

Building positive relationships for effective advocacy

Fostering positive relationships is key to RTOERO's organizational advocacy approach. We're non-partisan, so we connect with all levels of government and across all party lines. Our approach to government relations is aligned with RTOERO's values and brand personality—caring, inclusive and optimistic.

At times, it may feel tempting to protest or take a partisan approach to a particular issue. It's important to separate personal opinions and emotions from the organization's overall strategic approach.

Task conflict vs. relationship conflict

When you think about conflict, you likely think of relationship conflict—personal and emotional and sometimes filled with animosity. However, organizational psychologist Karen Jehn identified another type of conflict—task conflict—which is conflict about ideas or opinions.

In his book *Think Again*, organizational psychologist Adam Grant outlines evidence that shows high performing groups have low relationship conflict and focus instead on task conflict—they surface competing perspectives. Task conflict is tied to more creativity and better choices.

RTOERO's approach to advocacy is to **press the issue, not the person**. We focus on systemic issues, rather than perceived individual/party failures or flaws.

Our goal is to raise new perspectives and debate approaches while fostering relationships with people.

While we may have individual feelings about a particular person or political party, it's critical to be aware of our personal perspective and to keep it separate from our advocacy role with RTOERO. We aim to be **the** non-profit organization that decision-makers from all parties think of when they want to consult on topics. We want them to be willing to meet with us – and maintaining positive relationships is central to that aim.

Advocacy over protest

Advocacy is about making our voices heard by raising awareness, educating others, promoting change and trying to influence policy and decision-makers to support a specific cause. It's often a gradual process.

At times, there are critical issues that pull people into the streets—protesting is one way of exercising our democratic rights. It's a way to express grievances or demand change.

RTOERO does not participate in protests as an organization. Our members are absolutely able to attend as individuals—even together with other individuals who are also RTOERO members—but not to display RTOERO branding, as that can lead to the impression that the organization is participating in the protest.

Participating as individuals doesn't detract from the impact of your participation. It'll prevent any association with RTOERO that might hamper the delicate process of relationship building the organization is focused on.

RTOERO's approaches to advocacy

- Letters on behalf of RTOERO members to local, provincial and federal government
- Meetings with elected officials from all parties and all levels of government
- Responding to government consultations
- Opposition outreach
- Research and education
- Public statements or media campaigns
- Participation in or support for public awareness campaigns
- Participation in coalitions

RTOERO believes in a **better future, together.** Our approach to advocacy is a key way in which we're working toward that better future – through relationship-building and collaboration with all governments and political parties.