BPW Bowmanville Bulletin November 2026

Advocacy is the act of supporting, promoting or arguing in favour of a cause, policy, idea, or group. It's about using your voice — individually or collectively — to influence decisions, raise awareness, or create change. This is what BPW is all about! Let's continue our work and focus in 2026 & 2027 to continue to make this world a better place for women, girls and their families!

October Meeting

Our October meeting was small but mighty. Pamela set the stage as our new President. She added a new section to the meeting – Good News – presenting an opportunity to highlight positive stories and news items about women from around the world. We have begun planning our fundraiser event of the year. More discussions to come.

From the President – Pamela Cooper

Hello Everyone! The days are becoming shorter and colder, but so far, we have had a lovely fall, and I hope everyone has been able to enjoy it. Many have been travelling and with all of us busy, I am encouraged that so many are planning to be at our November meeting.

In October, it was a small group that discussed the resolutions passed in BPW Ontario and Canada this calendar year, and how to support these very important issues from within our club. It was evident that we would be most effective if we focused our attention and abilities on one main resolution, while still supporting the other worthwhile initiatives. With that decided, it only made sense for us to champion our own resolution, "Encouraging Women's Participation and Leadership in Municipal Politics". A fundraising initiative has been suggested which will be presented on the 27th. I would ask that everyone give some thought to how you would like our club to further this resolution and I look forward to a lively discussion at our meeting. As a reminder the resolution was as follows:

2026-05 Encouraging Women's Participation and Leadership in Municipal Politics

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that BPW Ontario urges the Government of Ontario, municipalities, and post-secondary institutions to take coordinated action to:

1. Develop and fund women-focused leadership and candidate-readiness programs. Expand mentorship, internships, and experiential learning opportunities in municipal governance;

2. Strengthen youth and women's advisory committees and reduce structural barriers to participation through accessible and family-friendly practices;

3. Collect and publish gender-disaggregated data on municipal candidates and elected officials; and

4. Promote municipal politics as an inclusive and viable leadership pathway for young women.



On a personal note my home initiative to Rethink, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle & Repurpose our household waste (Durham Region's 5 Rs), has been a surprisingly huge success. Howard and I are both shocked and he commented, "What are we going to do now with all the large black garbage bags we have?" 😆 This was our total garbage after two weeks.

Member Spotlight: Valerie Mayers-Griffith

Well, as most who know me are likely aware, I very much avoid the spotlight. Regardless, the Virgo in me is all about getting things done, which is also my Superpower (anyway, I think so □□).



As a bit of background, I was born in London to Bajan parents who had emigrated to the UK independent of each other. They met in England, married and gave birth to me as their first born. To continue their search for better opportunities, my father moved to Canada. He sponsored my mother and a month before my second birthday; we sailed to Montreal. My brother was born in Toronto in December of that year. I grew up in Scarborough and Markham (Ontario), attended the University of Toronto, then moved to Durham Region (Ajax then Whitby) after marriage. As a result, I am more Canadian than British, but the Barbadian roots run deep.

I have one daughter, Paige, who I am very proud of. We have both experienced much joy and
heartache throughout our lives, especially given the death of my husband in 2022. As strong, independent women, both my daughter and I have also thrived and experienced much success. While a lot of that can be attributed to what I learned from my high-school educated fierce mama, obtaining my accounting designation, increasing professional responsibility throughout my 35-year career, a history of volunteering, membership in Business and Professional Women (BPW) and finally moving on to retirement in August of this year.
A significant and invaluable part of my life has been my participation in BPW since 2013. At the time, I was between jobs, seeking employment but also searching to fill a void that I didn’t realize I had. It turned out that BPW, comprised of like-

minded, compassionate, giving, intelligent women, was the answer I was looking for. I had already experienced the satisfaction of giving back to my community while acting as manager/treasurer for my teenage daughter's soccer team and as board member for an Ajax youth health centre; however, from BPW I have also received so much back in the beautiful relationships, mentoring and sense of unity that permeates our organization. Actually, "organization" is too cold a description. BPW is an extension of my family.

As mentioned by our past president, Tina Jordan, in last month's bulletin, BPW Bowmanville has achieved much success over its many years. Most recently this includes our club's 75th Anniversary celebration in fall 2025, supporting education for Afghan women and girls by joining last spring's Red Pashmina Walk, and the successful passing of our 'Women in Municipal Politics" resolution at conference in June. We have had many achievements that are notable and impactful. I know I have contributed to that in my continuing (and possibly never-ending?) role as treasurer which began from the time I joined my previous club, BPW Durham, and in transferring to BPW Bowmanville in 2018.

BPW's goal is advocacy to better the lives of women, girls and their families. Personally, BPW has especially improved my life and mental health through joining this sisterhood of compassionate, intelligent, strong women.

Celebrating the Extraordinary Life of Dormer Ellis

Dr. Maxine Dormer Ellis passed away on October 14, 2026, in her 100th year, after an unusual life marked by many firsts. Dr. Dormer Ellis joined BPW in 1959 and was a member of North Toronto BPW. She was a pioneer in engineering, who had the vision and passion to inspire and widen the career aspirations of young women and girls. In 1950, Dormer became the first and only female professor of electrical engineering at what was then the Ryerson Institute of Technology.

During elementary school, she was called by her first name, Maxine, but when she was twelve years old, she chose to use her middle name, Dormer, to register at high school and was known as Dormer Ellis for the rest of her long life. Her unusual name proved fortuitous.

Having earned high marks in mathematics and science in Grade 13, Dormer enrolled in the Engineering Physics course at the University of Toronto. She became the first women to complete the four-year program and graduate from this challenging course. To meet the practical-experience requirements of engineering programmes, Dormer spent her undergraduate summers working for an aluminum company in northern Quebec where she was the first woman to ever work in the plant. Upon graduation, Dormer became the first woman to teach in the University of Toronto's engineering faculty. Her students were all men, mostly ex-servicemen who were several years older than Dormer. As she wanted more industrial experience, Dormer applied to an electrical machine manufacturer in Rugby, England, sending her academic record, employment history and glowing letters of reference from professors who were careful not to mention gender. Dormer's application was accepted and she was notified that an engineering position awaited her arrival in Rugby. Until Dormer showed up at the company's main office, no one realized the Canadian engineer who had been hired was female!

In 1952, Dormer married Roy Conway, an Englishman who had a mechanical engineering degree from the University of Cambridge. They flew to Gibraltar where they could be married by contract, which stipulated that neither partner would change their name nor nationality and that each would remain financially independent of the other. This was very unusual for the time. Dormer and Roy lived together happily for almost 70 years until his death in 2021. They moved from Rugby, England to Toronto in 1954 and Toronto was their home for the rest of their lives.

Dormer's Introduction to BPW:

"I spent my days in an entirely masculine environment. When a stranger happened to be chatting with on a TTC bus told me about a group of working women meeting for dinner at the Royal York Hotel once a month, I decided to drop in. It would make a nice change and, as they were employed themselves, I would not be subjected to the usual criticism for not being a housewife. I really thought it was just a social group. I didn't know that they had a mission."

Through the years, Dormer has given many speeches at various BPW events across Canada. Each speech highlights her BPW experiences and her own personal journey. For examples of her speeches, see https://bpwontario.com/bpw-through-the-eyes-of-dr-dormer-ellis/

Dormer was a true original and an amazing asset to BPW.

Upcoming BPW (and Other Important) Events

Call for Delegates for the 71st Session of the UNCSW – Deadline November 30, 2026
BPW Canada invites members to apply to be part of the delegation for the 71st session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW71), taking place at UN Headquarters in New York from March 8-19, 2027.
If you have any questions regarding the application process, contact uncsw@bpwcanada.com

2027 BPW Ontario Conference & AGM – Celebrating BPW Niagara Falls 110th Anniversary & BPW Ontario's 95th Anniversary
Virtual AGM, Thursday, June 10, 2027, at 7:00–9:00 p.m.
In-Person Conference, Saturday, June 19, 2027, at the Hilton Garden Inn, Niagara-on-the-Lake
https://bpwontario.com/2027-bpw-ontario-agm

Our Next Meeting: November

BPW Bowmanville's next meeting is on **Tuesday, November 24 at Barb's house.** Member attendees, please e-transfer $25.00 for dinner to Treasurer Val using email address treasurer@bpwbowmanville.com

Bulletin Editor:
Mary-Anne Pietrusiak