

April/May 2000

57th General Conference Session 2000

PLACE: SkyDome and Metro Toronto Convention Centre, Toronto, Canada

DATES: **June 25 - June 29 (Sunday -Thursday)**
World Ministers Council
June 29 - July 08 (Thursday - Sabbath)
General Conference Session

THEME: *Almost Home*

General Conference Session: How Much Will It Cost?

General Conference Sessions are probably the most expensive meetings held by the Church on a regular basis and yet, at the same time, one of the least expensive means of helping to keep a united church. They certainly are not the only factors contributing to the unity of the worldwide Church, but they go a long way in keeping us together as a denomination and give an opportunity for wide input in the selection of leadership, setting of Church policies and review of progress toward fulfillment of the gospel commission.

The General Conference budget bears the costs of the Session facilities and programming, as well as travel and accommodation expenses for most GC Executive Committee members and support staff. It also covers major costs for media coverage, including the audiovisual and technical support to provide image magnification for those in attendance at the SkyDome as well as uplinking reports and programs for satellite and Internet transmission around the globe. This technology allows major sectors of our world membership to participate in the Session experience even if they cannot be present in Toronto.

The General Conference has set aside approximately US\$5.5 million in its budget over the past five years to cover the costs for the Session. Although US\$5.5 million is a large sum of money and must be spent wisely, it represents approximately ten cents per member per year over the five-year period.

The SkyDome will be a blessing in that it will allow seating on the weekends for approximately 65,000 delegates and visitors; however, it was not designed with an event such as the GC Session in mind. It requires a major outlay of funds to provide image magnification, satisfactory sound quality, and satellite uplinks of the programs.

* The facility rental for both the SkyDome and the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, as well as facility services such as cleaning, ushering and security, which must be provided by contract, total a little over US\$900,000.

* The delegate expense, including travel and accommodations, of the GC Executive Committee members, for which the General Conference is responsible, totals approximately US\$510,000.

* The cost for equipment and furniture rental, stage design and stage construction is approximately US\$470,000.

* The cost related to image magnification, audio and lighting in the SkyDome, as well as the production costs for the crew and management to operate the cameras and audio system, is just under US\$1,000,000.

* The cost for broadcast production, facilities and crew is approximately US\$640,000 while the satellite rental to enable our members around the world to downlink the reports and programs will run around US\$400,000.

* Providing sound systems and image magnification in the larger halls for the women's meetings, youth meetings, children's programs and in over 70 other rooms will cost over US\$280,000.

* Support staff and services, including travel and accommodations, costs over US\$250,000.

* Programming and materials run close to US\$235,000.

* There is a budget of US\$85,000 for simultaneous interpretation into 12 languages.

* It will cost over US\$140,000 for printing of the extra issues of the *Adventist Review* which serves as the official minutes of the GC Session.

There are also additional costs to the Divisions which are not reflected in the above figures. These costs include travel and accommodation expenses for their delegates, as well as preparation of their Division reports and exhibits.

We pray that all who participate in this GC Session experience will be greatly blessed and as they return to their homes, churches and institutions, they will have a greater resolve to complete the mission of the church so we will have no need for further GC Sessions. [Robert Lemon]

Toronto Media Anticipate Adventist World Convention

The Toronto media are actively anticipating the Seventh-day Adventist Church's World Session to be held in the city June 29 to July 8. After making media visits this past week, "the media personnel are really interested in this important event, the largest in Toronto's history," comments Bettina Krause, media relations director for the Adventist world Church.

Some 60,000 Adventists are expected during the ten-day event which brings together Church members from all over the world for a convention that will tackle planning for the future, a review of past activities, and the election of the Church's top leadership, says Krause.

"This is our biggest convention ever, and it will make a huge impact on Toronto in terms of the tourism economy as well as an opportunity for Adventists to show who they really are. The great diversity of the Church—in culture, language, background and nationality—will be reflected, as well as the unity we share as brothers and sisters in Christ."

Not only will the Church be meeting for business in Toronto's largest venue, the SkyDome stadium, but also

to celebrate together and to share in a wide number of public events.

"So many different off-site events are planned it's hard to keep track of them," says Charlotte McClure, external events coordinator. "We are expecting many musical groups, singers and choirs from all over the world, as well as mime artists, creative children's ministries and a host of others as part of the youth activities of Impact 2000."

Reports in the press are already discussing the boost to tourism and business in Toronto as a result of what one article called the Church's "monster convention."

"We plan to take advantage of this unique opportunity to let others know what the Church stands for," Krause concludes. "We want to rightly represent the God we believe in and express our values and beliefs in ways that will be exciting and interesting." [Jonathan Gallagher]

Special Events "Off-Site" Feature Music and Cultural Performances

Survey results from the Seventh-day Adventist Church's website—www.adventist.org—show that one of two features anticipated most by people attending the GC Session is "the music." And during this coming Session, more musical performances representing every part of the Church around the world will be featured than ever before.

But what happens when their seven minutes on stage is over? They go out-of-doors to perform during lunchtime concerts at pre-arranged spots within walking distance of the SkyDome.

One of several venues includes Metro Square, just one and one-half blocks straight north of the Front Street entrance to the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. At the Square is a stage overlooking a grassy park, where Session participants and Torontonians can sit or stand by and enjoy a top-quality concert. Another of the venues is Round House Park, just outside the SkyDome and the CN Tower. A stage will be set up there, along with a few picnic tables and grassy space.

Watch for notices at the Session of where “off-site” concerts will be staged and who will be performing. Also check the website and the *Adventist Review Daily* Bulletins. [Charlotte McClure]

An Invitation to See the Adventist Flag Raised in Toronto

Where: Nathan Phillips Square (outside Toronto City Hall)

When: Monday, June 26, 2000, 12:00-12:30 p.m.

Toronto Mayor, Mel Lastman and Seventh-day Adventist Church president, Pastor Jan Paulsen will be among those participating in a noontime flag-raising ceremony in the square outside Toronto City Hall on Monday, June 26. Other local city officials and Church leaders, from Canada and around the world, will also be on hand as Mayor Lastman welcomes the 60,000-plus Adventists to town for what will be Toronto’s largest convention ever.

All are invited to come and see this flag-raising ceremony in Toronto’s Nathan Phillips Square. The Adventist flag will fly in Toronto throughout the ten days of the General Conference Session. [Bettina Krause]

Opening Ceremony Highlight: Unveiling of Adventist Stamp by Canada Post

The long-awaited unveiling of the Canada Post Seventh-day Adventist commemorative postage stamp will take place during the GC Session opening ceremony on Thursday evening, June 29.

“This will be a moment to remember,” says Ray Dabrowski, communication director for the Adventist Church. “The stamp, which includes the Church logo and features a dramatic image of the sun breaking through the clouds, is the first stamp honoring the Adventist Church to be issued in North America.”

The stamp issue has generated some media coverage in Canada, including a two-page article in the May/June 2000 edition of the magazine *Canada’s Stamp Details*. The stamp’s release, says the article, will mark the first time in the Adventist Church’s 137-year history that Canada has hosted a General Conference Session. The new stamp is described as “a unique memento of an important spiritual gathering.”

A Canada Post official will participate in the unveiling ceremony at the SkyDome. The Official First Day Cover will be cancelled on June 29, officially launching the 46-cent stamp, which will be available either singly, or as a 16-stamp pane. The stamp can be purchased throughout the ten days of the Session at a special Canada Post booth in the exhibition area of the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. [Bettina Krause]

A Ride to the Top Gives a Looney for Local Food Bank

CN Tower rises above the Metro Toronto Convention Centre and the SkyDome offering a full-circumference view of the city, the bay and beyond. It’s a great ride to the top and a thrill to step out onto a glass floor—if you dare!

Buying a ticket to experience the CN Tower features gets you more than a view from the world’s highest indoor observation gallery. By showing your identification badge from the General Conference Session, you get a greatly reduced price, plus CN Tower will contribute \$1—a Looney in Canadian money—back to the Session for every ticket sale.

At the closing of the Session, the General Conference will total the Looneys and present a gift check to Toronto Mayor Mel Lastman for the Daily Bread Food Bank. It’s a nice way to say “thank you” for Toronto’s hospitality and see the city. [Charlotte McClure]

Sabbath Food Drive Helps Feed the Hungry in Toronto

On the final Sabbath of the General Conference Session, July 8, everyone is invited to bring non-perishable food to the SkyDome to stock the warehouse of the Daily Bread Food Bank in Toronto.

Trucks from the Food Bank will be parked along the curb outside the SkyDome on Bremmar Boulevard to collect cans, boxes, and bags of food brought by generous Adventist Christians attending the Session. The Food Bank will haul the contributions back to their warehouse to sort and distribute food to a long list of organizations that feed needy people among the four million residents of Toronto. Several of those organizations are Seventh-day Adventist churches and Community Services groups.

Many small grocery and convenience stores are located beneath the office buildings and along the PATH in the downtown area. The concierge or front desk person at your hotel can give directions to a store located near you or the SkyDome.

Toronto Seventh-day Adventists are asked to join the effort by collecting food in their local churches on previous Sabbaths and bringing it with them to the SkyDome on July 8. [Charlotte McClure]

Making the Session Happen: A Look Behind the Scenes

Toronto 2000. What a contrast it will be to previous General Conference Sessions, especially the last one in Utrecht where we provided housing for about 5,000 attendees. This was done by installing 8 miles (or 14 kilometers) of one-meter panels divide a large warehouse space into dormitories. For the dormitories area, we purchased 2,605 air mattresses, rented 782 single beds, manufactured 868 clothes racks, along with installing 11 yellow cabins or portable bathrooms with showers. This

time, however, we are not planning to provide dormitory-type housing in Toronto.

To set up our satellite offices in Utrecht, we rented 153 desks, 38 copiers and fax machines, 301 secretarial chairs, 108 executive chairs, and shipped over 66 desktop computers.

In comparison, our setup in Toronto will include 94 desks, 15 copiers and fax machines, 164 secretarial chairs, 22 executive chairs and 65 desktop computers.

In Toronto, we have obtained the services of Xerox Business Systems to handle our copying needs. With an estimated two million copies to be printed, they will have their hands full. This service will keep us from having to rent the 26 copiers that have been requested. We will only have to provide some convenience copiers from our own inventory.

We have also arranged donations from Baldwin for two grand pianos and a concert organ for the SkyDome stage.

A General Conference National Accounts Partner, National Church Furnishings, will be donating the use of ten platform chairs and the main podium.

The food service in Toronto will be provided by the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. They have made arrangements with Worthington Foods to supply 50 truck loads of frozen vegetarian analog meats for the Session. Should we be taking suggestions on what to do with the leftovers? [Wayne Calbi]

Getting Around at the Session

General Conference Sessions are packed with many and varied memories, yet with a sense that God is moving in a powerful way to bring about the desired conclusion to His mission on this earth.

Reflecting personally on past Sessions, I'm always struck with the fact that I have rolled up so many

additional miles on my legs and feet. At one Session—due to the great distances traveled—I suggested skates for some of the staff. Bicycles and golf carts have been used on certain occasions. Delegates and staff should be prepared to walk miles over the course of the ten days you are at Session.

But there came good news this year. The SkyDome, where the Session is to take place in Toronto, will be carpeted! The SkyDome has consented to carpet the floor with their Astroturf. Gone from this Session will be the sound of high heels clicking down the aisles, as well as voice noise due to the reverberations off concrete floors. But what is much more important is that the stress on the legs will be greatly reduced on the turf.

If you are coming to the Session, you're still going to have to use your legs at this meeting, so if you are not exercising now, I strongly urge you to start a walking program. The carpet will help some, but there will be great distances to cover and you'll need to be in shape in order to do that with dispatch. Comfortable shoes are still a great investment.

There will also be better viewing of the proceedings due to the large Jumbotron located directly over the center of the stage area. Due to the size of the SkyDome, one can cover the view of the speaker with one's little finger. But with the Jumbotron, one will be able to see the image of that person large and lifted up in full view of all. [Thomas Neslund]

Tips on Tipping

Tips or service charges are not usually added to restaurant bills in Canada. Salary levels in many restaurants are based on the assumption that staff will receive a significant proportion of their income in tips. If you are satisfied with the service received, a tip of 15 percent is the usual amount given.

Bellhops, doormen, redcaps (porters) and similar staff at hotels, airports and railway stations are generally paid C\$1 per item of luggage carried.

The appropriate tip for hotel maid service is C\$1 per person in the room. [Session Management]

Last Issue

This is the last issue of the Session 2000 News Bulletin. This was a new and exciting venture for us and we hope that you enjoyed getting a behind-the-scenes glimpse of some of the preparations that go into planning such a huge event.

We hope you have a wonderful, positive experience at the Session, fellowshiping with brothers and sisters from around the world. And we hope the city of Toronto will know a lot more about Seventh-day Adventists by the close of the Session. [Lynn E Friday]