

HAPPY CANADA DAY: Stouffville citizens head into the 21st century with mixed emotions

Future to behold

BY JOAN RANSBERRY
Staff Writer

Most folks are marking Canada's 132nd birthday by attending this year's Strawberry Festival — the last of the 20th century. The three-day community festival offers everything from a bubble gum blowing contest to a midway to a pie-tasting contest.

Stouffville's children certainly have a unique way of celebrating Canada today. They'll be grinding the rails, catching some air and hanging 10s at the \$75,000 skateboard park which opens tonight at Thicketwood Park.

In keeping with Canadian tradition, there will be a fireworks display at dusk at Memorial Park. Thousands are expected to attend.

"We're celebrating Canada at the festival," said Linda Marr of Stouffville. "We always go. Won't miss it."

The Marr family has yet to decide how they'll ring in the new century. "I haven't thought that far ahead. I feel pretty relaxed about the coming of new century. We'll carry on day to day," she said.

With Canada Day in mind, Darlene McGill of Stouffville booked off work today and is partying in fine style. "I'll enjoy Strawberry Festival. I always do," McGill said.

Jennifer Batz's home in Stouffville is decorated with a large Canadian flag. As for the millennium, Batz is embracing it with open arms.

"I am really excited. I'm looking forward to 2000. And I'm looking forward to the changes," Batz said.

David Monaghan, owner of 1001 Variety, has a unique way to celebrate Canada's birthday. "I'm going to finish drywalling my house. But, I will fly the flag," he said.

Canadians should hold a Canada Day party and serve pizza, joked Mohsen Dastoom, owner of 2-4-1 Pizza. "Canada is big on beer and pizza with lots of cheese," he said. Dastoom grew up in a small town in Iran.

"My wish for the new century is for the wars (in the Middle East) to end and for people to live in friend-

Y2K

Citizens share views on how they'll celebrate final Canada Day of the century and welcome in the new millennium.

ship with each other."

Dastoom can't return to his homeland. "I hope to be able to bring my mother here for a visit in the new year. I miss my mother," he said.

Since the dreaded Y2K bug is expected to bite on the last day of this century governments, the business community and private citizens alike are into a readiness mode.

To be on the safe side, June Wiancko of Stouffville is going to stock up on canned goods and water in case the Y2K bug wins. "I guess we could exist at our cottage," Wiancko said.



LINDA AND LYDIA MARR

Jill Jones, owner of Stouffville's Inside Out, has upgraded her computer, making it ready for the millennium. Today, when Jones honours Canada, she'll think about the economic well-being of the nation.

"Business is looking up," she said. "Things are being built and the (construction) trades are busy."

Life has been good to Stouffville's Mel Fluish for 79 years. "I expect things will continue," he said.

"Even if the world turns all upside down and people carry too much stress, it won't hurt me. I'll survive. As for Canada, this country will survive another century."

Fluish didn't make Canada Day plans. But, he isn't turning down any invitations either.

"I'll leave everything up to the moment," he said.

One thing is certain: The 21st century will be busy in Stouffville.

Local, provincial and federal politicians as well as Stouffville's business community all agree: The turning of the century will be

noticed.

The communal sewage system, affectionately known as the Big Pipe, is Mayor Wayne Emmerson's personal millennium project. Big Pipe construction is slated to begin in 2000.

When the pipe crosses the Markham-Stouffville border developers will cheer the loudest. Communal services such as water and sewers are major drawing cards for growth. For developers, growth means profits.

While for many residents, the idea of a swelling population is upsetting, not everyone is pessimistic.

Resident Don Taylor doesn't mind increased development.

"Growth is now a way of life here. York has been growing. It will do all right. We have to learn to take it as it comes," Taylor said.

Canada Day did not keep Tony Wright home. "I'll be at Queen's Gardens, taking in the beach," he said.

Linda Stafford of Rapid Photo is optimistic.

"We're ready for the Y2K bug. Business is ready for it," Stafford said. "I'll be at a religious convention on Canada Day, but I'll think of it."

York Region has completed its testing of critical systems in preparation for the Year 2000 transition and is well advanced in meeting rigorous Y2K readiness targets, York Region Chairperson Bill Fisch said.

"Our goal is to maintain business continuity throughout the Year 2000 transition, with the health and safety of our residents being our number one concern. We have taken the necessary steps to prepare the region's systems, processes and equipment for the transition," Fisch said.

Residents of Ballantrae and Musselman's Lake feel safer this Canada Day now that the \$410,000 fire hall and ambulance station will soon open in Ballantrae.

Whitchurch-Stouffville's official millennium project is all wet.

In 2000, the battle cry in Stouffville will be, "Everybody into the pool," now that the town is getting a \$5-million, four-lane indoor swimming pool and library complex.

The 30,000-square-foot facility will be built near O'Brien Avenue and Rose Avenue and it'll open next fall.

In 2000, Stouffville might become the tennis capital of Canada if ClubLink and Team Canada form a partnership and build a world-class tennis facility in Gormley.

Encouraging Stouffville's business owners to take an international approach is Oak Ridge MP Bryon Wilfert's millennium agenda. Wilfert has the names of Stouffville companies that might want to consider establishing an exporting alliance with the Middle East.

On the homefront, the MP is adamant that an international airport will not be built on neighbouring lands in Pickering. Wilfert's message to Stouffville is this: "Jets aren't about to occupy our sky."

Global warming will boost Canadian tourism: author

FROM PAGE 1

and I hope our country can stay together. I've been to Quebec and met many wonderful French people. It makes me wonder if (separation) is something the people want or is it just a bunch of politicians?"

Robert Sawyer, perhaps Canada's leading science-fiction writer, doesn't agree Quebec will separate.

"Quebec will stay part of Canada. There's just no other viable option," he says.

The award-winning Thornhill author has a few other predictions to share.

"Global warming is going to increase, but that will be good for Canada — a boost for tourism. I'm sorry for what it will do in the southern hemisphere, but it will be good for us."

"And with all this talk of us adopting the U.S. dollar ... as much as I love Canada, we're going to have economic union with the U.S. in the next century. Like the European union. Nevertheless, I suspect that Canada will maintain its own identity."

K.Y. Ho, president and CEO of the high-tech leader ATI Technologies, thinks Canada is ideally positioned to enter the new millennium.

"The ability to compete globally stands Canada in very good stead for the next decade, the next century and even beyond," said Ho from his Thornhill office.

"Canada is now well established in the space shuttle program, we are leaders in computer technology and we have embraced the Internet to a greater degree than many countries. As a result, we are perfectly positioned to reap tremendous rewards as industrial economies continue to be replaced by knowledge-based economies the world over."

SILVER MEDAL WINNER

The chairperson of the York Region District School Board, Bill Crothers, agrees. And as a silver medal winner in track at the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo, he also knows a bit about competition.

But it is a former Montrealer who perhaps best sums up what so many Canadians are thinking on this last Canada Day of the 20th century.

Nicky Rauzon-Wright, area manager for the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, is a strong proponent of a united Canada.

"In a world confronted with monumental changes at all levels, I envision a Canada that has a warm sense of unity," she says.

"Despite our multicultural society, Canadians share the same interests, values, laws, education and cultural diversity, as well as love and respect for children, nature, sports and animals."

"I wish for a Canada where everyone will be given the opportunity to excel and be the best they can be. A caring Canada where people will take pride in their past and open their minds to the future. A Canada where people are appreciative of their knowledge and skills and are willing to share these by volunteering and mentoring."

"Bonne fete, Canada."

Indeed.

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