



THE
RTOERO
FOUNDATION

PARTNERSHIP
OPPORTUNITY



RTO Foundation
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SUMMARY

Imagine a society where seniors get the care and support they need. Imagine a country where we have a better understanding of the different dimensions of aging and more health professionals are trained to apply that knowledge.

Imagine a growing number of seniors who play an active role in the things that matter to them. Seniors who are part of daily life – around their neighbourhoods, as volunteers, in the workplace and across generations.

That quality of life is the dream of the RTOERO Foundation.

This is a pivotal and very exciting time for the RTOERO Foundation. We have ambitious growth targets and over the next few years, with an aim to transition from a small startup charity to one that is a powerful, national force in Canadian philanthropy. We will only achieve this goal by partnering with caring companies who are passionate about building a better society for the elderly, and a better future for us all.

If your organization is energized by innovative social change and the opportunity to build something meaningful, we hope you will consider partnering with us. Please explore this document to learn more about how you can be part of the solution.

WHO WE ARE

Vision

We envision a society in which all seniors live with dignity and respect.

Mission

We invest in programs, research and training to support healthy, active aging for all Canadians. Our activities aim to improve seniors' health care, end social isolation and combat ageism.

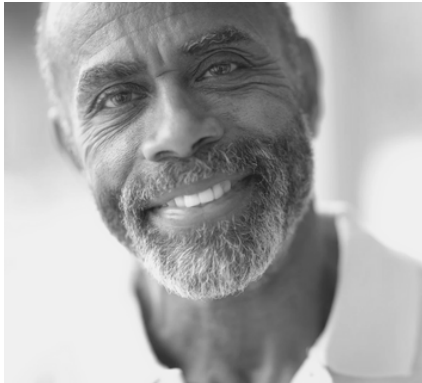
We are unique

The RTOERO Foundation is one of the only charitable foundations in Canada focused on the health and well-being of older adults. We focus on building and supporting creative, results-based initiatives to improve seniors' health care and promote social engagement.

Our beginnings

The RTOERO Foundation is the philanthropic partner of RTOERO; an association of 85,000 members across Canada and the largest national provider of group health benefits for education retirees. The RTOERO Foundation was established in 2011 to raise funds for the creation of an endowed Chair in Geriatric Medicine at the University of Toronto. Our mandate was expanded in 2015 to include the annual granting program, which remains the core of our work today.





OUR AUDIENCE

85,000

RTOERO members

Tens of thousands

Seniors and their families

National reach

Members in all provinces

Partners

Universities, research
& community groups

Geriatric Chair

University of Toronto &
Women's College Hospital

Bilingual

All communications in
English & French

The primary audience for our campaigns and communications are RTOERO members. These 85,000 older adults are well-educated, highly engaged and responsive. The membership consists of 70% female and 30% male. Almost half of our members are in the range of 65 to 74 years old.

Our secondary audience includes large groups of local seniors from across the country. The RTOERO Foundation partners with academic and medical institutions as well as community groups from various regions in Canada. The programs and the projects we fund are far-reaching with exposure to tens of thousands of seniors and their families.

The Foundation recognizes the need to evolve our granting program. We require philanthropic partnerships and financial support so we can fund more innovative projects and increase efficiency by bringing the program online. We expect a refreshed program to attract many more proposals and partnerships, which will further expand our reach and our audience. This will allow us to increase the funds we award each year to grow our impact exponentially.

THE CHALLENGES

Our communities are unprepared to meet the needs of the elderly

Canadians are living longer than ever before. However, our health care system and social supports are not prepared for the complex needs and unique challenges that come with a significantly older population. Across the country and across professions, we see a fundamental mismatch between the needs and interests of older Canadians and the knowledge, supports and interventions available to them. This lack of alignment results in poorer health outcomes for seniors, increasing the burden on individuals, institutions and communities.

- In Canada there are now **more adults aged 65+ than children** under 15, and this is a continuing demographic trend
- There is **only 1 geriatrician for every 22,000 seniors** in Canada
- Most health care and social service professionals receive **inadequate training on senior-specific care**
- Geriatrics is one of the most **chronically underfunded** areas of research

Key challenges of an aging population

1. Social isolation & loneliness: not only is the thought of being forgotten in old age heartbreaking, but the impact of social isolation on our society is far-reaching and expensive. It is estimated that 30% of older adults are at risk of becoming isolated.
2. Geriatric care shortage: there are just over 300 geriatric doctors in Canada. While it is essential to increase the number of medical students who pursue geriatrics, it is also critical to make sure other health care professionals have training in how to support the elderly.
3. Caregiver crisis: an estimated 3.8 million Canadians are providing unpaid care to an older adult with a short- or long-term health condition. Friend and family caregivers reduce demand on the health care system, but they experience economic, social and health-related consequences.



OUR RESPONSE

Chair in Geriatric Medicine at the University of Toronto

Valued at \$3 million, the endowed RTOERO Chair in Geriatric Medicine was created through support and fundraising from the RTOERO Foundation. In 2015, Dr. Paula Rochon was appointed as the inaugural Chair, and due to the impressive scope of her work, was recently awarded a second term.

Dr. Rochon's research focuses on an array of issues including long-term care, safer prescription policies and gender-based studies among the elderly. She is also dedicated to mentoring graduate students in the field of geriatric medicine. Dr. Rochon was an invited member of the *Task Group on Long-Term Care* and the *Expert Panel on COVID-19* for the Government of Canada.



Grants program

The overarching goal of our annual grants program is to identify and partner with researchers and community programmers in order to address the most critical issues faced by our aging population.

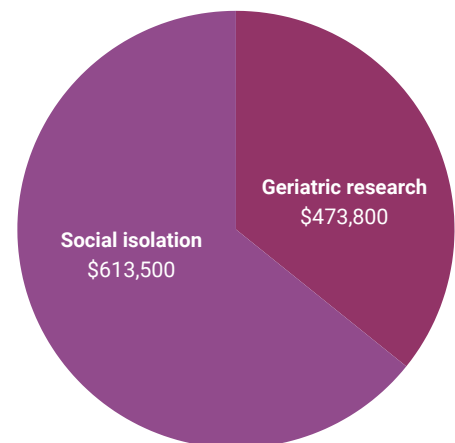
Foundation grants also support the development of resources to be shared widely and used to build a knowledge base for supporting seniors' health and wellness. Priority objectives for the grants program are the following:

- Fund essential research
- Facilitate health care training
- Raise awareness & support advocacy
- Translate and share knowledge

We have awarded thirteen grants to geriatric and gerontology research and eighteen grants to projects addressing social isolation and loneliness. Our total investment into seniors' health, wellness and social inclusion is \$1,087,000.

Some of the projects we have supported include:

- *Guelph Youth-Seniors Farm* (St. Josephs Health Centre)
- *Dance Videos for Frail Older Adults* (McMaster University)
- *Family Centred Dementia Care in NE Ontario* (Nipissing University)
- *Practice Toolkit for Personal Support Workers* (Sunnybrook Hospital)
- *Mentally Healthy Living After Social Distancing* (University of Alberta)
- *Using Visual Arts to Address Social Isolation in Older Adults* (Sheridan College)
- *Caring for LGBTQ+ Seniors Facing End of Life* (Northern Ontario School of Medicine)
- *Geriatric Education Program for Orthopedic Surgery Residents* (Mount Sinai Hospital)



HELPING LONELY SENIORS

Social isolation is the #1 emerging issue for Canadian seniors

The prevalence of social isolation and loneliness among the elderly has been steadily increasing over the last two decades. The situation has been further exacerbated by the global pandemic. According to recent research, social isolation affects 1 in 5 seniors and another 30% are at risk. Social isolation can contribute to anxiety and depression, poor physical health, higher rates of disease and dementia, and even suicide.

- Social isolation is **2x more deadly than obesity** leading to diabetes
- The **chances for early death** among isolated seniors is similar to smoking 15 cigarettes per day
- Social isolation **increases the risk of dementia** by 64%
- Canadians 65+ have a **higher suicide rate** than any other age group and men are especially at risk.

Social Isolation Awareness Month

In response to the crisis of isolation and loneliness among the elderly, the RTOERO Foundation launched *Social Isolation Awareness Month* (SI Month) in 2018. Every October, we promote a series of activities aimed at spreading awareness. We also set ambitious fundraising targets so that we can direct more resources towards our grants program. SI Month is designed with a firm and focused goal: to improve seniors' social engagement and combat the negative effects of loneliness.

Chime In

In response to increasing rates of loneliness and isolation among the elderly, the RTOERO Foundation launched *Chime In*; an online chat group for seniors to socialize with peers. Each week, participants join via Zoom and are organized into small groups to allow for easy conversation and connection. The positive effects of the program have already emerged as participants tell us how much they look forward to the weekly chat, and have even made new friends. We are proud of the small but important part *Chime In* will play in the national effort to address the crisis of loneliness and isolation among the elderly.



GROWING OUR IMPACT

How you can help

The RTOERO Foundation is a very small organization with limited resources, but we have established ourselves as one of the only foundations in Canada focused exclusively on helping our elderly population. Our efforts have been effective, but there is so much more we could do. Unfortunately, we are finding it very difficult to take our programming to the next level.

Our key programs are strong and well received...the problem for us is scale. Our grants program awards just \$100,000 each year. Our print newsletter reaches 2,000 homes. Our online webinars draw 400 attendees each episode and *Chime In*, our online chat group, has a modest 30 participants. We are proud of our work, but there is so much more we could do and we are struggling with growth.

Targets for growth and impact

Through mutually beneficial partnerships with caring organizations from the corporate sector, we hope to achieve a substantial increase in the scale and scope of our current programs. This will allow for growth in the size of our audience and significant expansion in the number of Canadians who participate in and benefit from our programs every year. Corporate partners committed to philanthropy and supporting the elderly can help us achieve the following targets:

Grants for innovative projects

- Increase total annual grants to \$250,000
- Build capacity to bring application & review process online

Knowledge sharing

- Grow webinar audience by 50%
- Create post-event resources to share with webinar attendees

Social engagement for seniors

- Increase *Chime In* participation by 300%
- Build resources to support seniors experiencing loneliness and isolation

Awareness raising

- Increase newsletter circulation by 200%
- Create brand video and other multi-media content to drive engagement





Please contact us at any time

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