

Prince Andrew, Duke of York will unveil Aurora's Diamond Jubilee Park plaque



By Brock Weir

A new plaque commemorating Aurora recipients of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal will be formally dedicated by the Duke of York next month.

Prince Andrew is due to unveil the commemorative plaque, which will take pride of place in Aurora's Queen's Diamond Jubilee Park, at a special event on June 5.

The Queen's son will take part in several events in the Aurora and Toronto areas to commemorate new battle honours received by the Queen's York Rangers.

The Aurora leg of the Royal Visit will include a celebratory lunch benefiting the Queen's York Rangers Regimental Assistance Fund at a location which will be announced closer to the date.

Following the lunch, the Duke of York will unveil the commemorative plaque before celebrations continue in Toronto with a parade at Old Fort York.

There, His Royal Highness will review a Trooping of the Guidon ceremony, which will be the formal recognition of the Queen's York Rangers' four new battle honours.

After June 5, the plaque will be installed in Diamond Jubilee Park, formerly Civic Square Park, on John West Way, just north of Aurora Town Hall.

The Duke of York has been Colonel-in-Chief of Aurora's regiment since 1999.

The Queen's Diamond Jubilee medal was awarded to 60,000 Canadians nation-wide who have contributed to public life to mark the 60th anniversary of the Queen's accession to the throne in 2012.

Earlier this month, Aurora Council reiterated its support for including the names of approximately 60 local residents who received

the medal on the plaque. They were asked to confirm their intent after one resident declined to have his or her name included while municipal staff were unable to reach about nine more residents.

‘There was a lot of work in terms of trying to track down all the names,’ said Mayor Geoffrey Dawe, noting letters were sent on behalf of the Town by Rideau Hall’s Chancellery of Honours to medal recipients’ addresses they had on file. ‘[Despite this] there are about nine or 10 people we haven’t been able to verify against this list. My suggestion for going forward and putting those names on it is all those names are already public knowledge [on the Governor General’s website].’

As for the one individual who requested their name not appear, Al Downey, Aurora’s Director of Parks and Recreation said no reason was given.

Speaking against putting the individual names on the plaque entirely were Councillors Evelyn Buck and Chris Ballard. From Councillor Buck’s perspective, including such a plaque would take away from the original purpose of the park naming to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee while including the names of those they were not able to track down could be an ‘invasion of privacy.’

Although he ultimately voted in favour of going ahead with the plaque, Councillor Ballard, who originally floated the idea of commemorating Aurora medallists, said he had since changed his mind. When he made his original motion to Council, his own calculation pegged Aurora’s recipients in the range of 20 ? 25 individuals, but the final list had many more recipients.

‘It is my sense now that 60, especially when they are not sure about 10 of them, that 60 is too many,’ he said. ‘With such a large number untraceable and such a large number, I have re-thought that original position and suggest we not move ahead with putting those names on the park or in the park.’

Nevertheless, Councillors ultimately approved including the names. For them, the proverbial genie was already out of the bottle and to try and put it back in after residents were already notified of their intentions to be included on the plaque might be seen as a slight.

‘To go back and say we have changed our mind might be offensive,’ said Councillor Sandra Humfries. ‘We need to be able to move forward. I would err on the side of having all the names. It is the right way to move forward.’

Tickets are still available for the special luncheon with the Duke of York on Thursday, June 5 from 11 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. Tickets are \$150 (a tax receipt will be issued for the allowable portion). To register, contact Brian North at bnorth@ellisstudios.ca or Kimberley Kerr at rkkerr@rogers.com.