

# A Decade of Firsts

The founding and first 10 years of the Superannuated Teachers of Ontario is marked by both milestones and minutiae

compiled by renée I.A. mercuri



PHOTO COURTESY OF OTF

*Norman McLeod, seen here in 1944, was the first president of the Ontario Teachers' Federation, the first First Vice President of STO/ERO in 1968 and the second person elected as President of STO/ERO, a position he held for two terms.*

1966-67

**Under the auspices of the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) Interim Committee for Superannuated Teachers**

❖ **From the minutes of the first Senate on March 14, 1968:**

“Early in 1965, the Superannuation Act was amended, reducing the period for calculating a pension from the last 10 years to the best seven. This amendment was to take affect on January 1, 1966... It was understood at that time that an adjustment would be made in the pensions granted prior to January 1, 1966. Early in 1966, OTF sent a request for recalculation. In September 1967, a year and a half later, no adjustment had been made in previous pensions and it was felt

by some on the OTF Executive that an organization representing all retired teachers would add weight to the OTF in getting an adjustment.”

- ❖ **Nora Hodgins**, secretary of OTF first suggests to **Arthur McAdam**, a pensioner who would see no increases, that if the retired teachers would get organized their numbers and expertise could be added to OTF. In McAdam's words, “By motion of the OTF executive, I was instructed to form a committee and proceed to organize the superannuated teachers.” He later praised Hodgins for her sense of fairness and for realizing the need for pensioners on low salary to get organized.
- ❖ **McAdam** chairs the interim committee consisting of two former members of each of the five OTF affiliates. With a budget set by OTF they meet for the first time on October 18, 1966 and 10 more times as they moved to unite all retired teachers to form STO/ERO. They decide they will continue work on the issue of pension recalculation. As stated in the meeting minutes of November 6, 1967: “What the superannuated teachers want is a stabilized fund, a new deal – an injustice has been perpetrated...” They determine it is essential to be a united voice in order to succeed.
- ❖ The **first meeting minutes** refers to the committee as “The Retired Teachers of Ontario Committee.” By the third meeting, they are the “Interim Committee for the Superannuated Teachers of Ontario.”
- ❖ The committee moves to meet with government officials, including **Minister of Education William Davis**, to discuss pension revision.
- ❖ In fall 1966, the committee sends a **letter of explanation and a questionnaire to all superannuated teachers** asking three questions, including if they agreed with the founding of an organization to represent them and if they were willing to pay a fee to help run the organization. A large majority (more than 85%) indicate “yes.”

- ❖ In spring 1967, a **proposed organization constitution and by-laws are drafted**. The proposed governing body is a Senate of 20 members drawn from the OTF affiliates, elected by mail ballot.

- ❖ Superannuated teachers are **sent yellow sheets in fall 1967** to join the Superannuated Teachers of Ontario. The sheet also entitled a member to submit one nomination for Senate.

## 1968-1972

1968-1969

**President Arthur McAdam (Ontario Public School Men Teachers' Federation)**

**Secretary-Treasurer Marion Tyrrell, until November 30, 1973**

**Membership: 9,176**

1969 – 1970

**President Norman McLeod (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation)**

**Membership: 10,012**

1970 – 1971

**President Norman McLeod (OSSTF)**

**Membership: 11,111**

1971 – 1972

**President Laura Cook (Federation of Women Teachers' Association of Ontario)**

**Membership: 12,217**

- ❖ **STO/ERO fees deducted from pension cheques** are: up to \$1,999 – \$1/year; from \$2,000 to \$3,999 – \$2/year and \$4,000 or over – \$3/year.

- ❖ **The first Senate is held with 22 people on March 14, 1968** in the board room of the Ontario Public School Men Teachers' Federation on 1260 Bay Street, Toronto. The first Senate included election of senators and appointment of the Executive for a two-year term, approval of the constitution and appointment of eight committees including superannuation, budget, health insurance, constitution and newsletter.

- ❖ The first STO/ERO Executive meeting is held on Wednesday, April 17, 1968. McAdam calls the meeting to order at 10 a.m. Present at the meeting are **Mary K. Macpherson, Past President; Norman McLeod, First**



*Marion Tyrrell, Secretary-Treasurer, 1968-1973*

PHOTO COURTESY OF OECTA

**Vice President; Laura Cook, Second Vice President; Marion Tyrrell, Secretary-Treasurer; and Executive Members Marie Jeanne Seguin, Thérèse Robert and Murdoch McIver. William Jones, OTF administrative assistant** is present for part of the meeting. Additional **Executive Members** not present include **Jean Beach, Emma Rogers and Veronica Houlahan.**

- ❖ The **first constitution** comes into full effect on October 31, 1968.

- ❖ The extension committee begins referring to 10 member groups as **“Areas or districts,”** governed by Area Chairmen (even if they were women) and committee members. The groups allow members to meet to discuss mutual problems and matters referred to them from the Senate or the Executive.

- ❖ To exert more influence and pressure on members of the legislature on the issue of 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.

- ❖ In the **first year of its existence**, according to its budget, STO/ERO **distributed two issues of its newsletter** to 6000 recipients at a cost of 20 cents each. The first issue is a double-sided sheet (7.5 x 9.75 inches) “compiled, printed and mailed to all retired teachers in the province



Clare Perry, Secretary-Treasurer, 1975-1984

under the chairmanship of Mr. Don Macpherson” according to the February 25, 1969 minutes.

- ❖ In the minutes of the first year of STO/ERO terms such as “mimeographed,” “stenographer,” “superannuation,” appear along with spellings such as “to-morrow” and “to-day.” Every name included in the minutes archive from 1966 to 1969 is prefaced by “Mr.” or “Miss.”
- ❖ Between 1968 and 1969, STO/ERO **meets with Minister of Education Davis seven times** to discuss increasing the teacher pensions.
- ❖ **McAdam**, along with **McIver** and **McLeod** work extensively to see **McAdam’s three clauses** accepted by the government: a) a minimum pension of \$1400 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. This last clause is realized shortly before McIver’s passing but too late for McLeod.
- ❖ Before 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 that all pensions, including those of civil servants, will be increased by 2%, with some limits, for each year a pension has been 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.
- ❖ President elections move to the fall Senate on October 23, 1969.
- ❖ As of January 1971, **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.
- ❖ The last vestiges of sex discrimination are abolished when widowers of pensioners are made eligible on the same basis as widows for dependents allowances.
- ❖ In 1971, the STO/ERO protests OTF’s reduction from 100 to 20 days the supplying teaching days a pensioner could teach without financial penalty. The OTF takes no action due to the teacher redundancy looming for many of its members.
- ❖ **Interviewing teams approach MPPs** to discuss the requests of superannuated teachers. In addition to an OTF pamphlet covering suggested reasons for granting the requests, Secretary Tyrrell distributes two pamphlets setting out how to arrange for and conduct an interview. Although dismayed with the small number who complete their interviews, the STO/ERO derives comfort that of the MMPs interviewed, all but one are favourable.
- ❖ The June 1972 *Newsletter* reports that a committee under Norma Duffy worked to **foster interest in STO/ERO in areas where there was none**, including in Toronto, which had no convener as late as the end of 1970. Interest gradually grows with pension improvements and the successful 1973 drive for automatic escalation.
- ❖ **Senate reforms** include that beginning in 1973 all Senators, Provincial Executive and standing committee chairs will serve one-year terms instead of two. With the introduction of Districts, Senators are elected or appointed by each District.

## 1972-75

1972 – 1973

President Laura Cook (FWTAO)

Membership: 13,792

1973 – 1974

President Murdoch McIver (District 16)

Secretary-Treasurer: Dorothy Martin, until August 31, 1975

Membership: 15,246

1974 – 1975

President Harry Redfern (District 21)

Membership: 16,257

❖ By 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. On August 27, 1973 at the OTF Board of Governors, **Minister of Education Thomas Wells**, states that these “increases 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 appears that automatic escalation is on the horizon.

❖ The STO/ERO founders are active at the federal level. **The Right Honourable John Turner**, then finance minister, hears from **Laura Cook** and **Gordon Loney** seeking tax relief for older citizens. In the exchange, Turner refers to the

*The last page of an original set of minutes from an October 22, 1968 Provincial Executive meeting includes the signatures of Art McAdam, the first President of STO/ERO and Marion Tyrrell, the first Secretary-Treasurer.*

\$1,000 exemption for senior citizens he had just introduced.

- ❖ **Norman McLeod** passes away on March 22, 1973, before seeing all the changes he lobbied for.
- ❖ The **formation of Districts** and Districts electing one of its members to the Senate comes into effect.
- ❖ Following continued pressure from OTF, as well as the STO/ERO, **Premier William Davis** establishes a committee headed by **Jim Causley**, **Director of the Superannuation Commission**, to recommend changes to meet the needs of pensioners.

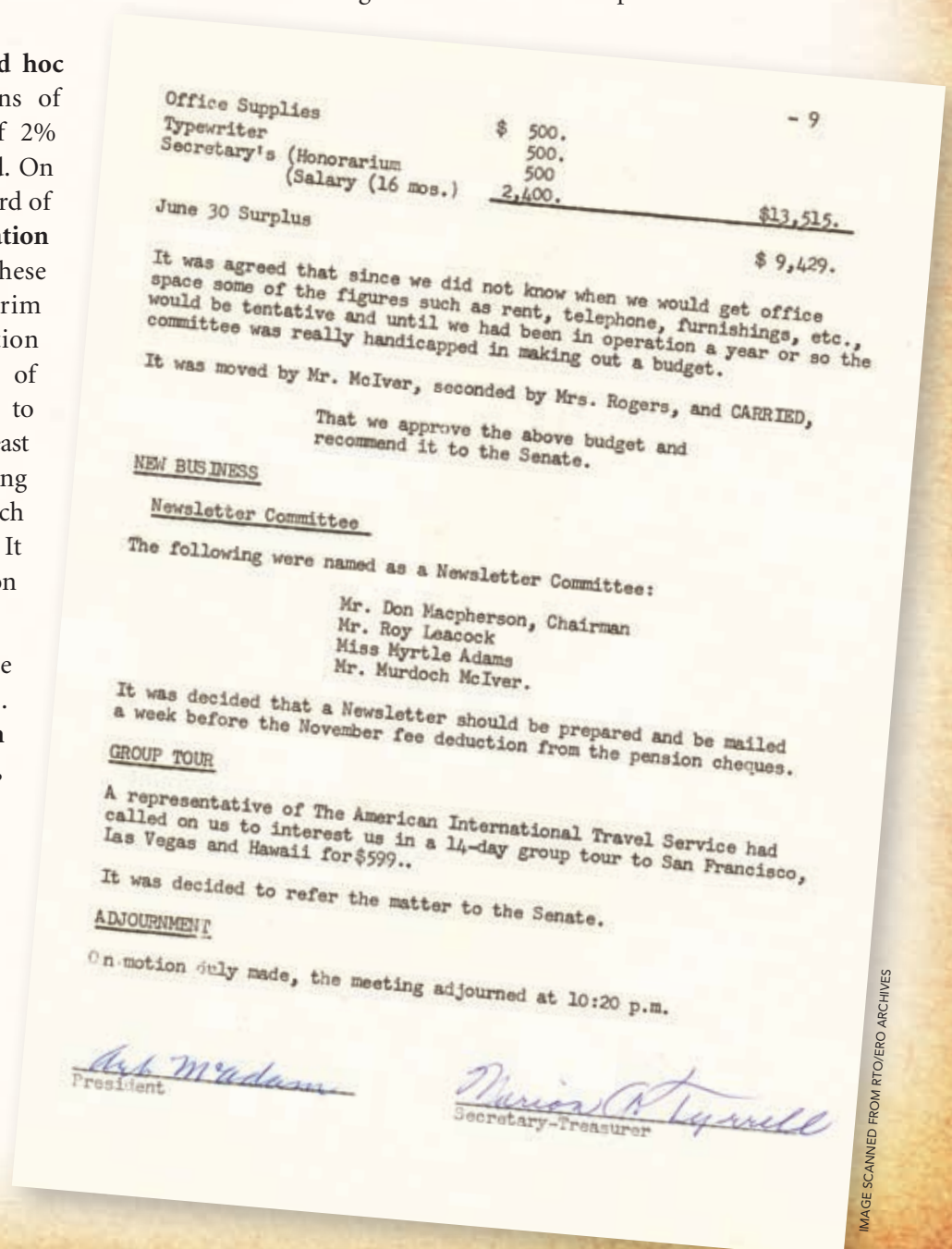


IMAGE SCANNED FROM RTO/ERO ARCHIVES

- ❖ On December 18, 1973, teachers across Ontario walk off the job in protest against proposed legislation that would prevent them from striking and limit negotiations to compensation. The demonstration leads to Bill 100, the School Boards and Teachers Collective Negotiations Act, a collective bargaining statute for teachers.
- ❖ The basis of calculation for STO/ERO fees changes to \$1 per \$1,000 of pension per year.
- ❖ After almost 10 years of lobbying, STO/ERO meets with **pension reform success**. On **September 1, 1975** the Superannuation Adjustment Fund allowing for the annual escalation of pensions comes into effect; the bill passes in July 1975. The legislation ensures teachers who retired before 1975 have pensions escalated with the full cost carried by the government. It also safeguards active teachers' future retirement incomes. The timing of the act is pivotal since the Consumer Price Index rose 9.09% in 1974 and 12.02% in 1975. The act provides a pension inflation adjustment to a maximum cap of 8%/year with the excess being cumulative and applicable when the adjustment for inflation falls below 8%.

## 1975-78

1975 – 1976

**President Marie Duhaime (District 6)**

**Secretary-Treasurer Clare Perry, until January 1, 1985**

**Membership: 17,113**

1976 – 1977

**President David Dewar (District 23)**

**Membership: 17,924**

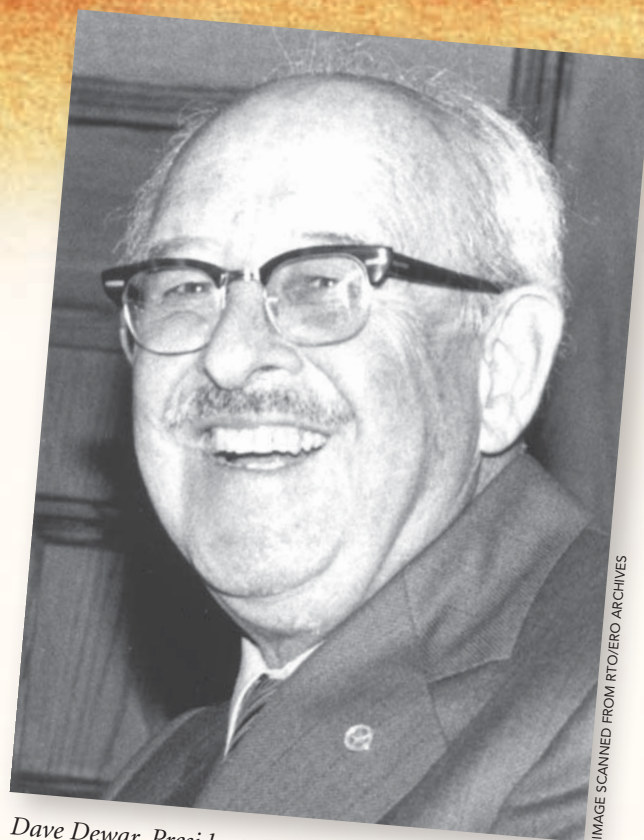
1977 – 1978

**President Weldon Abernethy, Robert Hopkins**

**(Districts 3, 15)**

**Membership: 18,965**

- ❖ **The Good Will Committee is formed in 1975-76** 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.
- ❖ In cooperation with the OTF, the **first two pre-retirement counseling seminars** are held in Toronto and North Bay for teachers retiring in June 1976.



*Dave Dewar, President, 1976-1977*

IMAGE SCANNED FROM RTO/ERO ARCHIVES

Duhaime said of the seminars: “The feedback was most gratifying and justified the holding of similar seminars in the future...such seminars have undoubtedly increased the membership... thus adding to its strength.”

- ❖ **Units are formed within certain districts**, with the aim to keep members better informed and more active, including a French unit in District 6. In a 1993 reflection, Duhaime credits units for “one reason why the districts are better organized today.”
- ❖ Members in the health plan reach 9,500.
- ❖ In 1976-77, a **mail campaign** conducted over three days by 75 volunteers helps increase participation in the extended health care plan to 13,591.
- ❖ **The newsletter goes from six small pages to four larger ones**, and members are encouraged to send in more articles. Districts in turn are asked to share their newsletters with the provincial office and with other districts.

*Sources: Archives of Ontario; The Battles, the Wars, The Victories: A history of perseverance, determination and leadership by Rod Albert on the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation web site [www.osstf.on.ca](http://www.osstf.on.ca); William Jones, interview, February 12, 2008; RTO/ERO Archives: The First Generation: The Superannuated Teachers of Ontario 1968-1988 by Robert L. Lamb, Provincial Executive Minutes 1966-1969, STO/ERO Book of Memories 1968-1993.*