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Background on 97th Lions Clubs International Convention in Toronto, Canada, July 4-8

Lions Clubs International – Lions Clubs International is the largest service club organization in the world. Our 1.35 million members in more than 46,000 clubs are serving communities in more than 200 countries and geographical areas around the globe. Since 1917, Lions clubs have aided the blind and visually impaired, championed youth initiatives and strengthened local communities through hands-on service and humanitarian projects. For more information about Lions Clubs International, visit lionsclubs.org.

Lions Clubs International Convention – In early July, more than 20,000 Lions club members and their families from more than 120 countries and geographic areas will gather in Toronto for the Lions Clubs International Convention.

For five days, Lions will conduct association business, share fellowship and enjoy the sights of this international city. The Lions Clubs International Convention is one of the largest annual conventions of its kind in the world.

Impact of Convention in Toronto – This is the fourth time that Lions Clubs International will hold its popular convention in Toronto. This will be one of the largest conventions ever held in Toronto. Lions usually stay longer, do more sightseeing and bring more family members than most business conventioners, with an estimated visitor spending of over \$20 million.

Convention Highlights – Among this year's highlights will be:

- A spectacular Parade of Nations with 10,000 Lions from over 120 countries and geographic areas, many in native dress, along with bands and colorful floats. The parade will begin at 10:00 on Saturday, July 5 and will take place in downtown Toronto on University Avenue from Queen's Park, ending at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. The parade route is approximately 1 mile (1.5km) long.
- Recognition of the young winners of the 26th Lions International Peace Poster Contest and Our World, Our Future Essay Contest for blind and visually impaired students.
- A colorful flag ceremony with the flags of Lions nations from around the world on Sunday, July 6.
- Presentation of the 2014 Lions Humanitarian Award, the highest honor of the association, to award-winning composer, singer, songwriter and record producer David Foster, founder of the David Foster Foundation, on Tuesday, July 8. The award includes a US\$250,000 grant from Lions Clubs International Foundation



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for continuing humanitarian activities. Previous recipients include former U. S. President Jimmy Carter and Mother Teresa.

- Election of Joseph Preston of Dewey, Arizona, USA, as the 2014-2015 Lions Clubs International president on Tuesday, July 8.

Convention Selection – The Lions Clubs International Board of Directors selects convention sites from around the world five years in advance, following an extensive bidding process. During the evaluation, tourist authorities explain why their cities are attractive destinations and present options for accommodating the convention and the large number of attendees.

Lions Clubs International looks for areas with a strong tradition of Lions volunteerism. Local Lions club members demonstrate their commitment by forming a Lions Host Committee.

Lions Headquarters – Lions Clubs International staff members, headquartered in Oak Brook, Illinois, USA, handle arrangements for convention events, housing, outside suppliers and exhibitors. Around 100 headquarters staff works at the convention.

Lions Around the World – Lions are men and women who volunteer their time for humanitarian causes. Lions clubs evaluate community needs and choose service projects to meet those needs, including:

- Collecting and recycling used eyeglasses and supporting eye screenings and cataract surgeries.
- Sponsoring programs for young people, including youth groups called Leo clubs, and providing scholarships and recreational opportunities.
- Improving the environment, planting trees and building or maintaining community parks.
- Supporting diabetes education, providing hearing screenings and assisting the elderly.
- Providing disaster relief in times of emergencies, including both short- and long-term relief efforts following the recent storms and tornadoes in the USA, the flooding in the Himalayas, and Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines.

Lions Clubs in Canada – Lions clubs have a very strong presence in Canada with 1,600 clubs and more than 37,000 Lions members. Local Lions are involved in hands-on service in a variety of areas including protecting the environment, improving health, assisting youth and establishing many other community services.



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Host Committee – Lions volunteers from Toronto and throughout Canada have spent several years preparing for the convention. They are responsible for hospitality, including staffing welcome centers, arranging welcoming banners, securing local marching bands for the parade and serving as sergeants-at-arms for major events.

Upcoming Lions Clubs International Conventions:

- Honolulu, Hawaii, USA: 2015
- Fukuoka, Japan: 2016
- Chicago, Illinois, USA: 2017
- Las Vegas, Nevada, USA: 2018
- Milan, Italy: 2019

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