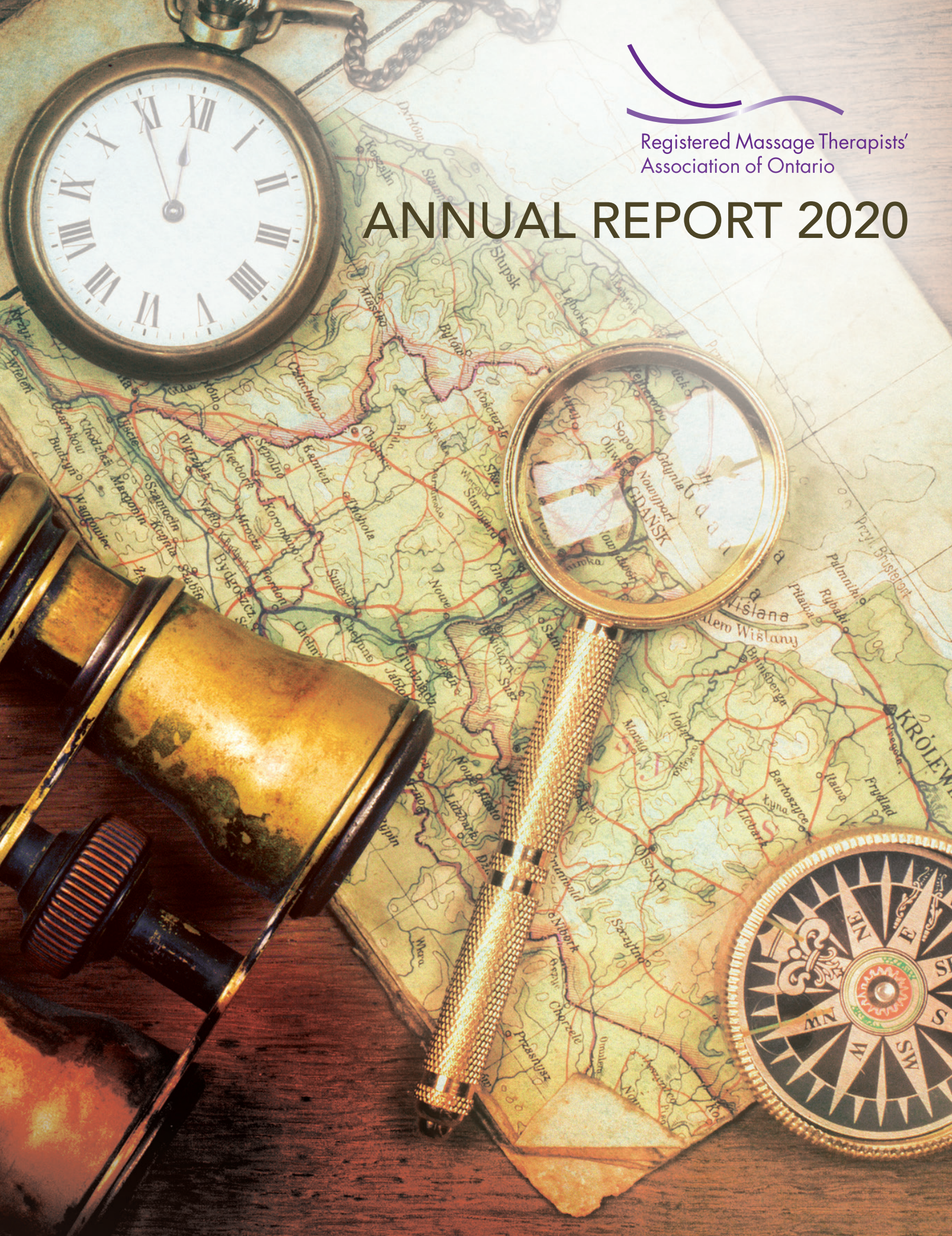




Registered Massage Therapists'
Association of Ontario

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



RMTAO Annual Report 2020

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Registered Massage Therapists'
Association of Ontario

Message from the Chair

2020 has been a year of great challenge for many of us both professionally and personally. This year has also had many changes for the RMTAO that are pivotal for the success of the association in the years ahead.

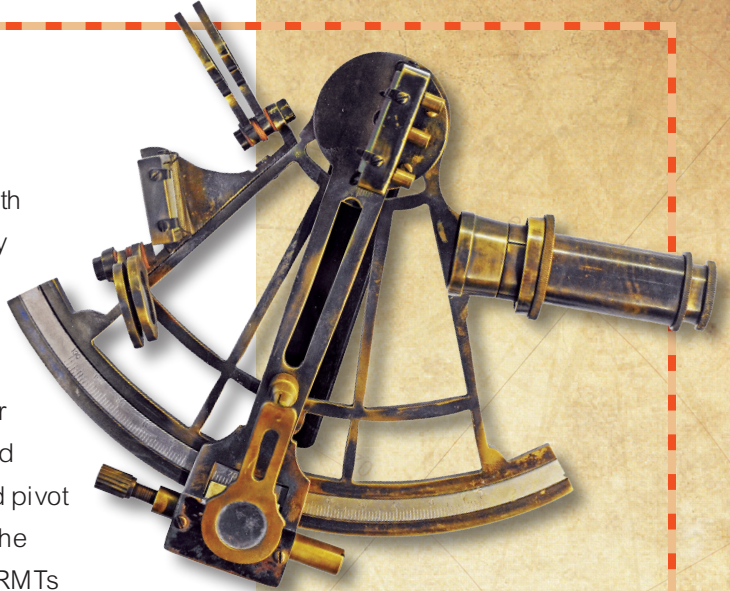
In early 2020, the Board of Directors welcomed Michael Feraday to the association as the Executive Director and CEO. Shortly after Michael's appointment we would find ourselves in the midst of a pandemic. This made the Board pivot to address the concerns of our members and ensure that the association was continuing to advocate for assistance for RMTs during this difficult time.

The Board also worked with our partners in other provincial massage therapy associations to further amplify the request for assistance for RMTs across the country. We worked with the Canadian Massage Therapist Alliance (CMTO) on the HST revocation campaign and on a presentation for a panel discussion to the Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association (CLHIA) regarding the benefits and importance of massage therapy in health care.

Despite the challenging year we have had as a profession, we continue to prioritize the promotion of the importance of massage therapy as a healthcare option for Ontarians.

As I complete my last year on the RMTAO Board of Directors, I wanted to take the opportunity to thank the membership for your support and encouragement over the years. I leave the Board of Directors with the comfort of knowing that we have a membership that is engaged and passionate about the profession. A membership that wants to see massage therapy as an equal to other regulated health professionals. A membership that is willing to step up to the plate and do the work when it comes to government advocacy and insurer engagement. A membership I will forever be grateful to for allowing me to represent the best interests of the profession to stakeholders over the years.

Thank you for the support and encouragement and thank you for the passionate engagement in a profession so many of us love.



Krystin Bolako,
BAHSc, CAT(C), RMT

Chair of the RMTAO
Board of Directors

Message from the Executive Director

This year we have had to navigate uncharted waters. We have faced what will most likely be the greatest storm of our era. This challenge is not just affecting RMTs; it is not just affecting Canadians; it is affecting everyone on the planet.

My message, however, is not one of doom and gloom but a positive one based on the very encouraging outlook I see for RMTs. In some ways, the pandemic has enhanced the value of RMTs and the role we can play to help society recover. We have a great opportunity to chart a new course.

There are a number of things happening right now that support me saying this.

Right now, there is a huge demand for RMTs from employers. This is not just something that has emerged as a result of the pandemic but something that has been trending for a while.

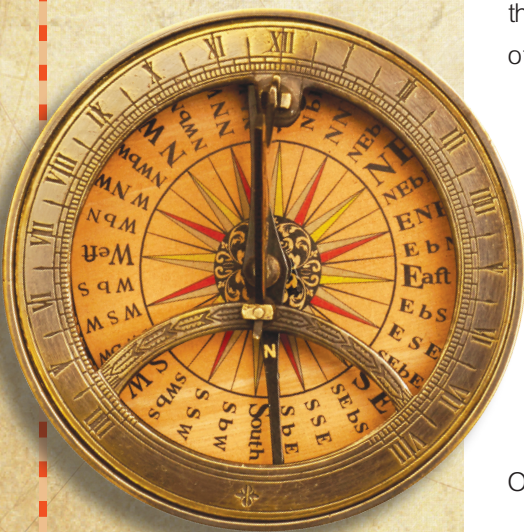
Healthcare in Canada and in most of the world is changing. It is changing to our kind of medicine. The old physician and hospital system is unsustainable and cannot meet the needs of Canadians. What is recognized and being consistently implemented is a population approach to health; a focus on overall wellness; and adapting a team-based, integrated approach where independent health professions play an ever-increasing role in the health of Canadians. It is better medicine and it is a more affordable approach. The old expression an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure has never been more true or more necessary.

What were some of the big challenges for Canadians prior to the pandemic? They included mild to moderate depression, anxiety, and stress and keeping seniors active and at home. I think we all understand the importance of massage therapy in helping treat these issues as part of a patient-centered approach.

What are some of the lessons learned and challenges identified as we emerge from the pandemic? For one—there is going to be a tsunami of issues related to mental health. The entire country just got a lesson in the challenges of social isolation and the importance of touch; for another—does anyone want to go into long-term care or similar institutions after what happened over the past number of months? Canadians want to stay in their homes as they grow older.

At the RMTAO our goals are set by our Board of Directors.

One of these goals is that the profession of massage therapy in Ontario is recognized by the public, healthcare professionals and other



stakeholders as a valued healthcare option. This requires advocacy.

A second is to assist in efforts to ensure the profession of massage therapy in Ontario has exemplary professional standards, embraces ethical conduct, respects diversity and is dedicated to high quality education. Working and supporting our Regulatory College and the various educational institutions is critical here.

A third is that the profession of massage therapy in Ontario has a credible and visible identity. This is not just advocacy but promoting the profession.

Another is that the profession of massage therapy in Ontario participates in integrated team-oriented healthcare to achieve the best possible treatment outcomes for the patient. This is the emerging model for a wellness-based healthcare system, and one in which we hope to more integrate massage therapy.

Another is that the profession of massage therapy in Ontario engages in a culture of continuous inquiry. This includes supporting the creation of future research that illustrates the many benefits of massage therapy in health care.

The sixth is that the profession of massage therapy in Ontario is prosperous, successful and promotes healthy practices. In many ways, this will follow when the other priorities are achieved, but the RMTAO works hard to provide tools and support to our members to help them be successful. This was never more evident than the support we gave our members both in the early stages of the pandemic and when they returned to work.

The RMTAO has strategies for every one of these priorities. Some were delayed as our biggest priority during 2020 shifted to helping our members deal with the pandemic, with information changing almost daily.

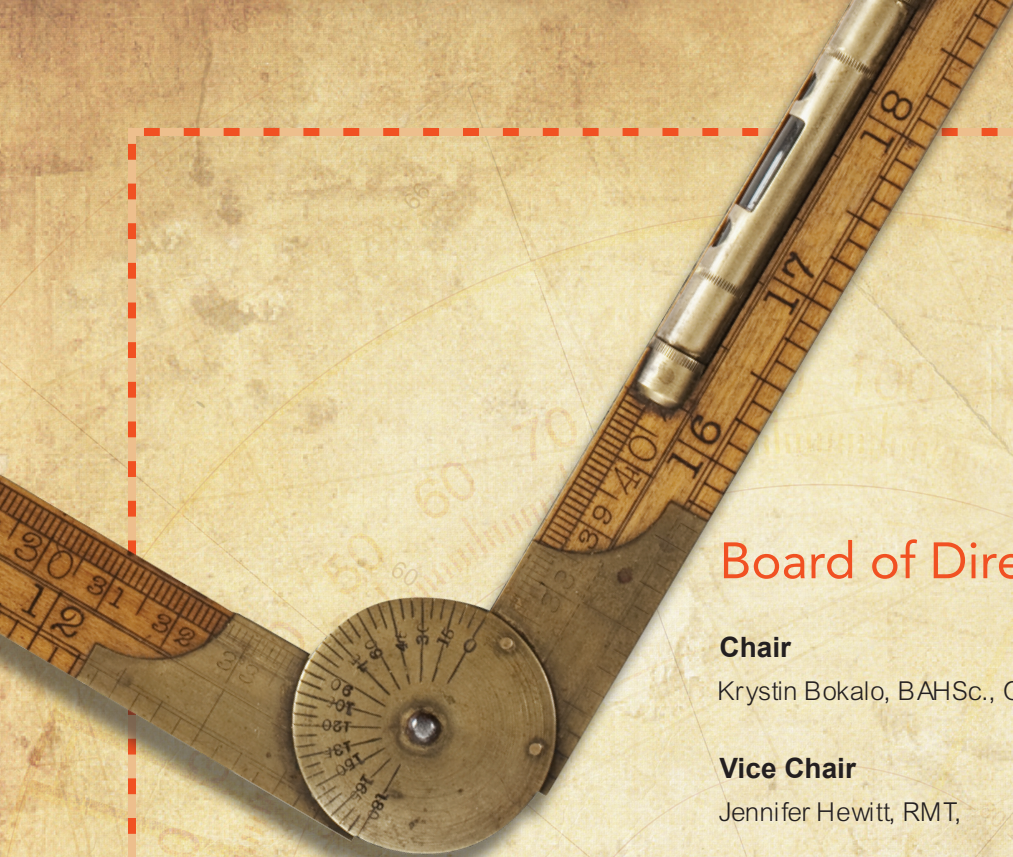
I am not saying that the course ahead is simple or easy, but if we are able to work together, work hard, and work collectively, we will reach our destination and realize our potential. It will take consistent messaging and pressure to bring about change and it will take time. However, we grow stronger all the time because we are an important part of the solution in the face of these uncertain times.

It's important to continue to support and belong to your Association. Your Association is the group that will advocate for you. Continue to make your voice count. There is strength in numbers!

We need to bring our voices together because Canadians need us; the health system needs us. Let's navigate and chart our course together and move the profession forward and make our voices heard.



Michael Feraday, MBA
Executive Director and CEO
RMTAO



Board of Directors

Chair

Krystin Bokalo, BAHSc., CAT(C), RMT

Vice Chair

Jennifer Hewitt, RMT,

Secretary

Stacey Neilson, BA (Hons), RMT,

Directors

Susan Bessonette, RMT

Ian Kamm, RMT

Alex Kidd, RMT

Melanie Levesque, BSc, RMT, MBA,

Darren Nixon, RMT

Mary Tzianias, RMT, RRP



RMTAO Staff

Executive Director and CEO

Michael Feraday, MBA

Director of Operations

Jill Haig, BSc, CAE

Manager of Communications

Laura Fixman, BAA

Education and Events Coordinator

Hariti Malhotra, BA

Member Services Coordinator

Christian Hall, BA

Membership

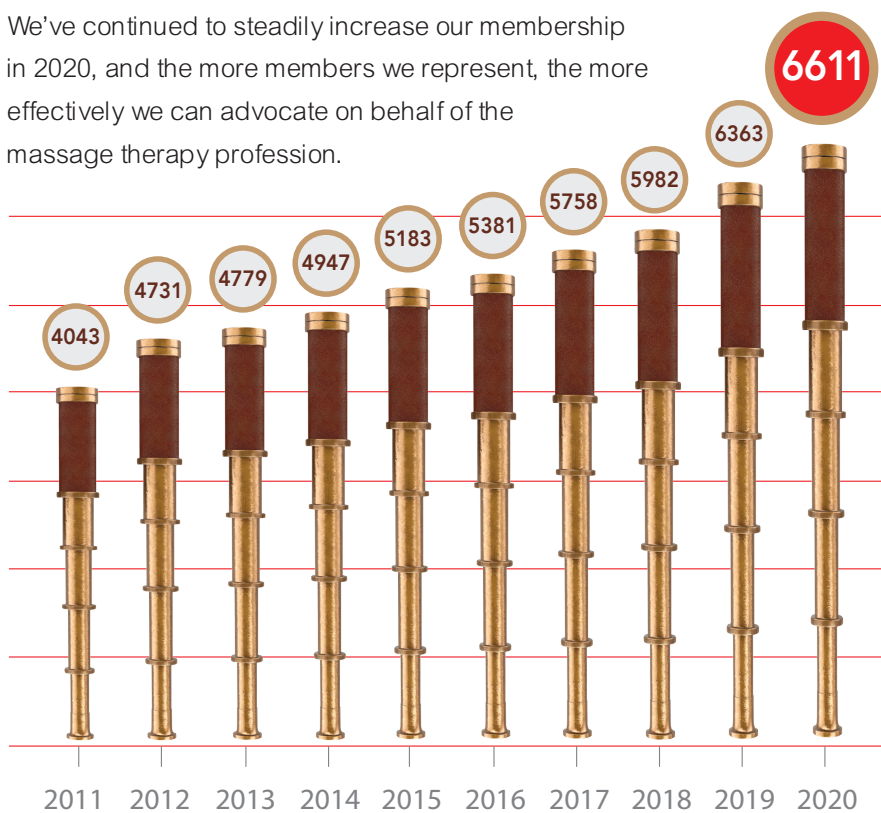
Membership Growth

2020 was an unprecedented year for all Canadians, including RMTs. The CMTO delayed their examinations meaning no new graduates were entering the profession for many months, and many RMTs were choosing to leave the profession either temporarily or permanently due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite this, growing numbers of RMTs continue to support the RMTAO, and the support of our members has been essential, as

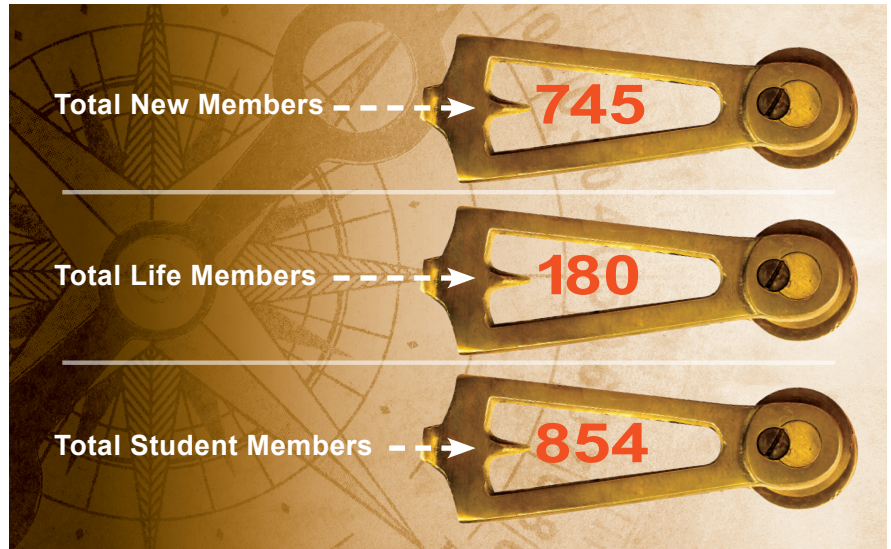


we've continued to provide information, resources and support to guide RMTs through the COVID-19 pandemic, and chart a new course for the profession into the future. We would like to thank our returning members for their support and our new members for their choice to join their professional association.

We've continued to steadily increase our membership in 2020, and the more members we represent, the more effectively we can advocate on behalf of the massage therapy profession.



2020 Membership Growth



Member Programs

RMTAO members get access to many benefits and programs as part of their membership including a free RMTFind listing, a subscription to our magazine *Massage Therapy Today*, continuing education opportunities and access to various practical resources and discounted programs. Members can still choose to pay for the programs and services that work best for them with our flex membership model.

We would like to thank all of our program partners for continuing to provide our members with beneficial programs and services.



COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic pivoted the focus of the RMTAO to helping get our members through the crisis, and we undertook many initiatives to provide information and support during these unprecedented times.



Regular Updates

Early on in the COVID-19 pandemic, information and guidance changed rapidly. We ensured that we kept our members up to date by providing daily updates that were summarized and clarified with the needs of RMTAO members in mind.

We also included regular COVID-19 updates in the Friday File, and continue to maintain a COVID-19 webpage with all of the information an RMT would need to know.

COVID-19 Advocacy

The RMTAO continued to advocate for RMTs, and during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, our advocacy efforts focused on ensuring that RMTs got the financial support they needed and were able to reopen as safely as possible once it was permitted to do so.

This included letters to the provincial and federal government outlining the need for financial support for self-employed individuals, a letter to the federal government requesting the expansion of eligibility for the Canada Emergency Business Account, a request for financial support to obtain personal protective equipment (PPE) and a letter advocating for extending the Canada Emergency Response Benefit to at-risk populations.

Blog Posts

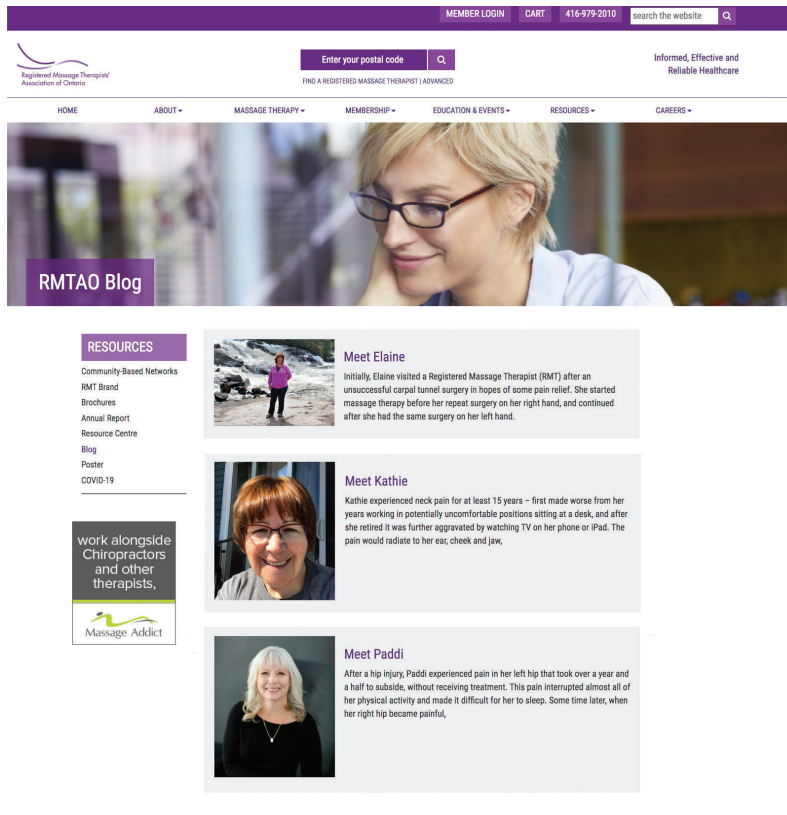
While RMTs couldn't work during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, the RMTAO regularly provided resources they could share to stay connected with their patients in the form of blog posts.



These posts focused on topics and issues that were pressing for both RMTs and their patients in the initial stages of the pandemic. Topics included improving sleep during COVID-19, dealing with chronic pain during COVID-19, the importance of human touch, focusing on your mental health, tips for connecting virtually, maintaining mobility during isolation and focusing on education during COVID-19.

Preparing for a Return to Work

Once the Ministry of Health allowed RMTs to return to work as of May 27, 2020, the RMTAO worked hard to make the transition as easy as possible. We met with the College of Massage Therapists of Ontario (CMTO) to clarify and make suggestions on their draft return to work guidance. Once the CMTO finalized their return to work guidance, the RMTAO created several resources for a return to work.



RMTs were facing with reopening. This survey helped inform our priorities moving forward.

Webinars

The COVID-19 pandemic brought with it a lot of new information for RMTs to learn and understand. To provide RMTs with the information they need to navigate the rapidly changing situation during the shutdown and adapt as they entered the new reality, we offered two COVID-19-related webinars.



These included a checklist before returning to work, arranging discounts on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and an infographic that RMTs can share with their patients outlining what they can expect from a massage therapy appointment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Once RMTs had returned to work for a few weeks, the RMTAO released a survey to determine how many RMTs have or intend to return to work, and the struggles

The two COVID-19-related webinars we offered were. A Massage Therapist's Guide to COVID-19 with Ruth Werner and a financial literacy question and answer session with a focus on managing your finances during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Communications

Blog Posts

The RMTAO created a series of blog posts outlining the benefits of massage therapy for various conditions and populations so that our members could share this information with their patients to help support their practices.

Topics included massage therapy for cancer pain, massage therapy for arthritis, massage therapy for headaches, back pain facts and myths, the importance of assessment in pain management and the importance of exercise for pain management.

We will continue to create new blog posts throughout the coming year highlighting the diverse benefits of massage therapy.

Massage Therapy Today

The RMTAO released four issues of Massage Therapy Today in 2020. The themes of the magazine in 2020 included Seniors, Assessment, Chronic Pain and Self Care.

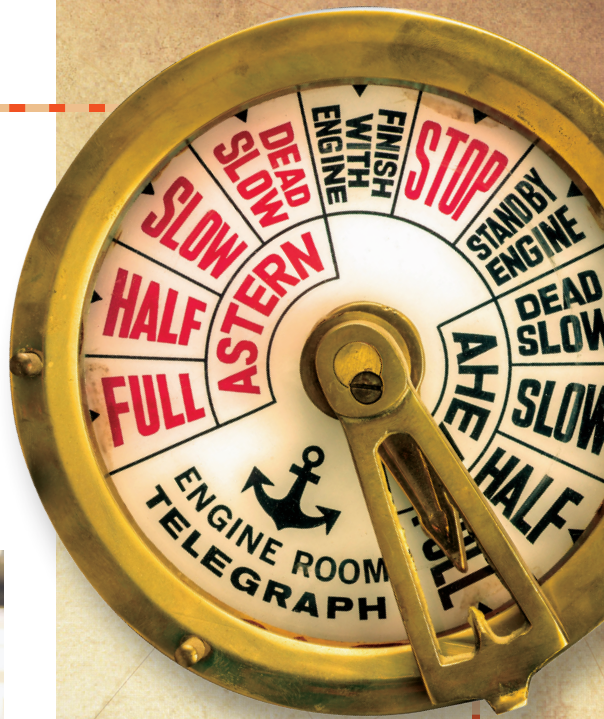


The Winter, Spring and Fall issues were sent to all RMTAO members. The Summer issue was sent to all RMTs across Ontario with content encouraging RMTs to join the RMTAO.



The Friday File

The Friday File e-newsletter continues to be sent weekly to our members and partners for updates on Association activities, highlights of practical resources and news that affects the massage therapy profession, and remains a trusted source of information for RMTAO members.





This year we added a section titled “The Member Question of the Week”, which is where we publish answers to common questions we get from our members during that week.

Massage Therapy Awareness Week

During Massage Therapy Awareness Week 2020, we focused on highlighting ways that RMTs were able to help their patients through the COVID-19 pandemic.

We shared the stories of several patients who struggled without massage therapy treatment during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic and who were greatly helped once RMTs could return to work.

We also shared videos created by our members, outlining self-care activities that their patients could complete from home to play an active role in their health care.

Thank you to all of our members who shared this content to their social media channels to help



spread the word about how massage therapy can help.

Social Media

The RMTAO continued to post engaging content on our Facebook page and Twitter channels. We’ve continued to post content about the benefits of massage therapy, practical resources that RMTs can use in their practice, and news that impacts the massage therapy profession.

Our social media reach and engagement continues to grow with our posts about the benefits of massage therapy that our members can share with their patients remaining the most popular!

Marketing Toolkit

The RMTAO released a Marketing Toolkit to provide our members with an overview of the pros and cons of various marketing channels, things to consider when crafting marketing messages and sample messages to give our members the tools they need to market their practices successfully.

Connection

Community-Based Networks

Although the COVID-19 pandemic meant that Community-Based Networks were unable to meet in person, we continued to provide support and facilitate virtual CBN meetings. Our Executive Director met with several CBNs in person in the early parts of 2020, and others virtually after the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As information about the COVID-19 pandemic was rapidly changing and RMTs were getting used to practicing in a new environment, the need to connect with peers to share information and provide support was more important than ever.

There are currently 25 active CBNs across Ontario.



Even as many schools at least partially reopened in person, we continued to offer virtual school visits to ensure the safety of staff, students, and school ambassadors.

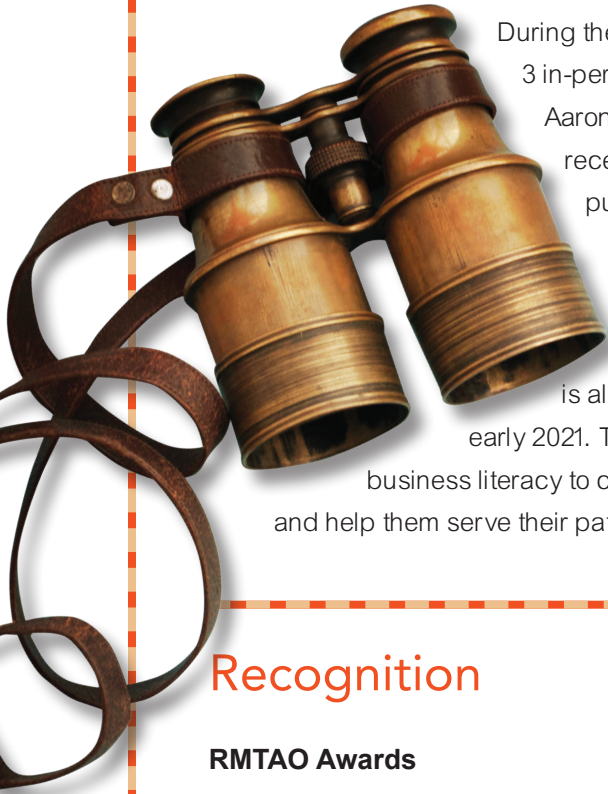
School Ambassador Program

When massage therapy schools moved online as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the RMTAO adapted to this new reality and moved our RMTAO school visits online.

Through these school visits, we kept schools apprised of the ways the RMTAO was responding to the COVID-19 pandemic to support our members, and continued to provide overviews of the benefits of RMTAO student membership.



Education



During the early parts of 2020, we were able to offer 3 in-person courses taught by Physiotherapist Aaron Rutter that were well-attended and well-received by members. The COVID-19 pandemic put a pause on any future in-person courses, and we will be reevaluating the option of offering in-person courses in the future.



Our new Education Coordinator, Hariti Malhotra, is also developing a plan to offer a variety of webinars beginning in early 2021. These webinars will cover a variety of topics, from industry trends to business literacy to competency-related topics that will help RMTs stay on top of their game and help them serve their patients better during these changing times.

Recognition

RMTAO Awards

Like many events this year, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, we moved the annual awards ceremony online. We were happy to have the opportunity to celebrate our award winners and our particularly engaged member volunteers at our superhero themed virtual event.

Congratulations to our winners!

Dani Faucher

RMT of the Year
(in Remembrance of Ken Rezsnyak)



Karen Munro-Caple

Professional Service Award



Patricia Belli

Educator of the Year



Advocacy

Beyond the immediate advocacy concerns brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of advocating for financial supports for our members and supporting RMTs through a safe return to work, we also continued to advocate on a variety of issues that regularly affect RMTs in their practice. Our 2020 advocacy efforts have included:

- Regular meetings with insurance industry representatives to discuss increased transparency with insurance company actions and improve relationships between RMTs and the insurance industry
- Working closely with researchers to facilitate the development of a scoping review for massage therapy, which will be essential in all future advocacy efforts.
- Continued engagement with the Coalition of Health Professional Associations in Ontario Automobile Insurance Services regarding accident benefits.
- Continuing to play a leadership role in the Canadian Massage Therapist Alliance
- Continued participation in the Organizations for Health Action (HEAL) to advocate for national health care issues, with the focus for the majority of the year on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on healthcare.
- Continued involvement with the Coalition of Ontario Regulated Health Professional Associations (CORHPA).



Connect With Us

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