



## President's Message – November 2015

Gerry Graham

By the time you receive this, the Federal election will be fond and long election memory. All across Canada we heard the young and elderly ask for change and with the stroke of a pencil we got change. For better or worse we hope the new government of the day will at least communicate with the Provincial Governments. Looking back on the past year ask yourself what have we personally accomplished as an individual, as an organization within the USCO. Did we make a difference in one person's life? Sometime listening makes a big difference at a difficult moment in someone's life. Take the time to talk to that person. It will make a world of difference. Then ask yourself not what the USCO did for you personally but what can you do for the USCO. After all at the end of the day we are all we have. There is no other organization in Canada that gets the respect we get from a provincial government like the USCO. It is the collective voice of all members from all the clubs large and small that holds the USCO together. We should be patting ourselves on our backs for all the volunteering we do. But we don't have the time to. We are that busy.

In case anyone is wondering about my health the bad news is I still have a cast on my foot. Fortunately the good news is I still have one good foot, and I am getting around much better. As your president I have been informed and able enough in conducting business, receiving updates daily and information via teleconference from your Executive board. So a big thanks to all USCO Executive board members. Without a doubt I could not have done it alone. Thanks to all of you for visiting clubs, meetings that I could not possibly make and my responsibilities as president of the USCO in my time of need. My cast will be coming off in a couple of weeks and I expect to be walking again and never climb another tree. In November Peggy Hawthorn and I will meet again with the Mario Sergio Minister Responsible for Seniors.

I would like to mention here that 3 years ago Bernard Jordaan and I met with the Minister Mario Sergio at Queens Park and we brought up the financial difficulties some of our clubs were having and suggested to the minister they could use some help. The following meeting the Minister announced grants to seniors clubs up to \$10,000.

It became so popular that the following year it went down to \$8,000 per year as the government was running out of grant money. However many of our clubs have benefitted through the actions of the USCO.

On another note a considerable amount of thought and effort from our USCO fund raising committee went even further to find ways to bring in some much needed funds into the

coffers of the USCO as well as USCO clubs. The USCO runs on a shoe string operation, sometimes on a day to day basis Thanks to our fund raising committee for all the volunteer work and effort they did creating the **Hug-a-Senior** design and the legal rights to own it out right from our own USCO organization. So now the USCO turns to our clubs and asks whether you use it for promotions, fund raising or just selling T shirts, remember the USCO. For every T shirt you sell, pay it forward and make a donation. You will get back more than you give.

Some issues and thoughts at large. Seniors made it clear they want to age at home with the proper competent care. Increasing the OAS and GIS to raise seniors out of poverty should be a priority. Hospital parking should be free. The last thing we need when we rush to a hospital is to pay a hefty amount for parking. The Ontario Retirement Pension Plan is still a good plan and we are receiving good reviews on it as long as it includes every one. You won't find a better saving plan. There is not a safer or better RRSP out there that can do what the ORPP can. This won't help us but will help our children and grandchildren save for their retirement. We expect it to merge with the CPP; that would be even better. Like most of you we question the government reasoning. Why not save Ontario Hydro, why not keep rates reasonable for business, agriculture and consumers. Keep our health care not for profit. We like the idea of community hubs to keep seniors active and connected in their communities. Canadian National Phamacare plan has been said to save billions on drug cost. We are the only first world country in the world without a national Phamacare drug plan. Finally on behalf of all the provinces across Canada let's get funding that was taken away from us back on the table and reinstitute the Canadian National Health Accord Act. In conclusion the USCO through hard work, dignity and respect have been very fortunate to be invited to these meetings and meet face to face with presenters, policy advisors, and most importantly Minister Mario Sergio who we believe understands the needs of seniors in Ontario. The USCO will continue to work along with the Minister for the betterment of all seniors across Ontario.

Just one more thought before closing. I would like to thank all who wrote or sent in photos in the October Voice. You guys put a lot of work in the articles. On behalf of the USCO, we would not have a Voice if it wasn't for the contributions of our members. USCO thanks you.

