



President's Message – April 2016

Gerry Graham

It is mid March as I tap away here on my computer and you will receive it in April. Our officers compose our reports a few weeks before they are mailed so everyone can receive it in a timely fashion. March has been a busy month for all your USCO executives.

As Chairperson of Club 407 and like all clubs we are in the planning stage of setting up our spring luncheon. Tickets will be sold at our club, the menu will be decided by the board based on feedback from our members as well as the venue and entertainment for the Christmas dinner. This is very popular with our members as a lot of them do come for the spring and Christmas dinner. It's always great to catch up with old friends.

Reading what other clubs are doing is inspiring to all of us. Keep up the great work and keep those pictures and articles coming.

As many of you know the President and Vice President have the privilege of meeting with the Honourable Mario Sergio Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs every three months. This give us a great opportunity and privilege to bring up your resolutions and concerns from our last convention. We have been in talks with Minister Mario Sergio, the Deputy Minister and as well as senior policy advisors and they are listening.

We can only do this from your dues and donations. There are 12 boards members elected to the USCO and because they truly believe in taking care of all seniors in Ontario they also volunteer and spend a great deal of their time for all our members. Board members make some donations back to our organization. If you really care, support the United Seniors Citizens of Ontario financially so we can support you.

We brought up the issue of free Shingles shots as this is a horrible disease and causes great discomfort to our seniors. There is a vaccine, however the cost is \$200 and most of our seniors cannot afford it and would rather take the chance they won't contract it. If they do nothing and do get Shingles it means \$1,000s a day in hospital costs and in most cases can take a year to clear up. There is no reason for our seniors to suffer with this disease.

I was invited by Minister Mario Sergio to go to Queens Park for the 2016 Budget and by the time I'm reporting this I believe they will move forward and do something about this terrible disease.

In the long haul this will save health care dollars that can be used elsewhere. This will be a real win for Ontario Seniors. It's now the end of March and having returned from Queens Park I can now report that the Government of Ontario will now make this vaccine free to all seniors covering \$176 for seniors between the ages of 65 to 70.

The USCO have been asking for free parking for seniors for over a year as seniors are in and out of hospitals numerous times as well as their spouse or partner who need to visit their loved ones. We were somewhat successful as they did address the issue by capping the parking rate at \$10 and anything over that would be reduced 50%. This may not help small towns and cities with small

hospitals as their rates are reasonable. However if you need to go to a large city like London or Toronto and are staying over a few weeks, it will help as parking there can be as high as \$28 a day. Also hospitals will be told to make allowances for daily, weekly and in and out privilege. We have some more work to do on this.

We also suggested increasing funding for home care and \$250 million has been committed for the next two years. The USCO suggested grants for families making \$80,000 or less a year for their children or grandchildren's post education and this will be prorated. If a family household income is less than \$50,000 tuition is free for university or college and moving forward on apprenticeship programs for a better educated Ontario.

I attended a Teleconference with the National Pensioners Federation and there was a good discussion on the Ontario Pension Plan and the Federal Health Accord. They still owe Ontario nine billion dollars for health care. Other issues include Phamacare, that we all support as this would save Canadians billions and a Canadian wide dental care plan.

Also it was reported by the president of the National Pensioners Federation there is still not a federal Minister for Seniors that we the USCO are fortunate to have in Ontario. However it was mentioned they are getting a better response's from the Federal Government. Hopefully that's a good sign and we wish them success with the new government of the day. Sometimes the right path is the easiest one.

The greatest pleasure in life is doing what other people say you cannot do.



President Gerry Graham

