



**Eastern Canada Region  
Sorooptimist International of the Americas  
93<sup>rd</sup> Annual Spring Conference  
May 2, 3, 4 / 2025**

**REGISTRANT PACKAGE**

***Be Bold, Be Brave, Be You!***



---

**ECR Governor Cheryl Ball**

**Host Club SI Guelph**

**HOMEWOOD SUITES, ST JACOBS, ONTARIO  
REGISTRANT PACKAGE**

**NOTE:** all meals, meetings and activities are being held in the Berlin room at the Hampton inn.  
The board meeting on Friday is in the Hampton Inn hospitality room.

**Friday, May 2, 2025**

**4 PM - ECR Board Meeting with Official Visitor, SIA Director Susan Gilbey**  
**7:30 PM - Check in & Meet 'n Greet on Friday (no business), paid bar and menu, networking and fun activity.**

**Saturday, May 3, 2024**

8:30 AM	Check-in/Registration Desk Opens	SI Guelph
10:00 AM	<b>OPENING OF CONFERENCE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Land Acknowledgement</li> <li>- Welcome</li> <li>- ECR Club Presidents – please stand</li> <li>- Official Opening</li> <li>- Call to Order</li> </ul> <b>Introductions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Eastern Canada Region Board</li> <li>- Parliamentarian</li> <li>- Federation Official Visitor</li> <li>- Soroptimist Foundation of Canada</li> <li>- 2025 Conference Committee</li> </ul> <b>City of Guelph Greetings</b> <b>Recognition</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clubs anniversary recognition</li> <li>- First Time Attendees</li> <li>- Past Federation Board Members</li> <li>- Past Governors</li> <li>- Guests</li> </ul>	SI Guelph Jennifer Oliver President SI Guelph Amanda Hingston Governor Cheryl Ball “ “  Governor Cheryl Ball  SI Guelph Donna Keating Governor-Elect Keshala Fernando-Dissanayake
10:45 AM	<b>Virtual Greetings from SIA</b>	SIA President, Dr Ginger Cole (Virtual) SIA ED / CEO Michelle J. Burnett (virtual)
	<b>Letters of Greetings</b>	ECR Secretary, Aline Chan
	<b>Governor’s Welcome</b>	Governor Cheryl Ball
11:00	<b>Credential Report</b>	SI Guelph Donna Keating
	<b>Roll Call of Voting Delegates</b>	ECR Secretary Aline Chan
	<b>Adoption of Standing Rules</b>	ECR Parliamentarian RoseMary Reid
	<b>Minutes of the 92nd ECR Spring Conference</b>	ECR Secretary Aline Chan
11:15 AM	<b>Nominations Committee 2025-2026</b>	ECR Past Governor Gertrud Hocke
11:20 AM	<b>In Memoriam (‘We will remember you’)</b>	Governor Cheryl Ball
11:35 AM	<b>Treasurer’s Report</b>	ECR Treasurer Karen Bortolin
	<b>Vote on Budget 2025-2026</b>	Governor Cheryl & Treasurer Karen Bortolin
12:00 PM	<b>Announcements</b>	SI Guelph Sharron Watson
12:10 PM	<b>LUNCH and Marketplace</b>	

1:15 PM	Credentials Report	SI Guelph Donna Keating
1:20 PM	Official Visitor's presentation Embracing Change, Celebrating Success and Committing to Inclusivity. A Call to Action for Soroptimists.	SIA Director Susan Gilbey
1:45 PM	IMPACT / PROGRAM PILLAR Reaching the Big Goal Together – Best Practices	Governor Cheryl Ball, DIBI
2:05 PM	RECOGNITION / PUBLIC AWARENESS PILLAR Creating an Effective Club website from Vision to Launch	ECR Public Awareness Chair Tanna Edwards
2 :25 PM	BIO BREAK – Line Dancing with Deanna Tobin – optional western wear...flat shoes like cowboy boots or running shoes (no flip flops).	
2:55 PM	<b>BREAK and MARKETPLACE</b>	
3:10 PM	INTERACTIVE WORKSHOP – OFFICIAL VISITOR How to Appeal to a New Generation of Volunteer Leader	SIA Director Susan Gilbey
4:10 PM	Close of Afternoon Session	Governor Cheryl Ball
	Announcements	SI Guelph Sharron Watson
6:00 –10:00 PM	Dinner & Activity with SI Guelph	

**SUNDAY, May 4, 2025**

8:00 AM	Registration Desk Open	SI Guelph
9:00 AM	Call to Order	Governor Cheryl Ball
9:10 AM	Credentials Report	SI Guelph Donna Keating
9:15 AM	THRIVING THROUGH CHANGE – Official Visitor General Session Presentation	SIA Director Susan Gilbey
9:45 AM	PHILANTHROPY / FUNDRAISING PILLAR Building Your Fundraising confidence Overcoming Your Fear of the ASK	Governor Elect Keshala Fernando-Dissanayake ECR Philanthropy Chair
10:00 AM	ENGAGEMENT / MEMBERSHIP PILLAR Combatting the Great membership Decline	ECR Membership Chair Dianne Nielsen
10:25 AM	<b>BREAK &amp; MARKETPLACE</b>	
10:45 AM	SOROPTIMIST FOUNDATION OF CANADA	SFC Representative Tanna Edwards
11:05 AM	ECR Region Awards - Conference Attendance Awards - Membership Satisfaction Award - Recruitment Award - Retention Award - Rose Bowl Award	Membership Chair Dianne Nielsen  Governor Cheryl Ball
11:20 AM	SIA ECR Region Awards - Live Your Dream: Education & Training Awards	Governor Cheryl Ball & SIA Director Susan Gilbey

11:35 AM	<b>Speakers - Region LYD Award Winners</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> Place Winner, introduced by Judy Prevett 2 <sup>nd</sup> Place Winner, introduced by Cindy Figus	
12:00 NOON	<b>Best for Women Luncheon &amp; Mystery Woman draw &amp; Marketplace closes at 1 PM.</b> Draws at 1:15 PM. Club Announcements (Virtual on overhead screen)	
1:30 PM	<b>Guest Speaker – Daryn Brito – 2024 LYD winner. If you want the book, “The Becoming” signed, you will have to pre-purchase it from Amazon.</b>	
1:45 PM	<b>Appreciation</b> <b>Save the Dates:</b> <b>2025 Leadership Event (Virtual)</b> <b>2025 Fall Meeting (Virtual)</b> <b>2026 Spring Conference</b> <b>2026 SIA Federation Convention</b>	SI Toronto  September 2025 November 2025 Need a club July 2026, Incheon, South Korea
2:30 PM	<b>Closing Remarks &amp; Adjournment</b>	Governor Cheryl Ball

**ECR SPRING CONFERENCE**

May 2, 3, 4 / 2025

### **DELEGATES**

1. Each club shall be entitled to three delegates to a region conference. The delegates of each club shall be the President and two members.
  
2. A club shall be deemed to be in good standing if all requirements of the bylaws, rules and procedures established by Region Conference and Region Board have been met at the time its delegates register. A delegate may represent only the club in which the delegate’s membership is held.

## CONFERENCE STANDING RULES

1. In the case of virtual meetings, the requirement for Club Delegates to be seated together is waived.
2. The official program shall be the order of business upon adoption by the conference body. Changes may be made only by majority vote of the Conference body.
3. Cell phones and other devices are to be silenced during sessions of conference.
4. The voting members of the conference shall be the Region Officers and board members, and the accredited delegates of standing.
5. A credentials report shall be given at the opening of each business session and/or any time outlined in the official agenda.
6. To speak at the meeting, a delegate or other member shall raise their hand, address the Chair and after being recognized, clearly and distinctly state her name, Club and position within the Club or Region.
7. During debates, a member may speak two minutes and only once, unless no one else wishes to speak.
8. Both delegates and non-delegates shall be allowed the privileges of the floor, but precedence shall be accorded to delegates.
9. Only registered delegates or registered alternates, when delegate is not in attendance at conference, are entitled to answer roll call or vote.
10. All motions must be submitted to the Secretary at the time they are made.
11. No conference discussion or action shall be released for publicity without the approval of the Region Governor, the Region Secretary and the Public Awareness Chair of the Region.

## RULES OF COURTESY

- Voting delegates to the Conference should be signed in prior to the start of each session.
- All attendees should have their cell phones muted.
- When voting, delegates are to maintain their raised hands until recognized in the count.
- Listen to the opinions of others with an open mind even if those opinions are not the same as yours. You will be afforded the same respect when you speak.

## Minutes from Spring Conference 2024

Soroptimist International of the Americas

Eastern Canada Region

92<sup>nd</sup> Spring Conference

April 26, 27, 28 / 2024

Novotel Toronto North York, 3 Park Home Ave, Toronto

Host Club – SI Toronto

*A Million Dreams*

### Friday, April 26, 2024

12:00 PM – Lunch meeting of the ECR Board with SIA Board Official Visitor, SIA Director, Melanie Kenny, held in a meeting room of the Novotel Hotel. Board members in attendance were Governor Gertrud Hocke, Past Governor Jennifer Oliver, Governor Elect Cheryl Ball, Treasurer Karen Bortolin, Interim Secretary Aline Chan, Director Keshala Fernando-Dissanayake.

**Regrets** – Director Raheleh Barkhordari

3:00 PM – Registration Desk opened with members and interns of SI Toronto welcoming registrants, informing them of the signing in requirements for each session, and providing gift bags to each as they arrived.

The meeting room was open for the basket raffle and networking prior to the opening ceremonies.

1. 5:00 PM – **Call to Order** - The Spring Conference was called to order by Governor Gertrud Hocke.

2. **Welcome and Land Acknowledgment:** SI Toronto Jean Skillman provided the land acknowledgement. SI Toronto President Estatira Shirkhodae welcomed everyone.

3. **Governor's Welcome & Introductions:** Governor Gertrud welcomed everyone and introduced the following to be recognized, asking each to stand as they were introduced:
  - Eastern Canada Region Board Members
  - Parliamentarian – RoseMary Reid
  - Federation Official Visitor – SIA Director Melanie Kenny
  - Soroptimist Foundation of Canada Board member Wendy Templeton
  - 2024 Conference Committee members from SI Toronto
  - **Credentials Report** was provided by Jean Skillman of SI Toronto as follows:  
In attendance according to registration records were:  
40 members, including 15 voting delegates, 4 first-time attendees, 15 non-voting  
5 Board members  
1 official visitor  
9 Clubs
4. **Greetings:**
  - SI Toronto President Jean Skillman brought greetings from Toronto Mayor, Olivia Chow.
  - Virtual greetings from SIA President Bobbi Enderlin, SIA ED/CEO Michelle J. Burnett, SIA Director Melanie Kenny brought greetings from SIA Head Office.
5. The Governor provided an overview of the presentations and events at the Spring Conference. She also announced the milestone anniversaries of four clubs this year: SI Grand Erie celebrating its 10th anniversary, SI York Region celebrating 15 years, SI Thunder Bay marking 75 years, and our host, SI Toronto, celebrating its 90th anniversary.
6. Dinner was served at 6:30 PM.
7. Marketplace, networking and gift card draw until 8 PM.
8. **8 PM: Close of Business and Announcements** – Governor Gertrud closed the evening's business session and SI Toronto held a special presentation celebrating 90 years of Soroptimist in Toronto.

### Saturday, April 27, 2024

At 8 AM, breakfast was served in the Ballroom Foyer.

### Morning Business Session

1. The Meeting was called to order at 9:00 AM by Governor Gertrud.  
**Board Motion** to accept the Standing Rules as circulated; seconded by Jean Skillman (SI Toronto). Carried.  
**Board Motion** to accept the minutes of the 92<sup>th</sup> ECR Spring Conference; seconded by Dianne Nielsen (SI Peterborough). Carried.
2. Governor-Elect Cheryl recognized the First time Attendees, Past Federation Board Members, Past Governors, Club Presidents and Guests.
3. **Credentials Report:**  
16 voting delegates, 27 non-voting delegates, 5 ECR Board, 1 SIA Federation visitor, 10 Clubs. Total 49.
4. **Roll Call of Voting Delegates:** Voting delegates were called by ECR Secretary Aline Chan and all were present.
5. **Board Motion** to accept the Standing Rules as circulated; seconded by Jean Skillman (SI Toronto). Carried.
6. **Board Motion** to accept the minutes of the 91<sup>st</sup> ECR Spring Conference; seconded by Corinne Hyatt (SI Guelph). Carried.
7. **Governor's Remarks** – Governor Gertrud gave her welcome remarks. The Governor provided an overview of the biennium's accomplishments, guided by the theme "**Unity in Diversity.**" She highlighted the collaboration with Western Canada, which resulted in a webinar series on the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women, as well as an online NGO event linked to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, focusing on a Canadian approach to overcoming poverty. She also noted that the creation of the Canadian newsletter, *Soroptimist Across Canada*, along with the enjoyable dinner meeting at the Soroptimist International Convention in Dublin 2023, has strengthened understanding and connections between our regions. The Governor thanked all clubs in the region for their unwavering dedication to serving women and girls—not only through financial support but also through countless volunteer hours. She emphasized that the inspiring stories of the LYD award winners and the transformational impact of the DIBI program on girls serve as powerful motivators for our work.

She also expressed her deep appreciation to the Board members for their leadership in guiding the region to success, recognizing each one individually by highlighting their accomplishments.

8. Finally, she closed with heartfelt gratitude to every member for their steadfast commitment to the mission of empowerment and positive change.
9. **Treasurer's Report** – ECR Treasurer Karen Bortolin presented a Balance Sheet and Budget to Actual comparison for the 2023-24 budget year – reported to April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

The balance shown on the Balance Sheet was \$71,600.

The comparison of budget to actual showed both areas that were underspent and overspent when compared to the budget. Karen explained that it was difficult to predict budget figures accurately because of the gradual emerging from pandemic restrictions. Projected shortfall based on the current numbers was reported as: \$3,874. The final report as of June 30, 2024, will be shared with the membership after review by the appointed accountant reviewer.

**Budget 2024-25** – ECR Treasurer Karen presented the proposed budget for the year 2024-25, which had been sent out with the registrant package. Discussion points included:

- That despite efforts to decrease spending in some areas, there is still a deficit projected.
- That the budget for Membership (Club building and Membership lines) should not be decreased since our focus needs to be on attracting and retaining members. This year, the attendance was down significantly.
- That although the Treasurer states that there is a surplus of funds available to manage the deficit, the surplus figures were not provided.
- Voting delegates registered the opinion that proposing a deficit budget is fiscally irresponsible. Karen stated that the budget is a guideline.

The motion to accept the budget was carried, with the amendment that a Finance Committee be established from interested members to review budgetary finances and present a non-deficit budget.

- Linda Skilton, SI Peterborough, drafted the following:

THAT A FINANCE COMMITTEE BE ESTABLISHED FROM INTERESTED MEMBERS TO REVIEW BUDGETARY FINANCES AND PRESENT A NON-DEFICIT BUDGET FOR 2025-2026.

A vote was taken.

Votes in favour: 16

**Motion was Carried.**

- Those interested in forming the Finance committee were asked to speak to ECR Treasurer Karen.

10. **Nomination Committee: Jennifer Oliver, Past ECR Governor**, chaired the committee, together with Governor-elect Cheryl Ball and Aline Chan, SI Guelph. Keshala Fernando- Dissanayake, SI Cambridge, will be Governor-elect and Aline Chan will be ECR Secretary. Two positions have yet to be filled: DIBI Director and Membership Chair. The other directors will continue in their positions.

Governor Cheryl Ball

Governor-elect Keshala Fernando- Dissanayake

Past Governor Gertrud Hocke

Treasurer Karen Bortolin

Secretary Aline Chan

LYD Raheleh Barkhordari

DIBI open

Membership Open

Parliamentarian RoseMary Reid

Webmaster Susan Peirce

Public Awareness Tanna Edwards

11. **Program Update - Keshala Fernando-Dissanayake & Raheleh Barkhordari**: Big Goal Accelerator Projects. Our big goal is to invest in the dreams of half a million women and girls through access to education by 2031. The Big Goal drives our Accelerator Projects.

Kesh had a game show style presentation to emphasize the criteria for Big Goal Accelerator projects. To be eligible, club and region work must meet ALL four requirements:

1. Serve women and girls facing obstacles who are not already covered by the Dream Programs.
2. Provide access to formal education with the goal of economic empowerment.
3. Be a hands-on project led by Soroptimist members.
4. Be officially reported to SIA through the designated reporting link.

**12. The contributing programs are Live Your Dreams and Dream It Be It.**

For 2023-2024, 100% club participation. 185 applications received. 54 awards. 577 volunteer hours.

For SFC: 8 of 10 clubs participated. ECR screened 51 applications, awarded 17 awards (\$1,000 each).

The highest number of awards given: SI Peterborough - 8 awards totalling \$9,300 USD; and SI Cambridge gave 5 awards totalling \$8,854 USD.

Highest number of applications received from SIA: SI Thunder Bay - 12 applications.

Highest number of applications was received by SI Toronto - 41 applications.

- Raheleh will ask SIA to change our demographics – Canada is big. ECR area is 2.783 million km with 10 clubs. The criterion of considering only within a 75 mile radius of the club does not function effectively in Canada due to the country's large size and the number of clubs spread across it.

Regional Award Recipients: 1<sup>st</sup> Place – Daryn Brito (SI Guelph), 2<sup>nd</sup> Place – Ida Mensah (SI Toronto)

Success Factors: Club Efforts, Participation in SFC program, Social Media Awareness, Successful fundraising through OLG.

### **BREAK and MARKETPLACE**

**13. Official Visitor Presentation was made by Melanie Kenny.** Her topic was The Role of SIA's Board of Directors: *Strategic vs. Working Boards*. She spoke about Strategic vs. Working Boards, Foundation/History, how decisions are made at SIA, Role of stakeholder engagement. She ended with questions & answers period.

**14. Pillar Presentation – Membership** was made by Jean Skillman, SI Toronto. Jean provided the stats for the last year. We had 26 new members for a total of 213 members as of March 2024. She spoke about Engagement and Hope for the Future. Membership/engagement needs magic sauce, and our connection is the magic sauce. SI Cambridge meet to build friendships – they have breakfast and dinner on a regular basis. Their meetings have a Consent Agenda, to keep the meeting short and not include old business. They have dessert meetings. Don't underestimate the power of food.

We should try to transition to a new model.

**15. Pillar Presentation: Fundraising: ECR Fundraising Chair, Cheryl Ball.** Cheryl spoke about the fundraising activities of the various clubs and their events were pictures in the overhead screen.

Cambridge's new initiative was Bingo

Guelph helped at Ribfest and card making

London sold Porcelain Dolls and Rheo chocolates

Thunder Bay held a yard sale. They also held a Two-Bit Sale and a Gift Card raffle

Toronto held a yard sale and a Diwali Night

THANK YOU to the ECR Fundraising Chairs and their Soroptimist Club members for all their fundraising efforts to help women and girls achieve their dreams. "There is no better exercise for your heart than reaching down and helping to lift someone up", by Bernard Meltzer.

When a member is down or has a misstep, their fellow Soroptimists gather around them to lift them up.

**16. Pillar Presentation: Public Awareness:** Tanya Fusco, President SI Peterborough. Topic: Perfect Your Elevator Speech with Your Soroptimist Why. A well-crafted elevator speech helps you articulate your passion and purpose, making your message memorable and inspiring! When you feel confident and ready to share, you can use SIA's Share Your Story form to share a short video of your Soroptimist Why. Here are some prompts to inspire you: Why should someone join Soroptimist? What inspires you most about Soroptimist?

Why do you donate to Soroptimist?

- A quick way to get to the story form is to go to Soroptimist.org, click on For Clubs & Members in the top navigation bar, then click on Soroptimist forms.

### **LUNCH AND MARKETPLACE**

**Afternoon Session** – convened at 1 PM by Governor Gertrud

**17. Credentials Report** – Jean Skillman – no change from this morning.

**18. SIA Official Visitor, Melanie Kenny – Workshop: SIA Director Melanie Kenny. BEYOND BORDERS, Passport to Education, Friendship & Adventure.** Your conference theme is A Million Dreams. The lyrics of the song from A Million Dreams - the Broadway show The Greatest Showman, tell us don't stop dreaming, and dream as high as possible. Your leaders have chosen this theme for your 2024 conference, and it fits perfectly



with this Beyond Borders workshop because that is what we need to do – dream large, don't stop, dream as high as possible and dream for women and girls everywhere. travel to achieve full equality of rights and opportunities. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to end the multiple forms of gender violence and secure equal access to quality education and health, economic resources, participation in leadership, decision making and political life.

To ensure the sustainability of our organisation, we need to come together globally and locally to work on the complex problems that are creating turmoil in our world. We need to work with others. We need to fight the pushback. We need to celebrate the perseverance of those who have overcome adversity for they are the ones that can rise and tell their stories. On the Road to Equality, we were asked to join the conversation about Forced Child Marriage and the plight of young girls who lose their rights when forced to marry an older man, entering a life of hard work because of being married young and therefore denied an education. Past SI President Sharon Fisher wanted to change the narrative to show the benefits of equality and not spend time debating which issue is the most important. Gender Equality is a cross cutting issue.

#### **BREAK AND MARKETPLACE (Gift Card Draw was held and \$400 was made)**

#### **19. General Session – Artificial Intelligence by Yllka Bojku.**

Yllka is an alumni of Trent University. Her educational leadership has been recognized with numerous international scholarships and awards including the Leonard Connolly Student Leadership award which she received for her creation of student-focused teaching tools to raise awareness of Trent's student refugee program. The advantages of AI range from streamlining, saving time, eliminating biases, and automating repetitive tasks, just to name a few. The disadvantages are things like costly implementation, potential human job loss, and lack of emotion and creativity.

#### **20. CLOSE OF AFTERNOON SESSION:** Governor Gertrud closed the afternoon session and invited attendees to come back for dinner and SI Toronto 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration with a live band and dancing.

#### **Sunday, April 28, 2024**

We enjoyed breakfast in the Ballroom foyer at 8 AM.

1. **Call to Order:** The conference session was called to order at 9:00 am by Governor Gertrud.

2. **Credentials Report** – given by ECR Secretary, Aline Chan

In attendance in person: 65 members

19 voting delegates

1 official visitor

6 guests

6 board members

33 non-voting

10 Clubs

3. **ECR Remembrance:** Jean Skillman (SI Toronto), chaired the memorial remembrances. We mourn the passing of:

Corinne Margaret Rivers - SI York

Barbara Joy Andrea Dydyk Hamilton – SI Cambridge

Loel Cline, SI London

Maxine Tenander, SI Thunder Bay

4. **Soroptimist Foundation of Canada – Wendy Templeton** (SI Peterborough and SFC Board member) presented information on the history of the Soroptimist Foundation in Canada – why it was established, the changes it has undergone over the years, its current status, responsibilities of the Board, and how funds are received and distributed. The winners of SFC grants for the 2024 year were announced.

#### **5. Live Your Dream Education and Training Award – ECR Winners**

SIA Director Melanie Kenny described the feedback received from former winners about the impact these awards had in changing lives and overcoming barriers. Melanie presented the Regional LYD awards to our winners.

Recipients: 1<sup>st</sup> Place – Daryl Brito (SI Guelph), 2<sup>nd</sup> Place – Ida Mensah (SI Toronto) gave short speeches about how receiving the award had impacted their lives and future hopes and dreams.

#### **BREAK – Soroptimist Foundation of Canada – Celebrated 60 years in 2023!**

A large cake made its way into the conference room and was shared with attendees as a special treat at break.

6. **Guest Speaker, Karen Amanuah Korsah**, Immediate Past President of SI Accra, Ghana, spoke about the newest SI Federation, Africa. She told of the initiatives being done in Ghana. There are five regions in Africa.
7. **ECR Regional Awards** – Jean Skillman (SI Toronto), Membership Chair, announced the winners.
  - Recruitment Award** – Club that has recruited the highest number of new members in the year April 1 2023 – March 31, 2024. SI Peterborough.
  - Retention Award** – recognises the club that has retained the highest net percentage of membership, June 30, 2023-April 1, 2024. Not calculated.
  - Member Satisfaction Award** - Clubs who retain over 90% of their members year over year. Most ECR clubs met this criterion.
  - Rose Bowl Award** - Club that had the highest percentage increase in the number of active members from April 1<sup>st</sup> of the previous year to March 31<sup>st</sup> of the current year. SI London.

**Sunday, April 28, 2024 (cont'd)**

**LUNCH Break: Corinne Hyatt (SI Guelph) spoke about the Toronto Trust.**

8. **The ECR Board for 2024-2026** was installed by SIA Director Melanie Kenny.
9. **Newly installed Governor, Cheryl Ball, spoke to the Soroptimist members and guests about adapting to Change.** Using the construction of a building as an analogy, she said that Eastern Canada Region Soroptimists had the strong base required for a strong building - our members. ECR has strong walls (SIA Pillars). The structural beam is "effective communication" and on this beam we have a strong roof- SIA Dream Programs. With our strong building ECR is positioned to face any future challenges. She concluded with a quote by the late Margaret Mead "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed individuals can change the world. In fact, its the only that that ever has."
10. **Club Announcements:** Following the award presentations, club representatives were invited to share information about upcoming events in their Clubs.
11. **Appreciation:** Dianne Nielsen, SI Peterborough, presented a gift to Jean Skillman (SI Toronto) for chairing this year's Spring Conference.

**Save the Date:** Information was presented about the following events that are upcoming for Soroptimists:

- 2024 SIA Convention – Bellevue WA – July 24-27, 2024
- ECR Leadership EVENT (Virtual) – September 26, 2024
- ECR Fall Meeting (Virtual) – October 24, 2024, SI Cambridge
- ECR Spring Conference 2025 – date to be determined

**Closing Remarks** – were brought by Governor Gertrud, and the Conference was adjourned at 2:45 PM

## ECR Delegates Spring Conference 2024

Club	Delegate	Delegate	Delegate	Alternate
SI Cambridge	Bonnie Domonchuk	Deb Joslin	Joni Gosselin	
SI Grand Erie				
SI Guelph	Sharron Watson	Donna Keating	Corinne Hyatt	
SI Hamilton / Burlington	Margaret MacRae			
SI Haldimand Norfolk	Pat Linn	Donna Hutchison		
SI Kawartha Lake	Susan Peirce			
SI London	Najet Hassan	Ann Marie Campbell		
SI Peterborough	Tanya Fusco	Dianne Nielsen Alt. Catalina Malin	Maggie Allin	Linda Skilton
SI Thunder Bay	Cindy Figus	Judy Prevett	Anne Marie Campbell	
SI Toronto	Jean Skillman	Rosita Mandeville	Estatira Shirkhodaee	Francisca Cole
SI York Region	RoseMary Reid	Kristi Kanitz		

**Point of Order** – It was noted that since RoseMary Reid was serving as Parliamentarian for the Conference, she was ineligible to be a voting delegate for SI York Region.

**END OF 2024 MINUTES.**

**SIA EASTERN CANADA REGION 2025-26 BUDGET  
(Budget based on a virtual Spring Conference in 2026)**

**INCOME BUDGET**

	<b>2023-24 ACTUAL</b>	<b>2024-25 BUDGET</b>	<b>2025-26 BUDGET</b>	<b>CHANGE</b>
<b>ADMINISTRATION</b>				
Club liability insurance levy	3,024	3,000	3,200	200
Club share of D&O insurance	2,880	3,000	3,000	0
Interest income	1,181	260	1,400	1,140
<b>TOTAL ADMINISTRATION</b>	<b>7,085</b>	<b>6,260</b>	<b>7,600</b>	<b>1,340</b>
<b>MEMBERSHIP</b>				
Dues, renewing and annual	8,649	9,000	8,000	-1,000
Dues, new members	504	500	500	0
<b>TOTAL MEMBERSHIP</b>	<b>9,153</b>	<b>9,500</b>	<b>8,500</b>	<b>-1,000</b>
<b>REGION EVENTS</b>				
<b>Leadership Academy levy</b>	1,100	1,100	<b>1,100 *</b>	0
Donation from SI DAF	250	0	0	0
<b>Fall Area Meeting levy</b>	1,100	1,100	<b>1,100 *</b>	0
<b>Spring Conference</b>				
Spring Conference levy	0	0	<b>1,100 *</b>	1,100
SIA LYD award	10,096	10,000	0	-10,000
Host club advance	0	2,000	0	-2,000
Raffle proceeds	470	1,500	0	-1,500
Conference surplus	925	0	0	0
<b>Total Spring Conference</b>	<b>12,091</b>	<b>13,500</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>-12,400</b>
<b>TOTAL REGION EVENTS</b>	<b>14,541</b>	<b>15,700</b>	<b>3,300</b>	<b>-12,400</b>
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>30,779</b>	<b>31,460</b>	<b>19,400</b>	<b>-12,060</b>

\* Levies are paid by the club and all club members are welcome to join the Zoom meeting

**EXPENSE BUDGET**

	<b>2023-24 ACTUAL</b>	<b>2024-25 BUDGET</b>	<b>2025-26 BUDGET</b>	<b>CHANGE</b>
<b>ADMINISTRATION</b>				
Accounting	565	565	565	0
Bank charges	28	40	30	-10
Club share of D&O insurance	2,880	2,900	3,000	100
Region share of D&O insurance	888	900	900	0
Club share of liability insurance	2,703	3,100	3,200	100
SIA Leadership Fellows program	0	600	300	-300
Governor's Leadership training	71	200	150	-50
Board meetings – travel	0	1,000	0	-1,000
- hotel	0	600	0	-600
- meals	0	400	0	-400
Biennial convention registration	2,000	2,000	1,000	-1,000
Supplies & communication	380	300	400	100
Miscellaneous	3,128	200	300	100
Website	212	250	250	0
Online meeting platform	0	300	300	0
Public awareness	-57	1,000	500	-500
<b>TOTAL ADMINISTRATION</b>	<b>12,798</b>	<b>14,355</b>	<b>10,895</b>	<b>-3,460</b>
<b>MEMBERSHIP</b>				
Membership Madness	99	500	500	0
Membership support	0	500	250	-250
Travel	0	500	250	-250
<b>TOTAL MEMBERSHIP</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>-500</b>
<b>CLUB BUILDING</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>UN TRAVEL GRANT</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>REGION EVENTS</b>				
<b>Leadership Academy</b>				
Guest speaker	250	500	500	0
Prizes	75	0	75	75
Technology	160	250	0	-250
<b>Total Leadership Academy</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>750</b>	<b>575</b>	<b>-175</b>
<b>Fall Area Meeting</b>				
Guest speaker	500	500	500	0
Prizes	0	0	75	75
Technology	159	250	0	-250
<b>Total Fall Area Meeting</b>	<b>659</b>	<b>750</b>	<b>575</b>	<b>-175</b>

	<b>2023-24 ACTUAL</b>	<b>2024-25 BUDGET</b>	<b>2025-26 BUDGET</b>	<b>CHANGE</b>
<b>Spring Conference</b>				
SIA LYD award	10,695	10,000	0	-10,000
Board – registrations	1,780	1,200	0	-1,200
- travel	2,062	1,000	0	-1,000
- hotel	1,650	1,000	0	-1,000
- meals	215	150	0	-150
Federation visitor – hotel	756	675	0	-675
- registration	300	300	0	-300
LYD winner – travel/meals	200	380	0	-380
- hotel	250	225	0	-225
Guest speaker – honorarium	500	0	500	500
- hotel/meals	0	305	0	-305
Advance to host club	0	2,000	0	-2,000
Travel grant to distant clubs	500	500	0	-500
Printing/copying	0	100	0	-100
Registration refund for 1 <sup>st</sup> timers	470	600	0	-600
Supplies	69	100	100	0
Prizes	0	0	100	100
Miscellaneous	451	0	350	350
<b>Total Spring Conference</b>	<b>19,898</b>	<b>18,535</b>	<b>1,050</b>	<b>-17,485</b>
<b>TOTAL REGION EVENTS</b>	<b>21,042</b>	<b>20,035</b>	<b>2,200</b>	<b>-17,835</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSE BUDGET</b>	<b>33,779</b>	<b>37,940</b>	<b>16,145</b>	<b>-21,795</b>
<b>TOTAL INCOME BUDGET</b>	<b>30,779</b>	<b>31,460</b>	<b>19,400</b>	<b>-12,060</b>
<b>PROJECTED NET SURPLUS</b>	<b>(3,160)</b>	<b>(6,480)</b>	<b>3,255</b>	<b>(9,735)</b>

## **PUBLIC AWARENESS Report 2024-2025**

2024-2025 has been a busy year on so many fronts. We are bombarded by news and events of the world, which seem chaotic at best. These are the times when women and girls need us more than ever. I know everyone is doing their best to manage the firehose of information coming at us; we do have to intentionally mobilize to have our club and broader organization voices heard, too.

Storytelling continues to be of paramount importance as does video in the information sphere. We HAVE stories to tell! Without using names, we can share a story of a deserving LYD winner and why that makes our Soroptimist membership meaningful to us. We can have fun with these videos...raise a glass...share a friendship moment between members...show "action photos" - those candid shots rather than staged ones on our social media feed.

Use hashtags: #Soroptimist #ECSoroptimist #VolunteerWomen #LiveYourDream, and TAG your friends, or partners' pages too. This extends your "reach":

@Soroptimist Peterborough Ontario Canada @Linda Philpott Skilton @ Soroptimist Eastern Canada Region.

Here's to us continuing to share our message from the firehose...share stories of the great work we do and the women we serve - investing in dreams!

Respectfully submitted,  
Tanna Edwards  
Chair, Public Awareness

## MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR OF EASTERN CANADA REGION

Last April at our 92<sup>nd</sup> Eastern Canada Region Spring Conference hosted by SI Toronto, I referred to a line from a 1964 Bob Dylan song “the times they are a changin’”. Here we are, 61 years later and boy, everything is a “changing” in the world and with Soroptimists!

All the changes that we faced one year ago seem somewhat minor now. In my address as incoming Governor, I spoke about my belief that our region had a strong foundation comprised of members with a wealth of Soroptimist experience and new members with new innovative ideas. I went on to draw a parallel between constructing a building and our ECR Soroptimist region. I mentioned that with sufficient time, effort, and planning, we could develop a stronger region. Our Soroptimists Dream Programs - Live Your Dream; Dream It, Be It; and SIA Accelerator Programs; together with the individual club projects made strong walls (pillars). On top of these walls, we could place a support beam of “effective communication” to ensure that we kept the conversation going by sharing and listening to stories of Soroptimist successes and challenges that our members have faced personally, in our clubs, our communities and around the world. This would provide our Soroptimist members the opportunity to offer assistance when necessary. All in the hope that we would develop more Soroptimist friendships in our own clubs, as well as other clubs in our region. In other words, so we don’t feel alone! On the roof of our building, I suggested using technology such as social media to broadcast our Soroptimists programs far and wide.

**I will hold off on answering your burning question: “How did we do” for now.**

**Message from the Governor continued...**

At our Fall Leadership event, SI Cambridge Soroptimist Gillian Dyck, a certified coach, was our keynote speaker. Her presentation and workshop was entitled “Stepping up with Strength”. In preparation for this workshop, Gillian asked the attendees to complete a character strengths questionnaire. Armed with our own completed questionnaires, we were able to gain a better understanding of all the strengths we possess individually and the strengths of our Soroptimist club members, family and friends. These insights likely helped club members work more effectively. These insights were likely heightened after we completed the short communication questionnaire that explained the various communication styles - eagle, owl, penguin or peacock – again, no one style was better than the other. I am very thankful that Gillian was able to assist our region with this meaningful leadership skill; and that we (her Soroptimist sisters) were able to support her on her journey as a certified coach.

Since this was the start of a new biennium, the board provided an opportunity for the attendees to break off into “rooms” to meet and chat with a board member about their own, perhaps new, responsibilities.

In November, the same week as the Soroptimist Foundation of Canada meeting, the board held our Fall meeting. We will strive not to have two such meetings in the same week in the future!

At the ECR Fall meeting, we heard from Dr. Kim Dawson who is a Professor in the Department of Kinesiology and Physical Education at Wilfrid Laurier University. Dr. Dawson has worked with recreational and elite athletes, artists and corporate clients to maximize their performance potential. She shared some behavioral strategies that high performers utilize to achieve balance and success in their lives. As participants, we were able to reflect on our own lives and identify small changes that we could make to achieve our unique goals.

### Update on our Successes

#### PROGRAM

Once again, all the clubs in Eastern Canada Region participated in the Live Your Dream (LYD) program this year! Despite a decrease of 53% in the number of applications, we were able to give **47 LYD** awards totaling **\$53,122.00 USD**. Please note that **18** of these awards were funded by the **Soroptimist Foundation of Canada**. We are very thankful for the continued support of SFC. Their financial assistance means that we will qualify once again for a second LYD award next year.

I’d like to congratulate Raheleh and the ECR LYD club chairs for all their work! **663 volunteer hours**, excluding those of Raheleh, the judges, SFC treasurer Alice Maxwell, and others, were spent on this important Dream project! You have positively impacted the lives of these women and their families! Your hard work and dedication did not go unnoticed!

## **DREAM IT, BE IT**

Five clubs committed to a DIBI project this Soroptimist year ending June 30, 2025. The in-person sessions are currently underway or have been completed by SI Cambridge, SI Kawartha Lakes, SI Peterborough, SI Thunder Bay.

Of note, SI Guelph is currently in the process of developing a DIBI plan for an Alternative School that focuses on learning through outdoor activities. I look forward to hearing about this new format and the outcome.

SI Toronto is planning a virtual DIBI event on June 8, 2025.

SI Grand Erie is planning an Accelerator Project addressing Period Poverty.

A big thank you to all the DIBI Club chairs and their committees for all their work on their respective Dream It Be It projects! Thank you to Governor-Elect Keshala, for her expertise and assistance with this program! Thank you for working tirelessly to make a difference in young women's lives!

## **FUNDRAISING**

This year, two clubs supported SIA's Club Giving by contributing 10% of their fundraising dollars. It should be noted that there are some clubs who have restrictions prohibiting them from making donations to non-Canadian organizations.

Many club members contributed to Founders Pennies as well.

There are 4 ECR Soroptimists Stargazers who make monthly donations to SIA. As well, there is 1 ECR Soroptimist who is a Laurel Society Legacy member.

Governor-Elect Keshala met with the regional Fundraising Chairs twice this year. Keshala noted in her Fundraising report that these meetings were "full of energy, with ideas and advice freely exchanged." This energy likely led to a spark of enthusiasm! Thank you for a job well done, Keshala!

We all recognize that it is difficult to raise money in these uncharted times! To the Club Fundraising Chairs and your committees, thank you for all you do to raise money! As you know, the funds raised help marginalized women, girls and their families! I truly believe that without the caring hearts of Soroptimists, many of these women would be overlooked!

## **MEMBERSHIP**

When I became Governor of Eastern Canada Region, I was advised that our membership number was 186 members as of July 1, 2024. Without a dedicated Membership chair, I undertook responsibility for Membership for our region.

I held an initial ECR Membership Club chair meeting on December 2, 2024 where we discussed different strategies on how to recruit new members including increasing the use of social media platforms.

In the new year, my prayers were answered when Dianne Nielsen offered to be the ECR Membership chair. Dianne assumed these duties in February 2025 with a membership count of 191 members.

From Dianne's report, you will see that she hit "the bricks" running. Dianne met with the Membership club chairs, sought input from various stakeholders and proposed a draft Membership survey that was approved by the Membership chairs and the board members. This survey was sent out on April 10<sup>th</sup> with a due date of April 24<sup>th</sup>. I am hopeful that our members will complete this short survey. It will provide Dianne, her committee, the ECR board and local Soroptimist boards with important information that is necessary going forward. I can't thank Dianne enough for taking over as Membership chair. I really appreciate it, Dianne!

## **UNITED NATIONS REPRESENTATIVE**

The late Judy Dickson of SI Kawartha Lakes presented her last UN report on the Status of Women at our Fall Conference. Judy noted that the appointment of Saudi Arabia as the chair of CSW69 drew a lot of opposition.

Further, Judy stated that the most contentious issues were around the use of language. The use of the word "gender" is no longer acceptable nor is "women" in all its forms. As a result, "single woman" or "single mother" and "widow" are unacceptable. The issue of sexuality is not up for discussion, especially ideas like "trans" or "nonbinary". They are not mentioned let alone debated.

## **PUBLIC AWARENESS**

Tanna Edwards, our ECR Public Awareness chair's report outlines why now, more than ever, our Soroptimist voices must be heard! It is paramount that marginalized women and girls and, in fact, everyone needs to hear the "good news" story of the work being done by Soroptimists through Dream programs and other local programs in our communities, country and around the world. Thank you Tanna for your work as Public Awareness chair!

## **ECR WEBSITE**

This past fall, Susan Peirce, our region's website Guru, rebuilt our website from scratch within a very short time frame. This was no small feat! Thank you, Susan, for your work on our new website and for keeping it updated!

## **WORKING TOGETHER**

As the new ECR Governor, I joined Chari Grant WCR Governor for a Sharing Stories event in the Fall of 2024. Both Governor Chari and I contribute articles for each edition of our Soroptimist Across Canada newsletter. Thank you to the Canada Soroptimist newsletter editorial team for all their work on this wonderful newsletter. When the newsletter "hits the stands" or, in layman terms, "is issued", it is time to sit with a cup of coffee and tea and enjoy reading all the informative articles about the work being done by Canadian Soroptimists in our communities! Take a bow, ladies!!

## **SIA MANDATORY CONVENTION FEE**

The SIA mandatory convention fee is top of mind for all the ECR Club presidents and our members. When we were notified by SIA that the mandatory SIA Convention fee for 2026, per club, will be \$825.00 USD payable in 2026, the ECR Club Presidents and their members stood together. We drafted a plan and sent two letters to SIA expressing our concerns about the format and impact of these biennial conventions on regions such as ours.

## **THANK YOU'S**

There is probably a correct order in which to thank people, but I will undoubtedly do it incorrectly. I first would like to thank the ECR board members - Keshala for all her work on Fundraising and as Governor- Elect; Raheleh for all her hard work as Live Your Dream Chair that resulted in another amazing year for Live Your Dream awards given out by our region; Karen for her calm manner and all the challenges she faced as ECR Treasurer; Aline: what can I say – you are "a wizard" with technology to me! I appreciate all you have done for our board meetings as well as the other regional meetings (Leadership event, Fall meeting and Spring Conference). Your hard work has resulted in meetings that flow smoothly from start to finish! Thank you, Dianne, for taking on the role of Membership chair! Thank you, Tanna, for being our Public Awareness Chair. Your knowledge and expertise in constructing and conducting surveys has been very helpful to Dianne and the board! Susan, thank you once again for your work on our website!

Next, I would like to thank the Club Presidents and their board members! Taking on club leadership roles during unsettling times is not easy! May I say that the work that you are doing now is perhaps more important than in times when life is predictable! You are the glue that binds your members! Thank you!

Finally, I would like to thank all the Eastern Canada Region Soroptimists. We may be small in number, but I believe we are mighty in spirit! We have helped countless women and girls over the past decades and continue to do so today!

## **CONCLUSION**

Now is the time to answer my burning question, "How did we do?"

I say that we earned an "A". Our Soroptimist foundation stood firm when faced with challenges such as members being reluctant to undertake leadership roles at the club or region level. We have much to celebrate! This year, every ECR club gave a LYD award despite some clubs experiencing fundraising challenges. Many clubs participated in DIBI programs or planned upcoming DIBI events. Yes, the ECR Soroptimists continue to help women and girls less fortunate with our SIA Dream programs, as well as other projects that are near and dear to your hearts. All these projects work to address the needs of women and girls in your communities!

Yes ladies, the world is a "changin". We are in unprecedented times. Women, in general, and especially marginalized women and girls, need our help more than ever! My hope is that we will continue to band together to do the important work that is so necessary.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cheryl Ball, Governor  
Eastern Canada Region  
Soroptimist International of the Americas



# LIVE YOUR DREAM Report 2024-25

## AWARDS REPORT

This year, the Eastern Canada Region (ECR) achieved 100% club participation. A total of 77 applications were received (including out-of-region applications), representing a 53% decrease from the 185 applications submitted in 2023–2024.

With most ECR clubs agreeing to share their applications, the region was able to grant Live Your Dream (LYD) Awards to 47 women, including out-of-region recipients. This marks a 15% decrease from 56 awards in 2023–2024.

Of these, 18 awards were generously funded by the Soroptimist Foundation of Canada (SFC).

The total dollar amount awarded by ECR this year is \$53,122.00 USD, including approximately \$12,894.00 USD (equivalent to \$18,000 CAD) from SFC.

## ECR CLUB TOP PERFORMERS

- **SI Cambridge** received, evaluated, and awarded the highest number of applications. They processed 18 applications and awarded 13, totaling \$18,343.00 USD.
- **SI Peterborough** reviewed 11 applications and awarded 8, totaling \$9,623.00 USD.

## CLUB RESOURCES AND COSTS

- **Total Volunteer Hours:** 663 hours, as reported by the clubs. Please note this total does not include the hours contributed by the ECR LYD Chair, judges, the Governor and Governor-elect, or SFC representatives, particularly Alice Maxwell, SFC Treasurer.
- **Total Administrative Costs:** \$1,145.31 USD, as reported by the clubs.

## ECR LYD AWARD RECIPIENTS

- **First Place (\$5,000 USD)**
  - **Club:** SI London
  - **LYD Chair:** Anne-Marie Campbell
  - **Awardee:** Kimberly Perry
- **Second Place (\$3,000 USD)**
  - **Club:** SI Thunder Bay
  - **LYD Chair:** Judy Perrier
  - **Awardee:** Samantha Broesky

## CLUBS SUPPORTING OUT-OF-REGION APPLICATIONS

We sincerely thank the following clubs for accepting and processing out-of-region applications, with special recognition to SI Peterborough and SI Cambridge for their outstanding support:

C	# of Non-Local applications received
<b>SI Peterborough</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>SI Cambridge</b>	<b>5</b>
SI London	3
SI Kawartha Lakes	3
SI Thunder Bay	2
SI Guelph	2

## CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS

There was a notable decrease in LYD applications this year for both club-funded and SFC-funded awards. While this trend is concerning, ECR will explore new strategies to better reach potential applicants in the future.

Additionally, an issue arose with one of the SFC-funded applications. A recipient had previously received two LYD grants, making her ineligible for a third. Unfortunately, this was discovered after she had already been formally notified of her \$1,000.00 CAD award. Following consultation with Governor Cheryl, the club, and SFC representatives, it was agreed that the award would be honored this year, accompanied by a letter stating she is no longer eligible to apply in the future. This award is not included in the 2024–2025 ECR award count. SFC will instead fund \$17,000 CAD in 2025–2026 to account for this payment.

*This report was generated by the Eastern Canada Region Live Your Dream Director:  
Raheleh Barkhordari ([Raheleh.barkhordari@gmail.com](mailto:Raheleh.barkhordari@gmail.com))*

## DREAM IT BE IT PROGRAM

I am pleased to report that many clubs participated in the Dream It Be It Program for 2024-25. I met with the club DIBI chairs on November 11, 2024 and hope to have a meeting later in the Spring prior to the July 1<sup>st</sup> deadline. As the new ECR DIBI Chair, I was pleased that there are a number of experienced DIBI club chairs! Since I am lacking in DIBI chair experience I was concerned that I wouldn't have the answers. However, I did have an "ace up my sleeve" when I asked our Governor-Elect Keshala Fernando Dissanayake to attend this meeting with me to answer any questions that might come up.

The following is a summary of this year's DIBI projects.

**SI Cambridge's** DIBI Committee began a partnership with The W in November 2024. The Committee met in February to begin planning for the upcoming SHYFT/DIBI program with the W. A mini-training meeting with The W and the DIBI Committee/volunteers occurred on March 28, 2025.

SHYFT/DIBI, group for 12--15 year old girls, transgender youth and youth who identify as female has been scheduled to begin on April 10, 2025 and end with a Gala Event on May 15, 2025. All the SI Cambridge members have been invited to attend the Gala. SHYFT incorporates modules developed by the previous DIBI Committee Members.

SI Cambridge will be supporting SHYFT by providing funding (total budget of \$3,200 including food) and volunteers. The DIBI Committee will organize the food for each session and the Gala. Any food remaining after each session will be packaged up and given to the youth many of whom experience food poverty at home.

**SI Grand Erie** is once again undertaking an Accelerator Project – their Period Poverty project. This Project was highlighted by SIA in 2024 as a marquee project. I am confident that this year's Period Poverty Accelerator project will be as impactful as their last one. Assisting women and girls with such a personal matter and providing menstrual products makes our hearts swell with pride!

**SI Guelph** is currently developing a DIBI plan to work with an Alternative school that focuses learning through outdoor activities. They anticipate running the program in the summer of 2025.

**SI Haldimand/Norfolk** did not have a DIBI program this year.

**SI Hamilton/Burlington** did not have a DIBI program this year.

**SI Kawartha Lakes** had a one-day event planned for April 3<sup>rd</sup>, at IE Weldon Secondary School in Lindsay. Due to the recent ice storm and the state of emergency in City of Kawartha Lakes, they have postponed the event. It is anticipated that it will be scheduled for early May 2025.

**SI London** did not have a DIBI program this year.

**SI Peterborough** ran a one-half day program at a summer camp for teens with neurodivergence in August 2024. The camp is run by the Peterborough Canopy Services. This was their second year running this very successful half day experience and have been invited back for a third year this August. The program includes the development of dream boards, goal setting and overcoming obstacles. This is followed by lunch and gift bags.

With the Bridge Youth Centre, SI Peterborough ran an after-school program. Only three sessions were completed due to lack of attendance. SI Peterborough had anticipated running this program beginning in March 2025, but due to a medical leave of the director, this has been postponed until her return.

**SI Thunder Bay** completed their DIBI program which ran one day a week from March 19 - April 9, 2025. The committee benefited from the expertise of the 3 retired teachers who met with the Student Advisory group on 3 different occasions in November 2025 to flush out the areas of

interest. The DIBI program was then drafted taking into consideration the students' interests. Due to a winter storm the 4-week scheduled format was changed to 3 weeks. 20 students participated in the program.

**SI Toronto** has been working on their DIBI program which is scheduled for June 8, 2025.

**SI York Region** did not participate in a DIBI program this year.

Respectfully submitted by Governor Cheryl Ball

## MEMBERSHIP CHAIR REPORT – 2025

In February 2025, I joined the Eastern Canada Region (ECR) team as Membership Chair. After learning about the significant decline in membership across our region, I was motivated to explore the underlying reasons and determine whether these challenges were common among all clubs.

My first step was to review the resources available on the SIA website to see if a recent member satisfaction survey had been conducted by headquarters. While some clubs within the federation had carried out their own surveys, I discovered that the last federation-wide survey was conducted in 2014. SIA staff also provided the following membership information, at my request.

ECR Membership History		
2014-2025	#Members	#Clubs
2014-08-31	273	13
2015-08-31	265	13
2016-08-31	250	13
2017-08-31	242	13
2018-08-31	229	13
2019-08-31	235	14
2020-08-31	230	14
2021-08-31	230	13
2022-06-31	243	14
2023-08-31	218	12
2024-04-31	213	11
2025-02-28	191	11
2014 to 2025	-30%	decline

Next, I contacted the Membership Chairs from each club in the Eastern Canada Region—initially by email, followed by phone calls—to request their support in addressing the issue and to gather their insights on the declining membership. I was able to connect with representatives from every club, learning more about both the challenges they faced and the successes they had in recruiting new members. During these conversations, I suggested launching a region-wide member satisfaction survey. This idea led to the scheduling of a Zoom meeting on March 6.

During the March 6 meeting, we discussed the survey proposal in greater depth and brainstormed potential challenges. Club Chairs noted that not all members might be comfortable with an online format, so we agreed that a paper version of the survey should also be made available.

Following the meeting, I developed a draft survey and shared it with the Club Chairs and the ECR Board for review and feedback. Based on their suggestions, I refined the survey and circulated it again for pilot testing. A final Zoom meeting was held on March 27 to review the preliminary results of the test survey and finalize the launch plan.

The finalized survey was officially launched to the entire Eastern Canada membership on April 10, with a requested return date of April 24. At the time of this report, we are still awaiting responses from members. We hope to share preliminary results at the Spring Conference in May.

Dianne Nielsen  
Region Membership Chair

## PHILANTHROPY / FUNDRAISING CHAIR REPORT 2024-2025

As my first year as Regional Philanthropy Chair (formerly Fundraising Chair) of Eastern Canada Region comes to a close, I can truly say it's been a year of learning, connecting, and working towards our shared mission. I've had the privilege of representing our region at Soroptimist International of the Americas (SIA) Fundraising Chair meetings on October 7, 2024, and February 10, 2025. Additionally, I attended Governor/Governor-Elect meetings in November and March, which provided valuable insight into the broader scope of our organization.

At the ECR Fall Meeting, my presentation focused on securing business and corporate sponsorships for our clubs' events and programs. I walked through key strategies and practical steps to help clubs successfully approach potential sponsors. For the Spring Conference, I'll be diving deeper into the 'ask' – that crucial moment when we reach out for financial support.

Throughout the year, I've also emphasized the importance of continued financial support for SIA. Our donations fuel the Dream Programs, and our dues sustain the governance that keeps our organization strong.

I've held two meetings with ECR Club Fundraising Chairs (October 29, 2024, and March 18, 2025), and I have to say, I've met some truly inspiring fundraising leaders. These Zoom meetings were full of energy, with ideas and advice freely exchanged. However, I also recognize that some members remain hesitant to engage in fundraising, especially given today's economic and political climate.

Some fundraising stats from our region:

- 2 clubs supported Club Giving (June 1, 2023 – May 31, 2024), contributing 10% of their fundraising dollars. (It's important to note that some clubs have restrictions preventing donations to non-Canadian organizations.)
- 3 ECR Soroptimists are Stargazers, making monthly contributions to SIA.
- 1 ECR Soroptimist is a Laurel Legacy member.

A huge thank you to the clubs that continue to support SIA through Club Giving and to the individual members who make monthly contributions. Your generosity is what keeps our programs running and allows us to make a real impact. I also want to express my gratitude to the Club Fundraising Chairs who took the time to meet with me this year. It was wonderful to connect, share ideas, and learn more about your clubs and the incredible work you do. A special thank you to Governor Cheryl for her guidance and support, as well as to my fellow ECR board members and committee chairs.

As I wrap up this report, I'd love for us all to take a moment to acknowledge the incredible work we do as Soroptimists. Every dollar raised, every program funded, and every woman and girl empowered is because of our collective effort. So, let's give ourselves a well-deserved round of applause—we've earned it!

Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Eastern Canada Region – Club Fundraising Updates & News (2024-2025)

Our Soroptimist clubs have been actively fundraising and exploring new initiatives to support women and girls in their communities. Here's a summary of their ongoing and upcoming efforts:

### 1. Updates and News from the Clubs (includes reports emailed)

#### SI Cambridge

Their BINGO fundraiser has raised approximately \$30,000 per year for the past two years.

- We gave \$22 000 to nine LYD winners.

Having a golf tournament through their Trust on May 23. Raised over \$6000 last year. Much was from corporate sponsors. We also raffle donated prizes and have a wine wall.

Looking to a Speakers Event on April 29 (Antihuman Trafficking).

- Look for donations or \$10 plus profits of a Raffle Basket.

SI Guelph – Participated in the Sweid's Food fundraiser and raised \$385 this year.

### **SI Grand Erie**

- Planning to restart their Krispy Kreme fundraiser in September after a successful April event.
- Sold 130 dozen boxes at \$15 each (previous cost: \$7 per box, now \$8).
- Uses recycled ads and sales lists, with about 1.5 weeks of effort.
- Also sells directly from a community shed on King George.
- Working on obtaining a lottery license for a future gift card draw.

### **SI Haldimand Norfolk**

- Volunteered at the Dead End Street Roaders (car show) event last September.
  - Received a \$1,000 donation

Selling Biker Day tickets at Port Dover

- Kinsman donated \$250.
- Driftwood tree workshop raised \$844.
- Legion in Delhi donated the hall for free.
- Cheese fundraiser raised approximately \$700.
- March 30 Paint Workshop
- May 4 Fashion Show
- May 24 Shredding event (we usually make around \$1000)

### **SI Hamilton**

- Organized a dance in April fell through due to booking error on the part of the hall. May look into doing it next April at the Ukrainian Club, with tickets priced at \$45 per couple.
- In September, they will do its annual 'Pursalooza' (done in the past and raised over \$6000).

### **SI Kawartha Lakes (KWL)**

Celebrity Night at Boston Pizza:

- 2-3 members will shadow a server
- Member will hand out our rack cards.
- We will serve the table water and ask them to consider putting their bill in at the front desk and SI will receive a percentage of the sales.

Holding a yard sale on May 17th.

- We are partnering with another group and will have a few tables with items for sale.

### **SI London**

- Mint Smoothie Sale (Christmas): Sold out of Rheo Thompson chocolates.
  - Found that selling in bundles (e.g., 7 for \$20) was more successful than individual sales.
- International Women's Day Movie Matinee:
  - Low-cost event (\$10 per ticket, included popcorn).
  - Used a condo party room (restricted to members, friends, and past members).
  - Screened Netflix's I Am Woman.
- Fundraising elements:
  - Purchased a jumbo bag of popcorn from Costco.
  - Donations of baked goods, soft drinks and water.
  - Raffle basket and free raffle tickets for \$10.
  - Raised approximately \$330.
- Upcoming Brushes & Bites Paint Event:
  - Two painters have offered their services.
  - Currently in the planning stage.
- General Strategy:
  - Small club focused on easy, small-scale events that generate funds.
  - Past funding support came from local businesses, including a family dentist, an accountant, and individual donors. Unfortunately, no one responded to our letters this years. Times are tough.

## SI Thunder Bay

- Fall Gift Card Raffle: A great success, selling out and allowing for a \$1,400 donation to Isthmus to help address food insecurity.
- Annual Yard Sale: A simple yet effective fundraiser, bringing in \$1,500 for club funds.
- Spring Gift Card Raffle: Expected to sell out, with proceeds supporting DEK, a cause with deep meaning and impact.
- Two Bit Auction Pause: Understandably on hold due to unforeseen circumstances,
- New Fundraising Ideas: From a Mother's Day Tea to Christmas gift wrapping, a multi-vendor craft event, spaghetti dinner, and a bulb seed sale, there are plenty of great options to consider moving forward.
- 'Bakeless' Bake Sale: A genius and low-effort way to raise funds
- 50/50 and Silent Auctions: Small but consistent fundraisers that contribute to club funds.
- Drinking for Charity: This might be the most fun and creative idea yet! Over \$2,227.50 raised from bottle returns — proof that simple ideas can go a long way.

## SI Peterborough

- Runs BINGO at the Delta in Peterborough several times a month, raising \$16,000–\$17,000 annually. These funds support:
  - LYD and DIBI programs
  - Awards for Trent University & Sanford Fleming College
  - Uses “10 to One Committees” (small teams of three members) to generate creative fundraising ideas, such as: cooking class-inspired dinner event (after members took a class in Italy).
  - Garage sales, knitting events, and grape jelly sales.
  - Gift card sales and percentage-based purchases.
  - Upcoming idea: card game nights. The events will take place during spring and early summer.

## SI Toronto

- Concert is planned with Artist
- Holds a lottery license, which took about a year to obtain and cost under \$100. Due to the complex paperwork, they are ensuring they are well-prepared before launching.
- Maintains a Trust for donations to a women's hospital.

Let's continue sharing ideas and supporting each other to ensure our mission thrives!

## SI York Region

In the planning stages of McGregor Meat sales.

Respectfully submitted,

Keshala Fernando-Dissanayake

Governor Elect, Philanthropy/Fundraising Chair 2024-2025

## WEBSITE Report 2024-2025

*Submitted by: Susan Peirce*

Up until September 2024, I had done several changes and updates to the existing website that had been built several years previously, after 'offering to help' in 2018.

On August 31<sup>st</sup>, I received notice that the 2-year hosting plan from [Wix.com](https://www.wix.com) was increasing in price from 298.32 USD to \$462.89 USD on Oct. 1. (approx. \$324/year CDN).

After consulting with the board, and giving some options, it was decided to change hosting companies. This meant that the proprietary website program could not be migrated to a new host, but would rather have to be rebuilt from scratch. I do own my own company where I build small websites and have hosting options. Because my company already had transferred the domain names ([ecsorooptimist.org](https://www.ecsorooptimist.org) and [ecsorooptimist.com](https://www.ecsorooptimist.com)), it was decided to go with my quote of \$150/year for the hosting.

The website was rebuilt from scratch with direction and suggestions from the board (Governor Cheryl in particular – *thank you!*). This all came together very quickly before the Wix website expired the 1<sup>st</sup> of October. The new website was live before that date, with some things added after that date. It continues to evolve with additions as I have time.

The analytics for the old website no longer apply, so I have attached some interesting statistics for the new site.

As requests come through the email, I forward them to the appropriate committee chairs.

I would, once again, encourage members to register, so you can access the information in the 'Member's Only' section. Your login information from the old Wix site does not work on the new site.

If your club is having a special event, both for Soroptimist members, and/or the general public, please send the posters to me so I can post them.

You will find newsletters from Thunder Bay (excellent reading!) and those that Aline has been sending from Western Canada, and the joint ECR/WCR newsletter. Keep up to date with our region by using the website. It is there for YOU - as well as to garner interest and educate the public.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Peirce, webmistress

[susanpeirce5@gmail.com](mailto:susanpeirce5@gmail.com)



# Heather Reich

REALTOR® Broker

-  519-580-8134
-  519-783-7314
-  heatherreichkw@gmail.com
-  realhomeexperts.ca
-  heatherreichrealty



# STEPHEN GREEN

STEPHEN GREEN MORTGAGES  
MORTGAGE AGENT, L2 M23005021

-  519-500-1789
-  STEPHEN@SGMORTGAGES.CA
-  THEFINANCIALCOLLECTIVE.CA



@SGMORTGAGEADVIC







At the Soroptimist Foundation of Canada, we seek to advance the human rights and status of women and girls and provide them with access to education and resources to enable them to pursue and achieve economic and social equity.

Each conference, the Foundation takes a few moments on the agenda to give an update on this mission. In that our assets have grown to over \$3 million this year, the Foundation has been able to increase the amount of funds disbursed to \$135,000. For 2024 -2025, a conservative estimate is that 1,000 women and girls benefited from efforts supported by the Foundation in workshops, Dream It Be It sessions, leadership camps, Live Your Dream awards and Grants for Women pursuing post graduate studies.

How can you help continue the Foundation’s good work?

- Make a donation. I urge you to support the Foundation as it invests in the dreams of women and girls. Additional and ongoing contributions each year are needed to grow our resources.
- Think long term and as your legacy, identify the Foundation as your charity of choice.
- Contribute hands on leadership. The Foundation needs expertise and talent to serve on its Board of Directors; people with skills in the areas of planning and oversight, program delivery, promotion and marketing. No doubt you are already serving your club in these areas so why not take it to the next level and volunteer as a Foundation Board member? If you have questions, talk to any Board member or email me directly [neaveapril@gmail.com](mailto:neaveapril@gmail.com)

The theme of this year’s conference is *Be Bold Be Brave Be You*. You can be all that and more, by serving on the Foundation Board. I can tell you, the possibilities to help advance women and girls are limitless. As my term comes to an end in October 2025, I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to serve. I celebrate the personal connections made and the learning gained.

April Neave, Chair

To make a donation to SFC, use this link: <https://soroptimistfoundation.ca/donations/>