

Ontario prepares for Parapan American Games

Excitement is building over the upcoming Parapan American Games and the two-year countdown is on.

In 2015, Ontario will be hosting the largest Parapan Games yet, welcoming over 1,500 athletes from 28 countries.

The athletes will compete in 15 sports including: archery, cycling, football, judo, swimming, table tennis and various wheelchair sports.

"In just two years, Ontario will welcome athletes of all abilities who will inspire and elevate parasport competitions in the global arena," said Michael Chan, the Minister Responsible for the Pan/Parapan American Games. "Hosting the 2015 Parapan Am Games will heighten awareness of Ontario's increased parasport capacity and showcase Ontario as an accessible tourist destination."

With so many athletes coming to Ontario, the events will be split up between different locations spread throughout Toronto, Markham and Milton. The University of Toronto and York University are two of the main sites that will be hosting events.

During the games the athletes will be accommodated at the CIBC Pan Am/Parapan Am athlete's village that holds nearly 270 accessible units.

"By attracting the world's top para-athletes to Ontario, the Parapan Am Games will give us all an opportunity to celebrate their athleticism, their achievements and their determination," said Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of economic development, trade and employment. "But the Parapan Am Games will do even more -- they will leave a proud and enduring legacy of parasport infrastructure that will make our communities more accessible and more inclusive for years to come."

With these Parapan Am games being the biggest yet, many are thrilled with how it will create investment and help para-sports grow.

"We applaud the province of Ontario's efforts in investing in sport and its commitment to diversity, inclusivity and community engagement," said Gaétan Tardif, resident of the Canadian Paralympic Committee. "These significant government investments will contribute to the long-lasting impact that the Games will have on generations to come, and will enhance Ontario's leadership in continuing to build a stronger parasport system."

Many are also enthused about the positive effects the games will have on the economy.

According to a release, some are anticipating that over 15,000 jobs will be created from hosting the event, including additional jobs from the construction and operation of the athlete's village.

Organizers are also championing the fact that 20,000 volunteers will be counted on for customer service, hands-on games operations and health and safety training.

Tourism should also provide a boost, with over 250,000 expected to descend on the area for the 2015 Games.

"Each Paralympic and Parapan Am Games has been bigger and better than the last, and the Games in Toronto will be no different," said Henry Storgaard, Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Paralympic Committee (CPC). "We will be bringing our best teams, our best athletes to compete in front of a hometown crowd under the national media spotlight. I would urge all Canadians to take advantage of this unique opportunity to watch Paralympic sport at its highest level, learn more about our athletes and become involved in the transformative role sport can play in your life and the lives of others."

By Jeff Doner