

Aurora Lawn Bowling Club looks forward to the next century



By Brock Weir

Sunday rains may have made the green extra challenging, but there was nothing to deter the members of the Aurora Lawn Bowling Club from their passion as they gathered to celebrate the 100th anniversary of their club.

Based at the corner of Fleury Street and Maple Street, the club has its earliest beginnings at Trinity Anglican Church. But, it was at their well-maintained new facility that the venerable club welcomed over 60 members and a host of dignitaries for an afternoon of celebration and gameplay.

"This is a great sport, it has a great tradition, and I am extremely proud to be a part of it," said Allan Dean, president of the Aurora Lawn Bowling Club, who has double duty as president of the Ontario Lawn Bowls Association.

As a 50-year member of the club, he said he was proud to be part of its storied history which, although versions of the game have existed back into antiquity, has its modern roots in Scotland.

These roots were heralded by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, in a special message which was read out to the crowd by Richmond Hill MP Costas Menegakis, on behalf of Newmarket-Aurora MP Lois Brown.

"Like curling, with which it shares similarities, lawn bowling has its origins in Scotland and was brought to Canada by British garrison officers before Confederation," read the Prime Minister's message. "Its popularity in Canada has grown in recent decades because of some notable international achievements at the Commonwealth Games and the World Championships.

The enthusiasm that your founding members showed for bowls a century ago has been passed down through the years to the current members who continue to meet as friends in the spirit of fair play and with respect for the game's traditions."

Representing these early days of the Aurora Lawn Bowling Club was Rev. Ian Martin, who was on hand to provide a few words for the century ahead, as well as Mayor Geoffrey Dawe and Newmarket-Aurora MPP Chris Ballard.

Joking that the club "didn't look a day over 98," Mayor Dawe paid tribute to the people that have allowed the club to flourish for a century.

"We really appreciate the opportunity you folks afford by organizing the club and volunteering to do all the work that you do," said Mayor Dawe. "Volunteers are really part of what makes Aurora such a great place to live. I am very pleased the Town could have a small part in terms of helping you with this facility and it has been spruced up quite nicely."

Upon arriving at the green, Mr. Ballard was asked if he had ever tried his hand at a few bowls. In fact, he had, as a summer student

working at Eastman Kodak, he recalled.

?Some of the more senior employees would challenge the summer interns to a game or two and we thought it was a pretty genteel sport,? he said. ?They seemed to be having lots of fun ? but they had particular fun in cleaning our clocks every time. I learned early on that this game is a lot more difficult than one would think and I have a lot of respect for people who play it well!?