

Thank you ---

Good afternoon and Welcome

Honoured guests, Parade Sponsors, Celebrity Clowns, Volunteers and our Parade artist's and designers.

Guess what ?? I am here to talk about a parade – A one hundred year - old parade

- A parade - - created by a great merchant
- A parade that has survived two world wars, the great depression and - - a number of recessions.
- A parade that over the last hundred years has given tens of thousands of children their first opportunity to volunteer and enjoy the benefit of having fun while doing good.
- A parade that continues today because the people of this city wanted it to continue.

Yes -- a 100 year old parade that our Board of Directors, Sponsors and volunteers are convinced will be celebrated for another hundred years – Why ???

Because the magic of

“5 miles of smiles”

is forever --and is for everyone

So come with me on a 100 year journey - take a peak into the past - - celebrate the present, and dream about the future of this great community project.

To begin with, parades are not a new phenomenon. The Romans had their version – music – banners – chariots – large crowds -- ending with the triumphal entry of the leader in a chariot, drawn by horses - - -

Just as today **our leader** -- Santa arrives accompanied by **9** reindeers – music -- banners, floats and cheering children.

Researchers tell us - - - Santa has changed over the last 100 years - - - They tell us – this jolly generous gent used to arrive in January as a “slim” Dutch sailor called Klaas - - dressed with a long green winter coat, and smoking a pipe.

As the years went on, his coat was changed to red - - - his waistline expanded – - - courtesy of the cookies and milk the children leave for him on Christmas eve. The horses pulling his carriage became “reindeer” drawing a sleigh. The Moorish Slaves who always accompanied the old fella became elves. And the parade date itself – changed -- the date was pushed back a few weeks - - to celebrate Christmas.

Now, let’s take a brief look at some of the turning points over the last 100 years .

It’s December 2nd , 1905 - - Timothy Eaton and his wife Margaret are waiting just across the street from here, in front of Union Station – waiting to meet and greet the one and only --- **Santa Claus**.

The Eaton family helps him up to a lorry, and together the little group toured the downtown area - - -From Union Station, along Front to Simcoe, up to Queen, over to York, south to King, back to Yonge Street, north to Queen again to the Eaton’s store. It was a small celebration – except that great merchant and visionary Timothy Eaton had tipped off The Toronto Star – the result -- front page coverage.

In 1906, Santa arrived at the West Toronto Station, and was pulled on a “tally-ho” by four white horses - - - along an extended route. That year began another parade tradition, MUSIC - - It wasn’t much, just four trumpeters, But it was music nonetheless -- and signaled --- “The Parade” was evolving.

In succeeding years, Santa would sometimes arrive at the North Toronto Summer Hill station where the liquor store is. And sometimes it would be back to the West End. For a couple of years, Santa would leave from Newmarket, and make his way down Yonge Street to Hogg’s Hollow.

Some of you may remember a pub there called the **Jolly Miller**, that’s where Santa would stay the night, before coming all the way down Yonge Street to Eaton’s Toyland. **Jolly Miller** --- **Jolly Santa** --- that works !!

Sadly, Timothy Eaton died in 1907 – but his legacy lives on - - his son “Jack” assumed the reins - - with a vision to get Eaton’s employees involved -- make the parade bigger and better - -

By 1913, the parade included a cadet corps and bugle band, and “an Eaton stroke of genius” -Children over the age of six were invited to walk with Santa in fact they were encouraged to do so, and they were rewarded with little boxes of candy.

Who would have thought that by inviting children to don nursery rhyme costumes – walk on a cold day - - to bring magic to the little ones along those early parade routes - - that the Eaton’s were introducing the concept of “volunteerism” to a generation of children. That has continued for 100 years.

I would like to think -- the sense of fun, and the joy of making others happy was the foundation for thousands of children to raise their hands and volunteer when asked to reach out and support their schools - - - and later as adults in their communities. (love to know, Volunteers school, United Way)

Now a few brief notes from our historical archives :

In 1919, with world war one - over, Santa arrived for the first and last time by air – piloted by WW1 flying ace --**Billy Bishop** . He touched down at an airport on Eglinton Avenue in Leaside, seven years before Lindbergh flew to Paris.

And in 1925 : As Canada welcomed many immigrant family's from Europe -- The parade introduced and exposed the children to a new series of Nursery rhymes with floats such as: the House that Jack Built, Cinderella, Peter Pan, Jack the Giant Killer, To name a few . . .

The parade also included walking - - wooden soldiers - - hobby horses - - nursery rhyme characters - - Large pudding heads - - bananas - - apples and pumpkins - - totem pole men - - heralds - - prince charming - - and two lady riders” -- **Three** marching bands - - - AND of course Santa – surrounded those wonderful young volunteers.

That same year, the parade left Toronto - - It was packed on flat bed trucks for a train trip to Montreal, to be ready for a parade there the following weekend. A tradition that continued, for more than forty years ...

Meanwhile -- in Toronto, the parade continued to flourish attracting volunteers numbering over a thousand –The reality of our parade day continues because of volunteers such as the Emergency Medical Service drivers who throughout the year provide such a critical service to those in need.

Many of these same drivers climb aboard tractors and trucks at midnight on Parade morning as they carefully drive the floats along the darkened streets of Toronto to the parade starting point at Christie Pits.

Later they are joined by volunteer Girl Guides and Boy Scouts who will be the “hidden” mechanical arms and legs or wings of the floats.

Our special thanks to the many school principals and vice-principals who volunteer their time as the critical Parade Marshall’s that guide and support the front and rear of each float and bands - - - to ensure our little elves and soldiers are safely secured on their floats.

And to the talented young makeup artist volunteers who transform young children into a Fairy Tale characters -- before donning their costumes with the help of yet other volunteers.

And Chief Fantino - - I know you have been along the Parade route to see the joy and happiness on the faces of the children as your officers quietly ensure the safety of the families along its route.

At any given crossway – you can be sure “Metro’s finest” - - get into the spirit of Christmas by sporting a red nose or reindeer antlers – much to the delight of the children

In 1925 -- Children were encouraged to write letters to Santa Claus. All the letters of course went to Eaton’s, where Santa’s helper elves made sure that every child received a personal reply.

And when Eaton's left the scene, [in 1982] Canada Post took over that delightful duty. **Today**, letter carriers walk the parade route and collect letters for Santa from the kids along the parade route [no postage required] `Every letter gets a reply – courtesy of the volunteers at Canada Post.

And across Canada, every child knows Santa's postal code - - it is so easy to remember: North Pole - HO HO HO. "THANK YOU POSTIES" and there is more

Just look at these stamps [on screen] To honour the **Parade's 100th** **Anniversary** – Canada Post has once again stepped up to the table - - and created these terrific – domestic, U.S. and International stamps that will be released on **November 2nd** ...

And when you and your family mail your Christmas greetings to homes across the country and to friends around the world - - It will be thanks to Canada Post for sharing these beautiful visuals of Parade's past with your friends !!

Another 100th Anniversary event -- On November 13th -- Global Television will air a documentary of the one hundred year evolution of the parade . DVD copies of this feature will be distributed through the 2500 Canada Post outlets across the country - - and for \$9.95 – it is a great stocking stuffer - - proceeds of the sales to benefit the Hospital for Sick Children.

A few more historical facts:

In the early years it was radio that first brought the parade into the home. There was a time and perhaps a few of you may remember – when radio was a families' only link to the outside world.

Toronto institutions such as **CFRB** were a child's nightly tie to the magic of Santa on his long flight from the North Pole. And our national broadcaster, **CBC** Radio kept enchanted children nightly listening to Santa's progress as some of Canada's most famous voices read Christmas stories.

And we cannot forget - - - throughout the great depression, the parade was, if not a beacon, at least something of a small light in the darkness. Eaton's continued to fuel the fantasy, the magic, and the joy of Santa Claus, even as unemployment reached record numbers - - Sadly - - for many children the only Christmas gift they would receive would be the small one they were handed as they left Santa's throne in Eaton's toyland.

The **great years of the Parade** began right after the second world war – bigger floats - - upside down clowns - - more bands - - more costumes - - more colour, - - - more marchers - - more of everything. The crowds on the streets grew larger and larger. It was, for Eaton's and for most of Canada, what one of their executives called: “the perfect fusion of fantasy and commerce”

But like many good things, the parade hit a bump in the road - - Retail trading in Canada had been hurt by recessions in the mid 1970s and then again in the early 1980s. Eaton's made a hard corporate decision. They cancelled the parade. It happened one day in August of 1982, without a hint of prior notice.

There would be no Eaton's parade that year, they said, or ever again. The employees who built the parade would be laid off if no jobs could be found for them. The floats would be dismantled. And that would be the end.

And it almost was the end.

I will share with you what happened and how the combination of corporations, volunteers and Eaton's saved the parade -- Of course I do this at the risk - - this will suppress the old rumour that George Cohon -- and -- I did it all by ourselves.

Actually --- it was a simple case of many many good people - - all doing good work - - all at the same time ---

In 1982 Paul Godfrey, then Metro Chairman and his chief of staff Ray Biggart – dialogued with Eaton's - -trying to convince them to reverse their “shutdown the parade” position.

Their persistence paid off – The Eaton's Corporation said “ if the monies could be raised “ -- they would hand over the entire parade, costumes, floats and every can of paint as well as it's employees.

(aside, Paul, radio, Stan Sobol)

Paul then invited George Cohon and I to his office and encouraged us -- to not let this opportunity slip away. He told us Ray Biggart was talking to Eatons and would handle the legals – and establish the Parade as a registered Canadian charity ...

George and I had only to raise the funds. We knew nothing about how to organize a parade.

We left Paul's office and headed to a wine bar in Yorkville to analyze the challenge

1. We made a list of all the Big Corporations we thought would respond in a positive way
2. We needed \$500,000 and had barely 3 months to go
3. There were 20 Parade floats and figured at \$25,000 each --we would reach our challenge of \$500,000 Somehow that did not seem too tough –

I ordered more wine, George switched to scotch .. we completed the list and created the incentive ...

- their corporate names on banners ahead of their float ...
- a commercial on the National televised broadcast ..
- sponsors would receive reserved seating to view the parade – which would include a brunch

Paul had also called - - **Irving Ungerman** who is always willing to give - - Irv helped qualify our list and pointed out the decision makers at the potential sponsors.

Peter Labbett, former Chair of the Grey Cup Parade – joined our group and transferred his talents to our cause – “he is the parades Marshall of all Marshalls”

Norman Jewison came on board – bringing his talents - - and a touch of class !!

The team was set: Irv -- Ray -- Peter --- Norm – George and -- I

6 volunteers who knew very little about running a parade – but determined to make Santa – recession proof.

These combined efforts to “**Save the parade**” received such tremendous media profile that we thought our challenge would be an easy one to accomplish --NOT SO !!

After we secured the first 5 or 6 sponsors, things got tough – we got several turn downs – our confidence level was shattered – We realized we had to increase our sponsor list to include smaller companies – sole owners who could make a decision quickly . We called Steve Stavro at Knob Hill Farms – Steve answered the phone laughing – and asked “what do you boys want” .. we told him .. he said “no problem, you’ve got it”

That cheered us up tremendously and sparked the drive to complete the 20 sponsor list and complete our \$500,000 goal.

Four of the original 20 **sponsors** still support the parade today .. [22 years]

- Canadian Tire
- McDonald's Restaurants ,
- Paramount Canada's Wonderland
- and Shopper's Drug Mart –

Santa Salutes them - - a list of our first 20 sponsors and all of our sponsors over the last 22 years is provided at each table.

And - - while sponsors are our main source of revenue – the single largest annual contribution to our revenues are the “**celebrity clowns**” -- It all started as a fun thing to do - - at the 1982 parade, Norman Jewison and I

[STORY]

As we later shared our fun --“ clowning” experience socially -- people expressed interest in participating. The following year, we recruited CEO's and Entrepreneurs and the Celebrity Clowns concept was born.

This group of men and women donate a thousand dollars each year to dress up “in costume”, get their faces painted - - Their job is to have fun –skip – run – roller blade --- tease the kids – the police – Enjoy that five miles of smiles and incidentally they get to keep the costume.

This “elite” club has been limited to **one hundred**... we lifted the cap of **100** this year and it has soared to **200**. Kudos to Ross Johnson – great job.

Now after the **first 100 years** –
what do we have - - and what can we look forward to ??

- We have loyal dedicated sponsors,
- We have Parade General Manager and Creative Director **Alf Yan-arelli** and his team of talented individuals.
- We have over 1500 volunteers – and I think we can look forward to an endless stream of young volunteers – many of whom will stay involved.
- We have Celebrity Clowns
- We have a fun loving active board ..

assisted by a group of keen associate directors

And should the economy dip or we run out of oil or --- there's another recession -- I believe the combination of good corporate citizens, hundreds of young and not so young volunteers - - - the parade will go on, it always has and it always will ... I know that because Santa told me. Thank you for being here - - -

We look forward to seeing you along the parade route on November 21st.