

## The National Institute on Ageing and RTOERO Partner to Support Student Research on Healthy Ageing

**June 16, 2021** — The National Institute on Ageing (NIA) and RTOERO have partnered to launch a new summer research program that will support the next generation of researchers to tackle pressing issues affecting older Canadians.

Through the Summer Scholars Program — developed with a contribution from RTOERO of \$100,000 over the next five years — two promising students will be selected each summer to lead research projects that will contribute to better understanding the health and well-being of older Canadians.

“Our Summer Scholars Program will provide a fantastic opportunity for emerging researchers to advance understanding about the challenges and opportunities posed by ageing in Canada,” says Michael Nicin, executive director of the NIA. “We are excited that our partnership with RTOERO today will help support the next generation of researchers on ageing. Together, we are providing student researchers the ability to learn from experts, contribute to our knowledge base, and participate in the conversations and important decisions about how we, as communities and as a country, will meet the changing needs of an ageing population.”

Each year, the program will draw candidates from a variety of different disciplines — including medicine, geriatrics, public health, nursing and more. Each summer scholar will be matched with a mentor at the NIA to expand and deepen their skills and knowledge in the field.

In this inaugural year of the program, the NIA is proud to have two exceptional students participating in the Summer Scholars Program.

[Matthew Downer](#) — a Junior Research Fellow at the NIA — is a medical student at Memorial University of Newfoundland and a PhD student at the University of Oxford, where he is currently studying as a Rhodes Scholar. During the pandemic, Matthew served as a Senior Health Policy Advisor for the Federal Expert Panel on Testing and Screening for COVID-19 and has participated in a range of health policy and advocacy initiatives at the provincial and federal level. This summer, his research will explore how the opioid crisis is affecting older Canadians.

[Weni Chen](#) is completing a Bachelor's degree at Ryerson University's Bachelor of Health Services Administration program. She currently works at Seattle Cancer Care Alliance in immunotherapy clinical trials and is furthering her studies through the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Her research this summer will focus on the potential of telemedicine and virtual care to provide high quality care and support for older adults.

The NIA is also pleased to announce the appointment of [Martha Foster to its Advisory Board](#). With a career in public education spanning more than 30 years, she worked as a teacher and school administrator before her retirement in 2007. Foster was very active in the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation and helped create the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC), serving as an executive for 6 years. During her term as OPC President, she represented Ontario's principals at provincial, national and international levels.

"In the years ahead, there will be both challenges and tremendous opportunities as we work to create social, financial, and healthcare policies and programs to support older Canadians," says Martha Foster, Board Member, RTOERO. "The Summer Scholars Program will provide outstanding student researchers with an opportunity to contribute to meaningful innovations and solutions, while developing their own skills. As retirees from the education community, RTOERO members are proud to support excellence in student scholarship."

An active member of RTOERO, Foster served as President/Chair from 2016-2020 and is currently a member of the Board of Directors. Through her participation in RTOERO, Foster continues to focus on meeting the needs of older adults across Canada and on advocating for healthy ageing.

RTOERO is a bilingual trusted voice on healthy, active living in retirement for the broader education community. With 81,000 members in 51 districts across Canada, it is the largest national provider of non-profit group health benefits for education retirees.

As we launch the inaugural year of the Summer Scholars Program and our partnership with RTOERO, we welcome Martha Foster to the NIA Advisory Board and look forward to working together to make Canada the best place to grow up and grow old!

*The National Institute on Ageing is a Ryerson University think tank focused on the realities of Canada's ageing population.*

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