

Our doors are open to the world

Mark Pavilons



It's a great time to be a Canadian.

Just ask the members of the Canadian women's soccer team, who made it to the quarter-finals in the FIFA 2015 World Cup. This tournament did our country proud and I think we shone brightly from coast to coast, welcoming fans and visitors from around the globe.

I watched almost every game and was quite impressed with the speed, talent and excitement these players provided. It was great to watch and I thought Canada played very well considering the high-calibre teams in this tournament.

For our neighbours to the south, they couldn't have capped off a July 4 long weekend any better. And they turned out in record numbers to watch their team in action, undoubtedly boosting the local economies in the host Canadian cities.

And now, we are the hosts for another historic event ? the 2015 Pan Am Games.

These mini-Olympics have attracted the best athletes in North, South and Central America, including the Caribbean. These athletes will compete in some 48 sports for some very prestigious hardware.

We are keeping an eye on King's own Rosie MacLennan and her trampoline performance. The finals are slated for July 19. We have every confidence Rosie will medal once again.

King will have representation in the equestrian rings, operating in nearby Palgrave at the Caledon Pan Am Equestrian Park.

For horse lovers and all manner of equestrians, this is an amazing opportunity to see some of the best, only minutes from King Township. Events take place from July 11-25 so there's plenty of time to get tickets and enjoy this once-in-a-lifetime experience so close to home.

Did I say it was a great time to be Canadian?

An event like the Pan Am Games is not just about competition, medals, athletic prowess or bragging rights. It's about camaraderies; about an appreciation for human accomplishments. It's about national pride, whatever your nation is.

And it's about sharing that excitement and enthusiasm with others.

The preparation and excitement for the Games has been building for years.

You've undoubtedly seen some really neat painted horse statues around King and Caledon. This is a project of the The Headwaters Equine Leadership Group and the idea is to welcome visitors with the ?Headwaters Parade of Horses.? These creations will be on display throughout the Games, and some will be residing here permanently.

I think it's a neat way to pique curiosity and engage residents.

We ran a newspaper poll asking whether people believe the Games will have a positive impact on the local economy. Sadly, the majority didn't think so.

Opportunities are what we make of them. I think there is potential to lure some tourist dollars to King, during the Games.

There will likely be thousands of visitors coming to the GTA over the next three weeks for the Games. They will need somewhere to

go, somewhere to eat, shop and stroll during their time here.

And that's where King can shine.

While we may not be the tourist mecca of Ontario, we are definitely worth checking out.

And, just in time to capitalize on the Games, King Township launched its 'experienceKING' Internet-based campaign that promotes tourism locally. It consists of a website at experienceKing.ca, a YouTube channel, a Facebook page and Twitter account.

The campaign celebrates King as a beautiful place to refresh, recharge and revitalize, with the website currently featuring 42 destinations within King Township, as well as 10 festivals and events.

King is regarded as being a gem in York Region in terms of internal cooperation and an emphasis on getting things done. We're frugal and financially solid. We have some of the most beautiful landscapes in York and we're home to, dare I say, the most interesting residents in southern Ontario!

So, we all need to pull together, jump on the bandwagon and shout the praises of King Township. We need to grab the bull by the horns, literally, and entice visitors to see our world-class farms and equine operations. We need to welcome them with the best food and hospitality we have to offer. We need to up the ante and create or boost those high-caliber community events that show us as leaders, not followers.

Let's run to the local store and snatch up as many air horns and vuvuzelas as we get our hands on and make some noise!

This is a great time to be a Canadian, and a King resident!