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## **Origins of RTO/ERO and Timeline of Important Developments**

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The need for an organization to represent retired teachers' interests regarding pensions arose in the mid-60's when a number of retirees and the Ontario Teachers' Federation were faced with changing times: some long-time retirees had pitiful pensions; the Federal government was considering a universal pension plan; the Ontario government was wondering how to improve government-employee and teacher pensions vis-a-vis the proposed Canada Pension Plan while helping those in need. Over time, these origins can get lost. So we take this time in our 40<sup>th</sup> year to remind you of our story.

Teachers, active and retired, have a history of political action related to pension improvement. We summarize, from **Bob Lamb**'s writings, as follows:

Following the closure of the Ryerson Fund to new entries in 1885, efforts were continued to achieve a better scheme of superannuation. In 1901, The Ontario Educational Association (OEA) resolved: "That in the opinion of this Association it would be in the interests of the teachers of Ontario to have established some scheme of superannuation under the control of the Education Department." The OEA was joined by a committee from a new group called the Teachers' Alliance.

The hope was realized when the Superannuation committee of the Ontario Educational Association reported "complete success" at Convocation Hall in April, 1917 saying that the new Act would prove to be "the best on the statute books of any country". This had followed a delegation of 2,500 teachers, spearheaded by the London Teachers Association, marching on the Legislature on March 9, 1917, to present their concerns to the government of Sir William Hearst.

STO was engaged in political lobbying in its very beginnings. Murdoch McIver, in a letter (May, '68) quoted in *The Long March* (p. 361), said, "I am in the middle of an operation to blanket the Legislature by having every member of the Legislature visited by two retired teachers." Before Christmas of 1969, Minister Davis announced that all pensions, including those of civil servants, were to be increased by 2%, with some limits, for each year a pension had been in force. *Continued Page S12* 📄

## Origins of The Superannuated Teachers of Ontario

The spark that ignited the idea of an organization representing retired teachers was the introduction of the Canada Pension Plan in 1965. By this plan each employer was to deduct a percentage of each employee's salary and remit this to the Canada Pension Plan (CPP). **Art McAdam**, in one of his reports, said that Premier John Robarts had decided that the most that should be taken from a teacher for pension purposes was a total of 6% and so the CPP should be "integrated with" rather than "stacked on" the teacher contribution. There was a fair amount of controversy generated among teachers, some of whom were willing to forego money loss now for benefits in the future, while others felt that dollars in their hands now were more desirable than a better pension at the end of the road to retirement.



**Art McAdam**

The Premier, at a meeting with the Board of Governors of the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF), put forward the integration plan but indicated that the superannuation fund would continue to provide pensions up to age 65 in the usual manner, after which the pension would be reduced but augmented by the CPP. Also added was a provision for the superannuation allowance to be based on the best seven years salary rather than the best ten years salary as it was at that time. Since salaries had increased substantially in the period this meant a much better pension. Seeing that this appeared to be a suitable compromise, the Board of Governors accepted the proposal.

When the Minister of Education made his annual visit to the Spring Meeting of the Board of Governors in 1966, **Nora Hodgins**, the Secretary of OTF, asked what was to be done for those who were already on pension and who had paid 6% into the Fund for many years past. The reply was that those pensions would not be disturbed.

Nora felt that pension changes for future pensioners should apply also to those already on pension and suggested that the retired teachers get organized. Art drafted a plan of organization for a retired teacher group and an OTF committee was formed to organize the superannuated teachers. The committee of ten retired teachers, two from each affiliate, was chosen by Art and **Norman MacLeod**. Those selected were **Art McAdam** (Toronto),



**Norm MacLeod**

**Norman MacLeod** (Leaside), **Jean Beach** (Ottawa), **Marie Jeanne Seguin** (Ottawa), **Murdoch McIver** (Toronto), **Harvey Mitchell** (North York), **Mary MacPherson** (London), **Laura Cook** (London), **Elizabeth Newman** (Toronto), **Marion Tyrrell** (Toronto) and **Yvonne Laronde** (North York). (Location by address, not by Board.)

Marion Tyrrell (later the first secretary of STO) wrote that Norman, Art and Murdoch were the driving force in the committee with Marie Jeanne and Harvey providing major support.

The November, 1967 OTF Reporter contained a report of the Interim Committee for the Superannuated Teachers which informed the OTF Governors that: "Every person who upon retirement is a member of the Federation and who is receiving a pension or an allowance under the Teachers' Superannuation Act, may, upon request, be an associate member of the Federation." Steps taken included:

1. Sending an information and progress letter to each pensioner.
2. Meeting with J. R. Causley Director of the Superannuation Commission to have a consent form sent to all superannuated teachers from his office and that a membership fee could be deducted annually from the pension cheque.
3. Sending to each pensioner and those who choose to join the Superannuated Teachers' Organization nomination forms and ballots to elect the first Senate.
4. Meeting with the Minister to review benefits for those retired prior to 1966. (Minister to take a minimum \$300 raise to the government.)

This interim committee gave the organization a name, the *Superannuated Teachers of Ontario*; defined the membership as being superannuated teachers; and provided for a Senate of 20 senators to be the governing body - four to be elected by and from the retired former members of each of the five affiliates. The Senate was to meet at least once per year and be required to elect from its members, a president, vice-president and a secretary-treasurer.

To accomplish this, it was necessary to secure the approval of the potential membership and provide for the election of the Senate and eventually for its officers. Each retired teacher was asked to submit a name of a retiree

from his or her affiliate. Five names of those most favoured by each affiliate were then included on a mailed ballot with two to be elected. A large majority of retired teachers favoured the proposal and the election occurred on March 14, 1968, with the 20 Senators meeting in the OPSMTF (now ETFO) Board Room [then] at 1260 Bay Street. The first elected officers were Kay MacPherson (past-president) Art McAdam (president), Norman McLeod (vice-President) and Marion Tyrrell (secretary-treasurer).



**Murdock McIver\***

Beside organizing itself, Senate set a membership fee and approved a constitution which lasted until 1973 when Murdoch McIver introduced a new one which allowed for the formation of districts and the power of districts to elect one of their members to the Senate. The Senate also tackled the problem of inadequate pensions received by early pensioners. There were many examples of hardship available. Murdoch McIver (President, STO 1973) had retired in the early fifties at a pension of about \$3,500 which at that time allowed for living at about his previous style. Twelve years later this amount was approaching penury due to the cost of living increases during that time. But at this first 1968 meeting, the chairman ruled that the matter should be deferred until the OTF resolution calling for pension adjustment based on substituting the best seven years' salary. This had been done for all teachers retiring after 1965. A resolution was adopted calling for a meeting with the Premier. This occurred, but the meeting was a disappointment since he was not in favour of recalculation. But Mr. Robarts indicated that an escalation clause might be a possibility if the teachers were willing to increase their contribution. It was apparent that another tack had to be taken. The new STO president Art McAdam wanted to restore the power of the pension by way of a formula which would remove much of the inequity. It appeared to also to Robarts that the minimum pension of \$600.00 in place for 50 years should be brought up to meet the needs of the present day. His draft proposal called for:

*Continued on Page S6* 

\* **Elisabeth McIver**, daughter of Murdock, was kind enough to send us a photo of her father for our archives. She also sent a letter containing personal recollections of teaching many years ago. We reproduce her description on Page S5.

Dear Mr. Menagh:

Someone recently passed to me your September Toronto Newsletter asking for photos of past Executive Members who were the original builders of District 16. I am the youngest of Murdock McIver's seven children, 85 years old.

I have very vivid memories of my Dad spending countless hours to bring about liveable pensions to retired teachers. Even as the teachers in the days prior to technical wings springing up everywhere, teachers struggled to raise families on very low salaries. Salaries became liveable only after teachers were brought in from industry to fill the teaching positions. People from industry would never have accepted positions at salaries academic teachers were getting so they had to raise incomes for the academic teachers already in the classrooms. When the government, Federal, woke up to the fact that students had to finish high school with some skills that helped them to find a job, they funded school boards 75% of the cost of building the tech wings.

Years prior to this major change, my father became aware of the teachers who had taught for 40 years, retired with pensions of \$2,000.00 a year. Without having saved something from their meagre salaries, they wouldn't survive, and actually, in those days, many teachers did not live many years in retirement, particularly male teachers.

My Dad, with a few other teachers travelled by train on weekends to many places in Ontario and he worked with the Ontario government to make the needed changes. He worked tirelessly in his eighties to have teachers' pensions pegged to the cost of living and now, teachers who never knew the hard times we grew up in, can retire and travel around the world.

My Dad, and others with the Toronto Board, were paid 10 times a year every month except July and August... which meant that the [June] pay-cheque had to last [our] family of nine to the 30<sup>th</sup> of September. Seven children had all the usual diseases children have and even the unusual ones - diphtheria, scarlet fever - no immunization shots for children in those days and no national health program. My eldest sister had the misfortune to suffer two serious diseases at the same time and was left with the lifetime disease of bronchitis. She struggled with the extremely debilitating stress of this disease until her death at the age of 51. At one point in her early years, our doctor had to call in a specialist. My Dad was literally unable to pay his bill and the specialist took him to court. The judge, after hearing the facts, threw the case out of court saying: 'You can't get blood out of a stone.'

The added stress for both my Mom and Dad was that any communicable disease had to be reported and a card to that effect was posted on our front door. My Dad was not allowed to teach unless he found other lodging and my mother was left to cope with devastatingly difficult situation on her own.

My Dad, upon retiring from teaching, worked full time for the Ontario Conservation Authority and when that was closed down, he worked full time for a Public, Not-for-Profit, health organization (the proper name of which escapes me at this writing). It was a national organization.

**Elizabeth McIver**

1. A Pension minimum of \$1,400.00.
2. All pensions in force to be increased by a percentage equal to 2½% times the number of years they had been in force.
3. An escalation clause in the Teachers' Superannuation Act to enable pensions in the future to be recalculated in relation to the cost of living increase.

Art met with Norman McLeod and Murdoch McIver at Federation House to take the proposal to the Senate where the proposal was adopted. Marion (Tyrrell) sent a copy of the proposal to the OTF executive in time to get it on the agenda of the Winter meeting of the OTF Board of Governors where it was passed. The Department (now Ministry) of Education received it shortly after and, in turn, phoned OTF to see if \$1,200 would be a suitable minimum pension. The Board of Governors thought that the minimum should be at least \$2 100.00 and the Government agreed to that new figure.

In October, 1969 the Education Minister (William Davis) set up a government committee to meet with OTF to consider the issue of escalation. OTF contributed five members to the committee including Norman and Art from STO. At one point a treasury official said "your request is reasonable but we can't grant it because the government also contributes to and guarantees the pensions of its civil servants and they haven't asked for a thing. At this stage perhaps nothing would have happened but Art recalls that he said "I can only speak for retired teachers but the old civil servants must be as hard up as we are and they must need help too". The meeting closed and all went home.

Twenty years later Art recalled presenting concrete examples of 'need':

Mr. J. retired in 1950. Mr. J. retired in 1950 and his pension was 2% times the average salary of the previous 15 years - of course they didn't use the year they retired. His pension was computed on the years from 1934-1949. During the depression, for five of those years his salary had actually gone down. Poor Mr. J. He had only four good years when he had an increase and the other eleven years were bad. So he had to be content with the minimum of \$50 per month. Inflation started up and by his 70<sup>th</sup> year he was living on bread and milk. He lost weight, took the flu and had to put on his angel wings and take off for eternity.

Mr. K. retired in 1955 and his first pension dollar was no better than Mr. J.'s last pension dollar so his whole pension was discounted at the inflation rate in 1947-1955. And then it started to go down and down with inflation

Mr. L. retired in 1960. His first pension dollar was discounted by inflation for 10 years.

The next one, Mr. M., retiring in 1965 had his pension value subjected to inflation for fifteen years.

Mr. O, retired in 1970, he was lucky, He got the best seven years.

Before Christmas of 1969 the Minister Mr. Davis announced that all pensions, including those of civil servants, were to be increased by 2%, with some limits, for each year a pension had been in force.

### **Pension Adjustments and Escalation**

The improvements obtained in pensions gave an impetus toward a stronger STO. As of January 1971 ad hoc escalation of pensions was introduced for 7,400 teachers who retired before 1970. Pensioners who retired in 1950 or earlier had their pensions increased 50% and those retiring as late as 1969 received an increase ranging from 46% for 1951 retirees, to as low as 2% for 1969 retirees.

By January of 1973 a further ad hoc escalation of 4% for pensions of 1970 or earlier and a rise for 1971 pensions of 2%. was established. A minimum escalation amount was set at \$84.00. At the same time the minimum pension for calculation purposes for past and future retirees was set at \$2,184 (this was the old minimum plus the minimum escalation of \$84.00) The "F" or service pension, and the dependents pension were adjusted in the same general way. For example the minimum adjustment to a dependent's pension was set at \$42.00. The costs of these adjustments were to be met by the Ontario Government rather than the Superannuation Fund. The most interesting development in the 1973 changes, announced on August 27, 1973 at the OTF Board of Governors, was the statement by the Minister Thomas Wells, that these represent an interim adjustment pending completion of a study to find a method of providing an ongoing solution to the problem of maintaining, at least to some degree, the purchasing power of all pensions to which the Government contributes". It appeared that some automatic escalation was on the horizon although the words "to some degree" tempered any possible wild enthusiasm that might have arisen.

The September 5, 1973 report to the Executive of STO by Murdoch contained the following account of his appearance at the Annual Meeting of OTF:

Miss Tyrrell, our hard-working Secretary, prepared literature to be used in preparing for, and conducting interviews. In addition to an OTF pamphlet restating the requests of the superannuated teachers with suggested reasons for granting them, which was reprinted and distributed widely to canvassers, members of the Legislature and officials. Miss Tyrrell prepared and sent out to all potential

canvassers two pamphlets setting out how to arrange for and conduct an interview. The shocking thing about this operation is the disappointingly small number who had completed their interviews, 55 at last count. We derive some comfort from the fact that, of the members interviewed, all but one were favourable.



Alan Sweetman at age 102\*

Murdoch McIver was enthusiastic over the contribution made by **N. A. Sweetman** of the City of Toronto whom he describes as “a most willing and tireless worker in our cause, an inspiration and a driving force”. Murdoch gave further good news:

Following continued pressure from OTF and also the STO under the leadership of Murdoch McIver and Dorothy Martin the new Secretary, Premier Davis established a committee to recommend changes to meet the needs of pensioners. Mr. J. R. Causley was named Chairman.

The biggest drawback to proposing a plan was the lack of a suitable model and the restriction of funding that the Pensions Benefit Act required. OTF took the position that nothing ventured was nothing gained and proposed the establishment of a fund to which teachers and government should contribute and which could be reviewed in the light of experience and the financial health of the fund. Such a fund would not need to be actuarially sound since the benefits would be contingent on the health of the fund and so that the restrictions of the Act were not applicable.

The government agreed to this approach, but at a meeting of the Board of Governors of OTF, teacher participation was jeopardized by the stance taken by one affiliate that the whole idea should be renegotiated for maximizing the benefits. Fortunately toward the end of a long afternoon the decision was taken to allow the OTF Executive to have a free hand to resolve the matter both expeditiously and practically, and the governors then “folded their tents” and departed for home leaving the matter to the OTF Executive. The committee recommended that all pensions in force as of July, 1975 be

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\* This photo of Alan Sweetman in his 103<sup>rd</sup> year was provided by our member, **Lorne Brown**. Additional contributions of missing executive photos to our archives would be appreciated.

escalated in accordance with the cost of living. There would be a waiting period for the application of the Act which would provide a buildup of capital in a manner similar to the original plan of the 1917 Act which established the Superannuation Fund. A yearly cap of 8% was to be applied to the cost of living increase figure with any excess carried forward to such time as the cost of living fell below 8% at which time the excess could be applied to that year’s pensions. If the cost of living were to decrease there was to be no change in the pensions. These benefits found favour with OTF.

The teachers of Ontario owe a great deal to the STO and the OTF superannuation committees of the early 1970s. With respect to STO, Murdoch McIver chaired a committee which included S. G. B. Robinson, Mary Lehane, N. A. Sweetman and Jessie Fairburn. Tom Tait as chairman of the OTF committee had Marie Arthurs, Gerald Hurtubise and Ed Minchin as members. The teacher members of the joint committee of OTF and the Government also gave strong leadership through Father Frank Kavanaugh, Bill Jones, Geoff Wilkinson, and Ian Fife. M. McIver and A. McAdam and J. A. Causley were also members. These pioneers were also active at the Federal level as witnessed by correspondence between The Honourable John Turner, then Finance Minister and Laura Cook and Gordon Loney seeking tax relief for older citizens. In the exchange Mr. Turner referred to the \$1,000.00 exemption for senior citizens that he had just introduced.

With the passage of the Superannuation Adjustments Benefits Act in July 1975 the “on-going” solution had arrived and seemingly none too soon since the years 1974 and 1975 saw the Canada wide Consumer Price Index rise 9.09% and 12.02% respectively. The timing was crucial. Inflation, as noted, was rising, totalling about 32% in the previous four years. The strength of the teacher position following the great walkout of December 1973 was never greater. At the same time the finishing touches were being put on the legislation which, for the first time, gave collective negotiation rights to teachers. The clouds of declining enrolment and the redundancy of teachers were also at hand and escalation was a good move to allow teachers to retire earlier with their pension protected from erosion. Lack of such assurance was the reason that the implementation of the “90 factor” had resulted in fewer teachers than expected retiring with the factor. From 1975 onward the pressure on government to improve pensions lessened as higher salaries were achieved and wage restraints were put in place. Delay would have been fatal to escalation in that climate.

The Superannuation Adjustment Benefits Act provided for escalation benefits to teachers who retired September 1975 or later. There was no automatic retroactive provision for those who had taken a pension previously. Thus pensioners were not part of the Act. But the costs of previous escalation

and raises in the minimum pension, together with future escalation of pensions in force before 1975, continued to be carried by the Government. The contribution of each teacher subject to the Act was to be 1% of salary matched by an equal government sum. This levy was to be fixed until 1981. At that time, in the light of inflation, number of contributors and salaries, and the return on investment, the rate would be subject to review. There was provision for a review committee composed of four teacher and four government representatives to monitor the previous factors and also other related matters. The rate of adjustment to pensions was to be the rate of inflation subject to the restrictions as worked out by the committee and OTF as mentioned before.

Projected Balances in the fund for 1995 varied with the assumptions. Where it was assumed that contribution rate and number of contributors remained fixed, two scenarios were possible according to actuarial estimates in 1979. First, given inflation rates of 7.25% declining to 4% in 1991 and investment return of 9.5% declining to 6.25 in 1991 and 6% thereafter, the fund would have a balance of \$846 million in 1995. Second, given constant inflation rate of 8% and investment rate of 9.5% dropping to 8%, the fund would be in deficit in the amount of -\$283.04 million. Both these assumptions were based on zero growth in contributors and the rate of contribution remaining fixed, but with salaries adjusted for increases. The Coward report of 1987 estimated that the Superannuation Adjustment Fund, to-day, would have an unfunded liability of \$2.6 billion and both the Coward and the Rowan reports estimate that the SAF will be exhausted by the year 2008.

The achievements of the present day Fund would astound those teachers in the Ryerson Fund of a century ago. Their demands then were outlined by Ryerson in the words:

“As to the grounds of objection to the distribution of the Fund (as now authorized by the School Act of 1871), which have been urged by very many earnest and faithful Teachers, I entirely sympathize, and would gladly see the Law modified so as to meet their reasonable wishes. These Teachers object to the present scheme, chiefly on the following grounds: That Teachers must be “worn out” before they can receive any aid from the Fund. As one Inspector remarks, “many of the best and most devoted Teachers look forward to a time when the work and worry of the School Room will be over, and the hope that their withdrawal from the profession may take place, at all events, a few years before they are incapacitated by infirmity and unable to teach a School any longer. Like the Merchant, the Mariner, and others, they hope for retirement while health and the capacity for enjoying retirement remains. Many of them would rather die in harness than confess themselves incapable of doing a day’s work.

The second reasonable ground for objection is the uncertainty of the amount of pension payable for each year’s service.

For some years, the state of the Fund has been such that I have only been able to apportion one to two dollars for each year’s service; last year the amount was only Two 33-100 dollars a year; but this year (out of the \$12,500 which I took the liberty to recommend being placed in the Estimates for this service), I shall be able to apportion at the rate of about Four dollars for each year’s service... It is the continual fluctuation in the amount payable to them which has reasonably caused much discontent. In regard to the first ground of complaint which has been urged, I would recommend a fixed age to be determined at which every Teacher who has subscribed to the Fund should have a right to retire and receive a Pension. A sliding scale of allowances might also be fixed, definite in amount, and not liable, under any circumstances, to fluctuation.”


While these century-old words may now sound quaint to us, they contain the hopes of all teachers that a pension scheme should provide enough time in retirement to be able to enjoy it. Thus, arriving at retirement in a “worn out” condition (as the old Act bluntly put it) and not being guaranteed a fixed pension in actual dollars, or its inflation-corrected figure, continues as the main concern of teachers.

It is true that teachers have made great advances in the field of pension allowances but so has the general population with the arrival of the Canada Pension and the Federal Old Age Security pension together with Guaranteed Income Supplements. Each improvement seems to point even more to those inequities that still exist, or are created by the improvements which are not applied retroactively.

#### Source:

*I*n 1989 **Robert Lamb**, an RTO/ERO Scarborough/East York member (right photo), researched the history of RTO/ERO including the development of teacher pensions in Ontario. We use this source to continue our 40<sup>th</sup> year’s recognition of those who laboured to build the current structure of our pensions.



We’ll publish more of Robert’s writings in future Newsletters. 

**Editor:** As our current governments consider the establishment of a form of universal retirement plan, two types are considered:

- a) a private-for-profit system operated by financial institutions; or,
- b) a publicly-operated system similar to the Canada Pension Plan where investment gains accrue to those supplying the funds.

Is there a place in this debate for RTO/ERO to add its 68,000-member voice to support a fair and viable pension program for all citizens?


The most interesting development in the 1973 changes, announced on August 27, 1973 at the OTF Board of Governors, was the statement by the Minister Thomas Wells, that these represent an interim adjustment pending completion of a study to find a method of providing an ongoing solution to the problem of maintaining at least to some degree the purchasing power of all pensions to which the Government contributes”.

The September 5, 1973 report to the Executive of STO by Murdoch, in part, contained the following account of his appearance at the Annual Meeting of OTF:

Miss Tyrrell ... stressed as “our major project of this year [would be] the organization of interviewing teams... to approach Members of the Provincial Legislatures. ...prepared literature to be used in preparing for, and conducting interviews. In addition, an OTF pamphlet restating the requests of the superannuated teachers with suggested reasons for granting them, was reprinted and distributed widely to ... members of the Legislature and officials.

The teachers of Ontario owe a great deal to the STO and the OTF superannuation committees of the early 1970s: Murdoch McIver chaired a committee including S. G. B. Robinson, Mary Lehane, N. A. Sweetman and Jessie Fairburn. Tom Tait, chair of the OTF committee, had Marie Arthurs, Gerald Hurtubise and Ed Minchin. These pioneers were also active at the Federal level when Mr. Turner introduced the \$1,000.00 exemption for senior citizens.

With the passage of the Superannuation Adjustments Benefits Act in July 1975, the “on-going” solution had arrived and, seemingly, none too soon since the years 1974 and 1975 saw the Canada wide Consumer Price Index rise 9.09% and 12.02% respectively. The timing was crucial. Inflation, as noted, was rising totalling about 32% in the previous four years. The strength of the teacher position following the great walkout of December 1973 was never greater. At the same time the finishing touches were being put on the legislation which, for the first time, gave collective negotiation rights to teachers.

The November 12, 1986 Newsletter, which continued to urge members to write to their MPPs about the “best five years”. Any successful pension campaign must have the aim of correcting, by pension changes, a serious breach of social justice relating to inequitable practice, or the overcoming of a social problem. STO can take heart that their pressure did cause legislators to pay more attention to pension issues, which did result in raising low pensions and also making it possible for future teachers to retire earlier without penalty. 

## **Background of RTO/ERO Beginnings**

**1966** ~ Under the auspices of the Ontario Teachers’ Federation (OTF) Interim Committee for Superannuated Teachers is created.

**1967** ~ a proposed organization constitution and by-laws are drafted with a governing Senate of 20 members drawn from the OTF affiliates.

**1968** ~ STO/ERO begins/Membership: 9,176

- Between 1968 and 1969, STO/ERO meets with Minister of Education Davis seven times to discuss increasing the teacher pensions.
- McAdam, McIver and McLeod work extensively to see McAdam’s three clauses accepted by the government:
  - a) A minimum pension of \$1,400 rather than \$600;
  - b) All pensions in force to be increased by 2% times the number of years the pension had been in force; and
  - c) An escalation clause inserted into the Superannuation Act.
- By Christmas 1969, the “Mc-trio” get the buying power of the pension dollar tied to inflation and the minimum pension up to \$2400 or \$200/month.
- Minister of Education Davis announces all pensions, including those of civil servants, to be increased by 2% for each year a pension is in force.
- Health service begins in 1969 with an agreement between STO/ERO, the Superannuation Commission and the Co-Operative Health Services. With deductions made by the Commission, pensioners paid \$2/month and \$4/month for those with a spouse. A family paid \$6.50/month. At least 6,500 pensioners join the plan.

**1971** ~ STO/ERO fees deducted from pension cheques are:

up to \$1,999-\$1/year; \$2,000 to \$3,999-\$2/year; \$4,000 + -\$3/year.

- 1<sup>st</sup> Senate held with 22 people: elects senators; appoints Executive for two-year term, approves constitution; appoints eight committees (superannuation, budget, health insurance, constitution and newsletter).
- Reference to 10 member groups as “Areas or districts” begins.
- To influence and pressure members of the legislature on pension recalculation a woman and man are selected in each Area to interview MPPs to explain the request for amendments to the Superannuation Act.
- Membership information is key punched on cards and filed according to county.
- ad hoc escalation of pensions is introduced for 7,400 teachers who retired before 1970. Pensioners who retired in 1950 or earlier have their pensions increased 50% and those retiring as late as 1969 received an increase ranging from 46% for 1951 retirees to 2% for 1969 retirees.
- Last vestiges of sex discrimination abolished when widowers of

pensioners made as eligible as widows for dependents allowances.

- STO/ERO protests OTF's reduction from 100 to 20 days the supplying teaching days a pensioner could teach without financial penalty.

**1972** ~ Membership: 13,792

**1973** ~ Membership: 15,246

- Senate reforms include all Senators, Provincial Executive and standing committee chairs to serve one-year terms instead of two. District structure introduced. Senators elected or appointed by each District.
- January 1973, a further ad hoc escalation of 4% for pensions of 1970 or earlier, and a rise of 2% for 1971 pensions is established.
- STO/ERO founders active at federal level: \$1,000 exemption for senior citizens introduced.
- Norman McLeod passes away before seeing all changes he lobbied for.

**1974** ~ Membership: 16,257

- Following continued pressure from OTF and STO/ERO, Premier Davis establishes committee to recommend changes to meet pensioners needs.
- Basis STO/ERO fee changes to \$1 per \$1,000 of pension per year.

**1975** ~ Membership: 17,113

- The Superannuation Adjustment Fund annual escalation of pensions comes into effect.
- The Good Will Committee formed to deal with the welfare of members who need help, be it financial assistance, counselling or moral support.
- Districts and Units are asked to form benevolent committees.

**1976** ~ Membership: 17,924

- In cooperation with the OTF, the first two pre-retirement counseling seminars are held in June 1976.
- Members in the health plan reach 9,500. A mail campaign conducted over three days by 75 volunteers increases participation in the extended health care plan to 13,591.

**1977** ~ Membership: 18,965

**1978** ~ Membership: 15,000

- Personal Planning Workshops in partnership with OSSTF and the Teachers' Superannuation Commission.

**1979** ~ Membership: 16,000

- By fall 1979, \$22,670 is disbursed to 73 members. Districts establish Good Will Committees to assist beyond financial needs.

**1980** ~ Membership: 16,484

- Co-operative Health Services Ontario, underwriter of STO health plans, goes into receivership.



Logo/1973

- Confederation Life to underwrite health plans now sponsored by STO.
- STO is not liable for unpaid claims, but is advised to incorporate.

**1981** ~ Membership: 16,421

- Nora Hodgins, Superannuation Committee chair, gets support for:
  - i) Improving low pensions so no superannuated teachers are on or below the poverty level.
  - ii) Continuance of the Superannuated Adjustment Benefits Act, the repeal of which was recommended by Ontario's Select Committee on Pensions.
- First policy period with Confederation Life ends with a deficit of \$317,208. Increased premiums stabilize the policy.

**1982** ~ Membership: 17,735

- Fiscal year operating budget:

**1983** ~ Membership: 17,735

- 12,800 of our members have been enrolled in our health plans
- Annual District grant increases from \$500 to \$600, plus \$200 for northern Districts and an additional \$1 per member in excess of 200.
- OTF accepts one STO member to sit on the OTF Biennial Review Committee that negotiates pensions with the government.
- STO offers auto/home insurance through Johnson Insurance Limited,.
- STO works to convince government to base all pensions on best 5 years.
- Government enacts this amendment to the Teachers Superannuation Act

**1984** ~ Membership: 19,518

**1985** ~ Membership: 20,396

- STO incorporated.
- "STO/ERO" is adopted including a new logo.
- The BEST 5 campaign begins seeking recalculation of *all* pensions on the best five-year average. Members and non-members are recruited to assist; 5,424 members write letters to the premier, the provincial treasurer and local MPPs.
- Constitution is translated into French.
- Johnson Insurance Limited is appointed broker/consultant to represent STO in negotiations for group health insurance policies.

**1986** ~ Membership: 21,141

- STO's Future Report makes recommendations covering aging population, health care for senior citizens, and an informed membership.

**1987** ~ Membership: 26,000 +

- Fees: \$1.25/\$1,000 of pension
- Out-of-province and out-of-Canada travel benefit plan first offered.



Logo/1986



- OTIP lobbies STO to be its insurance carrier.
- Federal Minister of Finance, Michael Wilson, indicates that STO membership fees “do not meet requirements” for income tax deductibility.
- STO/ERO expands to 40 Districts, an increase of 11 since 1979.

**1988** ~ Membership: 27,000

- More than 25,000 active/retired teachers plus civil servants rally in Hamilton to protest the break off of negotiations between the Ontario government and OTF regarding control of pension funds.
- The Health and Insurance Committee (HSIC) takes control of STO/ERO health plans. Members receive increased opportunity for input on plans.
- The Ontario Teacher’s Insurance Plan (OTIP) health plan is introduced.
- STO/ERO health plans participation increase about 6%.

**1989** ~ Membership: 27,500

- The Ontario Teachers’ Superannuation Commission is re-named the Ontario Teachers’ Pension Plan Board (OTPPB).
- Johnson Insurance becomes the claims administrator for Maritime Life, the new underwriter of STO/ERO health plans.
- Drugs are biggest expense in the STO/ERO Extended Health Care Plans. Premiums are \$15.14 (single); \$23.24 (couple) and \$31.18 (family).
- From 1980-1990, 115 members receive Goodwill financial assistance in grants totalling \$103,220.
- North York first proposes changing the name of STO/ERO to The Retired Teachers of Ontario.

**1990** ~ Membership: 27,518

- STO/ERO joins the Canadian Association of Retired Teachers (CART).

**1991** ~ Membership: 27,634

- STO/ERO members are now officially associate members of OTF.
- Retired Ontario teachers living in British Columbia form 1<sup>st</sup> District outside Ontario.
- A marked increase in the use of STO/ERO’s health plans, exacerbated by medical inflation costs, makes it necessary for the HSIC to limit future benefit changes to keep premium increases down.

**1992** ~ Membership: 28,213

- The President and Executive Director attend the first meeting of stakeholders of the OTPPB.
- STO/ERO requests OTF restore the 20-day limit (from 95 days) on occasional teaching by pensioners to address plight of aspiring teachers.
- Social Contract negotiations lead OTF and government to become 50-50 partners in sponsoring the pension plan.

**1993** ~ Membership: 29,060

- Senate agrees to hire a full-time executive director.

**1994** ~ Membership: 30,425

- STO/ERO Provincial Office reaches seven full-time paid employees.

**1995** ~ Membership: 32,491

- The Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) is formed and STO/ERO members are encouraged to register while registration is free.
- Senate approves membership as a pre-requisite for new enrollees in any of the three health plans.
- Senate endorses a more proactive political approach concerning teachers’ pensions, CPP reform and reduced benefits to the Ontario Drug Benefit program. Districts are encouraged to form political action committees and participate in a MPP letter writing campaign.

**1996** ~ Membership: 36,965

- A website [sto-ero.org](http://sto-ero.org) and an email address is established.
- STO/ERO petitions Premier Harris to place a retired teacher, appointed by STO/ERO, on the OTPPB to ensure direct accountability to the retired teachers of Ontario, who make up 25% of the pension plan.
- STO/ERO appeals to Revenue Canada for a more equitable tax application to deal with OTPPB lump sum payments from the discovery of incorrectly calculated pensions. Minister of Finance Martin says he sees there may be an issue that requires redress.
- STO/ERO Constitution amended to permit two Senators and one Observer per District to attend each Senate.
- STO/ERO supports active teachers in their struggle against the passage of Bill 160 (the Education Quality Improvement Act).
- STO/ERO expresses concern to OTF over rumours that it is negotiating with the Ontario government to use the OTPP to “pay for” \$2.5 billion of teaching staff and working conditions government cuts.

**1997** ~ Membership: 41,020

- Project – Service to Others is formed.
- New name announced: *“The Retired Teachers of Ontario”*
- RTO/ERO eliminates the deductible for prescription drugs.
- RTO/ERO purchases 18 Spadina Road in Toronto



**1998** ~ Membership: 42,585

- Member fees: \$1.25 per \$1,000 of pension.
- Over 21,000 member postcards are presented to the Harris government in a campaign asking for direct participation of retired members in negotiations affecting the pension plan.
- RTO/ERO succeeds in lobbying for a special change to Canada’s tax laws to treat more fairly the lump sum Ontario Teachers’ Pension Plan (OTPP) entitlement review payments.

**1999** ~ Membership: 44,338

- RTO/ERO offers long-term care insurance program to fill the gap between provincial coverage and the individual assets of members.
- OTF agrees to give RTO/ERO a permanent, voting position on its Pension Committee and Pension Negotiations Committee, thus allowing RTO/ERO to participate in matters to be taken to the pension partners before negotiations.
- Extended health care premiums increase by 25%, the first since 1996.

**2000** ~ Membership: 46,590

- RTO/ERO hires a full-time information officer
- OTPP achieves Canada Pension Plan (CPP) improvements, a permanent 85-factor for retirement and the implementation of the best five years of service as the means to calculate pension. The latter rewarding RTO/ERO for its perseverance since 1984 towards achieving this goal.
- The Ontario College of Teachers establishes its public register on the status of certified teachers. Inaccurate information and the status of retired teachers, no longer working, listed as “Suspended – Nonpayment of Fees” presents problems for RTO/ERO members. Senior staff meets with OCT and the status is changed to “retired.”

**2001** ~ Membership: 49,105

- RTO/ERO makes two submissions to the Romanow Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada and a formal submission to the Ontario Education Equality Task Force.
- The Newsletter transitions to a polished and professional magazine, Renaissance, that is circulated to more than 50,000.
- A new slogan, “Here for you Now... Here for your Future” is coined.

# Renaissance

**2002** ~ Membership: 51,657

- Audit Committee established to demonstrate transparency of corporate governance and accountability.
- RTO/ERO establishes policy stating it “*supports the right to strike of teachers and support staff in Ontario schools, both as a basic condition of employment and a legitimate means to achieve collective agreements.*”
- A full-time Manager, Financial Reporting is hired after the retirement.

**2003** ~ Membership: 53,988

- During the federal budget announcement a 1% cap on investments by pension plans in business income trusts is imposed. OTPP invites the RTO/ERO to join a potential task force to develop strategies to tackle the issue. By the spring Senate, the federal Minister of Finance announces

the suspension of the legislation.

**2004** ~ Membership: 56,075

- Membership fees reduced \$1.10 per \$1000 of gross pension.
- Goodwill program, which distributes emergency funds to members in serious need, is renamed the Emergency Assistance Program.
- Members who reach 100 or older now reimbursed their membership fee.

**2005** ~ Membership: 57,867

**2006** ~ Membership: 59,930

- The federal government follows through with its promise to include pension income splitting. RTO/ERO plays a prominent role in ensuring this happens through the actions of the Political Action Committee (which monitored the issue and in 2005, initiated a pension income splitting petition campaign throughout the province).

**2007** ~ Membership: 58,748

- RTO/ERO officially turns 40.
- Teachers eligible to join RTO/ERO upon retirement can join while still actively teaching.
- RTO/ERO hires its first middle management position, Communications.

**2008** ~ Membership: 61,407

- membership extended to a retired non-educator employee of an Ontario School Board or educational organization

**2009** ~ Membership: 62,679

- membership available to an individual, employed in education, not retired but eligible upon retirement to be a Full or Associate member;
- a retired teacher receiving a pension from a non-designated Ontario private school added to membership.
- a retired teacher with a minimum of 15 years of credited service who opted for a commuted value transfer from the Ontario Teachers’ Pension Plan following the Ontario Teachers’ Pension Plan rules in place at the time of commutation may join.
- authorized an annual workshop for district presidents.
- Political Action Committee renamed ‘Political Advocacy’.

**2010** ~ Membership: 63,927

- annual fee for membership raised to its previous level of \$1.25 per \$1,000 or major fraction thereof, of gross annual pension.
- parameters set for the RTO/ERO Charitable Foundation and its first goal of an Endowed Chair in Geriatrics at the University of Toronto.
- membership available to the spouse of a member or the surviving spouse



of a Full or Associate member who is not eligible to receive a teacher's pension.

2011 ~ Membership: 66,487

2012 ~ Membership: TBA

- non-designated private school employees added to membership

### Sources:

We thank the former Communications Officer, **renée I. A. mercuri** for her efforts in researching the RTO/ERO archives to compile the following data:

Archives of Ontario;

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*STO/ERO Facts and Impressions* (1985 – 2008);


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RTO/ERO Monthly Membership Counts 1990-present, maintained by

**Dianne Vezeau**;


RTO/ERO Newsletters and *Renaissance* magazine (1978-2008);

*The Next Ten Years*: 1993-2003, the sequel to the *Book of Memories*

1968-1993, compiled by **Colette Cunningham**, Assistant Executive Director. 

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**Editors:** Is there a future for RTO/ERO to be cognisant of pension issues in Ontario in addition to Federal concerns?

With the current issue of 'pension envy' being the pretext for Ontario's Progressive Conservative leader to propose the removal of defined-benefit plans for public sector workers, with the former Ontario Liberal leader overriding labour legislation to 'balance' a budget at the expense of the education sector (thus setting a precedent for future governments), perhaps you might be watchful should elected officials set their dollar-sign-eyes on the funds of public-sector pension plans. Stay watchful! 

*Did you read Jim Leech's presentation to the C.D. Howe Institute reproduced on Page 24 in this Issue?*