

Celebrate country and community this Canada Day with two-day bash

It's a time to celebrate country and community as the Town of Aurora plans a two-day Canada Day celebration.

Canada's 156th birthday party in 'Canada's Birthday Town' will include a celebration of community at Dance in the Park on June 30, before Aurora is painted a sea of red and white at the Aurora Farmers' Market, on Yonge Street for the annual Canada Day parade, and the day-long, family-friendly extravaganza and fireworks display at Lambert Willson Park.

'It has been fun planning this without worrying or anticipation that perhaps the plans might have to change and not having to develop as many contingency plans,' says Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora, on planning this year's party without COVID and public health restrictions. 'It all starts with Dance at the Park, which is on Friday, June 30, from 7 ? 11 p.m. at Town Park. We're very excited to be featuring the music of James Brown and Aaron Morris to open up the evening, and then closing the evening with the Beresfords.'

A beer garden operated by the Rotary Club of Aurora will help keep the party going.

As Canada Day falls on a Saturday this year, Ware encourages party-goers to start their day at the Aurora Farmers' Market, which opens at 8 a.m. at Town Park, with live performances from the Aurora Community Band at 9.30 and 11.30 a.m. From there, residents are invited to walk over to Yonge Street for the annual Canada Day Parade, beginning at 10 a.m.

This year's parade will begin at Yonge Street and Murray Drive at the appointed hour, before heading north to its completion at Aurora Heights Drive, just north of Yonge and Wellington.

'This year's parade is going to be absolutely spectacular with four marching bands,' says Ware. 'We're fortunate enough to have the Governor General's Horse Guards and Cavalry Band in Town and in addition to that, we will have several different cultural performers making their way up Yonge Street.'

This year's international cavalcade includes representatives from Brazilian, Mexican, Greek, Ukrainian and Caribbean cultural groups. Following the parade, many of these groups will join the day-long party at Lambert Willson Park, which concludes following a spectacular fireworks display anticipated to launch around 10 p.m.

'At Lambert Willson Park, we will start with the Birds of Prey show, which is featured by the Canadian Raptor Conservancy and then we will be doing our Citizenship Reaffirmation ceremony,' says Ware. 'We will be heading out into a four-hour multicultural showcase with back-to-back cultural performances starting with an Afghan-Iranian showcase, then Mexican, Greek, Brazilian, Caribbean. We'll have the Korean drummers back and closing off with the Ukrainian dancers. That will take us through 4 p.m., and then we will be flipping the stage to get ready for the bands in the evening.'

'We want to take the community on an east coast tour as we will be opening the live entertainment that evening at 6.15 with Fiddlestix and closing with Off the Rock, a Tribute to Great Big Sea, which will take us through fireworks.'

Throughout the park and throughout the day, activities will take participants on a virtual cross-country tour. In addition to popular inflatables, mini-golf courses, and other interactives, returning this year is the Town's Passport challenge where themed activities will be hosted to represent each province and territory.

'This year, we're offering inflatable Alien Laser Tag representing Alberta,' Ware explains. 'Some people may not know, but the first UFO landing pad in the world was built in 1967 in St. Paul, AB. We also have a really cool Nascar simulator from Nascar Bob for our Quebec activity because Quebec is home to the Montreal Grand Prix.'

Nearby on the patio of the Aurora branch of the Royal Canadian Legion, the band Tangent will add extra music into the atmosphere.

?We really hope everyone tries to visit each element, from Dance in the Park, to the Farmers' Market, the Parade ? absolutely everything is going to be spectacular. Then, heading over with community cheer into Lambert Willson Park with some really unique programming, whether you've come before and you know what you're in for, or if you haven't, you're really in for a treat.?

For more information on these and other Canada Day programs and activities, visit aurora.ca/canadaday.

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