



President's Message – January 2016

Gerry Graham

Welcome 2016. We have some work to do. To those who knew or did not know, yes I did fall out of a tree while trimming it last September. After eight weeks the cast is off, I no longer need crutches and can now walk without a cane. I am working with physiotherapists and that will continue for a few more months. I did learn that I am not as young as I used to be. I also understand the words accessibility for seniors. And in my short experience on crutches all I can say is we have a lot more work to do to break down those barriers. Even little things may mean a senior cannot get out of the house to do some shopping without help. Thanks to all especially the USCO Board for your thoughts and wishing me well. I'm back.

The Federal elections have finally come and gone and what a year it was. It was the longest campaign in recent history and we hope the new federal government will communicate with our Provincial Government. This is something we didn't have in the past. The lines of communication should now be open at all 3 levels of governments. At our last August 2015 convention we had many resolutions that were debated, passed and submitted to the federal and provincial government. We have had far too many issues in the past that need attending to yesterday. We understand all the work our clubs put into these resolution and on behalf of all Ontario seniors we deserve an answer on each and every one of them whether they agree or not. It would be only right that seniors know that someone is at least reading them at the federal and provincial level.

Through your clubs we listened and heard loud and clear about health care in Ontario. The past federal government scrapped our federally funded Health Care Accord and what's needed now is the federal government to come to the table and renegotiate a new Health Care Accord. That alone will relieve the pressure on all hospitals in Ontario and our aging population. The other big issue is prescription drugs that all our seniors rely on. We have far too many resolutions every year calling for a Pan Am national drug plan.

Re-negotiating the health care accord act would make it fair for everyone. Justin Trudeau has made some substantial promises and it is only fair that seniors concerns and issues be heard and hold the Honorable Prime Minister to his promises.

Recently the Ontario Secretary of Cabinet has appointed Marie-Lison Fougere as Ontario's new Deputy Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs and Francophone Affairs. As president of USCO I was very fortunate to get a phone call from Patrick Ouellette, Ontario Executive Advisor telling me that the new Deputy Minister is very interested in the good work a grass roots organization like the USCO is accomplishing with only one mandate: Looking after seniors. They are looking forward to working with the USCO on the mutual goal of improving the quality of life for Ontario seniors.

Ontario is home to 2.1 million seniors. For the first time in Ontario we have more people over the age 65 than children under the age 15. Over the next two decades this will rise to 4.4 million. The USCO is looking forward to working with the New Deputy Minister as we have a lot in common when it comes to senior issues. This will be followed up with a personal meeting with the Deputy Minister of Health for Seniors and I am looking forward to making that meeting on behalf of seniors and the USCO. I will be able to report more on this at a later time so stay tuned.

I would also like to announce another appointment by Minister Mario Sergio Minister Responsible for Senior Affairs who is always out there when it comes to senior issues. The Minister has designated John Rossiter as the new Chair of the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority (RHRA). John's accomplishments over the past 3 years involved completing the first round of routine inspection of over 700 retirements homes across Ontario including implementation of a complaints procedure which are of utmost importance to our seniors. He brings 30 years of service to the RHRA. We look forward to working with John and the 2010 public accountability mandate of the RHRA.

The USCO is encouraging and recommending that seniors receive their flu shots. This may not stop you from getting the flu but will shorten the recovery time. We also strongly recommend the shingles vaccine as this could take over a year

to recover from. See your doctor now and heed their advice. The USCO is on it and there will be more information on these issues in our next issue of *The Voice*. Till then take care of yourself.

***Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving.
sic (Albert Einstein)***

