

Only 75 days left until *Spring* arrives



Forget El Nino. Forget La Nina.

"This is *La Nada*," said Environment Canada weather specialist Ron Miller, when asked about December's cold – the coldest in over a decade, with twice as much snow.

"We're getting back into more normal winters – we've been spoiled by the last four or five years when it's been mild, and now we're getting colder temperatures with more snow," Miller said.

"We don't have an El Nino or La Nina – we're in a null period and while we usually do get snow in December on a regular basis, we haven't seen it for a number of years and we're

back into normal weather patterns and it's cold!"

Asked about long-range forecasting accuracy – technology versus folklore – Miller lamented about the relative lack of long-term Canadian weather records and dismissed the Old Farmer's Almanac as "vague."

The Almanac says temperatures and precipitation through March in Ontario will average close to normal, with warmer-than-average temperatures in this area, and below normal snowfall.

"I'm not a big fan of the Farmer's Almanac...it's a very ambiguous forecast, but

to say it's right or wrong, it's very hard," Miller said, adding he relies on Environment Canada climatologist Sandy Radecki, for his forecasting data.

Radecki said the average temperature last month was - 6.7 degrees Celsius – the coldest December since 1989 in Ontario when it was - 10.1 degrees C. The 30-year, long-term normal temperature is - 3.5 degrees C.

"It's a return to colder days – we've been very spoiled getting moderately mild conditions in December and snowfall conditions have been light, so I guess the pendulum swings the other way this year," Radecki said,

adding she doesn't mind because she can get her skis out earlier.

On average, the Acton area gets approximately 31-centimetres of precipitation in December. We had 56 centimetres last month – most of which we had to shovel.

For the winter as a whole, Environment Canada is forecasting above normal temperatures with below normal precipitation. The next three months, the Almanac predicts will be colder with below normal snowfall and spring – in 75 days – will be milder and drier than normal.

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What's Inside



Acton's Christmas week minor hockey tournament meant special awards and championships. See reports and photos on Page 8 and 9



2000 is only a memory but The New Tanner reviews the year starting on Page 7.



VIA Rail trains had at least two crashes in or near Rockwood in 2000. The year in Rockwood and area is reviewed on Page 11.

Good year for Acton merchants

No deal for high school teachers

There was no settlement under the tree for Halton's high school teachers this Christmas and when they return to class January 8th, they will continue the sanctions they began mid-December.

Teachers won't cover for absent colleagues, monitor lunchrooms and halls or take part in school or board committees.

As well, at Acton High School, some teachers have opted not to take part in any extra-curricular activities and parents and senior students are filling in as supervisors for

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PUCK POWER: Acton Citizen of the Year, "Mr. Hockey" Harold Townsley, dropped the puck for Acton Tanner Minor Novice captain Billy Burgan and Wexford's centre in the championship game at the Tanner's annual Christmas tournament. Wexford won the crown with an 8-3 win. - Frances Niblock photo

No last minute Christmas rush

By **FRANCES NIBLOCK**
The New Tanner

There was no last minute, wild rush harried shoppers for most Acton merchants this holiday. Shoppers spent as much – or more – than in past years, but they did it early.

At Halton Hills Furniture on Mill Street, people shopped for gifts – prints, wine racks, clocks etc. – but Jake Kuiken said that they also shopped for themselves, buying furniture, household needs and big ticket items.

"It's been good – it's been a super year and volume has been tremendous, although we didn't get the heavy last-minute volume," Kuiken said.

At Home Hardware, owner Bill Manes said business had been "pretty steady" all fall, but there wasn't a rush of last minute shoppers.

"We had a good fall, as far as all of the new products like gifts and toys that we brought in. Obviously, the snow has affected our business with (sales of) snow blowers and shovels," Manes said.

At Country Reflections, owner Judy MacDonald, who had better sales year than last year, was surprised with one popular Christmas present item this year.

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Others in running for car plant

By **FRANCES NIBLOCK**
The New Tanner

Magna International officials continue to investigate a site in Acton for a 500-job car plant – but the car parts giant is also looking at a number of other sites in Ontario and the USA.

Prior to Christmas, Magna filed an application to rezone an approximate 70-acre site for a plant on Main St. North, north of Highway 7. A public meeting on that application will be held at the

Civic Centre on January 15.

Magna's executive vice-president of finance, Vince Galisi, said they need a plant up and running by 2003.

"We're actually looking at a number of sites at this moment. Acton is one of those sites, but there are others in Ontario and some in the United States that are being considered," Galisi said on Tuesday, refusing to say exactly how many sites are being considered or where Acton ranks on the list.

"I really don't want to get into where

Acton and the other sites are in comparison to each other," Galisi said.

Magna's director of industrial relations, Louis Tonelli, said the new plant would produce truck frames for Chrysler and proximity to rail was one of the more substantial factors Magna considers when choosing a site.

"There are a number of communities that we consider when we come to consider building a new plant," Tonelli said.

Magna has 59,000 employees at 170 facilities in 19 countries around the world.

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