

Diana sweeps into the Big Apple and draws wolf whistles from fans

By Catherine Dunphy Toronto Star

NEW YORK — The Princess of Wales jetted into New York yesterday on a solo tour that is adding a dash of royal panache to Manhattan.

Diana stepped off a British Concorde at Kennedy International Airport at 5.49 p.m. to begin the whirlwind tour of the Big Apple where she will promote British industry, attend the Welsh opera and visit children with AIDS.

Under police escort, Diana was whisked to her first function, a reception thrown by the U.S. arm of British cashmere kings, Dawson International.

Diana wore a stunning cocktail dress featuring a tight fitting royal blue shirred satin tunic over black satin that crept up above the knees as she got out of her limousine at the Equitable Centre.

The Princess drew wolf whistles from a crowd four deep and all in a royal dither.

Security kept a close watch of it all as she waved to the public.

"I can't believe it," said Martin Cohen of Brooklyn. "All these cops for one woman when there's a crime wave in Brooklyn."

There was also a mid-winter heat wave in New York, where midday temperatures hit 21 Celsius (70 Fahrenheit).

It was a flawless beginning to Diana's first official visit to New York, and second official solo visit anywhere. Prince Charles is back in England tending to royal duties and the kids.

Diana's tour is a crafty combination of commercialism and compassion.

Expensive hotel

Today she spends an hour in an emergency housing project for the homeless next door to New York's drug infested Alphabet City area. She spends double the time at the famous toy department store F.A.O. Schwarz where 12-centimetre (5-inch) replicas of her in her wedding dress sell for \$72.

She was also to attend a glittering American debut of the Welsh National Opera at the Brooklyn Academy of Music tonight.

Among the rich and/or famous who paid \$1,000 per ticket to be in the same concert hall with her are Donald and Ivana Trump, designer Carolyne Roehm, rock singer David Byrne, designer Calvin Klein and Brooke Astor. There will be three shifts of those sitting in the 16 seat royal box with Diana.

Diana is staying in the \$1,800 (U.S.) a night two storey penthouse suite at the British owned Plaza Athenee hotel. She's travelling with a party of three, including lady-in-waiting Anne Beckwith-Smith.

Until yesterday, New York remained fairly calm about having royalty in town. A British pub staged a Princess Di look-a-like contest at noon yesterday.

Williwear clothing store was selling Princess Diana VIP (Very Important Princess) T-shirts and featured mannequins resembling Charles and Di in their downtown store windows.



ROYAL HANDSHAKE: Diana, Princess of Wales, is greeted by Equitable Centre's Robert Fairman as she arrives in New York last night.

Residents of the Baruch housing project, next door to the Henry Street Settlement where Diana was to visit today, complained that police were towing away all cars parking in the project. It's been declared a no parking zone for two days.

Yesterday, work crews filled potholes with asphalt, put up new wire mesh fencing and the graffiti had been scrubbed from the

brown brick high rise buildings.

"We really are giving her the royal treatment," said Denise Ramzee, who lives in the neighboring subsidized housing project.

"Too bad we didn't get this all the time. Come back Friday and see all the garbage, the food vendors, the cars double parked. We'll be locking our doors again and worrying who is going to be in the stairwell selling crack," said Donita Barrino, a single mother.

Big business backing social groups' drive for welfare overhaul

By Laurie Monsebraaten
Toronto Star

Big business wants Queen's Park to get started on a major overhaul of Ontario's \$2.3 billion welfare system.

Over the past several months a coalition of social agencies and churches has recruited a handful of high-profile business leaders to help persuade provincial politicians that the overhaul is vital to the economic future of Ontario.

These corporate executives, who plan to go public later this month, have agreed to use their personal contacts to lobby Treasurer Robert Nixon and Premier David Peterson on the issue, said Susan Davey, a spokesman for the coalition.

"We thought that if the government sees that everyone, not only welfare recipients and social agencies, thinks (the overhaul) is necessary, we might get some action," she said.

The coalition's goal is to get \$200 million to pay for the first phase of the overhaul included in this spring's provincial budget.

It hopes to achieve this through a province-wide public awareness campaign aided by big business and personal appeals to the province's pre-budget hearings later this month.

Welfare trap

The welfare overhaul was recommended last September by the provincial Social Assistance Review Committee, headed by Family Court Judge George Thomson.

After two years of study, the committee came up with a blueprint for change aimed at helping people move from the bleakness of the welfare trap to the dignity of self-reliance.

The cost of implementing the first phase of the overhaul would be about \$400 million — half of which would be paid for automatically by the federal government.

The committee's massive report, entitled *Transitions*, urged the government to scrap rules that discourage people from working and to boost welfare payments by as much as 22.5 per cent to reflect more accurately the cost of living in Ontario.

More than 500,000 people in Ontario are on welfare and 41 per cent of those are children under

age 18, according to government statistics.

Almost 18 per cent are sole-support parents, mostly women, and another 18 per cent are people with disabilities.

"We think the province should bite the bullet and implement the first phase this year," said Richard Yampolsky, executive director of FoodShare and a member of the coalition.

"Everyone agrees that this project is too important to be left to gather dust on a shelf," he said.

Nixon said set to take over as Hydro boss

By William Walker Toronto Star

Provincial Treasurer Robert Nixon could be named chairman of Ontario Hydro by this fall, sources say.

It's already known the 61-year-old pillar of Premier David Peterson's government will not be running for re-election in 1991. But recently he has privately expressed a desire to get out earlier.

Peterson told *The Star* yesterday he would not stand in Nixon's way if he decides to leave early. Nixon is Peterson's deputy premier.

Reached last night in London, England, Nixon said talk about the Hydro chairman's job is "idle speculation" at this point. He said his main goal now is to proceed with his next provincial budget.

Queen's Park sources say that after presenting the budget, around April 20, Nixon would probably sit through the spring session of the Legislature before joining Hydro as chairman in the fall.

Hydro president Robert Franklin has been holding down the job of chairman since Tom Campbell, a Progressive Conservative appointee, resigned the post in January, 1988.

The president runs the day-to-day operations of the giant utility, which employs more than 30,000. The chairman's position involves working with the board of directors, executives and government and acting as Hydro's chief spokesman.