

Olympic sites for 905 undecided

Equestrian locations don't fit the bill for 2008 Summer Games

BY PATRICK CASEY
Staff Writer

Potential York Region venues for the 2008 Summer Olympic Games will not be identified until Toronto bid officials determine where they will house the equestrian events.

Although the TO-Bid Committee is set to announce the location of various sporting events at a news conference tomorrow, there will be no news concerning any possible sites in York, Durham, Halton and Peel, the four regions that have submitted bids to house the Olympic dressage, show jumping and three-day competition events.

According to Karen Pitre, executive vice-president of TO-Bid, all four equestrian sites — including the York Equestrian Centre in Cedar Valley, just outside Newmarket — do not meet the specifications laid down by the International Olympic Commission.

Ironically, the York Equestrian Centre was the site chosen to host the equestrian events for the 1996 Games if Toronto had won that bid over Atlanta.

"Equestrian is the most costly event, and nobody really has what we need," admitted Pitre in an interview yesterday morning.

"It's a big hole for us right now, and we have to wait a bit before we get it nailed down."

"Until we figure out what it will cost, we can't figure out what we can spend on some of the other sports in the different 905 regions. We have to figure out what to do with the facilities after the Games, and the other sports are much less complicated. We are trying to balance things across the 905 area, and it's not just a matter of equestrian, it's what else is on the table."

"I'm not an equestrian expert, but this has caused us a lot of problems," added Pitre, who said the situation should be sorted out before the end of March.

Aside from the equestrian events, Pitre said York Region is bidding to host softball and baseball in Richmond Hill, water polo and volleyball at a proposed new sports centre in Markham and soccer in Vaughan.

On Monday, Vaughan politicians agreed to commit \$2.4 million to construct a premier soccer field to Olympic standards in a partnership deal with the Ontario Soccer Association, identifying the Vaughan Grove Sports Park opposite Holy Cross Catholic Academy in Woodbridge as the preferred site.

Vaughan Regional Councillor Joyce Frustaglio insists the Olympics in Toronto would create an economic surge, but worries local taxpayers could be asked to pay a 1- or 2-per-cent tax increase to fund the soccer venue.

"We are the keepers of the purse strings and we have to make sure our taxpayers are not on the hook for an astronomical tax increase," said Frustaglio yesterday, instead favouring a financial commitment from the region.

"If we have a venue in York Region, whether it's in Vaughan, Richmond Hill or Markham, regional council should see the benefit of it. There is a dramatic potential to garner world-wide publicity from the Olympics."

It's now expected only 18 to 20 facilities will be sent to the 905 belt, but Pitre said local residents will still have a chance to play host and interact with the amateur athletes, especially since training sites are vital to the actual competition.

Musselman's Lake plays host to day of family fun and games

The entire family is headed to Musselman's Lake this Sunday.

The Friends of Musselman's Lake is hosting a fun-filled winter festival at the lake and at Cedar Beach Pavilion.

The fun begins at noon and continues until 4 p.m.

There will be something for everyone, promises event co-ordinator Ruth LeBlanc.

"We are delighted to announce that this event will be free to the public. And it will be filled with activities for all ages," LeBlanc said.

The fun includes a scavenger hunt, snow golf,

skating, smurf hockey, snow mountain, snowmobile rides, a bonfire and a marshmallow roast. Inside the pavilion will be a host of activity, all catering to children.

There will be children's entertainers, clowns, face painting and birdhouse building.

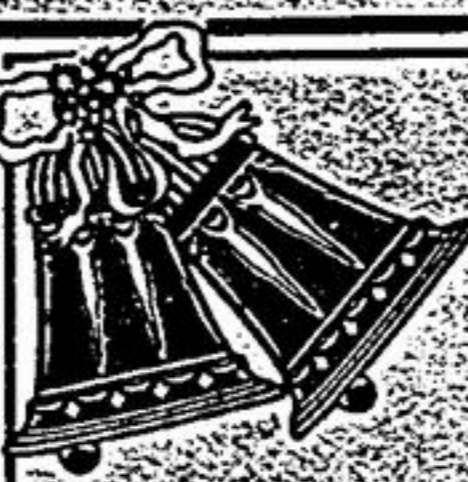


A winter nature walk and wagon rides, slated to begin at Shadow Lake near the pavilion, will add to the day.

Hotdogs, hamburgers, hot chili, beverages and other snacks will be sold for a nominal fee.

Proceeds will go towards the Musselman's Lake beautification.

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