



Looking Back to the “Accomplishments” of (STO) RTOERO and District 23, North York, over 50 Years

October 18, 2023

Let me say something to our Past Presidents. There are 52 of you, very sorry that many cannot be with us. A few have held the office of President more than once - thank goodness. Our most senior Past Presidents are John Wilson, Gord Claus, and Mildred Frank – please stand so that we can see you. I say to you and all of the Past Presidents present- a big thank you for your leadership- I am sure each of you can point to something that you did or happened during your term of office that made a difference to the district. Would those who held the office more than once- please stand- we owe you a great debt of gratitude for doing this

We all know the Presidents did not achieve all of this on their own- they had fine support from their executives. Helen Wiber, a Past President (and present today), has compiled a listing of all executive members from 1973 (the beginning) to 2006 which numbered about 156. Expanding this to now, the number could reach about 225, A big thank you is extended to each one, and all of these

members for their fine work & support on behalf of the district. If you have been or are a member of one of our executives- please stand (if you can)

(A Real Accomplishment)

55 Years Ago, the Superannuated Teachers of Ontario (STO/ERO) was established on March 14, 1968, with a voluntary membership of 9176. The organization emerged gradually because of issues that affected retired teachers at that time. These matters included: the unilateral integration in 1966 of the Canada Pension Plan into the Teachers' Superannuation Pension Plan of the day; low teacher pensions; and in 1966, no retroactivity in changing the best 10 years to the best 7.

STO/ERO grew out of the work of an OTF committee in 1966 charged with the mandate of organizing superannuated teachers with a Senate.

Senate determined that beginning in 1973 the organization of the large 10 'Areas' was to be changed to 25 'Districts' for Districts to organize activities closer to where the members live. Thus, District 23 – North York, with 36 members present at its 1st general meeting on October 4, 1973, was in place.

(An Accomplishment)

Since 1973 North York District 23 has included retirees of the North York School Board (later the Toronto District School Board), the Toronto Catholic District School Board (North York area), and later the North York Francophone schools, and retirees from other school boards and from the larger educational community.

Founding members of District 23 were: Bruce Dawson, Jean Featherstone, Viva Heaton, Helen Lang, Dick Webster, and Dorothy Young. Helen and Dorothy attended our Luncheons into the 2000's (some of Dorothy's family is here today).

At that time, each district was invited to send representative to provincial Senate (later it became 2 Senators.) We were represented by our first president, Bruce Dawson (1973-1974) and Dr. Charles Phillips- Senator. (a well-known professor of Canadian history of education at U of T and OISE).

Thus, District 23 – North York, was brought into being (as were the other 3 current districts in Toronto. The local annual fee was set at \$1.00 per member. By April 1, 1974, there were 94 paid-up members. The treasury contained \$266.14 which included \$200 that had been received from STO/ERO for District support. Even by then, 'escalation' was the major issue.

(An Accomplishment)

Things started to happen in the first 5 years (1968-72) of STO/ERO. The following was achieved under Ministers of Education Bill Davis and later Tom

Wells: minimum pensions were raised up to \$2200 from \$600; basic health plans were introduced in 1969 through the Superannuation Commission. This was later deemed illegal. Very soon, thereafter Johnson Inc. was appointed by STO/ERO to manage our health plans.

(An Accomplishment).

In 1976, escalation was introduced to our pension plan - a long time objective. Ken McKee and Jack Foote were very involved in lobbying the Government to introduce it. Escalation has gone through a few changes over the years along with the costs of the plan.

(An Accomplishment)

At the STO/ERO Senate in May of 1988 (its 20th anniversary), John Allen, a North York District Past President presented '**The Brass Bell**' from North York, District 23 in recognition of the many and varied achievements on behalf of North York district members. Jack Foote, our other District STO Founding Member Award Recipient, assisted in the presentation. The inscribed Brass Bell has been in use to this day at Senates and now Forums to announce the beginning of a meeting and the end of recesses. To quote Mel Steele, a former STO President, "District 23, North York is an inspiration to the whole organization".

(An Accomplishment).

During Senate in 1989-1990, District 23, North York proposed a name change from Superannuated Teachers of Ontario (STO/ERO) to the Retired Teachers of Ontario (RTO/ERO). In 1998, the Senate officially implemented this change of name.

(An Accomplishment after 10 years - again, slightly ahead if its time).

By 1990, the district had over 1100 members and had grown from an Executive of 6 in 1973 to 22 with Don Hazel as President and offering numerous strong social and cultural activities, excellent health insurance benefits, a fine newsletter, and travel opportunities.

(An Accomplishment).

We have always had a quality newsletter in North York. It has taken many formats, but the name has remained **STONY Bridges** - STONY is meant to represent '**Superannuated Teachers of North York**'. This newsletter is distributed 3 times yearly, in either electronic format or in hard copy, keeps our members up to date on activities provided in the district. It also provides an

opportunity for members to share their wider ranging experiences, as well as their writing talents.

(An Accomplishment).

At least monthly, a **District 23 e-Newsletter** is sent out to remind members of the next month's activities. This can include a new initiative that was not included in the current Stony Bridges.

(An Accomplishment).

In addition, we have a wonderful, very current website where one can source almost anything one needs to know and do. Go to <https://district23.rtoero.ca>

(An Accomplishment).

The Needlework and Craft group uses donated materials to create one-of-a-kind items to support our Community Service Grants program funded by RTOERO with a stringent application process. We have been successfully involved in about 23 community-oriented projects over the past years involving the contribution of over \$75,000.00 to fund such community projects directly. You will hear about one of these today.

(An Accomplishment).

There are many wonderful other services and opportunities offered such as: Bridge, Scholarships, Goodwill, Have-a-Java, Social (Luncheons), Strollers, and Trips among the many others mentioned. For more information on any of these programs, go to the current **STONY BRIDGES**, the current district **e-Newsletter**, or the district **Website** (<https://district23@rtoero.ca>).

(An Accomplishment)

Recognizing Our Leaders by RTOERO

RTO/ERO Founding Member Award

1986: Jack Foote received the award for his work in Goodwill and Life Insurance for service at the Provincial level.

2007: George Meek received the award for his outstanding service at the provincial level and his work at Senate, Chair of the Health Services and Insurance Committee, his contributions to the Constitution Committee, and his parliamentary work as a member of the Speaker's team at Senate.

(An Accomplishment)

RTO/ERO Distinguished Member Award

Mary Ellen Lawless, (2017), Mildred Frank (2019), Maureen Capotosto (2021), and George Meek (2023) were recipients of the RTOERO Distinguished Member Award for outstanding contributions to District 23 North York.

(An Accomplishment)

To maintain connections with our members, the RTOERO District 23, North York supports the growth and development of the district and its members focusing on areas such as recruitment, health service and insurance, support for the RTOERO Foundation, political advocacy, and retirement issues. In North York, all people involved in education are welcome to join RTOERO District 23, North York. Our large executive plans a wide range of activities to support member interests. Inclusivity is the basis from which District 23 develops focus areas. Consideration for the diversity of our members results in robust support for our many activities.

(An Accomplishment).

Thank you for your attention.

By George Meek on District 23, North York's 50th Anniversary. (18.10.23)

Many thanks to Mary Cairo (past District Archivist) for her contribution to my remarks.