



Retired Women Teachers of Ontario / Organisation des Enseignantes Retraitées de l'Ontario

President's Message – Think to the Future!

RWTO/OERO is a busy and vibrant organization that offers a social network and purpose. We support and help each other. We have friends to laugh with, to cry with, and with whom we can reminisce. We lunch together, join fun activities and engage in outreach projects to assist our communities. All of these things give us meaning and fulfillment. This is the gift that our organization's founders gave to us.

I truly believe this wonderful organization, that enriches our lives so fully, will endure despite Covid-19. Branches have been working tirelessly to maintain membership, stay connected and embrace technology with great success! I feel a positive vibe!

There is another very important piece that contributes significantly to our organization's ability to flourish during these fragile times and into the future. We need to seize the opportunity to assume leadership roles!

Several of our Branches are having difficulty finding members to take a turn at the helm. There are many legitimate factors that contribute to this such as family responsibilities, health issues and aging. Perhaps one of the reasons is that we need to redefine how we see ourselves as women in leadership positions.

Amy Morin is a Scottish-born American psychoanalyst who has outstanding credibility. She has written a book to help women channel their confidence called, *"13 Things Mentally Strong Women Don't Do."* Her chapter titles alone made me think that some of you might find the inspiration and strength to serve on your Branch Executives:



Nancy Papiez,
Provincial President

- *"They Don't Compare Themselves to Other People"*
- *"They Don't See Vulnerability as a Weakness"*
- *"They Don't Let Self-Doubt Stop Them from Reaching Their Goals"*
- *"They Don't Avoid Tough Challenges"*
- *"They Don't Let Others Limit Their Potential"*

It's time to look within. It's time to be brave. It's time to 'Think to the Future' and serve your Branch in a leadership capacity. Let's all help to sustain the beautiful gift of this organization that has been passed down through the generations!

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Retired Women Teachers of Ontario Organisation des enseignantes retraitées de l'Ontario

Provincial President:

Nancy Papiez
905-979-3391
npapiez@outlook.com

First Vice-President:

Nancy Bell
519-452-3596
n3bell@rogers.com

Insurance Convenor:

Anne Wilde
905-774-8330
wildeanne.wa@gmail.com

Manulife Financial 1-800-268-3763

Broker: Terry Kennedy
The Dolphin Consulting Group
519-583-0098 • Fax: 519-583-2876
tkennedy34@bell.net

Provincial Office

Executive Secretary-Treasurer:

Linda Huffman
2736 Twelfth Conc,
Tecumseh, ON, N8N 2M1
Toll Free: 1-877-607-6696
Phone: 519-979-7030
Email: info@rwto.org
Website: www.RWTO.org

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rwtoconnections@gmail.com • Website: www.RWTO.org*

Christmas Past, Present, and Future



President's Message - Think to the Future! – continued

Thank you, Board of Directors and Branch Executives, for your hard work and leadership in serving RWTO/OERO. You inspire us! And a big thank you to the members for supporting your Executives!

From my heart, I wish all of you good health, peace and joy during the holiday season.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Papiez,
Provincial President 2020-2021

Call for Nominations 2021-2022

Participating in your Provincial Board brings an awareness of the impact of our organization, RWTO/OERO, on the membership and the Branch communities in Ontario. Collaborating with a group of women to initiate and develop a project is a rewarding activity. Representing the interests of our Branches in discussions means that we are able to advocate for the benefit of all members. Although these are unprecedented times, there are still opportunities for involvement at the Provincial level. There are positions available as noted below. There is an outline of responsibilities and criteria for each in the Constitution and Policy & Procedure documents. Both are posted on the RWTO/OERO website www.rwto.org under the tabs About-Governance. Please take some time to explore the endless possibilities in continuing the legacy of RWTO/OERO.

1. Provincial Executive Officer

Nominations for the following elected Executive Officer for the Provincial Board of RWTO/OERO are to be sent to the Nominations Committee Chair by January 31, 2021. See the Candidate's Form on the RWTO/OERO website www.rwto.org: Click on the About title, click on Governance, then click on the Candidate Form for RWTO/OERO Provincial Executive Position. The Candidate Form can be filled out online and printed, or printed and filled out. Please ensure that the Candidate Form is signed by the President/Co-Presidents on behalf of the Executive of your Branch recommending your nomination (a letter of nomination from your Branch is NOT required). Submit a bio of 200 words maximum and a photo for the March Newsletter, Connections. There are suggestions on the Candidate Form for what should be included in your bio.

Nominations for the following elected Executive Officer for the Provincial Board of RWTO/OERO are to be sent to the Nominations Committee Chair by January 31, 2021. See the Candidate Form for RWTO/OERO Provincial Executive Position in the Policies and Procedures Manual 2019, page D-4. Submit a bio of 200 words maximum and a photo for the March Newsletter, Connections.

a) Criteria for Provincial 2nd Vice-President

Nominees should have experience at the Board level as well as at the Executive level in an RWTO/OERO Branch or other organizations. The job description is printed in the RWTO/OERO Policies and Procedures Manual Appendix C. If you have any questions, answers may be available from your Area Director, members of the Nomination Committee and/or on the RWTO/OERO website at www.rwto.org

Nominations should be emailed or mailed with a postmark, no later than January 31, 2021 to Karen Clark-Lauzon, 266 Ramblewood, LaSalle, Ont. N9J 3B3 or clarklauzon@gmail.com

2. Appointed Convenors

The final appointment decision will be made by the Nominations Committee and approved by the Board of Directors.

- Provincial Communications Website Convenor
- Provincial Assistant Insurance Convenor

If you have an interest in one of the available positions, please email the Nominations Committee Chair, including a brief description of relevant experience,

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Call for Nominations 2021-2022 – continued

before January 31, 2021.

3. Area Director

Any new Area Directors will be elected or selected according to the established protocol within their Area. (See Policies and Procedures Manual 2019, Appendix A) Once the new Area Director has been chosen, the name should be sent to the Provincial Nomination Committee Chair by March 31, 2021. For further information, please contact any member of the Nominations Committee, Karen Clark-Lauzon, Past President, Suzanne Rondeau, Area 10 Director or Connie Morris, Area 1 Director.

4. Provincial Communications Newsletter and Membership Committees

These Committees are complete at this time, but may

have a need for additional committee members in the future. If you wish to join either of these committees, (one-year term, renewable for one more term) when a vacancy becomes available, submit a description of relevant experience by January 31, 2021 to have your name considered for the future.

Applications for either Committee should be submitted by January 31, 2021, to:

Karen Clark-Lauzon,
266 Ramblewood, LaSalle, Ont.
N9J 3B3 or clarklauzon@gmail.com

Respectfully submitted by:
Karen Clark-Lauzon,
Past Provincial President, Chair
of Nominations Committee



Honorary Membership Award Nominations

The Provincial Honorary Membership in RWTO/OERO is a very special honour, bestowed on a member that has demonstrated outstanding services at the provincial level. This award is presented at the Annual General Meeting. Specific criteria for this award are listed in Article XIII in our Policy and Procedures Manual, which can be found on the RWTO/OERO website www.rwto.org.

This Provincial Award is dependent on nominations from the Branches and/or members-at-large. Your nomination letter should include an outline listing the Provincial Committees on which the nominee has

served, highlighting contribution to RWTO/OERO at the Provincial level.

Nominations must be received by the Nominations Committee Chair, Lois Lockhart, by January 31, 2021. Please provide full name, current address, telephone number and email address of the nominee.

Please send nominations to:

Mail: Lois Lockhart,
7653 South Chippawa Rd.,
Wellandport, ON, L0R 2J0

Email: lois_lockhart@hotmail.com



Membership Award Nominations

Good News! In this most unusual pandemic year, we have 50% paid members (2,489) as of Sept 28th! At the same time last year (2019), we had 45% paid members (2,266). We even have new members joining and offer “Congratulations” to those keen Branches! Of the 5,167 members to date, we have 4,193 paid-up members. That’s 85%! We also have 241 Life Members.

Twelve Barbara Bain Award Certificates have been sent out to the Branches who have increased their

membership the most in 2019-2020.

Submissions for “Feather In Your Hat” must be made to the Membership Convenor after January 1st and before March 1st, 2021. Mail a hard copy via Canada Post to:

Joyce Ratz, Box 487,
Iron Bridge, ON P0R 1H0
ratzdj@gmail.com



Insurance Matters

As fall gives way to winter's approach, I always find myself a bit reflective and this year is no different! We've been living a bit of a surreal existence since the shadow of Covid-19 has upended our lives. We're now told we're in the second wave which means we must be even more vigilant than before. Social bubbles are growing smaller and with the colder temperatures outdoor gatherings happen ever more infrequently. Our "new normal" consists of mask wearing, social distancing, frequent hand washing and disinfecting. For me, this "new normal" has only strengthened the importance of the Retired Women Teachers of Ontario. This group of wonderfully connected women live the motto of "Caring and Sharing". While we cannot get together as a group at this time, members are staying in touch with one another, reaching out with a friendly telephone call to perk up another member's day. Still others are assisting members with online grocery shopping, picking up and delivering purchases for those unable to do so for themselves. I've even heard of book club meetings within other branches being conducted via Zoom. How terrific it is to hear of such kindness within our group!



This fall we've been conducting workshops with the Branch Insurance Convenors, most via Zoom. The purpose of these workshops is to share information about claims

forms, how to complete them, when to complete them, what information is needed, what receipts are required and where to submit them. I thought I'd share some of the information with you as well.

Claim forms are initially sent with your insurance package when your policy is issued. When you do submit a claim using this initial form, you will receive a replacement form when your claim is paid. You can also download the RWTO/OERO Hospital & Home Care Plan Claim form from the RWTO website www.rwto.org/membership/insurance-plan. There you will find a link titled RWTO/OERO Claim Form. At this time there is no online submission of Hospital & Home Care Claims so you will still have to submit via regular post. When submitting your claims, please

retain a photocopy of your claim form and all receipts submitted. If for some reason your claim goes missing, you can resubmit using a photocopy. Your Claim Form should be submitted to the address at the top left hand side of the claim which is Manulife, Affinity Markets Health and Dental Claims, P. O. Box 670, Stn. Waterloo, Waterloo, ON. N2J 4B5.

When submitting claims for Cataract Surgery or Hearing Aids, you do not have to have the Attending Physician Statement completed. Simply submit your claim with receipts, indicating in the details section of the claim form which eye had the surgery and when it was performed for Cataract Surgery, and which ear (or both) your hearing aids were obtained for.

As always, your Branch Insurance Convenor is an important link to this insurance plan. You can also reach out to Anne Wilde, Provincial Insurance Convenor, Karin Mussen, Assistant Provincial Insurance Convenor or our Broker, Terry Kennedy. Any one of these women will be happy to assist you.

And finally, a reminder that a requirement of continued eligibility in the Hospital & Home Care Plan is membership in good standing. If members, for whatever reason, do not renew their membership in the Association they are placing their insurance in jeopardy and their insurance will be cancelled. Those members granted Life Membership in the Association are in good standing and this does not apply.

Stay safe, keep social distancing and washing hands.

Insurance Convenor
Anne Wilde
905-774-8330
wildeanne.wa@gmail.com



Assistant Insurance Convenor
Karin Mussen
519-272-0629
kmussen.rwto@gmail.com



Manulife Financial 1-800-268-3763
Broker: Terry Kennedy
The Dolphin Consulting Group
(519) 583-0098 Fax: (519) 583-2876
tkennedy34@bell.net





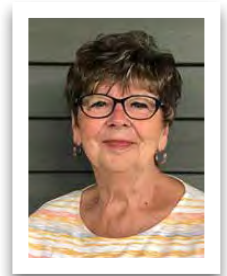
Goodwill

This year it has been my pleasure in having contact with so many RWTO/OERO ladies over 90. The Goodwill Provincial Organization is to be commended for its important service in sending cards throughout the year. I have received delightful messages and phone calls from some of the recipient ladies.

Since July, I have sent 123 Birthday Cards. We congratulate Marian Douey from the Sarnia-Lambton Branch who turned 100 on November 8th. Her branch has honoured her with a gift on behalf of RWTO/OERO Provincial. Presently, we have 17 members that are 100 and over.

At this time, Christmas cards are being prepared to send to this prestigious group of ladies. Please keep them in your hearts this year as we continue through this pandemic and keep the communication open with all your branch members. Keep healthy and safe.

Judy Drummond,
2nd Vice-President,
Goodwill Convenor,
jjdrum@explornet.com



Issues and Concerns – Downsizing

What do you do when your house is too big for your needs and you live in only a small portion? The cleaning and maintenance are getting harder to do on your own. You decide it's time to "downsize". But you look around your residence and the panic sets in and you feel totally overwhelmed at the thought of moving and clearing out your home. Where do you begin?

This is a situation that many of us have faced or may experience in the future.

There are now Professional Organizers who will assist you with organizing, downsizing, clearing excess clutter or moving you to a new location. They will help you make a smooth transition and in addition provide you with the emotional support associated with reducing possessions. This alone is worth calling a professional to guide you on this journey. Seniors on the Move, Moving our Seniors, Move Seniors Lovingly and Organized Transitions are all companies that provide invaluable assistance.

If however, you plan to tackle the transition on your own the biggest difficulty is usually what do you do with items that aren't functionally useful but carry the weight of memory? Some examples are photos, greeting cards, baby clothes, toys, souvenirs and heirlooms. In many cases our children don't want these things, but they provide great memories to us. It is suggested that pictures of these items could be made into a scrapbook or a folder on your computer for safe keeping.

Our next step is to sort items as we work our way through spaces in the house. Decide what items of furniture you will need in your new living quarters and then invite your adult children to label anything they would like. In our family, the order of selection was designated from eldest to youngest. That worked very well.

Three piles are then created as you sort, sell, donate and recycle/trash.

There are many options for selling your items – garage sale, Craigslist, eBay, consignment. You will have to decide whether it is worth the time and effort for what you will make financially.

Donated items are welcomed by organizations that help the homeless, those in shelters or new refugees in the country.

"You've Got Junk" is a service for trash removal as well as dumpster rental. Check your municipality about bulk trash pickup.

Marie Kondo reminds us that all items must "spark joy".

Kathy Smith,
Area 13 Director



Program – Happy Holidays to All!

This has been a challenging time for Branch Presidents and your Executives, but you have managed to demonstrate RWTO/OERO's "Caring and Sharing" motto through all of the creative ways you are "Staying Connected" with your members, and the activities planned to engage them. The Notes/Minutes I have received from your Area Presidents' Meetings demonstrate this fully. Little did we know that all of our skills and talents from our teaching careers would be put to the test during a world-wide pandemic!

"**Staying Connected**" is an appropriate theme for the 65th Annual AGM/Convention to be held virtually. Two very important email messages will be sent out from me in January. The first will contain the information used to determine the number of delegates each Branch will be allocated and the second, the **Convention Bulletin**,

will include all the information that you will need relating to the AGM. This is an unusual year; there will be a lot of information that may differ from other years so PLEASE be sure to download and print this document for future reference.

And finally, a reminder to check your email regularly to be sure that you don't miss any relevant information and updates as we move into 2021! Happy New Year!

Submitted by
Judith Bennoch,
Provincial Program Coordinator



Archives

As Archivist, I am continuing to receive names and photos of deceased members who will be honoured in the 'In Memoriam' service in June, 2021. Linda Huffman is to receive all names by the usual deadline January 31.

Please note that photographs are to be sent to me by March 1, 2021. Feel free to send them ahead of time if you wish. Please make sure that all photos sent are

part of the public domain, not private photographs. In keeping with privacy laws, public domain pictures are the only ones that are allowed to be shared.

Send photos to Susan Rose
mumkat@aol.com
Susan Rose, Archivist



Communications Website Convenor

JUST A LITTLE
Reminder

To All Communications Website Convenors

Check the Communication Website Convenors Page
<https://rwto.org/branches/communication-convenors/>
for: What, When, and How to send information to
rwto cyberlady@gmail.com

Kathy Gallagher,
Communications Website Convenor



Newsletter Convenor

If you are not receiving Connections online it may be because the security on your server is preventing it from arriving and it is being sent to SPAM or JUNK. Servers do not like mass mailings.

Jan Murdoch,
Communications Newsletter Convenor
rwtoconnections@gmail.com





Sales and Materials

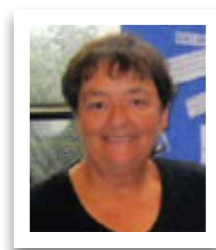
RWTO/OERO has a variety of items available for purchase through the rwto.org website.

As Sales and Materials Convenor for RWTO/OERO, I ensure that there is sufficient inventory on hand to meet the organization's needs. Send me your orders directly by email rwtoalesandmaterials@gmail.com and I will complete them as soon as possible. Please feel free to review the available items on the RWTO/OERO website and make suggestions about possible additional items.

Yearly orders for Membership and Cora Bailey pins are facilitated through the Area Director.

Membership pins as required and up to 3 Cora Bailey pins per year. The initial pin is free, replacement pins are available at a cost of \$5 each.

Potential Gift Items: Notecards, Sticky note pads, RWTO/OERO Pens, Lapel pin holder



All items are available for viewing on the website. Go to Membership then to Materials and have fun shopping.

Judy Anderson,
Sales and Materials Convenor
rwtoalesandmaterials@gmail.com
905-985-4257

Techno Tips

Browser History:

Whether you use Chrome, Google, Safari or Firefox your search engine has been keeping a record of your **search** and **browsing** activity for the last decade. It knows every link you've followed, every image you've clicked on, and the URLs you've entered in the address bar.

This search history can haunt you and interfere with searches or your attempts to join ZOOM. If you try once unsuccessfully to join Zoom, clean your history before making your second attempt.

If you own a car you are aware that part of the maintenance of the vehicle is to have the oil changed every 5,000 km. Your computer, tablet, or phone needs the same type of regular servicing. At least once a week and just before going on Zoom you need to clean your browser history.

If on Google or Chrome, go to the top right corner find the three little dots. From there you go to tools, then to more tools where you can erase your browsing history.

For Safari on a computer, go to History and clean your browsing history.

For Safari on an iPad or iPhone, go to settings, find the Safari APP and then go to your right and down to clean your browser and get rid of cookies.

I do this regular maintenance of all my machines while I enjoy my Monday morning coffee.

Your browser history is stored just like everything else on your computer, as a file (or collection of files). Clearing your browser history merely deletes these files from your hard drive.



For many organizations, including RWTO/OERO, Virtual Presentations are an excellent option. They enable presenters to participate in the convention and provide discussion times that allow for real-time interaction between online and physical attendees. This creates opportunities for interaction, knowledge transfer, and feedback in the form of questions and critique.

Online technologies expose us to new ideas, research and points of view, and virtual presentations are a welcome and modern addition to the convention experience. The virtual platform provides users with choice, access and an affordable means by which to interact with the other members. Virtual Presentations aren't a replacement for the traditional convention presentation experience but rather a modern, practical and effective alternative. They also serve to supplement the traditional model by providing more people with the opportunity to attend and participate.

Many organizations have chosen this option for their conferences, an informative and cost effective alternative.



For those interested in Genealogy you might consider joining the RootsTech Convention in Salt Lake City Feb 25-27 2021 <https://www.rootstech.org/rootstech-connect-2021-registration?lang=eng>. This is the leading Genealogy Conference internationally and anyone can attend, all you need to do is register.



News from the Branches – “Looking Toward 2025”

Area 1

Beaver Valley

Looking ahead as this year unfolds, the Beaver Valley Branch is focused on staying in touch with and retaining our 20 current members. Monthly meetings and/or social gatherings have been on hold since last March. We have stayed in touch through phone calls and emails. In December, we will deliver Christmas cards and poinsettias to our members. Phone calls and cards will let everyone know that they are being thought of on Valentine's Day. Our annual summer art camp was cancelled in July and will likely end after many years of providing art enrichment for children. We were disappointed that Convention 2020 could not go ahead as planned and that Convention 2021 will be virtual. We appreciate the tremendous work that has been ongoing to keep RWTO/OERO members as connected as possible. It is difficult to look ahead to 2025 until we have conquered Covid-19 and are able to achieve a new normal that will incorporate lessons learned from the pandemic. We wish every member good health, joy in the good things in our daily lives and a safer and brighter 2021.

Ainsley Lewin, Branch President

Flesherton

How are you doing? Are you staying safe? These are the questions that are an important part of our conversations. The landscape of our everyday world has changed and so has our relationships with the members in our RWTO/OERO branches. The Flesherton and Area RWTO/OERO Executive took the step to remain on board and as a result, we were able to maintain our membership with everyone renewing for another year. The members had a surprise porch delivery in June on the date of our AGM to help everyone feel connected. After having an email discussion in September, no one wanted to chance a face to face meeting and agreed to stay in touch virtually. A newsletter has been implemented for the members to share information about their lives and we have been able to donate to many of our charities. Many schools have had drive-by graduations and our branch was able to award their annual “Caring and Sharing” Award. The Flesherton Branch is still in talks about amalgamation

with Dundalk/Highpoint but the decision has been postponed until we can meet in person. Take care and stay safe.

Nancy Strutt, Branch President

Dundalk-High

Staying in touch and growing our membership are important challenges for everyone as we look forward to 2025. Fortunately, we have a very small branch so it has been possible to connect with our membership through calls, emails, letters, front porch visits and social media. While we managed to add two new members over the past year, clearly we must look to amalgamation with a neighboring branch once Covid-19 is over. We will continue to reach out to our members through various channels and our Sick and Sunshine Convenors will continue to send cards, flowers, treats or just a kind note. We are looking at Zoom and conference calls as a way to connect with our members and to reach out to new ones. Covid-19 is giving us the opportunity to expand our skills in many ways as we look to the future. Amalgamation also gives us the opportunity to increase our social roles and charitable presence in the community. Together we will be stronger in 2025.

Connie McInnes, Branch President

Owen Sound

The Owen Sound and Area Branch is delighted to report that most of our members have chosen to renew their memberships for the 2020-2021 year. We currently have 54 members with several more visiting and life members. In our efforts to maintain contact with our retired women teachers we are sending our newsletter out every other month. Members are contributing personal stories and pictures of activities and hobbies that they are doing during these challenging times. Our Goodwill representative has been very active sending out greeting cards to mark special days or to give encouragement during times of stress.

Our branch has purchased a Zoom licence with the special Covid-19 grant from the provincial office. Our executive meetings are held through Zoom and the process has been much improved with the licence capabilities. Our Social Committee is planning to

Continued ►

use the Zoom platform to organize a speaker and Christmas get together for our members. We are doing our best to embrace new technology to help us connect until we can meet again face to face.

Susan Loyst, Branch President

South Bruce

Although unable to hold regular meetings during the pandemic, members of South Bruce continue to demonstrate their caring for each other and their communities through the sharing of time, talents and resources. Joyce Scammell (pictured) communicated support to a friend and fellow South Bruce member during the lockdown of long term care facilities.



In an effort to maintain connections, combat feelings of isolation and remotely conduct branch business, the Executive instituted a monthly newsletter

containing new business and sharing of personal news, stories and photos. The message is sent electronically to most and mailed to those without internet access. As caring community members, the branch also felt it was important to support charitable organizations working with vulnerable people in our area. Generous donations were made to each of the following organizations: The Women's House, the Grey-Bruce United Way Backpack program and the Kincardine and Saugeen Shores food banks over the course of the spring and summer. Moving forward, South Bruce plans to use some of the provincial 3-Rs funding to embrace technology and purchase a Zoom subscription. Our first virtual meeting took place November 19 with a guest speaker.

Christine Roberts, Branch Communications

Warton

Looking Into The Future-Planning for 2025

Planning for the future is a difficult task; we have to leave our comfortable ways of doing things and step into an unknown world. The Warton Branch must plan for the future with a positive attitude if the Branch is to succeed.

For the near future our meetings will be held

online with video and teleconferencing. Zoom will make it possible for chat sessions among members and interesting programs/speakers. Thanks to the Provincial Special Grant (COVID-19) the Warton Branch will be able to purchase these services. In the meantime, we embrace the technologies available while remembering the words of the 1943 song sung by Vera Lynn, "We'll meet again, Don't know where, Don't know when, But I know we'll meet again some sunny day."

The Warton Branch will continue to personify the motto of "Caring and Sharing". We will continue to donate to the area Food Banks (Tara, Warton, Lion's Head).

The Executive will continue to plan innovative opportunities to recruit new members, recognize and retain present members. We will continue to recognize and appreciate our aging members.

The Warton Branch will meet the challenges it is facing during this difficult time and in the future.

Marlene Davis, Branch President

Area 4

Brant

Gazing into a crystal ball to predict the future of RWTO/OERO in 2025, all that is visible is a haze of bright colours and swirling mists. The future is a conundrum.

Several truths emerge from the mists – guarantees for the 75 members/14 associates in Brant.

We will continue to educate with ideas shared personally, online or through community outreach. We will initiate technology like Facebook Messenger and Zoom to keep us connected. We will communicate through emails, phone calls, cards and letters - always "In Caring and Sharing". We will celebrate our life journeys, our anniversaries, adventures, births and deaths. We will appreciate and acknowledge the many things big and small that our members do for each other and our community. We will not terminate our commitment to charities and community-based initiatives. They define us.

And, finally, we will not hesitate to promote RWTO/OERO.

Joan Brent, Branch President

Continued ►



News from the Branches – “Looking Toward 2025” – continued

Haldimand

The Haldimand Branch is navigating through an unusual year but with determination to continue to support our members and communities now and into the future. Executive members and Phone Convenors have telephoned each branch member and guests at least twice and will continue to do so. Goodwill cards were sent to many who needed a "lift". An extra mini-newsletter went out. Ongoing emails were sent out with reminders and "news". Feedback will be sought.

A "Fall Gathering in the Park" was planned but had to be cancelled. We created a separate new retiree celebration where we met outside--physically-distanced and masked.

Haldimand Branch has supported our community with a Christmas cheque donation to Grandview Lodge in Dunnville for the staff purchase of stocking stuffers for residents.

Instead of bringing Christmas donations of items requested by the Haldimand-Norfolk Women's Shelter we supported with cheques and gift cards.

Into the future: Haldimand Branch will continue being creative in ways to support our members and caring for our communities.

Joanne Weeks, Branch President

Hamilton-Wentworth

Many of our Covid-19 changes will be carried into the future for support of at-risk members. We organized an outdoor concert and contactless drive-thru charity drop off. We have adapted many interest groups to online interaction. Zoom calls for book and movie discussions, art and craft demonstrations, or needlework group visits. Our Lunch Bunch has moved from monthly restaurant visits, to exploring world cuisine while they eat in front of their computer or tablet. Card groups are using Trickster online to play while chatting. We have been offering Zoom workshops on a wide variety of topics, with Q & A, to engage our members. We are using our Zoom for executive meetings now and offer a technical crew to assist our members with using new apps. For our younger members, we are exploring the possibility of online banking and contemplate setting

up our own Branch Facebook page. Even wondering about blogging!

Lynn Anderton, Branch President

Area 7

Belleville

Looking Into The Future Into Unknown Times

RWTO/OERO Belleville is a large, strong organization made up of positive women who see only good things in our future. At the moment, we cannot meet as a group as we have 80+ members. However, our Executive did meet at a socially distanced outside venue in September. Tentative plans were made for a spring outdoor meeting. Fortunately, we live in a part of the province that has a very low number of Covid-19 cases. We will continue to contact members, by phone and email, to ensure the well-being of our members and to inform them of decisions made by the provincial office and our local executive. With special events such as 2025 in our future, we need to stay connected and keep active. Future luncheons will be planned and attended. Interests groups will meet once again. Conferences will be enjoyed. We must stay connected.

Elaner Pounder, Branch President

Durham North

We will focus on outreach projects. In times of uncertainty it is a positive experience if one feels that one can help others – even from a distance.

Our first big project was the Fill a Purse For a Sister. Members donated gently used purses filled with personal hygiene items, etc.

We plan to make bird feeders, encouraging members to help with construction and will donate bird seed to seniors in our communities. We are investigating having members become pen pals with classes in our area schools; an excellent way to keep seniors involved in their community and form bonds between young and old. With our social bubbles being reduced once again, it is important to maintain contact with others. It also provides students with a purposeful writing activity.

Continued ►

As we are able, we will resume our interesting monthly activities and semi-annual luncheons. We will continue to look for outreach activities that our members can be involved in.

Reaching out to recent and previous retirees will continue to be a focus. Establishing a strong sense of belonging, and caring and sharing will remain a priority for all of us in Durham North RWTO/OERO.

Wendy Campbell, Branch Communications

Northumberland South Durham

Planning for 2025 is dependent on the Covid-19 pandemic, whether the virus will continue to spread, if vaccines become available and how our membership will be affected by this virus and the after effects of isolation, and fears we all have. If life goes back to some semblance of “normal”, our branch will continue to plan its meetings, welcome new members, support our charities and provide important information to our members. We will continue to honour birthdays for our senior members, support those who are ill and attempt to comfort the bereft by our presence, prayers and sincere wishes. We have sent letters to try and offset the loneliness of isolation and will continue with that plan. We will continue to offer enriching opportunities to our members through speakers reflecting our communities, learning about ourselves through handwriting analysis and continuing to have Breakfast Club.

Julia Esford, Branch President

Peterborough

In an article entitled ‘My Garden is My Pleasure in This Pandemic’, newspaper columnist Heather Mallick extols the virtues of her newly planted perennial garden. A source of ‘pleasure and comfort’, it is the product of a landscape planner who created for her an oasis in a compact front yard: dogwood, euonymus, boxwood and yew - sturdy, reliable shrubs, already thriving amongst the carefully placed rocks, the go-to vernacular materials for an Ontario north-facing space, mostly devoid of sunshine (as small, urban gardens tend to be) but inviting, nonetheless. Her back garden, shady but south-facing, holds slightly more hope for flowering perennials. She is guardedly optimistic about the appearance of hydrangea blooms and plans hopefully for native plants that sustain butterflies and bees. She is



doubtful about the clematis vine but muses, ‘The peony, a sophisticated plant that will offer years of bloomless taunting until 2025, is worth trying’.

Thus, while making plans for the future of RWTO/OERO in the midst of this pandemic can be daunting, and 2025 seems light years away, I thank the garden for the lesson in endurance and hope and the writer for having faith that her peony will eventually bloom, even if the wait is long.

Deb Glynn, Branch President

Trenton

As a teacher I always found time a very abstract concept to teach. Once students grasped the concept they were able to mark milestones and make predictions about upcoming events, and so was I. Little did I know what 2020 had in store. Predictions, planning and the daily rhythm of life flew out the window and time became abstract. Our Branch is continuing to stay in touch with each other through phone calls, newsletters, revamped interest groups, etc. We are pivoting and learning as we go. As we approach 2025, we expect to find ourselves on the other side of the pandemic. We will return to our monthly meetings, numerous interest groups and community projects. Our meetings will be filled with laughter and fun. We will cherish the opportunities to meet together and celebrate each and every milestone. We are definitely looking forward to 2025.

Nancy Patterson, Branch President

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News from the Branches – “Looking Toward 2025” - continued

Area 13

Lincoln West

“Looking into the Future – Planning for 2025”

‘Looking and Planning’ into the future of RWTO/OERO includes looking at our own personal future which may seem daunting or difficult as we navigate around daily tasks, short outings, family, friends, holiday plans and so on, while managing our health and abilities. Think back. How did you plan for your students to guide and encourage them to realize their hopes and dreams? Can you use some of those tools to help you plan for your future? Write your own ‘positive’ report card. Focus on your self-esteem, strengths, physical and mental abilities, past and current successes. Some may have a ‘one day at a time’ approach to planning. Celebrate what you can do or achieve each day, regardless of how small it may seem. Even though we are not able to do the same things we ‘always’ did, how can you be creative to achieve your future goals? Stay positive!!

Diana Bujas, Branch President

Niagara Falls

As the Executive reflects on what 2025 holds for our branch, we accept that the future is slippery. In the hope that all members can again participate in wonderful social gatherings, we will continue to develop ideas for entertaining programs. However, if restrictions on the size of gatherings are still in effect, we will explore ways to hold smaller in-person meetings. We will also consider how to use electronic technologies to share activities. As the need arises, we will learn the skills to use those technologies and encourage members to do the same. If necessary, in 2025 we may even use traditional mail service on occasion to stay in touch with members. We do not fear challenges. Even if the future is far different from what we envision now, when that time comes, we will find ways to carry on our legacy of “Caring and Sharing”.

Diane Ewen, Branch President

Niagara South

When we turned the calendar from 1999 to 2000, the

year 2025 seemed a long ways away but here we are almost in 2021.

Looking toward 2025, I would like to continue to see a strong vibrant organization of retired teachers that offers community through our motto “Caring and Sharing”. Retired women can find themselves in need of companionship with other women. Their families may now be scattered across the country, their partners are getting old too and perhaps have passed. This is a critical time in women's lives. We all need the community that RWTO/OERO provides and the camaraderie in a safe and caring environment.

I joined our branch in 2015. It has been my honour to connect with fellow teachers, making new friends and strengthening old ones as together we continue to support a strong public education system.

I am thankful to RWTO/OERO for this opportunity.

In “Caring and Sharing”.

Lynn Millar, Branch President

St Catharines

The St. Catharines RWTO/OERO are looking forward to playing cards and golf, eating at new venues, singing and travelling, and learning from inspiring speakers. A return to post COVID-19 activities, while advertising to new retirees the benefits of insurance and friendships with their colleagues, should maintain our membership.

As the largest



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branch in Ontario, our challenges will be to create opportunities to connect with each other and to appreciate our individual strengths. Moving forward, we must consider the needs of women and our part in ensuring diversity and equality for all.

We continue to develop our media skills and to use web communication as opposed to print. The importance of personal visits to our over 90s and the ill and bereaved cannot be overlooked.

Our shared responsibility to support our members and to care for the community through innovative programs and charities ensures our future success in 2025.

Susan Lewis, Branch President



Tribute to York North

Sadly, due to decreasing membership and a scarcity of volunteers to help organize luncheons, York North has said farewell to RWTO/OERO. Several of our members have joined other branches. Many joined Scarborough, some went to Toronto, a few joined Durham North and one went to Belleville.

Because of the pandemic, our plans for a farewell/thank you lunch had to be postponed but we plan to hold it just as soon as it is safe to do so. In the meantime we wish all our members good times and new friends in their continuing involvement with RWTO/OERO.

Submitted by Regine Baker,
former Co-President, York North





RWTO/OERO

RWTO/OERO Provincial Office
2736 Twelfth Conc,
Tecumseh, ON, N8N 2M1

PM Agreement
40739021