



RWTO/OERO

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



St. Catharines Branch Newsletter, March 2026

President's Message -- Judith Bennoch, RWTO President

Welcome to spring! After a very long, snowy, cold winter, we are all happy to hear the birds again and welcome the disappearance of snow.

This is a time of renewal - and a time when we gather once again as a membership! April brings a very special luncheon event for us as we celebrate the 70th Anniversary of RWTO/OERO (1956). I want to personally invite each and every individual to take this special opportunity to reconnect, reminisce, chat, remember and enjoy each other's company. You are part of a special group of women. Let's celebrate each other and our accomplishments over the years. Our own St. Catharines branch is 56 years old (1970) and going strong!!!




The final event of our membership year will take place in May, when we hold our Annual General Meeting. At this time, we will report on and recognize the work of our branch over the past year, remember members who have passed, celebrate our Cora Bailey recipients and install a new executive. We will also be introduce and hand out, from the Continuum of Care Jubilee Project, a brand new In-Home and Community Support Services Guide.

To those who have agreed to continue or are new to the executive, I thank you for your service. And why do we do this? Because although we may all have different roles, we are all part of the same team, committed to our branch and its future. Many have commented they feel it is a way of 'giving back' to the organization that has provided them so many opportunities to meet, socialize, learn new things, make new friends, and enjoy a feeling of 'belonging'. Serving exemplifies our motto of Caring and Sharing. Don't be afraid when tapped on the shoulder and asked to consider serving. The personal rewards are more than worth the time. I am so proud of our St. Catharines Branch and its accomplishments in supporting our members and our community.

In June we will celebrate at the Provincial AGM/Convention in London. Seven delegates will represent our branch at this event. Please read the Resolutions in the March Provincial 'Connections' Newsletter. If you have any questions or concerns about what is being presented, please do not hesitate to drop me an email. I encourage non-delegates to consider attending this special celebration as well.

Finally, as my term as President ends with the May AGM, I would like to express my heartfelt thank you to the Executive. Each of you has been supportive and willing to help whenever needed in supporting our members. And to all members, thank you for supporting me. Thank you for all the many things you do as members of various committees, interest groups, assisting in so many unseen ways, attending our luncheons and events and offering a hand whenever you see a need. We are all stronger together!



Wednesday, April 22, 2026
St. Catharines Branch
70th Jubilee Celebration

Doors Open at: 10:00am and you are welcome to stay up to 2:00pm.

Club Italia

2525 Montrose Road, Niagara Falls, ON

Menu:

Served Family Style

Focaccia Bread

Spring Mixed Salad

Pasta with our Signature tomato sauce Meatballs & Sausage

Vanilla Cupcakes

Freshly Brewed Coffee and Tea. Water on tables

Cash Bar

Champagne Wall

Welcome Drink

Non-alcoholic

\$40.00

Due by April 8th, 2026

Payment **MUST** be received **TWO** weeks in advance as required by Club Italia

NOTE: If paying by cheque, notify Linda Foster

You won't want to miss this luncheon - here is what you can expect...and more...

- Doors Open at **10:00** am and the Celebration begins...from this time until almost 11:00 am, you will be encouraged to visit displays and enjoy a Welcome Celebratory drink
- Your Name Tag will include the YEAR you joined our branch - look for others from the same time and have a chat
- Displays around the room will share a history of our past in print and photos, our members, our three conventions - 2002 at the Americana, 2011 at the Hilton and 2019 at the Holiday Inn.... *plus more*
- 'Guess How Many?' contest...take a chance at winning a prize
- At your table - a special momentum for each member and a Trivia challenge - the opportunity to work as a team to test your knowledge of RWTO/OERO and, in particular, about our St. Catharines Branch
- Before we begin - a special group photo taken of all in attendance - a way to keep this memory alive in the future

- Guest speaker - Provincial President, Linda Sargeant. We are fortunate to have arranged well in advance to have Linda join us.
- A special 'instrumental' performance will set the 'tone' for lunch and the rest of our program
- 'Let's Remember' segments during lunch....*that's all I'm willing to share about this, at this time*
- Opportunity to lend your voice to a very special song presentation

It's going to be so much fun to celebrate this milestone together - let's dress up and celebrate each other and the wonderful organization that has brought us all together.

DON'T DELAY - SIGN UP TODAY!

UPCOMING RWTO LUNCHEON

**May AGM / In Memoriam / Cora Bailey Awards/
Support Services Guide
Wednesday, May 27th, 2026
Betty's Restaurant
8921 Sodom Road, Niagara Falls (Chippawa)**



You will be asked to pick one of four menu choices at the restaurant.
Fish & Chips, Pasta Tortellini, Roast Turkey, Baked Salmon

\$40.00

Payment Due by May 20, 2026

General Luncheon Information

- The May luncheon begins at 11:00 am. Doors open at 10:30 am, unless otherwise indicated.
- The name tags are on the table close to the entrance and are displayed in alphabetical order.
- Payment for luncheons must be received by the Wednesday prior to each luncheon (except for the April 2026 Celebration at Club Italia which requires two weeks before), whether by cheque or e-transfer. If you are late in mailing your cheque, let Linda Foster know that you are planning to attend and that your cheque is in the mail.
- There are no luncheon tickets. As your payment is received, your name is added to the list of attendees. You should receive a call or an email when the Treasurer has received your payment.
- Cheques are payable to: **RWTO St. Catharines** and mailed to Linda Foster. E-transfers, use the **rwtoctcatharines@gmail.com** address.
- Luncheon payments will be returned if cancelled by the Wednesday prior to the luncheon (except April requires two weeks). Call Linda Foster to cancel.
- You will receive a phone call or email reminder several weeks prior to the luncheon.
- Pictures are taken at luncheons. If you do not want to be in a picture, speak up and tell whoever has the camera.
- Escorts needed. Sometimes our members need a ride to the luncheon. If you require a ride, or could offer assistance with driving, please call Kathy Trussell, Goodwill Convenor.

We are a Fragrance-Free Environment.

REPORTS

Insurance:

Susan McLaughlin, Insurance Convenor

RWTO Insurance: This is the home nursing care benefit in our plan.

What Home Nursing Benefit covers:

#1 It pays for 80% of the incurred expense for nursing services at home, as a result of an injury or illness.

#2 It has a \$1500 maximum for any one injury or sickness.

#3 It must be recommended by a physician.

#4 Services are to be provided by a Registered Nurse, Practical Nurse, or a Personal Support Worker (cannot be a relative).

How to access the Home Nursing benefit :

#1 You must have **prior authorization from Manulife** to obtain this benefit.

#2 Forms are available on the RWTO provincial website. Click on *members*, *insurance plans*, and then *prior authorization form*.

#3 Forms are also available on the Manulife Secureserve site.

#4 As soon as you become aware that you will need the Home Nursing benefit, fill in the form and email or mail it to Manulife.

#5 In case of emergency (no prior knowledge of requiring home nursing) please call Manulife at 1-800-268-3763 (found on RWTO provincial website).

Respectfully submitted, Susan McLaughlin

Issues and Concerns:

Marg Newby, Issues and Concerns Convenor

RWTO Continuum of Care Jubilee Project

IN-HOME AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES GUIDE

**Be safe, comfortable and happy in the place
you call HOME and in Niagara's Community at
large.**

HOME... SWEET ...HOME

... or the place that has become HOME!

Do you want reliable help with house repairs, housekeeping, transportation, gym or in-home Fitness programs, technology skills, help during illness or accessing Virtual Medical Support!

**Our SUPPORT SERVICES GUIDE,
loaded with tips,
should help to make it easier for you to do that!**

**Pick up your copy at the May
AGM/Luncheon!**

Another Option to Learn About

It's Never Too Early

As we age, we become more aware of our own mortality. Educating ourselves about navigating end-of-life choices, including palliative care, pain relief options, Do Not Resuscitate orders, hospice care and MAiD (Medical Assistance in Dying), is something we can do to help us to deal with the spiritual and emotional weight of the decisions we or our loved

ones may need to face as we approach the end of life's journey. It is never too early to explore what choices are available to us so that we can feel our needs, values and dignity are respected. We often don't want to talk about end-of-life but if we don't, we can leave our loved ones in a terrible position of not truly knowing what our wishes are.

According to Spiritual Care Practitioners, there is a lot of misinformation and disinformation about MAiD out there. To be clear, in order to have MAiD, an individual has to have capacity and be able to sign for it. Once the decision has been made and a date chosen, the individual always has the right to say, "No", and to reschedule. For those with a diagnosis of end-of-life who are concerned that they may lose the capacity by the date chosen to say "Yes", there is a Waiver that can be signed ahead of time. When we explore an option, we can feel more at peace with our decisions, and it is a kindness to our families as well. In the case of MAiD, once a person who is dying has the option of control and can say when the end will come, it helps to relieve the fear of death, brings calm and allows one to handle the pain better. It allows one to have control and to get on with living the time left peacefully. 25% of those who have chosen it end up not using it after all. A plan in place can help one coast through to a normal death. Chaplain and Spiritual Care Practitioner Trish Heidebrecht-Archibald says, "It is healthy to think about it ahead of time before we are faced with a crisis. It is important to start the MAiD discussion and consultation early, and to make your decision known early."

Often there are things people are not aware of until they begin to educate themselves about end-of-life choices. For example, in the case an emergency situation for someone who is receiving palliative care at home, rather than calling 911, there are services available in Niagara like the Palliative Care Outreach Team (PCOT) <https://ontariohealthathome.ca/document/niagara-palliative-care-outreach-team-referral-form/>. Also, there are two systems in place to help make the decision about choosing MAiD. For a palliative patient in hospital, the hospital system can be used to set the process in motion. In that case one would express the desire to their hospital care team,

and they will set up everything for you, including spiritual care. Alternatively, if a patient prefers to be at home for their final days, that person would need to work through the community system by calling 8-1-1, which is an intake service that connects you with a MAiD navigator. A couple of things to consider include the following: 1. If you choose to do MAiD, you cannot then choose to go into a hospice. 2. Some hospitals with religious affiliations and funding will not do MAiD. In that case, a patient would need to be transferred to another hospital or return home to proceed with the process which can be stressful. Although things continue to change as legislation changes, this is the current state of things in 2026.

It's never too early to start the conversation. Advanced planning can make a big difference for all concerned. As Heidebrecht-Archibald says, "These decisions are clinical and legal, but also emotional and sacred. It's not just about death. It's about how someone wants to live their final days – with choice, music, the people they love and, sometimes with less fear".

Related Helpful Websites

<https://www.dyingwithdignity.ca>

<https://www.advancecareplanningontario.ca>

<https://maidfamilysupport.ca> (regarding Before and After Support for the MAiD provision of a loved one)

By Emily Lomas, for the Continuum of Care Committee. Watch for our upcoming pamphlet with information on In-Home and Community Support Services.

Membership

Clara Warden - Membership Convenor

Happy Spring!

The arrival of Spring means its time to shake off the Winter chill of our Canadian winter and embrace the warmth of the new season.

I am looking forward to seeing our members at the upcoming April luncheon – our St. Catharines Branch 70th Jubilee Celebration! Such a milestone! It’s going to be a fun time celebrating each other and our wonderful organization together.

I am happy to report that we are maintaining our Membership numbers. So far, we have welcomed Erna Antaya, Jennifer Bradbury, Margret Bousfield, and Erika Phair in this calendar year.

Our totals are now 306 regular members, 10 Social members, and 11 Life members.

Membership in RWTO/OERO is essential for our organization to continue growing. We are always looking for new members, so please “talk up” our Branch group with any retired women educator that you may know. You may contact Linda Foster or myself, if you are aware of anyone who may be interested. We would certainly be happy to hear from you.

In caring and sharing, Clara

Goodwill:

Kathy Trussell, Good Convenor

The Goodwill Committee had a very busy December. We send out Christmas cards to all the members over 80 years of age, and a group of “Elf” bakers made Christmas goodies and delivered them to our “Forever Young” members (who are 90 years old and over). A big thank you to the 2025 bakers... Pat Wilcox, Wendy Waind, Theresa Carnegie, Verna Leger, Patti Malkiewich, Janis Harlos.

Since the new year, I have sent out many Get Well, Thinking of You and Sympathy Cards to our members. Jennifer and Catherine continue to mail or e-mail Birthday greetings to all the members over 80 years.

In February, Christine sent Valentine Cards to the Forever Youngs, and in April the team will deliver potted plants to them.

If anyone needs a card for any reason, please let me know by phone or email.

Yours in Caring and Sharing,
Kathy Trussell and the Goodwill Committee Team

Catherine Cookman, Christine Graham, Jennifer DiMarco, Linda Borland, Wendy Keunzel

Directory Changes:



Calling All Members We NEED YOU TO HELP!

As all our members are aware, we are a very large branch with many activities that so many of us enjoy. This activity takes many people to keep things organized. Our executive is very active in planning and keeping our branch alive. Teamwork is vital to the success of our branch.

We have a full team of executive members who are very dedicated to the branch and its members. Unfortunately, we are still in need of a volunteer to step up to help lead our branch over the next few years. We need to fill the one-year Vice President position which will soon become vacant. Should any of our members possibly be interested in this position, there is a full team to back you up. In such a large branch as ours, there must be someone who is able or willing to accept this challenge. There is also the possibility of two members accepting this position as a team. This has been successful in other branches where there have been issues finding someone who is able to assume a position of responsibility. We are all busy people, however, there is a saying, "If you need something done, ask a busy person".

Should you be interested, please contact me, Melanie Kelch, for further information.

Submitted by:
Melanie Kelch, Past President.

Pictures

Hey, St. Catharines RWTO/OERO members! Our branch has over 300 very busy members and lots of lively activity groups.

Let's share the fun - take pictures of your adventures, activities and friends and share them with our members. Send your photos (any time!) to Sharon Martinello or Fern Lackenbauer. A picture says a thousand words, so celebrate 70 years of RWTO/OERO by sharing the joy!



The Lunch Bunch ladies meet for lunch in the Winter months to enjoy the indoor sunshine and excellent restaurants of St. Catharines. Others may go to a warmer place, while we enjoy life here.

INTEREST GROUPS

OUT 'N ABOUT One Time Special Events

Kathleen Bradley, Interest Group Convenor

Shaw Festival Theatre 2026 Play: "FUNNY GIRL"

Friday, June 19, 2026, at 1pm.

It is always a good day with great seats when the RWTO St. Catharines ladies are at the Festival Theatre!



REVOLVING BOOK CLUB

Looking for a chance to read a new book every month by an author you may not have read before – join the RWTO Revolving Book Club. Ten books are selected and shared amongst our readers over the year, beginning in October and ending in July. Each reader enjoys the opportunity to read a book each month and then passes it on to the next reader. In July she gets to keep the last book and add it to her personal library.

To participate, each reader contributes \$25.00 to the cost of the books which is due June 30, 2026, to Patt Chivers in cash, cheque or e transfer. Look for Patt at either of the Spring Luncheons for more information.



(left) This Singin’ 4 Fun Interest Group *ROCKS!* Janis Harlos and Lesia Farrell so enjoying dancing to the music. They might need to change their name to “Singin’ and Swingin’ 4 Fun”.

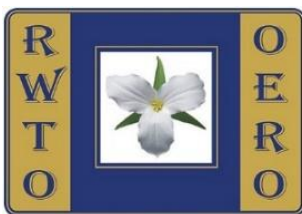
(right) Judith Bennoch and Joyce Babcock in California after Judith’s Musical performance. Snowbirds enjoying their warm winter while we shovel the white stuff. No jealousy here!



Interest Groups meet weekly, monthly or as a one-time special event.

If you are interested in joining a group or better yet, forming a group, contact Kathleen Bradley.

Art in the Afternoon	Dining Divas	Let’s Chat About It, Book Club	Singin’ 4 Fun
Beading	Euchre Groups 1 & 2	Let’s Chat About It, Chapter Two, Book Club	Travelogue Group
Bowling	Out ‘n About	Lunch Bunch	Walkers 1 – Morning Group
Bridge	Golf	Revolving Book Club	Walkers 2 – Afternoon Group



www.rwto.org Learn more about RWTO/OERO on the provincial website.

<https://rwto.org/branch-new/st-catharines/>

View the St. Catharines Branch activities, including contact information, upcoming events, Branch Newsletters, Interest Groups, Resources, Awards and more.

Thank you to our printer, UPS Printing, Ridley Square.