



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

President's Message

May the gifts of friendship, love, peace and happiness be yours this season!



Are you looking for fun and adventure to supplement some volunteer time with committees, emails and documents? I highly recommend moving through the RWTO/OERO Provincial Chairs, to the amazing role of

Provincial President!

Visits to numerous Branches over the past three months have been thoroughly enjoyable! Day trips to individual Branches, were supplemented by two of the longest possible trips, one to the 'Far East' (Upper Canada East, Ottawa-Carleton, Gananoque, and Lanark) and the other that enabled me to also view the incredible autumn colours on my trek to Sudbury, Central Algoma, and Sault Ste. Marie.

Frankly, with my background in a large Branch, I was concerned that some of our small Branches might especially face a struggle with the membership numbers needed to thrive, so these trips were very

important for my own education.

We absolutely must find ways to increase our numbers, but I was truly amazed to see how vibrant and active our Branches are, no matter their size! In our smaller groups, everyone knew the others well, so conversations often had a caring & sharing theme. Crafts, skits and activities were part of some of their meetings, and I need to figure out how I can adapt a "Quarter Frenzy" activity for use by a large Branch.

Community networking also seems a bit more viable with some of the Branches in smaller areas. Not only does a member know 'someone who knows what's going on somewhere else, and has contact (by first name) with somebody running it', community locations and guest speakers sometimes volunteer to provide services. Some of these places also still maintain their community newspapers, which we



Linda Sargeant,
Provincial President

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

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President's Message – continued

have sadly lost in many of our more urban areas recently. I was quite surprised to find myself in the Kincardine News, courtesy of a thoroughly detailed article about the wonderful South Bruce luncheon that was held on the 'first day of school'.

I am truly impressed with the Branches I have visited to date, and the leadership of those keeping them active. Some groups are using partnerships or teams to handle the sharing of responsibilities, others have a larger executive with job-specific roles. Thank You for all that you do! To assist with this year's plans, the Provincial Board of Directors has sent each Branch a special \$200 gift to help celebrate our organization's 70th Anniversary!

My compliments and appreciation are extended to the 28 members of our organization who volunteer on our Provincial Board of Directors. This impressive group of motivated women is looking to the future - ours as an organization, and also that of all senior women living in the province, whether

or not they are members. For example, our Social Justice Committee is continuing their work with like-minded organizations to improve the quality of life for those in Long Term Care homes. The Marketing Committee is researching ways that potential members throughout the province will learn about our organization.

Finally, a special thank you to the members of Branches throughout the Province, who have stepped up to assist Judy Massey, Provincial Convention Convenor, in the creation of our special 70th Annual AGM Convention at Western University this coming June! This is the first time in recent history (or possibly ever) that the Planning Team has stepped up as individuals from small to large Branches from across the province. Amazing! Please think about joining us at the event!

Enjoy our future! 2026 and beyond!!!

Call for Nominations 2026-2027

1. Provincial Executive Officer nominations for the RWTO/OERO Provincial Board of Directors will now be accepted until January 31, 2026:

Elected Positions: *Provincial 2nd Vice-President
*Provincial Recording Secretary

Appointed Position: *Parliamentarian

The job descriptions for these positions are found in the RWTO/OERO Provincial Policies and Procedures Manual, which can be found on our website at www.rwto.org, under the title ABOUT, click on Governance.

Please review Article VI, Duties of Executive Officers. You may also contact your Area Director or the Nominations Committee Chair for the job descriptions.

Nominees for both the elected provincial positions and the appointed provincial position follow the same process. Nominees are to submit their name by

completing the *Candidate's Form for RWTO/OERO Provincial Executive Position*, which has been signed by your Branch President or Co-Presidents. The Candidate's Form can be found on our website at www.rwto.org, under the title ABOUT, click on Governance. The form must be printed and filled out. A reference letter is NOT required from the Branch. You will also be required to submit a bio (maximum 200 words) and photo for inclusion in the March issue of *Connections*. Instructions for what to include in the bio are listed on the Candidate's Form. Nominations should be emailed or mailed with a postmark by January 31, 2026 to the Provincial Nominations Committee Chair.



Nominations Committee Chair: Jan Murdoch

Continued ►

181 Pitts Cove Rd, Dunsford, ON. K0M L1O
rwtopastpresident2526@gmail.com

2. Area Directors

Any new Area Directors will be selected or elected in accordance with their Area's protocol (see Provincial Policies and Procedures Manual, Article IV 3.). Once chosen, the names should be sent to the Provincial Nominations Committee Chair before March 31,

2026.

For further details about any position, please contact any member of the Nominations Committee:

Past Provincial President Jan Murdoch,
Area 5 Director Judy Anderson,
Area 13 Director Patti Malkiewich.

Submitted by
Jan Murdoch
Past Provincial President

Honorary Membership Award Nominations

The Provincial Honorary Membership Award is the highest honour bestowed on a member for outstanding service to our organization at the Provincial level. This special award is presented at the Annual General Meeting. A description and the criteria for the award are found in Article XII of the Provincial Policies and Procedures Manual located on the RWTO/OERO website www.rwto.org under the link About and then Governance.

A Provincial Award can be nominated by a Branch or a member. Your nomination letter should include an outline listing the Provincial Committees, on which the nominee has served, highlighting those and other

contributions to RWTO/OERO at the Provincial level.

Nominations must be received by the Nominations Committee Chair, Sandra Salerno, by January 31st, 2026. Please include the full name, current mailing address, telephone number and email address of yourself and the nominee. Please send nominations to:

Mail: Sandra Salerno
4 Claymore Crescent
Caledonia, ON N3W 2N9

Email: smsalerno@rogers.com



Membership Award Nominations

The Membership Committee recommends that all Branches consider making a submission for the "Feather in Your Hat" Award.

We recognize creative, innovative and successful activities carried out by a Branch or a group of Branches that have cooperated on a project that has enriched the programs offered by RWTO/OERO. The 'Feather in Your Hat' Award is now tiered according to Branch size. Three awards may be given in each category for small, medium and large Branches.

The award application must be submitted to the Membership Committee between January 1st, 2026 and March 1st, 2026. Please check the RWTO/OERO website for the criteria and procedure to be followed when assembling your submission. On the top bar, click on "Members" and from the drop-down menu, select "Awards".

Mail a hardcopy of your submission via Canada Post to Mary Maxwell, 1673 Phillbrook Crescent London ON N5X 2Z4. To ensure your submission has been received, please notify the Membership Convenor by email at mmaxwell@rogers.com. The membership convenor will confirm its receipt upon arrival by Canada Post.

The "Feather in Your Hat" Awards are presented each year at the AGM/June Convention.

Mary Maxwell
Membership Convenor





Insurance Matters

Christmas is always, for me, a time of happy gatherings and reflection - memories of Christmas excitement from childhood days, memories of delicious meals served to thankful family and friends and reflections of where we came from and where we're heading.

As we approach this 70th anniversary of the Retired Women Teachers of Ontario, we on the insurance team can also reflect upon how this insurance plan began and where it stands today.

At the Annual Convention in 1961 the question of an insurance plan to benefit the members was raised. In 1963 a plan was negotiated with Canada Health and Accident Insurance Company. At that time, The Ontario Association of Superannuated Women Teachers (O.A.S.W.T) appointed an "Insurance Secretary" who acted as liaison with the Company. As with many new insurance plans, this plan faced several problems with slow claims processing and misleading or incorrect information being provided to claimants, but these were normal "growing pains".

In 1969 with the introduction of government provincial health plans, the O.A.S.W.T insurance plan was revised to eliminate duplication of benefits. The O.A.S.W.T plan was specially designed to supplement provincial benefits to meet the unique needs of its members.

In 1973 Canada Health and Accident Insurance Company had merged with another company, C.N.A. and the insurance plan available to members was extended to spouses of enrolled O.A.S.W.T members. In 1974 a revised plan was accepted which formed the basis of the plan to this day.

In 1982 an Insurance Committee was created, and each Branch was to appoint a Branch Insurance Convenor to receive and relay information about the plan. In 1988/89 the Insurance Committee made recommendations to the insurance company of plan improvements. This resulted in the introduction in 1990 of the new Hospital and Home Care Insurance Plan.

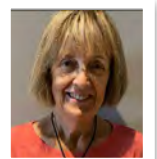
In 1992 Citadel notified O.A.S.W.T that it was exiting the Association Insurance business, and the Association would have to appoint an Agent of Record to manage the program. In 1992 Seabury and Smith was appointed broker. In 1999, Seabury & Smith increased the administration fee to 3% of Annualized Premium. During this period, the insurance plan was moved to Industrial Alliance Insurance Company.

In 2000, Terry Kennedy became the contact person for Seabury and Smith for the O.A.S.W.T Hospital & Home Care Plan. When Ms. Kennedy reviewed the financial position of the plan, she realized that the insurer was reaping very large profits and she proposed a Profit-Sharing arrangement to benefit the Association, while ensuring that the insurer met all its expenses and still realized a profit. Industrial Alliance refused to entertain such an arrangement so Terry set about finding an insurance company willing to do so. Liberty Health stepped up and a Profit-Sharing arrangement was put in place. In 2003 a Profit-Sharing cheque was delivered to RWTO in the amount of \$14,958.00.

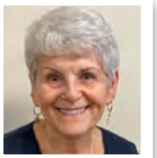
The insurance industry was consolidating, and Liberty Health was sold to Maritime Life. Maritime Life was subsequently acquired by Manufacturer's Life Insurance Company and Manulife remains the insurer today. Manulife agreed to plan improvements

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Manulife

(increases to the Convalescent Care Benefit, provision of a Convalescent Care Benefit for outpatient surgery, introduction of a Cataract Surgery Benefit and more) but wanted to renegotiate the terms of the Profit-Sharing arrangement. Then President, Sherry Stokes, and Terry spent many evenings “burning the midnight oil” during these negotiations which resulted in a greatly improved Profit-Sharing arrangement.

In the 2007/08 Plan Year, the Profit Sharing payable to RWTO had risen to \$29,398.20 plus

an Administration Fee of \$11,500 (which is 4% of annualized premium). During the most currently-ended Plan Year (2024/25), the Profit Sharing payable to RWTO was \$72,029.78 plus \$21,004 Administration Fee. As you can see, Manulife is a supportive contributor to RWTO/OERO.

Your insurance team wishes everyone a wonderful and safe holiday season filled with new memory making experiences.

Issues and Concerns

Falls and Fractures

My article in the September *Connections* outlined ways to prevent falls in your home. If a fracture occurs it is wonderful to know that our RWTO/OERO Hospital and Home Care Plan pays a scheduled amount depending on which bone is fractured. For example, hip fracture - \$200, ankle - \$200, pelvis - \$350. It is not necessary to have been hospitalized to obtain this benefit.

Muscle-strengthening exercises are a key to maintaining existing strength, slowing the loss of muscle mass, and helping to prevent falls. Examples of muscle-strengthening activities include:

- Using resistance bands, weight machines, or hand-held weights
- Lifting your body weight, with exercises such as arm circles, leg raises, pushups, pullups, planks, squats, or lunges
- Carrying heavy items, such as groceries
- Gardening, which may require digging and lifting
- Try doing muscle-strengthening activities at least two days per week to work the major muscle groups of the body (muscles of the legs, hips, chest, back, abdomen, shoulders, and arms) but avoid working the same muscle group on any two days in a row to allow for muscle recovery between sessions.
- Listen to your body. Overdoing muscle-strengthening exercises can cause exhaustion, sore joints, and muscle pain or injury. Warm up for muscle-strengthening activity by doing exercises with less weight.

Balance involves maintaining the body’s stability while still or in motion. As with muscle-strengthening

exercises, balance exercises help to prevent falls and fall-related injuries. Aim for about three sessions of balance exercises a week.

Examples of balance exercises include:

- Tai chi (a “moving meditation” that involves shifting the body slowly, gently, and precisely, while breathing deeply)
- Yoga or chair yoga
- Standing on one foot
- The heel-to-toe walk
- The balance walk
- Walking backward or sideways
- Practicing standing from a sitting position
- Using a wobble board

Listen to your body, and if you feel unsteady do whatever is necessary to steady yourself. Go slowly to prevent falling, have something nearby to hold on to, and wear comfortable, stable footwear or go barefoot.

Older adults need a mix of physical activities to stay healthy. As part of your weekly activity, include a combination of aerobic, muscle-strengthening, and balance activities.

You can also combine more than one type of exercise into the same exercise session. Activities such as dancing, yoga, tai chi, gardening, or sports can also be considered a combination because they often incorporate multiple types of physical activity.

Continued ►



Issues and Concerns - continued

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/falls-and-falls-prevention/falls-and-fractures-older-adults-causes-and-prevention>

Diane Sinden
Area 12 Director



Board Reports

Program

SEASON'S GREETINGS TO ALL AREA DIRECTORS AND PRESIDENTS!

A warm thank you is being sent to the Branch Presidents and Area Directors for getting together this fall along with Insurance Convenors.

In the new year, the plans for our 70th Anniversary AGM Convention in London at Western University will be underway. Mid-January, the Branches receive their Membership Information from Linda Huffman. First confirm with your Membership Convenor the Branch membership enrollment as indicated by the Provincial record. Please report discrepancies to Linda as soon as possible. Secondly, confirm your delegate numbers for the Convention defined in the Constitution as based on paid full membership on November 30th.

Later, I will email an updated detailed 2026

Convention Newsletter with the processes and procedures. This guide will direct your Executive with how to book accommodations and travel arrangements, selection and role of delegates, reimbursement policy, and events and awards at the convention. Please feel free to contact myself or Linda Huffman with questions.

Wishing you peace, joy, and love during this time of celebration and always. Take this opportunity to generously reach out to your communities with best wishes and tidings of joy.

Margaret Geare
Provincial Program Coordinator
rwtprovprogramcoord2024@gmail.com



Archivist

It is with deepest sympathy that I acknowledge and record the names of the RWTO/OERO members who have passed away 2025-2026. Their contributions and presence will be greatly missed by all who knew them.

The memories and legacies of these individuals continue to inspire RWTO/OERO. As we prepare to celebrate the 70th anniversary, we remember their dedication to our organization at the Branch and the Provincial levels.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to those responsible for forwarding this important information. Linda Huffman and I are truly grateful. Your efforts ensure that we can honor and remember our members appropriately.

Caring and sharing
Hénédine Weiman
Provincial Archivist
e-mail:hen.wei29@gmail.com



Board Reports

Goodwill

Being Goodwill Convenor is quite rewarding. Previous convenors have noted this, but actually connecting with senior RWTO/OERO members has really reinforced the rewards of being Goodwill Convenor. The notes of appreciation that were received emphasize how much the over 90 members enjoy receiving cards. The increase in numbers of these

senior members is noteworthy. This year the role of Goodwill Convenor is shared.

In caring and sharing
Sandie Bender
Patricia Lambert
Goodwill Convenors



Communications

Website Convenor

It's been a busy fall with many of our Branches reporting all the exciting activities that they have had over the summer and so far into the fall. As we move through our 70th Jubilee year I look forward to reading and posting all the wonderful activities that are taking place in celebration of this special milestone year. For our Branch Website Convenors, I'd like to remind you to check your local Branch Web Page to see what information needs to be updated including contact information, membership fees and new feature photos if you have them. Please send all those Branch updates to rwtowebbsite@gmail.com.

If you have News about events that have already taken place in your Branch please use the form that's found on our Main Page under the BRANCHES dropdown menu. Just click on Branch News & Events and then "click HERE to set up your post", click News on the form and fill in all the required

fields including a short writeup about the event that has already taken place, click SUBMIT POST FOR APPROVAL at the bottom of the page and I will post your News. If you have an Event that's coming up, use the same form but select EVENT if you want to advertise this upcoming event on your Branch page for members and potential new members to attend. It will then be posted under UPCOMING EVENTS on your Branch Page and it will show on the calendar at the bottom of the Branch News & Events page.

I'm looking forward to reading and posting all the News about your activities that have already taken place and posting all the events that are yet to come as we celebrate our Jubilee year across the province.

Jane Macdonald
Communications Website



Newsletter Convenor

What an exciting year for the Retired Women Teachers of Ontario (RWTO/OERO)! For seventy years we have developed relationships, advocated for women teachers and made a difference by caring and sharing.

In this issue, we continue to celebrate and recognize the journey that women have made in our Branches. A special four page centrefold has been included and we hope you enjoy the content. The Branches have shared wonderful stories of their early days and the women who forged ahead on our behalf. We hope

you sit and relax with your favourite beverage and recognize the work of women who came before us and the changes that have occurred over the years.

Kathy Smith
Communications Newsletter
Convenor





Sales and Materials

You know you belong to an organization of retired women educators when the 70th Jubilee planning starts a year in advance!

Many Branches have already ordered and received their 70th Jubilee pins, pens, cling-ons and crests.

Don't worry! The 70th Jubilee "swag" is available all year round.

Check out the RWTO web-site under SHOP and see all the regular items, as well.

Branch Executives : Do you need more New Member, Cora Bailey, or Past President pins?



Are you getting low on note cards, sticky notes or RWTO/ Trillium Letterhead? Shopping on the RWTO website is easier than Amazon and there's no charge for mailing or taxes!

A RWTO Board Member, on her way home to Sault St. Marie, was stopped by airport security.

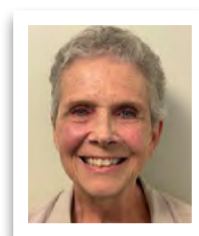
"M'am, your carry-on appears to have a suspiciously large quantity of pens. They will have to be individually scanned. Can you explain why you have so many?"

"There are seventy 70th Jubilee Pens! Celebrating 70 years of Retired Women Teachers of Ontario! And they are for my membership!"

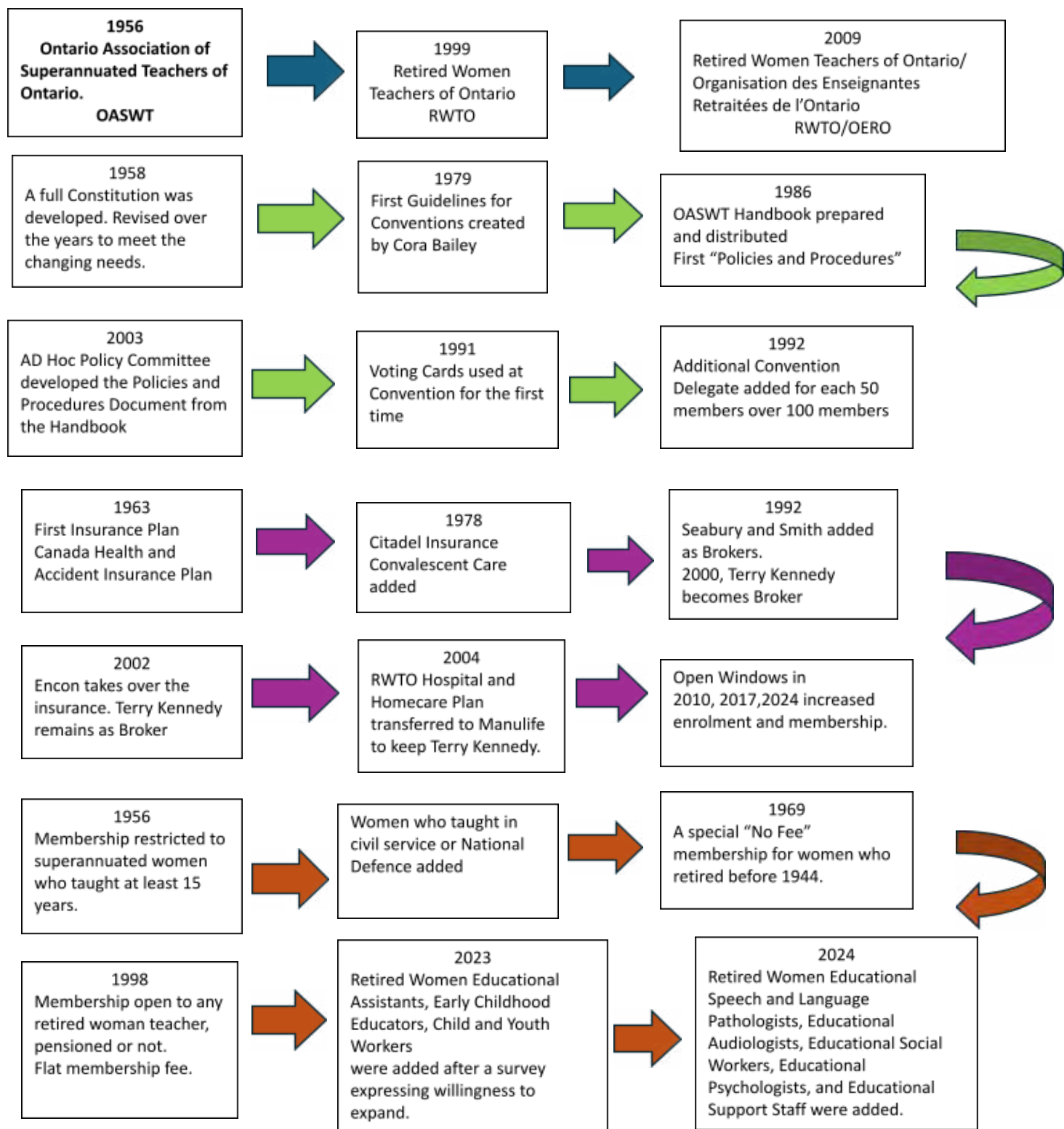
"Oh. Congratulations. Go through."

Never doubt the power of the retired teacher's voice.

Submitted by
Patti Malkiewich
Area 13 Director



Highlights of Our Herstory



Through the past 10+ years I have come through some very difficult times in my life. I always knew that my RWTO/OERO sisters were concerned about me. I knew that I could call them any time of the day or night. I would not be as far along on my healing journey without them. My sincere thank you to all the members of Stratford Branch.

Janice Ward Stratford

Moving to a new area was made easier by joining the caring community of women in RWTO/OERO. Volunteering on the executive offers me social and meaningful connections.

Carolyn Boyd Niagara Falls

How has RWTO/

I have enjoyed hearing some speakers who have shared some amazing information and insights.

It's great to keep the brain ticking.

Shirley Crissione Scarborough

I enjoy our luncheons where we socialize with each other. There is no other organization, in my opinion, that treats those 80 and 90 year olds so well. We are given special luncheons, gifts and are made to feel like queens! Cards come our way for birthdays and other special occasions. I am very grateful to belong to such a fine organization.

Sandy Minard Windsor-Essex

RWTO/OERO is not only about fellowship and sharing, but a great resource for finding answers to the many issues that impact our lives as retired educators.

Clara Gigliotti Mississauga

Participer aux activités du RWTO/OERO, quelle belle façon de revoir des amies et de faire de nouvelles connaissances.

Jeannine Renaud Sudbury

RWTO/OERO has introduced me to many wonderful ladies whom I now call close friends. I have traveled with many of them, enjoyed luncheons, attended special events, shared laughter at cottages, walked many kilometres, and cherished the time spent together. What an amazing group of enthusiastic retired women educators!

Thank you for all the fun!

Carol Morningstar St. Catharines

I enjoy socializing with friends and meeting new friends. It has been very beneficial for me to have signed up for the medical insurance.

Mary Kilgon Lanark

When I joined after retirement and in a new part of Ontario this group of ladies formed my new social group – sharing teaching experiences but so much more. They offered a new group to form a social life. I felt at home in my new life.

Nancy Konzuk Central Algoma

I was an avid member of FWTAO because I wanted to be sure that the voices of women were being heard. Thus, when I retired, I joined RWTO/OERO for the same reason. I feel now more than ever that we need to keep reminding leaders in all fields who we are and what we stand for very clearly. When talking with other members, some over 90, their thoughts echo mine.

Lois Plowright Blue Mountain

OERO impacted your life?

RWTO/OERO has provided the opportunity to keep in regular contact with the women I taught with or whom I came in contact with, a lovely extension of our working lives. I've really enjoyed exploring music through our drum circle interest group – no time for this before retirement!

Anne Cameron Kitchener-Waterloo

RWTO/OERO has connected me with interesting, capable, wonderful women who share my beliefs, "Caring, Sharing" and always having fun!

Linda Hart Haldimand

Before retirement I wasn't a member of any organized group; therefore I never held any executive position. A few years after joining South Bruce Branch, I took on the role of president for five years then Area director for two years. At first accepting these challenges scared the daylights out of me but gradually I began to feel more confident and capable. As a result of that personal growth I have taken on leadership roles in other areas of my life.

Pat Emmerton South Bruce

I especially valued reconnecting with past co-workers with whom I shared many career memories.

Connie Cole Scarborough

Newly retired, I welcomed the opportunity to organize groups to share my interests. Now I appreciate the impact of social interaction for healthy aging.

Sylvia Meyer Hamilton-Wentworth

Challenges Faced, Challenges Met

Pension Reform:

Most of us know our organization began with the challenge of raising the pensions of retired women teachers:

- In 1949, many single retired women teachers were living on \$600.00 a year.
- Bena McCowan and Laura Cook provided the leadership with letters and presentations to Ministerial Committees and the Government to raise it to \$1200.00.
- In 1966, this was guaranteed for newly retired teachers, but what about the others?
- Lobbying Continued!
- Under Bill Davis, this was provided for all teachers

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!

Equity in Employment:

In 1956, female teachers outnumbered male teachers by 3 to 1, but male administrators outnumbered female administrators by 10 to 1.

- Not until 1998 did the ratio of administrators reach equity, although female teachers outnumbered male teachers 2 to 1.
- In 2025, the ratio of female administrators is 1.86 for every male administrator, while there are three female teachers for every male teacher.
- Opportunities for women to become administrators is improving.

MISSION ONGOING!

Personal Freedom:

Through the 1950's, women teachers were restricted in what they could wear, marital relationships, when they had to resign due to pregnancy, and "moral character".

- In the 1970's female teachers were allowed to wear pants to school, on a board-by-board basis, with some stipulating "pant suits".
- By the late '70's, female teachers could follow the fashion of the day, even wearing mini-skirts – making water fountains and going upstairs a challenge!
- 2025 -Female teachers are now quite comfortable wearing jeans and leggings to school.
- Living arrangements are nobody's business.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!

Qualifications:

In 1950, "All Candidates for admission to normal schools must be British subjects, of good character, and able to pass the required medical examination". (The Hope Report, 1950)

- Elementary teachers needed grade 13 plus one year

of Normal School; secondary teachers needed a degree plus one year of Teacher's College.

- Legislated in 1979, all teachers required a university degree plus one year of Teacher Training.
- 1999 – all teachers in Ontario must belong to the Ontario College of Teachers.

Teachers Federations:

Teacher Federations did not always work together. In the public system, men and women belonged to separate federations. Women played varied roles in leadership.

- 1918- FWTAO was founded from its beginning formulation in 1888 to represent the interests of female teachers for better salaries and job security.
- From the 1960's onward, FWTAO lobbied for Affirmative Action programs against systemic discrimination and provided scholarships to help women further their careers.
- In 1998, FWTAO merged with the Ontario Public School Men Teachers' Federation to form ETFO. Its first president was Phyllis Benedict.
- OECTA formed in 1944 with men and women as members. The first leader of OECTA was Margaret Lynch.
- OSSTF formed in 1919. In 2025, Martha Hradowy, an Educational Assistant, became its first female president.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!

Teachers and Government:

Once all teachers belonged to integrated teacher federations, they worked together for fair legislation. The relationship between Teacher Federations and various governments has been rocky. Some of the issues faced are the following:

- Class size, funding, and contract teaching obligations.
- Unpaid days in Austerity Budgets.
- Constant curriculum changes and the beginning of EQAO testing.
- 1998 – Administrators were removed from all Federations, making them "management".
- Loss of the right to strike (rescinded), and restrictions on sick days to 10; banking sick days was lost.
- These and various other battles resulted in work-to-rule, one-day walks outs, rotating strikes and the 1997 ETFO and OSSTF two-week strike.
- February 1, 2020 - all four teacher Federations walked out on a one-day strike.

MISSION ONGOING!

News from the Branches – "Recalling the Early Days of our Branch"

Cambridge

Taken verbatim from "15 Year History 1964-1979 Cambridge and District Branch Ontario Association Superannuated Women Teachers" compiled by Ethel Whitfield

"On April 19, 1964, with the assistance of the Hamilton Branch the Galt, Preston and Hespeler Branch of the Ontario Association of Superannuated Women Teachers was organized at the home of Ruth Neelands. There were 11 members present. It was decided to meet twice a year, and the local membership fee was 50 cents.

May 3 1965: The members met with the Hamilton Branch. It was announced that the Provincial Association was pressing very hard for an improvement in pensions. At the November meeting the Automatic Membership Fee schedule was set up: \$1 for each \$1000 of pension received.

Nov. 11, 1966: "A meeting was held for the purpose of discussing the formation of amalgamation with a retired men teachers' association".

April 24, 1967 A meeting was held at the YWCA with 18 members present. "A request from F.W.T.A.O. for names of those teachers who were teaching in 1918 to be used in connection with the Golden Anniversary in 1968".

January 12, 1968: "The newly formed Superannuated Teachers Organization was explained which allows us to be Associate Members of O.T.F. The minimum pension has been increased to \$1,200 and the request for re-calculation of pension on the best seven years is being considered by the Education Minister".

Submitted by
Mary Jane Novak
Branch President

Guelph-Wellington

In 1957, Miss Ethel Bale invited the superannuated elementary women teachers of Fergus and Guelph to a meeting at her home to organize a Branch of the Ontario Association of Superannuated Women Teachers (O.A.S.W.T). In November, 1961 secondary and separate school retirees were granted permission to join the Branch. The purpose was purely social: hosting card parties and recognizing shut-in members at Christmas and when they were ill. There were monthly executive meetings and three general meetings each year. The executive wrote letters to members of Parliament asking support for Briefs advocated by Provincial O.A.S.W.T, such as the one requesting pensions be raised from as low as \$600.00 annually. The Guelph Branch first hosted the O.A.S.W.T Convention in June, 1963 at the Royal Hotel. The convention fee of \$10.00 per person included the cost of hotel accommodation (\$4.50), lunch (\$1.50) and dinner (\$2.45). 242 members from across the province attended the convention.

Submitted by
Judy Steer
Branch President

Kitchener-Waterloo

This year our vibrant membership of 74 retired educators has been having fun caring and sharing with each other, providing friendship and emotional support, and enhancing our members' interests with stimulating programs and guest speakers.

We have met community needs through our donations to women's shelters, Adventure 4 Change, and homeless shelters.

At our four luncheons a variety of guest speakers made interesting presentations. Also, in March we were visited by Colleen Robertson (Area 2

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News from the Branches – "Recalling the Early Days of our Branch"

Director) and in May our Provincial President, Jan Murdoch, visited to meet members and give a memorable address.

In June we sent a Provincial delegate and a Branch Delegate to the Provincial Annual General Meeting in Brantford. Another member attending on her own thoroughly enjoyed the convention, especially the Elvis Sock Hop.

Goals for this coming year include growing our membership and sending more nondelegate members to the 2026 Provincial Annual General Meeting in London. A good time will be had by all as we celebrate the 70th Anniversary of RWTO.

Submitted by
Kari Todd-Bustamante
Past President

Palmerston and District

As a newer member of our Branch, I was uncertain that I could do justice to this topic. In discussion with my fellow Branch members and in reading archived material, I have learned that founding members joined in order to connect with other teachers and to make new friends. Issues of pay equity and pensions were topical. At one point thirty years ago the Palmerston Branch had 32 members. Today our membership has risen to 77. What began as camaraderie has evolved into a Branch whose members meet, socialize and raise monies for a number of child-centred initiatives like school backpack provisions in the fall and Sleeping Children Around the World. It is wonderful to be a part of such an organization. Caring and sharing in action.

Submitted by Laurie Aitken
Branch President

Stratford

On July 2, 1954, a group of retired women teachers in Stratford met to form a social group. They elected Mary McDonald as president and two other women to be on the executive.

A collection of \$1.25 was taken; \$.25 to go to Toronto, \$.50 for flowers for any future deceased members and \$.50 for reserve. Nineteen ladies joined that day and after the meeting a five-dollar money order was sent to Toronto.

It was noted that retirement monies averaged \$600 a year.

Hence Stratford has always celebrated ten year anniversaries over two years.

In 2015 our Branch hosted the Convention as well as celebrating the 60th anniversary. This year, 2026, we will celebrate the 70th (72nd).

At our new members meeting this year avoiding loneliness by joining our group and having fun was one of our themes alongside Sharing and Caring. Five new members joined our Branch.

Submitted by
Patty Brine
Branch President

Chatham-Kent

Connecting to the community is ongoing at Chatham-Kent. At our September meeting, a retired woman teacher from our area spoke of an historic connection of her family to local black history, with documents in the Mackenzie House in Toronto. Retired educators are always interested in the education system where we taught. Our Branch fundraised over \$1000 for Noelle's Gift to Children, where money goes directly to schools to help students in need. To support local libraries,

News from the Branches – "Recalling the Early Days of our Branch"

in honour of members who have passed away, our Branch donates a book to the library of the family's choosing. We fundraise each fall for the local hospice. Caring and sharing is our objective with many cards sent to members for birthdays and visits to members who are not able to attend our activities. Since we now include other professional educators, our Branch has welcomed our first speech and language specialist.

Submitted by
Nancy Hrytzak
Branch President

London-Middlesex

In the late 1940's and 1950's London retired women teachers met for fun and fellowship. Retired men and women joined forces to form an organization in 1966 that later became RTOERO. London-Middlesex has always enjoyed a rich history of inclusion and participation in its Branch. Branches were always called by the city instead of the city - county until Barbara Bain suggested the change when she was Provincial President of RWTO. We now include counties/regions with every city Branch and we ensure that our outreach includes women's programs (shelters) located in Middlesex County as well.

We continue to acknowledge the indigenous communities surrounding our city and include learning about them in our programs. Patsy Day was our guest speaker in September, who came from one of three indigenous communities to speak about the shared history of the land and the people within London-Middlesex.

Submitted by
Linda Freeman
Branch President

Sarnia-Lambton

In Sarnia-Lambton our 70th anniversary theme is "Remembering Through Fashion". Our May luncheon will include several fashion activities and has members searching for tweed skirts, Peter Pan blouses, plaid skirts and twin sets!

"In 1960, while pregnant, I was summoned to a meeting with my superintendent. He informed me that I would have to take a leave as soon as I had to wear maternity clothes."

"My 1962 interview outfit was a blue skirt suit, high neckline blouse, and white gloves".

"In 1967, I wore my new pant suit. Meeting in the hall, I noted the glances. Older teachers looked disgusted. Younger ones looked admiringly interested".

"In 1972, teachers' college advice was to avoid wearing pants for practice teaching or interviews."

"In 1972, every female on staff wore a matched pant suit, for the first time, on the same day".

"Don't forget yellow rain slickers for picket duty".

We are excited to showcase these memories.

Submitted by
Norma Vossen
Branch President

St. Thomas-Elgin

Our young, frugal Branch held afternoon meetings in church halls and community centres and an annual pot luck. Led by caring, strong and loyal women, RWTO/OERO was a natural progression from FWTAO. At one time a board member put up her own funds to keep the Branch going until a provincial grant was received. Meetings progressed to luncheons at opposite ends of our long county, and membership grew. Under the dynamic leadership of women like

Continued ►



News from the Branches – "Recalling the Early Days of our Branch"

Carole Watson and Theresa Sherratt, many members were encouraged to take roles in helping our Branch grow. Prior to email, annual newsletters were mailed, and telephone callers played a huge role in getting membership out to meetings. Our Branch has long been a place of smiles, laughter, caring and tremendous community support through local charities. It was a proud year when our Branch won the Barbara Bain and Feather in Your Hat awards in the same year.

Submitted by
Shelly Sturk
Branch President

Windsor-Essex

To quote Cora Bailey, "Big enough to serve you. Small enough to know you."

To read about the past accomplishments of RWTO/OERO and its genesis is wonderful. To know that Windsor-Essex hosted a convention four times is terrific. To read about the O.A.S.W.T. transition to RWTO in 1999 and the addition of OERO in 2009 is fascinating. To have ten members who retired in the 80's still with us going strong is a blessing. To award Shirley Dicker with the first Cora Bailey Award in Windsor-Essex was an honour. To know that our members embrace "Caring and Sharing" and extend it to the community at large in their daily lives is thoughtful. To mourn together when a member passes, to cry together, and to miss them dearly is a privilege.

Remember ladies, we are always under RECONSTRUCTION. You must listen to the music of the past. So you can sing in the present AND THEN dance into the future.

Submitted by Gina Marcon
Branch President

Lanark

A meeting of Superannuated Women Teachers from Almonte, Carleton Place, and Pakenham was held at the home of Hilda Cram, in Carlton Place, on Wednesday, June 5, 1963, with 20 members present. It was moved and seconded that a local group be formed, and be called the North Lanark Unit of O.A.S.W.T. (Ontario Association of Superannuated Women Teachers).

In 1966, Mrs. Eva Rankin delighted her audience with her talk on leisure time pursuits and activities. Her advice was not to retire but to change your occupation and to learn something new every day. **Old age is just a new page on which you can write life's noblest chapters.**

At each luncheon, the President would read a few selections from "The Chuckle Box" which thoroughly entertained everyone.

The guest speakers varied in the 60's and 70's from soloists, to choirs, to blacksmiths, health advisors, recruitment, and slide presentations of trips to various countries.

Submitted by
Denise Vanopdenbosch
Branch President

Ottawa-Carleton

Our archives provide a treasure trove of information about the women who have preceded us and their volunteer work on behalf of women and children. Our oldest archival record is a handwritten notebook from 1935-1936 of the O.W.T.A., the Ottawa Women Teachers Association, part of FWTAO. The Ottawa Silver Jubilee booklet (1956-1981) reports that the luncheon meeting in May 1974, held in Bell Street United Church Hall, cost \$2.75 and that it was decided to raise the local fee

News from the Branches – "Recalling the Early Days of our Branch"

from \$1.00 to \$1.25.

The O.A.S.W.T records of 1979 show Ottawa and Carleton as being members before 1956. Agnes McCredie (1956-1958) was the first of 53 presidents. We have also had four Provincial Presidents - Bessie Piggot (1961-1962), Doris Gilhuly (1978-1980), Catherine Daly (1989-1990) and Gertrude McCrimmon (2000-2001).

Ottawa-Carleton has hosted Annual General Meetings/Conventions in 1962, 1967, 1976 (20th), 1986 (30th), 2000, 2014 in Ottawa and 2023 in Kingston.

Of our present members the earliest start date is 1986. The two members who joined in 1990 still attend events. We remain an active "caring and sharing" Branch.



**O.A.S.W.T. Convention in Toronto 1979.
President - Miss Doris Gilhuly**

Submitted by
Sharon Chop and Marg Dempsey
Co-Presidents Ottawa-Carleton

BurlOak

On April 30th, 1973, the Burlington Branch of O.A.S.W.T. met at Wellington Square Public School. The Executive agreed to hold four meetings a year. The fee was \$2.00 and the term of office was two years. Phone tree and volunteer hostess systems were instituted. The first Annual General Meeting was held at the Estaminet in May 1974 costing \$2.50 with 30 members and three guests.

The Oakville Branch was formed on April 8, 1987. The women agreed to hold four meetings a year, a one day excursion and to send a delegate to the annual convention. The cost of the luncheon for the Annual General Meeting at the Holiday Inn was \$10.10.

The amalgamation of these two Branches - the new BurlOak Branch was celebrated in March 2022 at the Tyandaga Golf Club with a lovely luncheon, delicious cake and was well attended by more than 80 members.

Submitted by
Claudia Stewart
Branch President

Lydia Snow North Halton

Lydia Snow North Halton recently celebrated our 25th anniversary, using our Christmas Luncheon as a gala meal with accents of blue and silver. Our Branch was an offshoot of Peel North as many retired Halton teachers living north of Milton felt there were sufficient members to form their own Branch and save the trek to Brampton. Lydia Snow was one of the champions of this idea, but she passed away before the first meeting. Several women took up the idea, deciding what was needed to form a successful

Continued ►



News from the Branches – "Recalling the Early Days of our Branch"

Branch, and on December 6, the first meeting was held. Since then, we have grown from a Branch of under 25 to just under 100. Our focus in Outreach has been promoting literacy in schools and supporting those struggling in society by supporting food and backpack programs. A more recent initiative has been putting money aside for the soon-to-be-built Townsend-Smith Hospice. We are excited to be celebrating the Provincial 70th Anniversary this year.

Submitted by
LeAnne Taylor
Honorary President

Mississauga

I have been a member of RWTO/OERO for twenty years now. In those early days I was eager to reconnect with former colleagues and to belong to a book club.

I very soon discovered that there was so much more to being a member in RWTO/OERO. I joined that bookclub, and a euchre group, went on day trips and attended luncheon meetings with strangers who very quickly became friends. I joined the Branch executive, attended the provincial conferences and learned how RWTO/OERO operated. What impressed me most was the enthusiasm every member showed. Interest groups thrived. The bus was always full on our trips and lunches and meetings were well attended.

However, since the pandemic things have

changed. We lose members every year and struggle to gain new ones. Fewer members attend events and it's difficult to get volunteers.

Can we get back to the excitement of those early days? I hope so. We must continue to promote the joy that can be found in belonging to RWTO/OERO. We must look to the future while remembering the good of the past.

Submitted by
Marie Solarski
Co-President

Peel North

Peel North has its roots in O.A.S.W.T. In 1970 a Branch of that organization was started up in Brampton where eleven members began to meet in private homes. The purpose of the group was to forge social connections, fellowship and group strength for insurance benefits. By the 1980s the organization consisted of members from Mississauga, Halton and Brampton. As membership continued to grow, the group split into three separate Branches. RWTO Peel North continued to meet as a smaller group. Meetings were held in churches where members enjoyed lunches prepared by the ladies auxiliary. The senior members would often attend wearing hats and gloves. Branch traditions included tins of home baked Christmas cookies that were gifted to the more senior ladies, fashion shows where the members modeled the clothes and a variety of interest groups. After Covid, Peel North resumed meeting in person at Century Gardens.



*You are the roots of our organization ...
without You our Branches cannot grow!*

Suzanne Rondeau, President, Sudbury Branch

Celebrating 70 Yrs at Convention 2026 in London

Join Anne, Hope and Karin at the
WELLNESS FAIR 10:00 am-5:00 pm June 2



VENDERS WANTED



Join Wendy, Linda
and Liana at the
Silent Auction
June 2-4



DREAMCATCHER DONATION

Members of the RWTO/OERO 69th AGM Convention Planning Team presented a donation cheque for \$1000 to the Dreamcatcher Foundation, earned at the Silent Auction in Brantford. This Indigenous charity supports health, education, arts & culture, and recreation & sports to further develop Indigenous youth throughout the province into healthy thinkers, creators, and leaders, to build a brighter future.

71st AGM 2027

This Annual General Meeting will likely be a virtual event, as no Areas, Branches, or individuals have yet volunteered to host.

The Board of Directors are looking into various alternative formats, and your suggestions are welcome.



RWTO/OERO

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