

Celebrations will mark Queen's milestone reign



By Brock Weir

Aurora will host a series of celebrations next month to mark the milestone reign of Queen Elizabeth II.

On Wednesday, September 9, the Queen will set the record as longest reigning monarch, overtaking the long-standing record set by Queen Victoria in 1897.

To mark the occasion, a community celebration will be held that afternoon at Queen's Diamond Jubilee Park (18 Civic Square Gate at John West Way) beginning at 2 p.m.

Diamond Jubilee Park will be the setting of a flag raising ceremony and dedication of a newly-installed flagpole, a citizenship affirmation ceremony, performances from the Evergreen Choir from the Aurora Seniors' Centre and the White Heather Pipes and Drums, along with greetings from Federal and Provincial dignitaries.

Festivities continue at 3 p.m. at the Aurora Seniors' Centre with a Celebration Tea featuring ? you guessed it ? tea, light sandwiches and dessert, with entertainment provided by the Evergreen Choir.

At 4 p.m., celebrations shift to the Royal Canadian Legion at 105 Industrial Parkway North with a special meet and greet.

From September to December, the Aurora Cultural Centre, in conjunction with the York Region Branch of the Monarchist League of Canada, hosts a special exhibition marking the Queen's record-setting reign and the role of the crown in Canada from Victoria through Elizabeth II.

This theme will continue in a number of activities planned by the Centre to mark Culture Days on September 26.

Queen Elizabeth II ascended the throne on February 6, 1952 upon the death of her father, King George VI. The Town of Aurora marked her Diamond Jubilee with the dedication of Queen's Diamond Jubilee Park ? formerly Civic Square Park ? later that year. It is slated in the future to host a fully accessible playground with sensory features.

Queen Victoria's record as monarch stood at 63 years, 216 days at the time of her death in January 1901. At press time, her great-great granddaughter's reign stands at 63 years, 193 days.

September 9 will be marked in many communities across the country and, federally, by a special commemorative \$20 bill, coin series, and postage stamps.

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In the meantime, if you have any memories or photos of your own encounters with the Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh or other members of the Royal Family ? or even memories of the death of King George VI and Coronation Day -- we want to hear from you. Send your thoughts and images to brock@auroran.com.