

When a financial planner does an analysis of an investment portfolio, it shouldn't be considered a once-in-a-lifetime experience. According to Marc L'Heureux, Financial Planner at Caisse Desjardins de Lac-Memphrémagog, a financial analysis should be done whenever necessary, and investors shouldn't panic when the markets decline. "I tell my people that if they're losing sleep over their investments, then maybe they don't have the right ones for their profile. It's a good time to sit down with them and review their goals."

Table 1: Savings of \$100 per month in an RRSP until age 60

If you start at age	Interest rate			
	4 %	6 %	8 %	10 %
25 -->	\$89 992	\$137 360	\$214 257	\$339 879
35 -->	\$50 885	\$67 629	\$90 899	\$123 332
45 -->	\$24 466	\$28 691	\$33 761	\$39 844

Table 2 : Savings of \$1,200 per year, at year-end, in an RRSP until age 60

If you start at age	Interest rate			
	4 %	6 %	8 %	10 %
25 -->	\$88 383	\$133 722	\$206 780	\$325 229
35 -->	\$49 975	\$65 837	\$87 727	\$118 016
45 -->	\$24 028	\$27 931	\$32 583	\$38 127

Source: *Prospect*, April 2003, Régie des rentes du Québec.

Your investor profile

An investor's risk tolerance is generally greater if he has 30 years to grow his assets than if he is a few years away from retirement. The distance to this horizon will also influence the type of investments: for instance, a 60-year-old investor's portfolio will usually have more fixed-income securities than a 40-year-old investor's, because the 40-year-old's portfolio can absorb fluctuations from growth securities.

"Determining your investor profile should not be taken lightly," warns Françoise Gagnon, "because that's what will establish your risk tolerance, your horizon and your investment goals." It isn't until the profile is completed that the planner can suggest a suitable investment strategy. Consequently, the profile may change following a divorce, the death of a spouse or a change of job. That's why it's important to review your goals and discuss them with your financial advisor. Françoise Gagnon insists, "Make the time to look after your financial affairs!"

As for market fluctuations, they should not disrupt a balanced portfolio. Our planners point out that more than 80% of portfolio yield depends on asset allocation, not the features of each product in the portfolio. Just follow the old proverb about not putting all your eggs in one basket.

Finding your way around

Normand Joly likes to compare the stock market to a department store... and says he likes getting a good deal. "With globalization, the investment market is experiencing sustained growth. If you keep your nose stuck to the shop window, then you don't see what else is there. That's why inexperienced investors end up selling when markets are low, and buying when markets are high."

Marc L'Heureux is averse to fire sales, and urges his clients to have faith in the economy and to remember their goals: "The economy goes through cycles, and the cycles don't necessarily last the same length of time. If your portfolio mix matches your profile, all you have to do is wait and be patient. Investing isn't a lottery. The financial planner's role is to help the investor choose from among all the options available and keep a cool head."

A complete range of investment products

"With Desjardins, I can meet all our members' demand for financial products," says Marc L'Heureux, whose customers generally have significant assets and are age 50 and over.

Through Desjardins Securities (a full-service broker providing access to any mutual fund company or stock exchange), Disnat (a discount broker), Desjardins Trust (Desjardins mutual funds, asset management and private management services) and Desjardins Financial Security (Millennia funds, life and health insurance), members have access to the complete range of products available on financial markets.

Desjardins Financial Planners are therefore uniquely positioned to help investors large and small to take full advantage of opportunities around the globe.

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