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Caledon?s Town Crier brings home gold

The Town of Caledon was once again represented at the Ontario Provincial Town Crier Championships, held over the weekend in Markham, by defending champion Andrew Welch.

Welch was not able to repeat his overall win, but still brought home the gold medal for one of the three competition proclamations, and was also awarded the Dave Thomson Memorial Trophy for Most Humourous Cry of the weekend-long competition.

Caledon's Official Town Crier, first appointed by council in 2011, makes year-round appearances on behalf of the Town, opening charity events and new businesses, leading parades and officiating at civic ceremonies. Welch is still considered a newcomer to the profession which boasts many veterans with two or three decades of proclaiming the news in their home municipalities ? some of whom even don their uniforms as a full-time job. Still, he has quickly established himself as a serious contender for both provincial and international honours.

This is the busy season for town criers, second only to the weeks leading up to Christmas, and Canada's 150th anniversary has certainly added several engagements to the traditional summer roster. Indeed, a packed schedule was Welch's biggest challenge when preparing for this year's provincial championship, including a three-week volunteer Red Cross deployment to manage last month's flooding in eastern Ontario.

?The key to success in town crier competitions is partly in keeping the voice in shape, but is mostly in the writing of the proclamations,? he explained. ?Each proclamation can take several days to get just right, while working within the 100-125 word-count limitation. If you can get that just perfect, then the other judging criteria such as delivery, deportment and accuracy will follow.?

In some cases, the proclamations have to be submitted well in advance of the actual event, such as is the case for the 2017 International Town Criers Competition to be held in Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley in September. Welch said he is furiously scrambling to finish those three new cries before the Canada Day deadline, in addition to preparing for three more appearances for the sesquicentennial itself. He has already put Caledon on the map for the Ontario Guild of Town Criers ? now he intends to capture the attention of the world's best.



Caledon's Town Crier Andrew Welch with John Webster, town crier for Markham, where the weekend competition was held.Photo by Elswyth Fryer