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June 17, 2020

Honourable Deb Schulte, Minister of Seniors  
Honourable Francois-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Parliament of Canada  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6  
Sent by email

Re: Support for United Nations Convention on the Rights of Older Persons

Dear Minister Schulte and Minister Champagne,

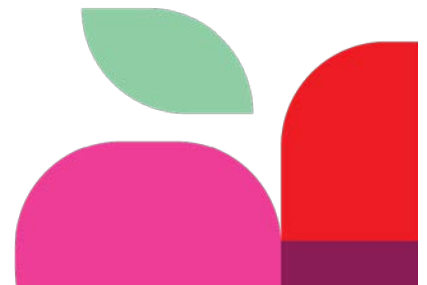
RTOERO is a bilingual trusted voice for healthy, active living in retirement. With more than 81,000 members in districts across Canada, we are the largest national provider of non-profit group health benefits for education community retirees. We serve members who are retired from the early years, schools and school boards, post-secondary and the broader education community.

We are writing to express our unequivocal support for the creation of a UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons.

We certainly appreciate that the federal government has many pressing priorities and issues to manage right now, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the crisis in long-term care and growing public concerns about systemic racism. So, it might seem this issue is not as urgent. Yet we believe this is exactly the time to take decisive international action on a rights-based approach to the needs of seniors.

This is a moment in which the decades-long neglect of long-term care has been painfully brought to the forefront of Canadians' consciousness. At the same time, recent tragic deaths have galvanized Canadians – and others around the world – to demand action on the dismantling of social structures that reinforce discrimination and oppression.

As an organization, we are deeply distressed about the racism experienced by Canadians who identify as Black, racialized and Indigenous. Yet, we know from experience that ageism is an equally deadly and systemic bias – in Canada and around the world.





We believe that an international legal framework to protect the rights of older persons is an essential component of the difficult work of dismantling systemic ageism and ensuring a more just and fair society for all Canadians as we age.

We understand that the Canadian government has expressed openness to the concept of a UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons. We believe the Canadian government is uniquely positioned to take a leadership role internationally to move this convention forward.

**We urge the Canadian government to publicly commit to a UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons** and to use its influence to make an international legal human rights framework for older persons a reality.

We join with other non-profit organizations, such as ILC Canada, in urging the government to take action. RTOERO board of directors and members stand ready to provide assistance and support on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Martha Foster'.

Martha Foster, Chair of Board of Directors  
[chair@rtoero.ca](mailto:chair@rtoero.ca)

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Jim Grieve'.

Jim Grieve, Chief Executive Officer  
[jgrieve@rtoero.ca](mailto:jgrieve@rtoero.ca)

c. Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada

Attachment: Letter from ILC Canada, April 17, 2020  
in support of Convention on the Rights of Older Persons