

Don't call me retired

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Living Reporter

When he turned 75, Lloyd Robertson started to think about Act 3.

He had been the anchor of CTV's nightly newscast for more than three decades, invited each evening into the homes of Canadians around the country.

He was healthy, energetic and still on top of his game. But he was also 75.

"Turning 75 was one of those markers in my life," Robertson, now 76, said Thursday, almost a week after announcing he will step down as anchor in a year's time. He called it a "magic number," like 60, 50 or 40 for some people.

Robertson said that staying "anchor for life," as his bosses have welcomed him to do, was a nice thought but not practical. "I didn't want my head to go bang-down on the desk at the age of 89. It might be great for the ratings but it wouldn't be good for me."

But even if headlines are using the R-word, Robertson is not. He isn't retiring. He will continue as co-host of CTV's current affairs show, *W5*, and will remain available for special programming. Call it what you will.

"It will be a slower pace but it won't be a slow, slow pace. I'm not stopping," he said.

Slowing down but not stopping, despite being years or even decades past the average retirement age (roughly 61 in Canada), is a trend poised to grow as hard-working baby boomers get older. And in recent weeks, some high-profile members of generation prior have reminded us you're only as old as you feel.



KEVORK DJANSEZIAN/AP file photo

Hugh Hefner

At 84, Hugh Hefner is going head-to-head with FriendFinder Networks Inc., owner of adult magazine *Penthouse*, in a bid to take Playboy Enterprises Inc. private by buying out the shares he does not own. Hefner has expressed concern about the *Playboy* brand and the magazine's editorial direction.

(On Thursdays, FriendFinder Networks Inc. bid higher than Hefner, casting doubt on the pyjama-wearing patriarch's chances.)

Like Robertson, longtime CNN host Larry King, also 76, recently announced he would step down as host of *Larry King Live*.

King said he will hang up his suspenders but not abandon the cameras; he plans to do specials for CNN, work as spokesperson for the Original Brooklyn Water Bagel Company and is reportedly interested in working in sports television.

The number of North Americans who continue to work post-retirement is expected to continue to rise as we live healthier, longer lives.

Canadians born today are expected to live 80 years on average, compared to 75 years for those born in 1979.

Suzanne Armstrong of Life's Next Steps said boomers are determined to "repurpose" their skills and do something that will keep them feeling relevant and meaningful post-retirement (retirement, by the way, is a word she despises).

According to the *McKinsey Quarterly*, 84 per cent of American baby boomers expect to work after they retire and 63 per cent don't expect to ever retire completely. Armstrong sees these figures reflected in Life's Next Steps' workshops, whose attendees range in age from 55 to 67.

At 63, Armstrong is a baby boomer herself and launched Life's Next Steps with her husband two years ago after a career as an organizational consultant.

"We've been the most successful generation in history," she said. "Everything's come to us. We've been used to the successes and the influence and the impact and the financial success we've had."

She encourages retirees to devise a plan for the next five or 10 years that involves engaging work — maybe a scaled-back version of their previous career or something new and exciting they always wanted to try.

But working late in life is not always a matter of choice. A Sun Life Financial survey last year found that 48 per cent of Canadians planned to work past the customary retirement age of 65 — but 30 per cent said they had changed their retirement plans because of recent economic turmoil.

University of Toronto sociology professor Scott Schieman said that can take an emotional or even physical toll on people who don't wake up every morning excited to go into work (as Robertson does) or those who work in low-wage, labour sector jobs.

"I think a lot more people can work into late life if it involves ideas and working with ideas rather than things or physical objects," Schieman. Academics, judges, journalists and writers can easily continue to thrive in the realm of facts and ideas past retirement age.

“These are people whose work really matters to who they are. It really matters to the core of their identity, and there’s probably a lot of pleasure and benefit that derive from that.”

Robertson uses the “love” over and over again as he talks about the position he will have held for 35 years when he finishes his tenure next year. That lust for life and work — plus a little bit of exercise — is what has kept him going strong.

But he will soon have more time to relax and to travel with his wife, Nancy. He is also considering trying to learn to play the bagpipe, an instrument he poetically said “covers the range of musical emotion . . . from the light to the lament.”