

Canada a global hot spot

On the list of trendy global hot spots where you should be and be seen in 2017 one name tops the list: Canada.

That's right Canada.

Oh Canada while you're definitely not hot in terms of temperature at this time of year, you're hot because you're exciting, fresh and popular. Or, put another way, you're cool in every sense of the word.

It's not just that in a world that's grown increasingly unpredictable, unstable and intolerant, Canada is a beacon of predictable stability, tolerance and dare we say general contentment.

The new year marks the 150th anniversary of Confederation, and Canadians have every right to be in a birthday-partying mood.

In his annual New Year message, Governor General David Johnston urged Canadians to seize the once-in-a-generation opportunity that 2017 offers to think about Canada.

The way to do this, the former University of Waterloo president says, is to reflect, to reaffirm and to look ahead.

These are worthy New Year resolutions for every Canadian.

So let's start by reflecting on the long, improbable journey that began 150 years ago.

Our country has come so far since 1867 when 2.5 million people in the British colonies of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Canada East and Canada West (now Quebec and Ontario respectively) took a collective leap of faith and landed in the newly formed Dominion of Canada.

Today there are 36 million of us sharing a land stretching from sea to sea to sea, a land of staggering size, physical beauty, matchless human diversity and untapped potential. We are, by any measure, blessed.

Who were the people, what were the forces and what were the decisions that made this happen? What wars did we fight? What depressions did we endure?

Find out by reading a Canadian book, visiting a national park or historic site. Travel to a province, territory or place you've never been. Put on snowshoes. Walk a trail. Swim in a lake.

Other countries will look to 2017 with trepidation. We can anticipate it with confidence.

Happy New Year, Canada.

Now party on!

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Letters to the editor

Our water is worth fighting for

Why are we all drinking water out of bottles when most of us don't need to? The Premier of Ontario asks. It's an excellent question.

The answer lies in the multi-million dollar marketing budgets of the hugely profitable bottling companies who have made a fortune by drawing massive amounts of water from our province's aquifers (via permits for which they have paid a pittance), then selling it back to us in disposable containers, most of which end up in landfill.

Bottled water requires 2,000 times more energy to produce than tap water. And last year, Canadians disposed of almost 11 billion empty beverage cans and bottles.

This is a major environmental issue and an utterly unnecessary one.

We are strong advocates of efforts to protect our drinking water

sources and to provide alternatives to prepackaged flat or sparkling water and we're proud of the fact that our Canadian operations are on track to eliminate the use of up to 100 million disposable bottles and cans in 2016.

Premier Kathleen Wynne has made a good start with a two-year moratorium on new or expanded water extraction permits, but more must be done, and it will take resolve.

The big boys of the bottled water business have been making money hand over fist for many years now, and they don't take kindly to anyone whom they perceive as a threat we have the cease-and-desist letters from their lawyers to prove it. Premier Wynne best prepare for battle, but it is a fight that must be fought.

The future depends on it.

Rena Nickerson,
 General Manager
 Sodastream Canada

Texting, driving must be stopped

I know there has been a lot of discussion for the past long while about cracking down on texting and driving, but as a daily pedestrian and commuter for work, I don't think we have done enough or anything at all to combat this problem.

For the month of December I decided to keep notes of flagrant violations. Only this morning (Dec. 28), while standing for the bus for nine minutes, I observed 17 persons talking on the telephone.

I have in the month of December almost been hit by four drivers distracted by their cellphones and not paying attention to people crossing the street but just looking at the light.

If the police want to curb this, more enforcement is needed. You don't need to go far, stand on any street corner and observe, guaranteed you will run out of ticket books within two hours.

Don't wait to have someone sacrifice a life or limb do something now, please.

Kurt Brar