

Less than two years to go before Pan Am Games

By Bill Rea

It was made official that two years from now, King's Caledon neighbour will be in the midst of hosting the 2015 Pan Am Games. There were numerous celebrations throughout the Toronto area, including at Caledon Equestrian Park in Palgrave.

Craig Collins, managing partner with Equestrian Management Group (EMG) extended the welcome to the crowd on hand for the festivities.

He said EMG has been operating the facility with the Town of Caledon and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority since 1986. 'We are seeing the park maintained in a most wonderful way,' he declared. 'We are ready to welcome the world to Caledon.'

Victoria Winter, a board member with Toronto 2015 Pan American Games Corporation, as well as individual and team bronze medalist at the 1995 Pan American Games, expressed appreciation for all the cooperation that has gone into getting things ready for the Games, including between the various levels of government.

'You are all integral to the success of TO 2015,' she added as she stressed the coming Games will include competitions in dressage, eventing and jumping.

She also took in the fact there have been a lot of improvements to the facility in the last little while, with more in the works in anticipation of the Games. She pointed out the first phase has been completed, with the new facilities having stood up well to last Monday's heavy rains.

'Let's get excited Caledon,' she declared. 'The Games are coming.'

Oak Ridges & Markham MPP Dr. Helena Jaczek was on hand representing the Province, reminding the crowd there will be some 10,000 athletes and officials representing 41 countries in a host of athletic disciplines. She said there are several other facilities in the Toronto area that are seeing improvement in anticipation of the Games.

'I know the next two years will fly by,' she said.

'This is just going to be phenomenal for our community,' Caledon Mayor Marolyn Morrison commented, as she pointed to the area's proud equestrian history and tradition.

She also praised the cooperation between the Town, EMG and TRCA.

'We welcome the 41 countries of the Americas and Caribbean to Caledon,' she declared.

Morrison read a proclamation, declaring last Wednesday as Pan Am/Parapan Am Day in town. The proclamation stated the 'Games will use the power of sport to engage Ontario's diverse communities, inspire children and youth and transform our neighbourhoods through legacy facilities and programs.'

The mayor also helped unveil a mural proclaiming the Games by Artist David Arrigo. Morrison a contribution to the work at last month's Caledon Day, and she pointed that out as the work was uncovered.

'This grass is my grass,' she boasted.

Olympian Jessica Phoenix told the crowd about how she won a gold medal in eventing at the 2011 Pan Am Games, recalling her family was there to see it. She said it will be an 'absolutely amazing feeling' for local athletes to be able to compete so close to home.

She also said the improved equestrian facility will be a huge boost to the sport.

'I can hardly wait for the competition to begin,' she said.

Tony Eames, a member of the board of the Canadian Olympic Committee, said the Games offer a great chance for Canadians to shine among the greatest athletes in the world.

'They'll be bringing with them their A game,' he said. 'Make no mistake. Canadians will be bringing their A game as well.'

'The excitement is to come, but this is a very exciting day,' he added.

There were also comments from representatives of various sponsors of the Games.

Chevrolet is a premier sponsor. Peter Cornu, manager of sponsorship, auto shows and exhibits for GM Canada, pointed out when the Games come, there will be more than 20,000 volunteers will be hard at work to make the games a success. He said it will be an 'exciting and amazing experience.'

Lead partner for the Games is CIBC. District Vice-President Gerry Simpson was on hand for the recent celebration, too.