



## **RTOERO Foundation kicks off Social Isolation Awareness Month with new online program**

**Toronto, October 1, 2021** – The RTOERO Foundation is recognizing its fourth annual Social Isolation Awareness Month during October with the launch of a new program called [Chime In](#) for RTOERO members. Chime In is a regularly scheduled weekly chat, offering open discussion and social connection. The first session takes place on October 6 from 1 to 2 p.m. EST.

“Things have changed—isolation became a reality for many of us because of the pandemic. And so, this year, we’re evolving our focus from raising awareness about social isolation to taking action with the kick-off of off Chime In, which aims to help RTOERO members who might feel isolated and alone,” says Mike Prentice, executive director of the RTOERO Foundation.

The RTOERO Foundation is also offering a [live webinar](#) on October 5 at 1 p.m. EST called Practical ways to address the growing epidemic of loneliness and isolation in older adults, presented by Dr. Samir Sinah, director of geriatrics at Mount Sinai and the University Health Network Hospitals in Toronto. The webinar will help participants understand the difference between loneliness and isolation and provide practical strategies for addressing personal challenges.

All [donations](#) received during Social Isolation Awareness Month will be directed to grants to support research and innovative programs to prevent and address social isolation for older adults in Canada.

“The pandemic has added to the social isolation crisis, but it’s also helped with awareness,” says Joanne Murphy, chair of the RTOERO Foundation Board of Directors. “I don’t think any of us who’ve experienced social isolation will forget the sense of despair it causes—and so, now the question is, what will we do to address this? RTOERO members can join us for *Chime In* and register for the webinar. Donations, of course, are always welcome. We can create a better future for all us by taking individual and collective action.”

For more information about Chime In, including registration details, visit:

[rtoerofoundation.ca/chimein](https://rtoerofoundation.ca/chimein)

[Register for the webinar here.](#)

To make a donation in support of research and innovative programs to address social isolation, visit: [rtoero.ca/rtoero-foundation/donate/](https://rtoero.ca/rtoero-foundation/donate/)

## **Facts about social isolation**

- Social isolation is linked to premature death and poorer general health and mental health.
- Risk factors for social isolation include living alone, being over 80, having lower income, and experiencing critical life transitions like losing a spouse.
- Before the pandemic, research indicated that about 30 per cent of Canadian seniors are at risk of becoming socially isolated. Statistics Canada reports suggest that between 19 and 24% of Canadians over age 65 feel isolated from others and wish to participate in more social activities.

## **About Social Isolation Awareness Month**

The RTOERO Foundation started Social Isolation Awareness Month in October 2018 to help increase awareness of social isolation, including risk factors to watch for and ways to help. Since 2018, more than \$235,000 has been raised during October to support research and innovative programs to address social isolation in Canada.

## **About the RTOERO Foundation**

The mission of the RTOERO Foundation is to foster respect, self-determination, better healthcare and social connection for older adults. The foundation raises awareness and funds in order to support the research, ideas and actions that will build a better future for all of us as we age. It's one of only a few foundations to invest exclusively in initiatives related to healthy aging in Canada.

## **About RTOERO**

RTOERO is a bilingual trusted voice on healthy, active living in the retirement journey for the broader education community. With 81,000+ members in 51 districts across Canada, RTOERO is the largest national provider of non-profit group health benefits for education retirees. It welcomes members who work in or are retired from the early years, schools and school boards, post-secondary and any other capacity in education.

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