



# Arts & Entertainment

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## Mrs. Canada wants to help other women

By ALAN LICZYK  
Staff Reporter

Trying to help other women is the goal of the reigning Mrs. Canada who hails from Bolton.

Irene Serra-Sellitto won the title Aug. 30 at the Hilton Niagara Falls Fallsview Hotel.

"I was very excited," she told the Citizen. "For me, just being at the pageant was enough."

It had been a dream of hers since she was a little girl. She added she was always very shy and this allowed her to alleviate her fears.

"I went to challenge myself," she said. "I didn't want to go through life saying I wish I had done this, I wish I had done that."

Besides Mrs. Canada, the competition also included

Ms. Canada, Miss Canada, Miss Teen Canada and Miss Preteen Canada. Serra-Sellitto was one of three contestants for Mrs. Canada.

This year will also mark the last time there will be a Mrs. Canada or Ms. Canada pageant due to lack of participants.

Serra-Sellitto held the Mrs. Peel region title when she went to the Mrs. Canada preliminaries in February. She made it to the finals thanks to sponsorship from The Country Kitchen Catering, Reflex Fitness, Salon Daniel Luis, South Bolton Dental Care, LASERMED (Dr. Pinto), Perfect Complexions, Royal LePage RCR Realty (Victoria Kaye, realtor), Bolton Wal-Mart and JoAnne Chapman School of Dancing in Bolton.

She explained 50 per cent of each contestant's marks were based on an interview with five judges, 25 per cent was on fashion wear and 25 per cent was on formal wear. There was no swimsuit or talent requirements.

In the interviewing part of the competition, the judges asked questions about the contestants their families and their platforms.

Serra-Sellitto married her husband Gianni in 1995 and they have two daughters: Giulia, 8, and Sofia, 4.

Her platform was helping women with postpartum depression.

"I chose this platform because I experienced this myself," she explained.

She had it when her first daughter was born, but wasn't aware she had it until her second daughter was born. She found out she had it by reading up on the subject.

"I could speak to other mothers because I had it myself," she said. "It's not their fault. I want women to know there is help out there."

The Ontario Early Years Centre at the Albion Bolton Community Centre has a support group for women dealing with postpartum depression. Serra-Sellitto expressed her thanks to Teresa Colasanti, community outreach/volunteer program facilitator at OEYC, for her help.

There are many risk factors involved in postpartum depression. In Serra-Sellitto's case it was her parents' divorce, moving to a new house and feeling isolated by being home all day that she believes caused her postpartum depression.

"I was crying all the time," she said. "I had a hard time concentrating."

She added she had feelings of guilt or inadequacy, and didn't believe she was a good mother. She was also anxious and unable to cope, and had unrealistic expectations of what motherhood should be like.

"I should have spoken with my doctor about it because he could have helped me," she said. "Isolating myself didn't

help. You've got to get out there."

The three types of postpartum depression are: baby blues, postpartum depression and postpartum psychosis.

Baby blues is the most common form and is experienced by up to 80 per cent of women. It's temporary and lasts from the time of giving birth up to about two weeks.

Postpartum depression can last from two weeks up to a year and is experienced by 10 to 15 per cent of women.

Postpartum psychosis is the most extreme form and is experienced by one to two per cent of women. They may talk about suicide or hurting the baby.

A book she recommends women read is called Women's Moods, written by Dr. Deborah Sichel and registered nurse Jeanne Watson Driscoll. It covers all moods women go through including postpartum depression. Included in the book is a self-help guide called NURSE which stands for nourishment and needs, understanding, rest, spirituality and exercise.

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"When I read this it made sense to me," Serra-Sellitto said.

The book is available at the Ontario Early Years Centre.

Web sites that are also helpful include [www.oursistersplace.ca](http://www.oursistersplace.ca), [www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca), [www.postpartum.org](http://www.postpartum.org) and [www.postpartumdads.org](http://www.postpartumdads.org).

Serra-Sellitto's responsibilities as Mrs. Canada are to make 12 appearances during the year and promote her platform. She appeared on

the television show Daytime and appeared at the Tournament of Champions equestrian event. She may also be appearing on other TV and radio shows.

"My goal is to promote awareness," she said.

For more information on the Canada Pageants or to book an appearance by Serra-Sellitto, go to [www.canadapageants.com](http://www.canadapageants.com) or call 1-866-574-STAR (7827).



Irene Serra-Sellitto



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