



MEDIA RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 4, 2010

LET THE GAMES BEGIN!

Muskoka, Ontario - The Ontario Winter Games have arrived in Muskoka and were officially kicked off during the formal opening ceremonies held earlier this evening at the Muskoka Wharf. Simulcast technology provided by Bell permitted athletes competing in Sudbury to be part of the excitement in Gravenhurst. A crowd of more than 5,000 enjoyed the opening ceremonies.

The Ceremonies, the single event of the Games that brings all athletes together at once, was focused on creating a memorable, exciting, motivating and inspiring experience for the competitors. Hugh Burrill of City TV was the Master of Ceremonies and he was joined by Randy Pascal via satellite from Sudbury. The event began with the Parade of Athletes that mirrored the International 2010 Winter Games ceremony that took place only a few short weeks ago in Vancouver.

Notable guests who attended to show their support for the athletes included Minister of Health Promotion, Margaret Best; Sport Alliance of Ontario Chair, Holly Abrahams; MPP Norm Miller; District of Muskoka Chairman, Gord Adams; the Mayors of all of the hosting municipalities, and, Scott Aitchison, Chair of the 2010 Ontario Winter Games Organizing Committee.

"The McGuinty government is pleased to support the 2010 Ontario Winter Games. Funding these Games, and other Games in the Ontario Games Program, is a tangible example of our government's commitment to supporting and investing in sport and to helping Ontario's athletes achieve their full potential," said Margaret Best, Minister of Health Promotion

SAO Chair, Holly Abraham also delivered greetings to the athletes. We would like to congratulate Ontario's top athletes for being selected to compete at the Games. We wish you all the best as you showcase incredible talent and performance over the next 3 days." said Holly Abraham, SAO Chair. "Thank you Muskoka and Sudbury, the Games Organizing Committee and 900 volunteers for your time and energy in hosting the 2010 Ontario Winter Games."

Sponsor representatives Tom Blake from Bell and Dr. Barbara Olmstead, from Nipissing University, a former Olympian, welcomed the competitors and their families to Muskoka, indicating that their organizations were pleased to be part of this exciting event that challenges athletes to meet their personal goals during the games.

Two local athletes, Logan Patricio a Gravenhurst boxing competitor and Jordan Barteaux –Comeau a Sudbury Squash read the Athlete's Oaths in English and French respectively. Additionally Weightlifting official, Bob LeClair of Sudbury and Hockey Official Don Collison of Bracebridge took the Official's Oaths.

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Athletes enjoyed The Stereos, a well-established, up and coming Canadian Band and danced along to a number of songs. The event wrapped up with a spectacular fireworks display over the Muskoka Bay in Gravenhurst.

Athletes were transported back to their respective Athletes' Villages in order to allow plenty of time to prepare for Friday's competitions that will be hosted throughout Muskoka, Coldwater and Sudbury.

For further information, contact:

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The Ontario Winter Games is a unique multi-sport event that provides young athletes with development and competitive opportunities that prepare them for national and international competitions. The event is scheduled for March 4-7, 2010. The majority of the events will be held in Muskoka with some of the competitions – bowling, diving, speed skating and squash – being held in Sudbury. Approximately 3,300 athletes, coaches, officials and volunteers and are expected to converge on the region during the games. It is estimated that the games will generate between \$3 and \$4 million in economic benefits for the local economy. The Ontario Games are a program of the Ministry of Health Promotion and delivered by the Sport Alliance of Ontario.

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