

POLITICAL ADVOCACY REPORT to Members by Janis McCaskill

It is a time of uncertainty in our lives, a time that many of us have never before experienced. The issues and concerns surrounding seniors have never had the light shone on them as brightly as it is now. And, although RTOERO's main focus revolves around seniors, we understand that we are deeply impacted and affected not only by the COVID-19 pandemic but also by the world in which we are living.

Most, if not all of us, have been impacted in many ways as we witnessed demonstration against systemic racism and the calls for change which started in the United States and then spread to many other countries around the world. Canada and locally in and around Toronto was not immune to these actions and many of us have taken note of what is being called for. As Jim Grieve, CEO of RTOERO, has stated: *"Many of us have been saddened and frustrated by the unfortunate news of tragedy, senseless abuse of power, violence and injustice toward black and indigenous individuals. However, we are also inspired by the collective displays of support, peace, and action taking place in communities worldwide. RTOERO members are characterized by their supportive voice. We are leaders in urging action, and in these times, we can use our community to make a positive impact. Things haven't been "normal" for some time, and that's just fine with us. We do not want to return to normal; together, we are committed to pursuing better. It's our right, and our responsibility to advocate for and support positive and lasting change.*

We have the privilege to use our voices in advocacy for equal and equitable access to education, fair policing, and the fair treatment of all Canadians."

RTOERO has been very busy during the COVID-19 pandemic. RTOERO has received extremely positive feedback regarding the letters they sent to both the Federal and Provincial governments with respect to Long Term Care, dispensing fee for medication during the pandemic, and cash for cancelled travel in lieu of a certificate.

In March, the board of directors approved three advocacy issues for RTOERO for 2020 – [geriatric health care](#) (including long-term care), [national seniors strategy](#) and [environmental stewardship](#). Due to the pandemic, geriatric health care and the national seniors strategy are being prioritized. The goal is to advocate for sustainable change, improvement in long term care policies and practises (not just homes) and push for the establishment of an agency to administer the issues surrounding long term care for seniors. They have conducted virtual meetings with four experts on geriatric health care to discover where our advocacy efforts can make the most impact. They are also working on developing more resources and measurable objectives. For more information go to [vibrantvoices.ca](#). Vibrant Voices is a community-based advocacy campaign supported by nine organizations (including RTOERO), representing more than two million older adults and their families.

RTOERO District 22 has continued to support our members and our community. Letters and emails have been distributed appropriately ensuring our district concerns are being voiced and heard. District 22 has also contributed by making financial donations to assist with COVID-19 research and to support community groups.