



Outfitted like little bundles of joy, these children get ready for lesson in Caledon Hills

MIKE STUPARYN

## Ontario resorts spruce up and even 'build' a mountain

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them. Ice has often been a problem, compounded by stiff winds sweeping in off Georgian Bay. At best, the Peaks was only open on weekends and holidays. Even then, lift tickets for the Peaks alone were sold at a discount to encourage people to use them.

The number of strong skiers who liked the Peaks' challenge was more than offset by the negatives. Now, it will be up to the new owners, Georgian Peaks Ski Club, to solve these.

With the Peaks out of the way, the summer was spent upgrading some of Blue's offerings. About \$1.5 million was spent on snow-making in the property's north end where many of the most difficult runs are located. The additional snow-making enables Blue to cover 96 per cent of its slopes.

Another \$2 million was spent on hill improvements. A double chairlift was installed to service northern slopes where a new racing run was also developed for use this winter. In addition, two runs were carved through the trees in the easier, south end Orchard area. Night skiing was moved from the south to Blue's central area, providing five slopes that will be lit up seven nights a week.

### Boom continues

A good number of Ontario's downhill and cross-country centres invested in improved facilities, anticipating another bumper winter after two consecutive outstanding seasons. Records were set both in numbers of skiers and revenues.

"There's a snowball effect going on," says Don McIvean, general manager of the Ontario Ski Resort association. "After two good winters, interest in skiing is definitely on the upswing and operators have geared up for another boom season."

Beaver Valley Ski Club, near Kimberley north-west of Toronto, added snow-making capability and put in four new trails at a cost of \$800,000. The club sells lift tickets to the public on weekends. It is just down the road from Talisman Mountain Resort, which added a few new trails last summer after major expansion last year.

Glen Eden, halfway between Toronto and Hamilton, spent \$550,000 for an assortment of goodies, including a new run with appropriate lighting for night skiing and installation of a second triple chair.

East of London, Oxford Ski in Woodstock added a new T-bar to the main hill, virtually doubling its

### Guidepost

For more information about Ontario ski centres, call the Ontario Ski Resort Association in Toronto, (416) 479-2113. The Toronto snow phone number is 963-2992. The Barrie snow number is (705) 726-0932. The toll-free snow number is 1-800-268-3736 Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

uphill capacity. In Kitchener, Chicopee Ski Club increased its snow-making to cover all slopes including a run carved out during the summer.

Less than an hour's drive north of Toronto, Snow Valley, under new management after 28 years with the Hans Eder family, which developed the property, put out a half million to build a new beginner slope with its own lift and to renovate the chalet and improve snow-making and night lighting.

East of Toronto, Oshawa Ski Club made a similar investment to expand and refurbish its base lodge.

Not far away, at Devil's Elbow near Bethany and Dagmar near Claremont, you'll see more than a quarter million dollars in upgrades.

To the far east in the Calabogie Highlands, Calabogie Peaks, with the greatest vertical in eastern Ontario — 323 m (760 ft.) — bulldozed trouble spots on the slopes, increased snow-making and beefed up capacity while nearby Mount Pakenham, operated by pioneer snowmaker John Clifford, added 1½ new trails with lights and snowmaking.

Probably the biggest changes at any cross-country centre are at Hardwood Hills Cross Country centre near Barrie where \$350,000 was invested in snow-making, 10 km of new trails, track-setting and grooming equipment and refurbishing the chalet.

Another cross-country area, Ski Wye Marsh, at the Wildlife Centre

in Midland, developed some 15 km of additional trails that will be tracked and groomed. South of there, at the Mansfield Outdoor Centre, new trails were cut and additional trail-side cabins built.

At Hockley Valley near Orangeville you'll notice new lighting on six of the 11 downhill runs, snow-making guns that cover all the slopes and a renovated cafeteria with a separate bar.

Further north near Huntsville, Hidden Valley launched a 10-year improvement program with the purchase of a state-of-the-art groomer-tiller and a bunch of new rental equipment, and rearranged the rentals section so skiers are served more quickly. At Sir Sam's in Haliburton there is more room for skiing and relaxation because of the addition of 10 acres of trails and a new wing to the chalet.

In northern Ontario the big news is again at Ski Searchmont, which completed an \$8 million expansion last year. This year's work included a new beginner area, more snow-making, tripling in size of the base lodge and the building of more slopeside luxury chalets.

### Project delayed

Development of year-round resort King Mountain, 20 miles north of the Soo, which would have the province's greatest vertical — 274 m (900 ft.) — is on hold following the Oct. 19 stock crash. Developer Frank Rush said the effort to arrange financing for the \$53.5 million project would be undertaken in the new year rather than in the fall as originally planned. If all goes well the resort will open for business in 1989.

At the far end of Superior, Thunder Bay's big four — Candy Mountain, Loch Lomond, Mount Baldy and Mount McKay — spent a busy summer improving slopes and trails. A good combination: great verticals, interesting runs and no crowds. Too bad they aren't just an hour's drive away.

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