

PHILIP IN TORONTO FOR 40th ANNIVERSARY GALA

Evening Raises \$760,000 for Duke of Edinburgh's Award

On the evening of April 26th, His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh travelled to Toronto for what was surely one of the briefest Royal Visits in history in Canada: the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the first conferring of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award in this country. The Gala evening, to raise funds for the Canadian Award scheme, also was an opportunity for corporations and supporters of the scheme to toast His Royal Highness for his continuous commitment to the programme and his dedication to young people over the past forty years. The celebrations of the Golden Jubilee of The Queen's Reign had also, been of course, a milestone for Her Consort, Prince Philip, and his many contributions as well as the manner in which he has chosen to define the role. But many have felt that The Duke's initiatives and impact on life in Canada and the other realms was worthy of individual celebration and commemoration. Among these are the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, but also the World Wildlife Fund, his Regiments in this country and the 57 visits he has made over the course of the Reign. With this in mind, a group of corporate supporters felt it was high time that the Duke himself be celebrated individually. The 40th anniversary of the first Gold level achievement of the Duke of



As Galen Weston looks on, HRH receives a gift from Phanuel Antwi (Gold Award Achiever, 2000) on behalf of the young people who have participated in the programme over the past 40 years.

themselves seated with a Gold Award Achiever corresponding to the year of the table number, with the young people providing direct experience of the impact of the donation on their lives. Gold Award Achievers were among the only non-paying customers, travelling as many did from across the country to be present on this historic occasion.

His Royal Highness was diligent in identifying the Achievers throughout the event, notable for their unique lapel pin, and engaging them in conversation. Grace was said by an Achiever from 1964, from Alberta (himself present with sons who have also participated), and thanks were given at the end of the evening to His Royal Highness by one of the newest Gold Award Achievers, from the year 2000. A highlight of the initiative was a special mini-documentary on the Award produced by CBC which appeared on CBC Morning and the National on April 26th. This unique segment featured interviews at Buckingham Palace of both The Duke of Edinburgh as well as The Earl of Wessex. Prince Edward is taking on an increasing role in the Award internationally and in this country. The feature also showed young award recipients as well as an interview with His Worship David Miller, Toronto's recently elected Mayor, himself a Gold Award Achiever from 1977. The Mayor attended the Gala evening and proposed the Loyal Toast.

With the more than 5,000,000 Canadians who were estimated to have seen media coverage of the event through CBC or other coverage, the Gala, while also the shortest and most productive Royal Visit in Canadian Royal history, will certainly be remembered for the Duke's good humour in the face of punishing jet lag with the wealth of affection and respect for which His Royal Highness is held in Canada's corporate community and in the country at large. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award in Canada has been successful by any measure: longevity and reach, as well as the sheer diversity, portability and flexibility of the programme. Thankfully, due to fundraising events of this kind, the Award will continue for years to come.



HRH enjoys a joke with Toronto Mayor David Miller, himself a Gold Award achiever.



HRH chats after dinner with Monarchist League Dominion Chairman John Aimers and National Post's John Geiger

Edinburgh's Award, now known as Young Canadians Challenge, provided an excellent opportunity for His Royal Highness to be the centre of attention. Several key sponsors, among those who have supported The Duke of Edinburgh's Award over the years came forward to cover costs and ensure that the maximum amount raised would be for charitable purposes. Hilary & Galen Weston and George Weston Ltd., along with the other gala hosts, the Bank of Montreal and the Royal Bank, are among those who have a long and consistent history of generosity and support of the award scheme. This ensured that a record amount was raised for a Royal charitable event in this country: \$760,000, from corporations who sponsored tables as well as donors who wished to mark the occasion but were unable to attend.

Characteristically, the Duke of Edinburgh only agreed to attend an event in his honour if it could be for charitable purposes and thus the maximum amount in sponsorships, gifts in kind and other support was sought from the corporate community in Canada. Unusually for such an event in Toronto, the Gala had a national reach in donors and the media coverage benefitted the entire programme, not just one division in the award. 40 tables were sold and were numbered for each year of the programme from 1964 to the present. Each corporate supporter and guests found