

Report Thirty-One

President's Message – Anne Smith

As we begin 2021, we are hopeful that this new year will be better than the one we have just come through – that, with the vaccine roll-out and continued safety protocols, there will be the possibility of more normal routines happening sooner rather than later. Together, since the pandemic began, we have worked diligently to try to contain this virus and we must stay the course. Although we are seeing increasingly alarming daily case numbers, leading to another lock-down and virtual learning for our students, we must continue to follow the rules and stay positive, active and connected. It is so important that we do our best not to feel isolated or helpless, and help others do the same.

Although we are all anxious to resume to our gatherings in person for our luncheons, meetings, and groups, RTOERO has directed that these not be held for the foreseeable future.

District 31 Executive

Despite this directive, our executive has been very busy. We have been using ZOOM to conduct our national and district meetings. It is certainly not our preferred way but it has meant that we could continue to do our business. Six new members joined us in October, taking on a variety of positions. Check out the Executive Member contact list.

It is my pleasure to have assumed the job of your District 31 President for the next two years. In that role, I have presided over four executive meetings from September to the end of January, been one of the district's representatives at RTOERO Senate and Forum in October (along with Nancy Baker and Richard Goodbrand), and taken part in four District Presidents' workshops.

Locally, we have a number of committees, including three new ones – Archive, Social and Community Grants and Scholarships. During the month of January, the Archive, Editorial and Governance Committees will have met.

This past fall, National Office has presented a number of webinars and workshops:

Benefits in October, represented by Shirley Goodbrand; The Foundation in October and November, represented by Joan Berry; Political Advocacy in September and November, represented by Brenda McGinnis and Nancy Baker; and Marketing in November, which I attended.

During this pandemic, we will continue to provide you with RTOERO and District 31 updates on our website and through emails. As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

Goodwill – Joyce Barnes

“Hope smiles from the threshold of the year to come whispering,

It will be happier.” Alfred Lord Tennyson

To each and every one of you, I wish you a happy, hopeful, healthy 2021. Thanks to the members of the RTO/ERO District 31 Goodwill Committee of Brenda, Marina, Mary, Nancy, Jean, Marg, and Joyce who sent over 370 birthday and Christmas cards to our members who were 80 plus in 2020. Fifteen floral arrangements were sent to members who were 90 and 95 in 2020. Many get well, sympathy and congratulatory cards were also sent.

2020 presented challenges as we were not able to enjoy our usual social interaction with each other. It is very important to our Goodwill Committee to reach out and stay in touch with our members. Please help us to do this by contacting any of the members of the District 31 Goodwill Committee listed below to help us meet our members' needs.

Arthur, Mount Forest, Harriston

Joyce Barnes 519-848-2351
joyce.barnes@sympatico.ca

Drayton, Moorfield, Palmerston

Jean Brodhaecker 519-638-2291

Elora, Fergus, Salem, Alma

Marg Hall 519-846-5235
margcarl.hall@gmail.com

Rockwood, Hillsburgh, Erin

Marina Howlett 519-836-8585
howlettmarina@gmail.com

Guelph

Brenda McGinnis 519-824-5263
dmcginc602@rogers.com

Nancy Baker 519-822-6653
nancyida@sympatico.ca

Mary Hermann 519-821-3892
maryhermann@rogers.com

Apologies are extended to any member of whose needs we have not been made aware. Monthly reports are received from the RTO/ERO National Office to assist us with our work. Please contact RTOERO National Office at 1-800-361-9888 if there are any changes in your personal information so our Goodwill records are up-to-date.

A smile on our face puts a smile in our heart.

RTOERO Benefits Report – Shirley Goodbrand

Plan surplus from 2020

The surplus from 2020 has resulted in a reduction of 3% for all plans for 2021. Premiums for the next five years will be subsidized to keep premiums as low as possible.

Dental Plan

Reimbursements will be updated to the 2021 fee guide for general practitioners.

Pandemic Travel Coverages

The plan now covers COVID-19 medical emergencies while travelling, even during times of government-issued travel advisories. This is retroactive to October 1, 2020.

New Insured Risk for Trip Cancellation

A member can cancel or interrupt a trip for any reason listed on pages 73 to 76 of the insurance plan booklet, including an existing medical condition that has become unstable.

Note: A member is **not** covered for trip cancellation or interruption related to COVID-19.

Pre-existing Stability

A reduction or discontinuation in medication due to an improvement in your condition will no longer be subject to the stability clause.

Exclusion Endorsement

Members can continue pro-active care without impacting coverage.

Direct Submission—Paramedical

Additional paramedical practitioners are able to submit your claims and have payment made directly to them.

My Insurance Portal

Improvements feature easier sign-on, quicker reimbursements, improved security and better online support.

Note

If your claim is processed after December 31, 2020, these claims will appear on your reimbursement statement for the 2021 calendar year.

Pension and Retirement Concerns – Marina Howlett

2020 Inflation Increases Effective January 1, 2021:

- Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (OTPP) - 1.0%
- Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System (OMERS) - 0.94%
- Canada Pension Plan (CPP) - 1.0%
- Old Age Security (OAS) – quarterly inflation adjustment (January – March 2021) 0.2%
- Effective January 1, 2021, the basic OAS pension will be \$615.37 and the threshold where the clawback starts is \$79 845 (net income from all sources).

District 31 Financial Report –

Mike Curtis

December 31, 2020

Income

Annual Rebate	21 462.56
Bank Error	.50
Provincial Strike Rebate	500.00
Project Service to Others	4 000.00
Total	25 963.06

Expenses

Goodwill	1 631.45
Project Service to Others	4 000.00
Recruitment	489.35
Executive	67.00
District	22.66
Newsletters	3 669.63
Office Expenses	127.09
Website	276.28
Miscellaneous	
Donations to three teacher unions	600.00
RTO Foundation	200.00
Scholarships –	
Chloe Roberts	200.00
Cas Good	200.00
Cedar Van Stavel	200.00
Christmas Donations	600.00
Guelph/Well Com. for Social Justice	50.00
Total	12 333.46

Surplus	13 629.60
Bank Balance	18 313.08

Political Advocacy – Brenda McGinnis

The Toronto Star Headlines of December 31st say it all:

"Crisis of Care: The Terrible Toll of Inaction
More than 2,700 dead.
Thousands more sickened, neglected,
denied basic rights. We've been failing our
seniors in long-term care throughout this

pandemic, and for years leading up to it. The tragedy must end. This open letter is an urgent call for change."

The article goes on to inform readers that *The Toronto Star* is asking all Ontarians to sign an open letter to responsible city, provincial and federal authorities demanding an end to the inhumane treatment and needless death of our vulnerable elders.

"The neglect, underfunding and overcrowding of Ontario's long-term-care facilities under the watch of numerous governments over many decades has been tragic.

The situation has only worsened with the COVID-19 pandemic. Send a letter to your MPP and MP urging action now at <https://www.thestar.com/long-term-care/ltc-crisis.html>."

District 31 encourages our members to participate in signing this letter.

In addition, District 31's Political Advocacy focus for the immediate future is on the treatment of our vulnerable citizens in our long-term care homes. This is not to say that we are not still very concerned about what is happening to our environment and in our schools and in the health care system as a whole, but it does mean that we are working hard on advocating for huge immediate improvements in our long-term care homes.

In December, on behalf of the members of our District, I wrote a letter to MPP Ted Arnott and one to MPP Randy Pettapiece, two members of the majority Conservative government who serve the constituents of District 31 and who are part of the immediate decision-making group for long-term care homes.

In the letter, I asked the following questions suggested in our excellent political advocacy resource documents prepared by our National Advocacy Committee:

1. What immediate steps have you taken to improve conditions in our long-term care homes?

Are you demanding the immediate hiring of more permanent staff in our long-term care

residences? Are you ensuring that all staff have proper and sufficient PPE?

2. What are you doing right now to ensure that staff are properly trained in geriatric care, receive on-going training and are properly paid to recognize the importance and complexity of the care provided?

Will you ensure that staff receive, at the very minimum, a living wage that will ensure their retention and commitment to providing long term care?

3. Describe the inspection process now in place. How frequently are the residences inspected? Are the visits in-person, at random and without advance notice?
4. Long-term care homes should all be not-for-profit to ensure processes and benefits truly serve and respect the constituencies they should. What steps are you taking towards making all long-term care homes not-for-profit?
5. Have you recently visited any long-term care homes to see conditions for yourself? Have you consulted with any residents in long-term care homes?

MPP Ted Arnott responded very quickly to my letter. He wrote: "In 2018 I was elected Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. In this role, I have a unique privilege and opportunity to work together and in cooperation with MPPs from all political parties, on both sides of the House as I advocate for our communities. As Speaker, I must be impartial, and cannot make public statements expressing an opinion on issues that are being debated or are likely to be debated in the House. However, I hear you, and will endeavour to ensure the Government hears you too."

He continued: "I have written to the Hon. Doug Ford, Premier, and to the Hon. Merrilee Fullerton, Minister of Long-Term Care, to bring these questions to their attention."

As yet, I have not heard from MPP Pettapiece, Premier Doug Ford or Minister Fullerton.

I will follow up and will give you a progress report, probably in an email and/or on our website.

Please feel free to write to our MPPs - especially the Conservative MPPs and to the Premier and Minister. Share your experiences of long-term care in our community. If you are hesitant to do this, share your stories or concerns with us and we will pass them on to the MPPs.

When it is election time in Ontario, we will question politicians of all parties on this issue but, right now, we are focusing on the Tory MPPs because we want immediate action - not two years from now, not four years from now, but right now and this government has the ability to make it happen right now.

Two other headlines also say a great deal and cry out for immediate action:

- "Nursing home chains made big payouts to investors while receiving pandemic aid: Province's largest for-profit operators paid \$171M to shareholders in first three quarters" (*Toronto Star, December 26, 2020*)
- "Ontario reports another 32 deaths in long-term care homes: A total of 2,877 people have died in the province's LTC homes, 218 of which are in outbreak." (*Toronto Star, January 7, 2021*)

Project Service to Others – Brenda McGinnis

Our executive was extremely happy that our 2020 submission for Project Service to Others was approved for \$4,000 by the Provincial Project Service to Others Committee. We felt very strongly that this important project could save lives.

The project benefits 136 families, in extreme poverty, located in the community of Anibal Archila, Barcenas, Villa Nueva, Guatemala. Each family is receiving a COVID-19 Survival Lifebag which consists of hand sanitizers, masks, bleach, laundry detergent, 1 lb of beans, 1lb of rice, 1lb of sugar, 500ml of oil and 1 pkg Nutritive Milk Supplement for children. In addition, the Community Leaders will also be given two handheld digital infrared thermometers which will be used by the leaders of the community to take the temperature of any visitor who may want to enter their community.

Our executive is especially proud that the group sponsoring this project is One By One: The Latin American Project, which is a registered non-profit organization founded and run by the RTOERO members Peter Ingram, Kathy Ingram, Ted Laxton, Terry Donaghy and Cynthia Morris. Many other RTOERO members have also participated in some of the many activities sponsored by this group. Once again, this involvement in such a worthwhile project proves that RTOERO members continue to contribute and give to society in retirement.

Our executive applauds these members who work hard to improve the lives of these "forgotten poor" and encourage members to check out their website: <https://www.onebyonecanada.ca>.

We know that many other members of RTOERO District 31 are involved in special initiatives. We encourage you to apply for support of their projects.

As noted below, the name, rules and guidelines for Project Service to Others are changing.

Community Grants and Scholarships - Richard Goodbrand

Community Grants (formerly Project Service to Others)

Each year, RTOERO districts can apply for grants for community projects. Since the inception of this grant 21 years ago, RTOERO has donated \$1.85 million for 523 projects.

The new Application Process Information and Application Form will be posted soon at RTOERO.ca, Menu, Giving back, Grants. The deadline for applications is June 1, 2021.

Once the application details are released, please contact Richard Goodbrand, RTOERO District 31 Chair of our local CG&C Committee at rdgoodb@gmail.com for further information about the application process.

Student Scholarships

The Community Grants and Scholarships Committee's (CG&S) Eligibility requirements are

posted at rtoero.ca; however, the deadline is past for this year.

Foundation Report – Joan Berry

I attended two webinars on the effects of social isolation during Covid-19. Research results were presented by Michael Prentice of Ryerson University and Dr. Rachael Savage of Women's College Hospital. Each of these institutes has joined with our Foundation to study this issue and suggest recommendations.

Some of these are:

- adhering to regular routines;
- getting outdoors for fresh air and exercise;
- engaging in a new hobby;
- limiting access to news reports; and
- maintaining contact with family and friends, virtually or via telephone.

Finally, do not lose hope! Let us take comfort in the arrival of the vaccine.

Travel Report - Lynn Morrison

Unfortunately, due to the safety concerns for their patrons, Great Canadian cancelled all their tours, including ours.

However, it has given me time to reflect on the many years of great times we have had touring together.

These are just a few of our adventures;

- We have taken overnight trips to Chicago, Boston, New York City, Agawa Canyon and Mackinac Island, Lancaster Pennsylvania for the Sight and Sound Theatre and Amish country and Pelee Island.
- We've seen shows in Stratford, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Toronto, Brantford, and Niagara Falls.
- We've visited the Bruce Nuclear Plant, Casa Loma, the Toyota Factory, Sharon Temple, various wineries, Dundurn Castle, Castle

Kilbride, a cranberry bog, Ripley's Aquarium, the CN Tower, and Cullen Gardens.

- We've taken day cruises from Toronto, Orillia, Hamilton, to the Big Chute Marine Railway, and on the Niagara Belle.

I have been very grateful for the many people who have supported me in my endeavours over the last 15 years. Hopefully, we will be able to continue our travels when things open up again.

Until then, stay safe and stay healthy.

WODLF Theatre Opportunity – Pam Niesiobedzki-Curtis

In 2012, District 31 was a proud sponsor of the Western Ontario Drama League Festival (WODLF) which was held at Guelph Little Theatre. Not only was the event our Project Service to Others that year but many of our members were involved in the Festival in a variety of volunteer roles and since then District 31 members have continued to enjoy a positive, active relationship with Guelph Little Theatre.

Now Guelph Little Theatre is slated to host the 2022 Western Ontario Drama League Festival during March Break 2022 and, once again, District 31 members are invited to become involved. The committee will be starting to prepare soon. The festival is hosting the presentation of the five best plays chosen from the Western Ontario Community Theatre Region. Members from these groups are usually hosted at a local hotel and events and programs are planned for them - including workshops, hostess room, speakers and a wonderful awards gala. At the theatre, we provide lunch and an après show reception and assist with the needs of the evening's presenting group. Volunteers can help by ushering, decorating and selling 50/50 tickets, etc.

If you are interested in getting involved - organizing, fund raising, publicity, decorating, hosting, or other aspects of the festival - please contact Pamela Niesiobedzki-Curtis at pm@guelphlittletheatre.com, secretary@wodl.on.ca or 905-877-4134. GLT is looking forward to a fun time with a wonderful group of like-minded volunteers.

In Memoriam

*"They walk beside us every day
Unseen, unheard, but always near,
Still loved, still missed, and very dear."*

RTOERO District 31 extends sympathy to all the families and friends of our departed loved ones.

Marilyn Crooks	Joan McTavish
Aloysius D'Cruz	Edna Miller
Vera Denny	John Miller
Roberta Garber	James Mile
Robert Glazebrook	William Mulchinock
Constance Haldenby	Janet Nicholls
Wayne Johnston	Evangeline Raftis
Leonard Johnstone	Margaret Stinson
M. Bernard Kiely	Margaret Sullivan
Emerson Lall	Oliva Tersigni

Something to Shout About

District 31 is blessed with many talented and creative members who are engaged in many interesting and exciting activities. We continue to feature some of these achievements in our newsletters. Please let our executive know about any of our members who are involved in interesting adventures or who have received awards or special recognition for their work. We would like to acknowledge, celebrate and support the accomplishments and endeavours of our members.

Carol Christie and Frank Tersigni have retired as Membership Committee Co-chairs after many years of service to District 31. We will certainly miss their contributions to District 31 and their presence at our executive meetings. Both of them brought great ideas and good humour to our meetings. As a thank you, our executive made a donation in their honour to the RTOERO Foundation, a cause near and dear to their hearts.

J.O.E. (Jobs, Opportunity and Enterprise), whose members have a special relationship with District 31, were featured both in a news segment on CTV Kitchener and in an article in *Guelph Today* for sending out 4 250 cards with hand-written messages to members of the community who were feeling especially isolated. Many of the recipients were residents of Long-Term Care Homes.

James Lafferty has written and published a new book, Memories and Meditations of a Persistent Pilgrim on the Camino de Santiago de Compostela and Beyond. Its focus is his 800 km journey across Northern Spain. It contains prose, poetry, photographs and a sterling Preamble by a friend from Ohio. The book (\$20.00) can be ordered from James' website www.jjlafferty.com.

Richard Goodbrand was given an award by the Rotary Club of Guelph Trillium in recognition of his volunteer work with Food4Kids.

Amanda Leathem has joined Richard Goodbrand on the Guelph-Wellington Coalition for Social Justice (GWCSJ). They will be primarily using the District 31 Facebook page (rtoerodistrict31wellington) and Twitter page (@rto_District31) to keep you informed about GWCSJ events and activities.

To **family, friends, colleagues** of RTOERO members who have been working hard as teachers, educational workers, custodians, secretaries, administrators, and bus drivers in our school system, we offer thanks for being our front-line heroes.

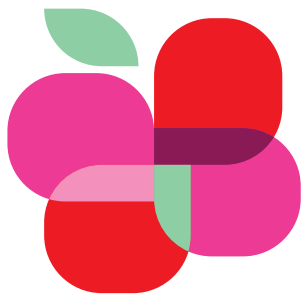
Book Donation Acknowledgement - At the Annual General Meeting of Action Read on Wednesday, September 23, 2020 during the awards presentation of the meeting, Nancy Baker, on behalf of RTOERO District 31 – Wellington, was presented with The Action Read Community Award. This award was created to recognize

businesses or organizations whose generous support to the Action Read mission of improving the literacy and numeracy skills of adults and families in Guelph. It is outstanding and particularly meaningful, upholding their core values of compassion, respect, community, and celebrating diversity. Our name will be on a plaque hanging in the Action Read space and a small plaque was given to us.

The following is part of the message that was presented with the award.

“Action Read is extremely appreciative of this practical and meaningful gesture. We always look forward to meeting with Nancy Baker and the other lovely people who co-ordinate the project. The day the books are delivered looks like Christmas and, as staff go through them, we start linking them up to various interests and reading levels of the individual learners we support, both adults and children. We often pay this gift forward on Family Literacy Day, when we give each of the children in our Early Start Program a beautiful new book. Their glee at receiving this gift is huge. ... The Retired Teachers Wellington District 31 stamp inside each book reminds our members of the generosity of our community and that the vocation of teaching does not stop at retirement. This is further demonstrated by the fact that many of our amazing volunteers are retired teachers.”

Congratulations to all who support our Bring a Book Campaign at our spring luncheon.



**RTO
ERO**

District 31
Wellington

RTO District 31 Executive 2020-2022

Executive Position	Name	Email Address	Phone #
Past President	Stephen O'Connell	soconnellguelph@gmail.com	519-265-2125
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2 nd Vice Pres	Richard Goodbrand	rdgoodb@gmail.com	519-291-2015
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Treasurer	Mike Curtis	mikecurtiserin@yahoo.ca	905-877-4134
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	Joan Miller	joan.miller5@gmail.com	519-746-4218
	Pam Niesiobedzki	pniesiobedzki@hotmail.com	905-877-4134
	Lenore Ralph	lrsidebyside@hotmail.com	519-822-1596
	Brian Serafini	bserafini@rogers.com	519-763-0069

Upcoming Virtual Meeting Dates

February 18, March 25, April 22, 2021
District Presidents Meetings

May 17, 2021 RTOERO Annual Meeting

May 19, 2021 RTOERO Spring Forum

District 31 Executive tentatively plans to meet on the last Monday of the month.

District Website

Visit our District website at rto31.org for up-to-date information about RTOERO events in Guelph and Wellington County and for photos of past events.

Each edition of Report Thirty-One is posted on the website. We encourage you to try opting for a digital version. If you would prefer to get your newsletter online, email John at mistercanoehead@yahoo.com.

RTO 31
c/o Mike Curtis, Treasurer
9450 Copeland Path, RR #2
Erin ON
N0B 1T0

Change of Address or Status

It is imperative that, if you have changed:

- Your postal address
- Your email address
- Your phone number or
- Your status,

You contact:

- OTPPB (5650 Yonge St., Toronto M2M 4H5 or 1-800-361-0105)
- RTOERO (rtoero.ca or 1-800-361-9888. Ask for Membership or email <mailto:membership@rtoero.ca>)

National Office sends out monthly membership lists which we use to create a database for sending out newsletters. Every attempt is made to ensure that this information is correct and up-to-date.

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