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If the G8 were cancelled tomorrow, Huntsville would still win

By *Stephanie Ortenzi*

HUNTSVILLE, ON—To host the G8 summit in June, Deerhurst Resort will become “a little country with eight embassies,” says general manager Joseph Klein.

Heads of state from the U.S., England, France, Italy, Germany, Japan, Russia and Canada will sit down together and, consequently, put the resort on the world’s radar.

In 2006, Klein began speaking to the government’s Summit Management Committee about the resort’s suitability to host international meetings. The committee began an evaluation, which took into account capacity, meeting space, closeness to an urban centre with an international airport, proximity to major arteries and community support.

The following year, discussions narrowed in on the specifics of what Klein calls “managing the experience,” which led Klein to suspect in September, 2007, that Deerhurst was being considered to host the upcoming G8. He was sworn to secrecy, but his suspicions were never confirmed.

The final word came in May, 2008, when Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced the contract on site three weeks later. “Finally,” sighed Klein, “I could sit down with my team and share the excitement.”

With the contract in place [there was no bidding, no gouging, says Klein], summit preparations began in earnest, but many details were withheld for security reasons, leaving the team to work out the logistics of eventualities that may or may never materialize. “It was like having a jigsaw puzzle without the box cover to work with and another 200 pieces still to put on the table,” said Klein.

The RCMP will control all aspects of the security program, including a lock-down once all the delegates, their teams and the media have arrived, working closely with each country’s security force. The RCMP will also lead an integrated security unit to monitor traffic to keep the business and community life in the town of Huntsville running smoothly as usual.

For executive chef Rory Golden, the food will showcase the region. “The menu is going to be all about Savour Muskoka,” says Golden, a founding member of the culinary tourism group that works with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Lamb will come from Schomberg, Arctic char from Nipissing, honey and shiitake mushrooms from Utterson, smoked trout from Bracebridge, and maple sausages and rare-breed beef from Huntsville.

For five feeding locations, some operating 24 hours a day, Golden will outsource additional culinarians and call on such industry friends as John Higgins, director of George Brown Chef School. The chefs of 24 Sussex were also consulted about the dignitaries’ food preferences. Room service will be provided for leaders only and staffed by four designated chefs.

Atlic Hotels, Deerhurst’s management firm, celebrated its 50th anniversary with some of the dishes Golden is considering serving to the summit leaders, including a smoked trout Napoleon, Ontario beef tenderloin with shiitake dust, a kitchen specialty, and Canadian Black Cod.

Take-out containers will be 100 per cent recyclable. Says Golden: “It will cost 18 per cent more, but it’s a good thing to do.”

Once the delegates leave, the resort will herald its summer season with dignitaries of another sort. The Canadian Women’s Olympic Hockey Team will come to celebrate its Olympic Gold Medal.

“Even if the summit were cancelled tomorrow,” says Klein, “Huntsville and Muskoka would still win.”



Executive chef Rory Golden of Deerhurst plans to introduce Muskoka cuisine to delegates at the G8 Summit to be held at the resort in June.