

Memorandum to District President and Political Advocacy Committee Chairs dated April 13, 2011

From: Simon Leibovitz, Director of Administrative and Member Services

Re: 2011 Federal Election – Monday, May 2, 2011

Background/Introduction

As an organization of over 65,000 members, representing the interests of retired members of The Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, other retired educators, educational support staff, and college & university faculty, RTO/ERO has influence.

The Provincial Executive and provincial Political Advocacy Committee recognize that, as a provincial organization, RTO/ERO can have an impact, through its advocacy initiatives, during election periods. Realizing that often the most successful lobbying efforts take place at the grass roots level within an organization, they encourage Districts to participate in local advocacy activities related to the upcoming federal election as well as the provincial election in October.

Provincially, issues deemed important by RTO/ERO for advocacy purposes have been developed by the Provincial Executive and recently distributed to Districts. In addition, it has been determined, with input from the Political Advocacy Committee, that an insert on these issues as well as advocacy strategies will be contained within the summer issue of Renaissance, as was done in the provincial election of 2007. Similarly, as happened four years ago, advertisements outlining RTO/ERO's provincial issues will be placed in weekly newspapers delivered free to residents in each of our 46 Districts in Ontario.

Both provincially and federally, it is important that our members are aware of what RTO/ERO believes to be the most vital issues facing the seniors in our country. By sharing these with all members, it is RTO/ERO's intent to have a better-informed membership when it is time to vote in these elections. The main purpose of this paper, however, is to provide issues and strategies for use by Districts in their advocacy activities related to the federal election.

Non-Partisan Status [Emphasis added]

As evidenced by the number and variety of advocacy initiatives undertaken so enthusiastically by the Provincial Executive and Political Advocacy Committee provincially and Districts locally, RTO/ERO continues to advocate for its membership with all political parties.

It is important to note, however, that it does not support specific political parties and never endorses specific candidates. This position is enshrined in one of RTO/ERO's policies within its Constitution, which states:

“RTO/ERO is a non-partisan, issue-based organization. RTO/ERO does

not support any particular political party, but will meet with members of all political parties to promote its issues and positions.”

Election Day

RTO/ERO believes that one of the most important roles that Districts can play during an election campaign occurs on Election Day – is the provision of transportation of those members and others within in your communities who want to vote and could not otherwise do so.

As has been stated previously, the encouragement of eligible citizens of all ages to participate in the democratic process by voting is one of RTO/ERO’s key philosophies at times of elections. Districts can certainly undertake an important role in this process by assisting members with transportation to the polls on Election Day.

Development of Local Strategies

Refer to Appendix A (See Page 5), “*Election Readiness Strategies*” and also to Appendix B (See Page 6), “*Using the Media During an Election*”.

Issues

Health Care

- While the provision of health care is essentially a provincial responsibility, the federal government is responsible for establishing and upholding the principles of the Canada Health Act, and for providing financial support to the provinces and territories to enable them to do so.
- According to Health Canada, The Canada Health Act (CHA or the Act) is Canada’s federal legislation for publicly funded health care insurance.
- The Act sets out the primary objective of Canadian health care policy, which is “to protect, promote and restore the physical and mental well-being of residents of Canada and to facilitate reasonable access to health services without financial or other barriers.”
- Though the provinces and territories are responsible for the delivery of health care to most Canadians, the federal government is solely responsible for the delivery of health care to more than one million people, including those living on reserves, Inuit, the Canadian Forces and the RCMP, and eligible veterans.
- The federal government is also responsible for programs such as food safety, consumer safety, and the regulation of pharmaceuticals.
- In 2004, the federal and provincial ministers of health established a task force to develop and implement a National Pharmaceuticals Strategy.
- RTO/ERO encourages the government to move quickly to full implementation of the principles established in 2004.
- As well, the Health Accord, signed in 2004 by the First Ministers of

Canada, expires in 2014; the Prime Minister and federal government must address the renewal of this Accord to ensure adequate and equitable funding for the provision of health programs and services.

- Related to the above, the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) is interested in consulting with Canadians on the future of the health care system in Canada, as indicated in a letter to Harold Brathwaite, Executive Director. Refer to Appendix C, “Consulting with Canadians”. (Not included in this Newsletter Supplement.)

Funding

- RTO/ERO has previously noted that Ontario does not receive its fair share of funding from the federal government.
- The inadequate funding needs to be addressed since the shortfall impacts health care, social and other government programs at both the municipal and provincial levels.

The Environment

- Most Canadians believe that the greatest public policy challenge of our time is dealing with climate change, specifically a rapidly warming planet.
- RTO/ERO remains very concerned that, while the ravages of global warming are adversely affecting Canada, all three levels of government continue to prefer pronouncements, token promises, and voluntary targets to immediate action.
- Carbon dioxide levels in the air have increased to an alarming 30% higher than any time in the last 100 years.
- New data shows that the north polar sea could be ice-free by 2040.
- The prospect of the permafrost melting holds the probability of releasing huge quantities of methane gas which will alter significantly the earth’s temperature and oxygen ratio.
- The impact on wildlife, vegetation and humans will be devastating.
- Extreme heat waves and destructive weather patterns are frightening.
- Global warming can trigger a runaway greenhouse effect that could leave low lying areas under the sea, water sources dried up, food supplies scarce and plant and animal species lost forever.
- RTO/ERO urges governments to support a national strategy to address the environment immediately.
- The federal government must act immediately to:
 - deploy greenhouse gas reduction technologies
 - increase energy efficiency
 - mandate clean air
 - protect water resources
 - implement sustainable development projects

Conclusion

Over the next couple of weeks, as the federal election campaign comes to an end, and as members consider which candidates to support, they are encouraged to determine how well their views mesh with their own and those of RTO/ERO.

Members are encouraged to attend all-candidates' meetings and carefully review campaign literature.

Above all, RTO/ERO encourages members to exercise their democratic right and VOTE! For reference on the importance of voting, please see Appendix D [below], "Your Vote Matters", courtesy of District 13 – Hamilton, Wentworth and Haldimand.

Please note this information is also posted on the RTO/ERO provincial website, www.rto-ero.org in the Members' Centre under the Political Advocacy Committee.

Appendix D



Your Vote Matters

- ▶ We believe that seniors are valuable and contributing members of society who deserve to age successfully and with dignity.
- ▶ You have seen the advertisements on radio, television and in newspapers for a May 2nd Federal Election.
- ▶ We would like you to place a high priority on voting. To prepare, we have four suggestions...
 1. Make sure that your name is on the Voters List or have some one check for you.
 2. Become a knowledgeable voter by reading all of the candidate literature, the newspaper articles and items on other media.
 3. Determine where your 'voting' poll is located or have some one do it for you.
 4. On the second of May, make sure that you vote. If you don't have a ride, a relative, a friend or a neighbour may be willing to assist you.

This message is brought to you by the Retired Teachers of Ontario, District 13 – Hamilton, Wentworth and Haldimand.

Appendix A ~ Election Readiness Strategies

Organization

- Form a local PAC team to develop election strategies
- A team should have at least one Executive member to ensure effective internal communications
- Involve non-RTO/ERO members who may be interested, where possible
- Seek external expertise where deemed appropriate
- Choose election strategies and actions to suit your District. For each strategy decide:
 - Who will do it
 - By what date
 - What resources will be needed

Communications

- Develop a means of communication with members, e.g. phone committee, email message system, District website
- Make sure the message is accurate and consistent by using a written script
- Messages could go to non RTO/ERO members – keep in touch with them
- Keep members involved on a regular basis through brief updates/bulletins Issues
- Refer to provincial issues established by the Provincial Executive
- Focus on local issues of interest to the community Media
- Send letters to the editor on issues of concern to RTO/ERO and your District
- Exchange issues and election messages with other local groups with similar interests
- For further information, refer to Appendix B, “Using the Media During an Election”

Candidates

- Share RTO/ERO’s issues with candidates
- Visit the offices of all candidates to gather information on their positions
- Develop questions for the candidates on their positions
- Indicate to the candidates that their answers will be shared with all RTO/ERO District members
- Publish the responses on your District website (if feasible)
- Set up or collaborate with other groups on an all candidates meeting

All Candidates’ Meeting

- Check with other organizations e.g. Affiliates, Seniors’ Groups, to determine whether an all-candidates meeting can be mutually coordinated
- If your District takes a lead role in organizing a candidates’ meeting, ensure that you have sufficient volunteers to undertake this endeavour

Other Initiatives

- Organize a driving committee to take members to the polls
- Encourage members to help the candidates of their choice throughout the campaign
- Ensure that the candidates are acknowledged in writing for whatever their participation is related to RTO/ERO election activities
- Keep a record of District actions for future reference

Appendix B ~ Using the Media

A. Introduction

The following methods of using the media may be used to deal with specific events and activities that Districts/Units are involved in, as well as to promote a social or political cause.

During an election campaign, however, Districts/Units may wish to consider formulating a plan, using a multi-faceted or coordinated approach to take a stance on political issues and stances by candidates, both during the pre- and post-writ periods of the campaign.

B. Advertising

1. Try to obtain free advertising through community bulletin section of newspaper or on radio station as PSA (public service announcement).
2. When paying for advertisements, ask for the non-profit rate.
3. Keep wording short and to the point; too much wording makes it difficult for the reader to “get the message”.
4. Use no more than two fonts for title and message; vary size and use of bolding to draw attention to the key message.
5. Use the RTO/ERO logo and any local graphics to draw attention to the advertisement.
6. Advertising by third parties (individuals and organizations, not candidates or parties themselves) to oppose or promote a candidate is subject to regulations under the Canada Elections Act.

C. Letters To The Editor

1. The letters section is one of the most highly read sections in a newspaper.
2. An opportunity for a District President to inform readers how the local RTO/ERO District feels about a certain issue and/or to reflect provincial RTO/ERO policies.
3. Letters to the editor can correct or interpret facts that have been previously stated in an inaccurate or perhaps biased article.
4. Letters to the editor can also be used to comment on a recent editorial.
5. Respond directly to the publication in which you read the article/letter/editorial; chances are the other publications in your community will not be interested in printing your opinion on an item which they did not carry.

6. Be timely – if responding to an editorial or article, try to do so within 24 hours for a daily newspaper and for the next issue of a weekly or bi-weekly publication.
7. Referring to a previously-written article increases the chance of a letter being published as it becomes relevant for both editorial staff and readers; state this reference (title of article/editorial and date in the opening sentence.
8. As readers may not have seen the original article/letter/editorial, restate the basic premise of it in the letter to the editor.
9. State your position clearly and concisely at the outset so readers know why you are writing – offering support or criticism to a previously-written article/letter/editorial, or offering new ideas; most publications have a maximum length for letters to the editor and may edit your letter if it is too lengthy.
10. If lending support to or criticizing specific politicians, mention them by name to get their attention.
11. Keep your letter short and simple, with short sentences as they have more impact.
12. Be as factual as possible.
13. Stick to a single subject – deal with one issue per letter; do not try to respond to all the issues, but select the key ones and concentrate on them.
14. Respect legalities –your letter should not be defamatory or obscene, no matter how upset you may be about a specific issue or individual.
15. Type your letter if possible; if they can't read it, they won't print it.
16. Proof your letter before sending it to ensure it is clear and to the point without repetition, and of course, for spelling and grammatical errors.
17. Include your name, address and phone number for verification purposes, but only your name and city will be identified.
18. Depending on the issue, encourage your friends and colleagues to write as well.
19. Don't be discouraged if the letter is not printed as editors receive numerous letters and simply don't have room to print them all; be persistent and eventually one should be printed.
20. Whether the letter is published or not, think of others who might be interested in your stance – municipal, provincial and federal politicians; chief bureaucrats, other RTO/ERO Districts, RTO/ERO Provincial Office.

D. Media Releases

1. Use a lead or “grabber” or “hook” so media knows at outset what purpose of the release is.
2. Name a contact person at end to provide further information if requested by the media.
3. Use a creative headline that grabs attention – keep it short, edgy and descriptive.

4. Use the 5 W's – where, who, when, what and why.
5. Use the present tense, not past tense, as it adds to the “shelf life” of a release especially in areas where newspapers are published on a weekly, not daily basis.
6. Attribute assertions/announcements in the lead to a person or an organization.
7. Back up the lead with supporting statements.
8. Avoid jargon; use terminology that the public will understand.
9. Use active tense.
10. Use quotes throughout to liven it up.
11. Be direct and concise.
12. Be factual; keep it simple.
13. Proofread; don't leave a poor impression of teachers/retired teachers with careless grammatical and/or typing errors.
14. Include a brief overview of RTO/ERO, your District/Unit at the end of the release as background information.
15. Use “30”, centered, at bottom of release to indicate end of release.
16. Keep the release to one page if possible; maximum is two pages.
17. All media releases should be typed.
18. Don't expect the release to be published word for word, especially in larger municipalities where daily newspapers exist.

E. Surveys/Questionnaires

1. Send a questionnaire to declared candidates to ascertain their stance on key issues facing: specifically, the members of the District/Unit; generally, the residents of the area (municipality/electoral riding).
2. Pose four-to-five key questions and ask for responses to be returned within a reasonable timeline.
3. Advise candidates that responses will be shared with: members of the District/Unit, municipality/riding; and how, through a newsletter, a release to the media, advertising in the media, etc.

F. Tips for working with the media

1. Be honest, accurate, frank and friendly.
2. Respect the fact that news people are trained professionals in their field.
3. Treat all media fairly; don't play favourites.
4. Never lie.
5. Don't be afraid to say “no” to the media, but be courteous.
6. Don't try to tell a reporter how to write a story.
7. Reporters are busy, so get to the point and stay there.
8. Select an official spokesperson for your District.
9. Don't use the phrase “No comment”.
10. There is no such thing as “Off the record”.
11. Avoid (educational) jargon.

12. Use clear and simple language in both written and oral communication.
13. Don't expect a newspaper to publish news releases word for word.
14. Identify the key publics you want to reach and determine the best method and the best media to use, i.e. newspaper, radio, television.
15. Identify the key points that need to be publicized.

G. Being Interviewed by the Media

If you are to be interviewed by the media, you may wish to contact Simon Leibovitz, Director of Administrative & Member Services, at the Provincial Office, sleibovitz@rto-ero.org for detailed information.

Values Of RTO/ERO (What We Stand For)

1. RTO/ERO believes that all seniors, including retired teachers, educators and support staff, are valuable and contributing members of society, are worthy of respect, and deserve to age successfully and with dignity;
2. RTO/ERO is committed to the welfare of those who have retired from working in education in Ontario;
3. RTO/ERO values and will vigorously advocate for (a) universal health care, (b) quality publicly-funded education, (c) defined benefit pension plans, and (d) age-friendly communities;
4. RTO/ERO believes that building and cultivating relationships — interpersonal and institutional, as well as the practice of win/win issue oriented strategies contribute to societal cohesiveness, participatory democracy and creative decision-making;
5. RTO/ERO values the rule of law and universal human rights.

Rationale To Support The Values Statement

1. We are an organization of seniors who continue to play a vital role in society and we believe in the equitable treatment of seniors. The focus is on enabling seniors to be active and involved citizens;
2. Much of what we do demonstrates our commitment to meeting the needs of those who have retired from education or are planning to do so;
3. (a) Universal Health care consistently ranks as the number one concern on surveys of RTO/ERO's membership; (b) RTO/ERO has a public position that supports publicly-funded education and has set aside a reserve to support the Affiliates in the event of a strike; (c) A concern for fairness with respect to teacher pensions led to the creation of RTO/ERO forty-two years ago and we continue to have a Pension and Retirement Concerns Committee; (d) If seniors are to age successfully and be treated fairly, then we must continue to advocate for age-friendly communities.
4. This speaks to how we do business — seeking common ground, alliances of interests, issue - driven partnerships, constructive dialogue and engagement with governments and political parties, a solution rather than

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RTO/ERO Provincial Election Issues

Repeated from our March, 2011 Issue:

Below are the three key issues that the Provincial Executive proposes to pursue with the three provincial political parties in the lead up to the next provincial elections. These are:

1. A reaffirmation of a commitment to the principles of the Canada Health Act and to the provision of adequately funded programs and services that ensure timely and equitable access to quality health care.
 - This would include the following issues submitted by committees:
 - o Wait times
 - o Access to quality health care
 - o LHINs and CCACs – operation, efficiency, accountability, transparency
 - o Long term care
 - o Hospice care
 - o Honouring principles of Canada Health Act
 - o Patient care at home
 - o Closing small hospitals
 - o Funding/care levels/supervision of standards in resident homes
2. A commitment to the provision of adequately funded programs and services that allow and encourage seniors to age with dignity.
 - This would include the following issues submitted by committees:
 - o Incentives to encourage age-friendly communities
 - o Social housing/affordable housing
 - o Independent living/support to stay in own homes
 - o Expansion of community services such as meals-on-wheels
 - o Provision of and support for caregiving for seniors
 - o Tax rebates for seniors and those living in Northern Ontario to offset the rising costs of energy and transportation
3. Other issue(s) not covered by the two statements:
 - Recognize the need to protect social, educational and health programs while at the same time recognizing the need to ensure these programs are funded at levels supported by available provincial funding.

problem-oriented focus, and modeling the best practices of democratic institutions.

5. RTO/ERO's reach, on occasion, extends beyond this province and country, providing emergency funds for disaster relief, as well as supporting STO projects outside of the country that are recommended by Districts. These two principles of Canadian society that are also upheld by the United Nations Charter, provide justification for RTO/ERO's support for such projects.