



SouthWest Region Annual Report for 2025



The 2025 Annual Meeting of OTA's SouthWest Region was held on Sunday November 23rd at the Tyandaga Golf Course in Burlington.

There being no other nominations, incumbent Region Chair Rosemary Goodwin was declared elected for a 5th term. The Chair announced her intention to make this her final term, and encouraged delegates to give active consideration to candidates for next year. Appreciation was extended to Steve Knight, who has served as Treasurer throughout the past four years and will continue for 2026.

The most noteworthy event of the 2025 season was the victory by **Victoria Mboko** at the National Bank Open in Montreal in August. Vicky spent her formative years in Burlington, where she frequented courts at the Burlington TC, Burlington Racquets, Cedar Springs and most of the open-access parks. She is admired and beloved by all those who had the privilege of watching her grow into the world-class tennis player she is today. On November 21st, she was honoured with a key-to-the-city presentation by the City of Burlington.



And at the ATP edition of the National Bank Open in Toronto, **Mustapha Jamal** received a TPA coach-of-the-year award in a centre-court ceremony. Mustapha is the Director of Operations at Ancaster Tennis Club and was recognized for his outstanding service in connecting tennis with organizations and events within the greater community. Congratulations!

Several members of our SWR community gave brief presentations reflecting the wide range of interests among our volunteers :

- **Gene Kiernicki** (Welland Tennis Club) spoke about the new initiative to recycle tennis balls, and encouraged all clubs to get involved. The best option that has been found is a machine that can grind the balls into granules that provide a base for new tennis courts. The cost of collecting the balls in Canada is about ten-cents per ball, which is managed by a fee of \$20 for a bin with a capacity for 200 balls. The filled bins are stacked on skids, loaded into containers and shipped

to the recycling facility. This is an ideal program in which we can work together to make our sport more eco-friendly. Whatever are our differences, we all use tennis balls!

- **Greg Kirsten and Alex Bittermann** (Wallace Park Tennis Club; Burlington Hall) describe themselves as “a couple of tennis enthusiasts, with decades of experience in managing sports and events, looking to bring together all tennis lovers in the Halton region for social gatherings and tournaments”. They created the [Halton Tennis Association](#) as the vehicle to manage their outreach and their events. They’re entrepreneurial by inclination, but motivated by the power of tennis to bring people together. In 2025, they hosted the first-ever OSGA 55+ event for Halton Region and also accepted responsibility for administration of the Lakeshore League. Social events kicked off the season with a Captains gathering, and ended it with an awards party for all the players.
- **Kevin Yang** (Burlington Tennis Club) is father to a teenage girl. Along with countless other parents, he observes his daughter’s travels along the tennis pathway and notices bumps in the road. The search for ways to fill the gaps with meaningful and positive tennis experiences led to team play, with ICTA Juniors and Tennis Rocks being the readily-available options. Team building is no easy task, given the wide variation in experience and playing levels among the young players at any club, and also the varying degrees of involvement by parents. It takes determination and persistence to bring together the young players, and also to find a blend of coaching and parental volunteer-time sufficient to manage all the complexities. Although it definitely “takes a village” to pull this together, an extra special dose of appreciation and admiration is due to Kevin for his leadership in bringing this about at BTC. The undertaking is chronicled on the SWR website as [Engineered Serendipity](#).
- **Oliver Barkovic** (Aldershot Tennis Club) has observed the university tennis system in Ontario for the past two years, following the matches of his daughter - Fiona - who plays for Brock University. This has led him to create a comparison of the Canadian approach to university tennis with the system in the United States. It’s called *Elevating Canadian University Tennis, Strategic Action Plan*. Many of our young Ontario players aspire to scholarships in the United States, in search of a team experience alongside extensive competition and coaching. A more scaled-down version is available in Canada.

Featured guests at the meeting were **Richard Mainella**, President and CEO of the Ontario Tennis Association, and **Ely Schwartz**, Senior Manager, Community Outreach. They brought extensive information about the ways and means whereby OTA connects with member clubs and with the general community.

Richard was particularly eager to hear which of the programs were most-widely used, and what suggestions - if any - clubs had for improvements or additions. Unfortunately, the preceding presentation ran over-long, and Richard's discussion with the clubs was cut short by the arrival of the hot meal. We must ensure this doesn't happen again.

Ely had an extensive presentation about OTA programs, with delegates expressing appreciation and interest. Although we may read about activities in newsletters, Ely made them feel particularly relevant and emphasized the desire of the staff to make everything of practical value for the clubs and the players.

In general discussion after the presentations, a couple of points were noted :

- Our community clubs share common challenges with governance standards and issues. Andrew Zucker offered to share the extensive manual of best practices which had been developed by the Ancaster Tennis Club. Anything we can do to combine our collective efforts will benefit all.
- Greg Kirsten raised questions regarding the potential value of hosting significant events within our SWR geography. Such events feature high-quality play that is of interest to spectators. Among the required features would be a "show court" to accommodate spectators. It would also include facilities for the players' needs, as well as for administration and presentation features. Indoor events of an ITF level are held indoors annually at White Oaks. Beyond the Tennis Canada Centre and Sobeys Stadium at York University, we don't have a lot of hosting capacity within the province of Ontario.

Thanks are extended to all the others who contributed to the success of the 2025 annual meeting :

- Dot Knight and Anne Luxon; welcome and registration
- Wayne Saigeon, Michel Lecavalier and Tony Schafer; continuity with SWR history
- Brent Miller; top-quality audio
- D&T Classic Catering; our hosts at Tyandaga Golf Club
- All the presidents, volunteers, coaches and players who joined us for the day







SouthWest Region Annual Report : 2025

Rosemary Goodwin, Region Chair

As the years roll by ever-more-quickly, we tend to identify key features by which to anchor them in our SouthWest Region memory. For 2022, it was the Canada Summer Games, hosted in Niagara. For 2023, it was the Davis Cup Champions Tour, with stops at Cedar Springs in Burlington and at Queens Royal Park in Niagara-on-the-Lake. For 2024, it was the Billie Jean King Champions Tour, celebrated at Rosedale Tennis Club in Hamilton, not long before the completion of the club's new bubble. And 2025 will forever be remembered as the year Victoria Mboko won her first Canadian Open title at the NBO in Montreal. It was a hugely proud time for tennis throughout Burlington.

So much of whatever it is that makes tennis so special is about finding where we fit in. For this OTA region, those anchors are relatable high points that we shared provincially and nationally. For individual clubs, the anchors might have been court rebuilding or clubhouse renovations or celebrating a special anniversary. For players, it could be a competition goal or a skill goal or forming new friendships. For coaches, it could be achievement of a higher certification or development of a new program. Everyone is looking for their niche.

In SouthWest Region, it all comes together to achieve the overall **OTA Mission : Grow the game and build communities**. The values that have guided our quest over these last four years are primarily humility and curiosity.

Humility comes easily as soon as one begins exploring our far-flung geography. We started to get to know the many and varied tennis facilities and the providers of tennis activities within them. Curiosity follows naturally, as there's so much to learn. Every observation leads to questions, and every answer leads to more questions. Lessons learned lead to connections being tried, leading to more lessons learned and circling back to that humility factor yet again. It's been a truly joyful experience, gradually discovering where everyone fits in.

In a nutshell, a case can be made that tennis is in great shape in SouthWest Region. Among all our organized facilities, the courts are in good condition. Two of the most-wanted are being rebuilt as this is written : Fort Erie Tennis Club at the west end of the region and Wallace Park Tennis Club at the east end. Near the centre, Niagara Academy of Tennis has a major renovation planned for next summer. Tyandaga TC has been newly resurfaced and we have new courts in St Catharines and at Queenston Heights. And all our courts are fully-occupied with the sport of tennis!

Our clubs are well-managed by outstanding volunteers. Several longstanding presidents are passing the reins with well-planned successions. Congratulations to Ron Mauro (Grimsby), Christina Wilson (Burlington), Susan Kitamura (Milton) and Bill Pinto (Fort Erie) on years of outstanding service. Our clubs also benefit from the professional services of outstanding coaches, many of whom have successfully pursued higher certification levels this year. Special recognition was awarded to Mustapha Jamal (Ancaster TC) as a TPA coach-of-the-year.

The Club at White Oaks hosted the annual ITF Junior Tournament in memory of Bruno Agostinelli. Several SWR residents won national championships, in categories ranging from under-16 to 70+, and played on gold-medal Team Ontario at the Canada Games. Milton TC shared in hosting the Ontario Under 14/18 Championships. Three large open tournaments were hosted by volunteer committees : Rose City Classic, Niagara Slam, and Halton Championships.

A total of 12 venues hosted OTA junior tournaments, with more than 200 events on the schedule. Access to tournaments relatively close-to-home is a big help for families of young players, and we hope it will stimulate more interest in competition within all our entry-level club programs.

The OTA National Bank Roadshow was a frequent visitor to SWR clubs, and Tennis Rocks was again hosted at Burlington TC. The Ontario Parasport Games were hosted at Brock University. Ontario Senior Games events were hosted in Niagara, Hamilton and Halton, with winners advancing to the provincial games in Sudbury.

The Lakeshore League passed to new leadership, with social and community connections as a key feature. The Burlington-Hamilton Ladies League continued, and many teams were entered in ICTA Leagues for Ladies, for 55-Plus, and for Juniors. In Niagara, the Team Tennis Doubles continued to fill the courts every Sunday afternoon at Youngs Sportsplex. And the SW 55+ League centred in Port Dover carried on despite the challenge of travel distances.

Our two universities - Brock in St Catharines, and McMaster in Hamilton - played a full OUA schedule with both women's and men's teams. Although the competition is crowded into the months of September and October, the players and coaches will continue working together throughout the winter.

The official high school competitions were hosted at Welland TC and at Rosedale TC, with ever-increasing interest in tennis being seen among the students. Perhaps one day we'll find a way to build on this and expand it beyond the traditional early-autumn events.

Connection with elementary schools is an ongoing challenge. North Burlington TC has a well-developed system of connecting with its adjacent school in the early fall, and Stoney Creek TC has a regular program that brings middle-school students to the club each spring. Burlington TC does outreach to neighbouring schools as well, with several families becoming club members as a result. We could certainly benefit from a special-interest committee to provide coordination and promote available resources in this area, both for elementary schools and for high schools.

We've had three areas of focus for the region in 2025 :

- The first was communication among coaches, and a start was made with a gathering in February and then at a special event in September. Lots more is yet to be done.
- Next was exploration of ways-and-means for partnership with municipalities to grow our game through activation of parks courts. Considerable time and effort have been devoted to this in Hamilton, with lots more yet to be done.
- And the third was advancement of affirmative action regarding girls and women - anything to address the disparities in coaching opportunities and in player-retention for adolescents and teens. Events for girls were hosted at White Oaks, at Burlington TC and at Rosedale TC, with another in the planning stages for Ancaster TC. Lots more work is yet to be done.

A continuing area of interest is that of junior development, particularly for providing support and coordination among families in which young players are pursuing competition. The concept called "regrouping" at the OTA level could be a helpful model, bringing together players of similar age and skill level from among various programs across the region. This is another area for a special-interest committee.

Promotion and marketing are always important. Help would be welcomed for social media activities and for development of branded promotional items such as t-shirts, hats, jackets, bags.

This brief summary captures a few highlights, but barely scratches the surface of all the events and activities that are generated by all our clubs and coaches. Our website is designed to capture more of the story in greater detail, and features photos of hundreds of players involved in dozens of events. But even that is only a sample representation of everything that happens on a week-by-week basis across the region.

The website is a major undertaking. Its value may not be readily apparent, and awareness is still at a very modest scale. But it's the easiest way to provide answers to questions such as :

- What is community tennis like in SouthWest Region?
- What kind of people play tennis? Where would someone like me fit in?

It's also a historical record, an archive of documents and information. The ongoing maintenance of the website is in two parts. The editorial part produces the content, and is a volunteer undertaking. The technical part maintains the back-end, ensuring it evolves with WordPress updates and maintains compatibility for all screen sizes. This includes optimizing the video content along with the many and varied links that are included in stories and lists.

There's reason to believe we'll see another major transformation of the information super-highway in the near future. Communication and connection are at the heart of everything we do in SouthWest Region, and the hope is that the website will be well-positioned to take advantage of new developments as they occur.

Contributors to the success of tennis in SouthWest Region include all the club leaders, tournament and league directors, coaches and players who make all the above happen. In addition, Steve Knight maintains our bank account, Oliver Barkovic maintains our social media and follows university tennis, Bruce Cates coordinates Tennis Rocks and advocates for expansion of activities for junior players, Mustapha Jamal provides leadership for coach coordination, Joel Cruz is a valued advisor for junior tennis, as is Helen Donohoe for community tennis.

An emerging area of interest is that of recycling, with increasing awareness of the landfill implications of thousands of tennis balls. Gene Kiernicki, Carol MacSween and Els Swart have done extensive research and are developing a proposal for coordinated action.

We're wide open to involvement by anyone else who wishes to make a contribution at the region level, or for any questions about how the region operates and how we're represented at the OTA Board of Directors.

Nominations for the region's elected positions closed on November 3rd, with the incumbents - Steve Knight and myself - being the sole candidates. This is my 5th election and will be my last, thus making the search for candidates for a November 2026 election a key goal next year.

November 23 2025

<https://southwestontariotennis.ca/>



Cash Flow Report for 2025

Balance at December 31 2024	\$ 3,497.41	
Paid re 2024 website expense	(3,000.00)	
Starting balance for 2025 operations		\$ 497.41
Received from OTA budget re 2025	11,500.00	\$ 11,997.41
<i>Disbursements re 2025 operations :</i>		
Tamahaac Club re coaches roundtable	(1,374.30)	
Brock University re Hamilton research project	(1,530.00)	
Cuative Publishing re website maintenance	(3,000.00)	
Tyandaga Golf Course re AGM	(3,066.76)	
Brent Miller re AGM audio	(875.75)	
AGM name tags & supplies	(38.95)	
Bank charges	(48.00)	(9,933.76)
Available for allocation at December 31 2025		\$ 2,063.65

Notes regarding 2025 Cash Flow :

For our first two years (2022 and 2023), the only expenses were for the annual meeting. In 2024, we had the annual meeting expense and also initiated the website. For 2025, we've continued with the meeting and the website, but also introduced two new areas of exploration.

1. **COACHES** : As a region, we're operated by volunteers, and our connections are among the volunteer leaders in the clubs. Our coaches are a central part of the tennis landscape, and their connections are primarily within the clubs in which they work. They have an umbrella organization (Tennis Canada's TPA - *Tennis Professionals Association*) for certification, professional development and insurance. And they access OTA resources for promoting summer camps, for the JobLine and for the annual Symposium. But we don't have any system for region-wide connections and communication among the coaches.

This raises the question : Given the central importance of coaches in tennis, could we be doing more? If we could encourage and support more communication among the coaches in SouthWest Region, would there be benefits for the coaches, for the clubs, for the players - for tennis in general? Could such communication lead to collaborations that would help to grow the sport?

With the help of Mustapha Jamal and Gary Caron, we started with a round-table discussion in February. It identified more issues than solutions, but first steps are always worthwhile. The most tangible outcome was development of a database/ mailing list, which was used to share news of interest to our coaches on several occasions.

Programs such as *Tennis Month In Canada*, *First Set*, *Tennis in Schools*, *Girls-Set-Match* and *World Tennis Number* are examples of initiatives brought forward from OTA and Tennis Canada to the volunteer leaders of our clubs. But they require involvement from our coaches for implementation. How can we support or coordinate that?

2. **COMMUNITY TENNIS** : In Ontario, most tennis is played on public courts. Those occupied by our clubs provide wonderful service to their municipalities by maintaining the facilities and organizing comprehensive programs. The other public courts are scattered across parks, are managed by the municipal staff, and in most cases are under-utilized. If we want to grow our game, these courts are a good place to start.

If there was an easy answer to getting this done, it would have happened long ago. In SWR, the largest area under the direction of one city hall is Hamilton, so this became the starting point for an exploration.

Brock University's Sport Management division has a feature called the *Centre for Sport Capacity*. It connects graduate students searching for real-world projects with volunteer non-profits searching for research expertise. To that end, we contracted with Nick Lacoste (and professor Taylor McKee) to create a survey of the tennis landscape in Hamilton.

The project is ongoing. As with the coaches initiative, delving into large subjects reveals more complexity than answers in the early stages. And the two areas happen to overlap, with conversations about activation of parks courts often including learn-to-play initiatives. Beyond the parks courts, the project has highlighted issues in relations between community clubs and their municipal partners - yet another worthwhile area of exploration.

This section is repeated from last year's report, as it remains relevant.

Financing for the SouthWest Region website (southwestontariotennis.ca)

The impetus for the website began at the 2023 SWR meeting on January 20 2024. The project began on a volunteer basis, with Robin Smith providing the technical side, and Rosemary Goodwin providing the content side. WordPress was chosen as the comprehensive and flexible platform and the domain name was registered.

After several weeks of work, it became apparent that the missing ingredient was design expertise. Cu Van Ha (<https://cuative.crd.co/>) was approached on the basis of previous work done together and the website gradually began to take shape. After months of work, we finally launched on May 8th 2024.

We had a basic Home page, a directory of Clubs, a Stories section with a format for making regular additions, an Events section with a listing of all the tournaments in SWR along with an explanation of the Junior structure, a Library section with a format for adding archival material. We sketched out two additional sections : Team Tennis and We're Here to Help, both of which are yet to be developed.

At each step of the way, Cu reinforced the technical side, ensuring that we had a robust foundation in which multiple formats could be delivered and optimized equally well on phones-tablets-laptops. In October, a performance issue led us to relocate the website from HostPapa to GoDaddy, and we now have that hosting for the next year.

This isn't an out-of-the-box template-driven website. It's set up to be adaptive, flexible and evolving. It provides us with a home base, a tangible presence for SWR, a vehicle for connection and visibility, a showcase of our objectives and our culture. It's more than marketing, more than information.

The total process has required hundreds of hours of work. While my time is volunteer, the design work is professional and requires compensation. Even at a very generous friends-and-family rate, this has accumulated to a substantial amount.

The OTA staff offered us the option of allocating the Donna Wood legacy of \$10,000 to the costs of the website. This has been accepted, with the hope it's something she would have appreciated and approved. Donna was very active at the Burlington TC and in all inter-club activities during the 1990s. She loved every aspect of tennis, was an avid student of the game, and was an intrepid note-taker and record-keeper. (Her partner, Tony Legault, has kindly passed on to us Donna's files and records from that time. We have her to thank for the 1996 SWR annual report in the website's Library.)

Since that initial amount, costs for continuing to build the website are at least \$1000 per month. I'd like to propose we allocate \$3000 of the SWR 2024 budget for this purpose and another \$3000 from the 2025 budget. *[This has been done.]*

Guest List : 2025 SouthWest Region Annual Gathering

Alex Bittermann	Halton TA; Lakeshore League	alexbittermann@hotmail.com
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Ron Mauro
Rosemary Goodwin
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Seth Kovnats
Stefan Ruff
Steve Brannen
Steve Knight
Suzanne DeKay
Tony Schafer
Tudor Enache
Wayne Saigeon

Hilltop TC
Grimsby TC
SWR Chair
TPA Course Facilitator
The Club at White Oaks
SWR Juniors
Grimsby TC
SWR Treasurer
Fort Erie TC
SWR Honor Roll
The Bubble Club; Appleby TC
SWR Honor Roll

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