

Canada151 party will be two days of fun

By Brock Weir

Canada 150 may have come and gone, but there are more than enough reasons to party as Canada turns 151.

Aurora is pulling out all the stops this weekend to maintain the title of Canada's Birthday Town, with two days of festivities starting this Saturday, June 30.

The party begins with the Rotary Dance in the Park, which runs at Town Park from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m.

Featuring the Optimist Food Truck and the Rotary Beer Garden, the entertainment gets underway at 6.20 p.m. with Louisa & The Planets, followed an hour later by Bernadette Connors. The band Six Ways to Sunday then takes over the bandshell from 9 ? 11 p.m. to close out the night.

The party continues Sunday, Canada Day proper, with the annual Canada Day Parade, which starts on Yonge Street at 10 a.m., working its way from Mosley Street southbound to Murray Drive. From the parade route, the fun shifts over to Lambert Willson Park, just behind the Aurora Family Leisure Complex on Industrial Parkway North, where the party continues well into the night.

?I always love seeing the Colour Guard come out with the Town Crier,? says Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora, on the start of the Canada Day Parade. ?Then, we have five marching bands from the White Heather Band, to the Uxbridge Band, the Barrie Pipes and Drums, and returning again this year is the Governor General's Horse Guards and Calvary Bands. It is not just about bands, we also have multicultural performers that are staggered into the bands. We have two dragons and one Chinese lion which will be orchestrated and moving in synch. We also have other multicultural performers, including a Hawaiian dance group, a Chinese group, a Portuguese group and I believe the final group is a Russian group of dancers.

?We have a healthy mix of community participants, from the Farmers' Market, to the Aurora Garden & Horticultural Society, a variety of those types of groups. They will be infused, again, with a healthy mix of bands, dancers, and community groups that are participating in the parade procession.?

Post-parade, organizers hope to continue the momentum felt in last year's Canada 150 commemorations over at Lambert Willson Park with the ever-popular Passport program, which takes party-goers, particularly youngsters, on a virtual tour across the country with 13 hands-on activities representing each of Canada's provinces and territories.

Visitors to ?Ontario?, for instance, will be treated to a geocaching activity, which highlights Halliburton, ON's position as third in the entire world for geocaching. Next door in ?Manitoba?, Scientational Ssnakes will bring together an elaborate display of slithery creatures, noting the largest gathering of mating garter snakes in the world, which gathers in the prairie province each year in May before dispersing ? a little known fact about the Province.

?As families tour throughout the provinces and territories, we're hoping they take a new experience or a new piece of information so, six weeks after Canada Day, when they are visiting friends, they can say, guess what I learned? They can say they learned it at Aurora's Canada Day festivities,? says Ms. Ware.

In addition to the Passport tour, the Canada Day festivities will feature with live on-stage entertainment, kicking off with the Welsman Brothers Band, which has its roots in Wells Street Public School, where the siblings attended elementary school.

Their performance will be followed by the traditional free pancake breakfast run this year by the Optimist Club of Aurora in conjunction with Enbridge, the Canada Day birthday cake cutting, and the citizenship reaffirmation ceremony.

The musical program will then resume with the Patty McLaughlin Band and Delayne Drive, before the Top 8 contestants in the Aurora Teen Idol competition duke it out for the crown, with former Teen Idol Louisa Barbosa and her band, Louisa & The Planets, performing between rounds.

Once the 2018 Aurora Teen Idol is named, its over to Hot Rocks, a tribute to the Rolling Stones, which will keep the party rocking through to the popular fireworks display at dusk.

Throughout the day, there will be a Community Zone, which provides a showcase to the myriad community groups that call Aurora Home. Local scouts, for instance, will host a giant Connect Four battle while offering an opportunity to learn all about what the Scouting program offers.

The Queen's York Rangers will have two military vehicles on site for party-goers to explore. In addition, historical displays and interpretations will be hosted by Science North, Viking heritage artists, Black Creek Pioneer Village, and the Ontario Provincial Police.

Hands-on activities will be facilitated by Home Depot as well, with their Home Depot Kidz Workshop between 12 noon and 3 p.m. Past activities have included tool kits and bird house, but to find out what you can build this year, there's only one way to find out:

head over to Lambert Willson Park.

For more information on Aurora's Canada Day celebrations, visit www.aurora.ca/canadaday.