



UP AN RUNNING. Amanda Parlett , FedNor youth intern/games administrator with the 2010 Ontario Winter Games, and games' general manager Myke Malone showcase the event's new official website at www.2010ontariowintergames.ca.
(Photo by Matthew Sitler)

New website launched for 2010 Ontario Winter Games

by Matthew Sitler

BRACEBRIDGE - A new website for the 2010 Ontario Winter Games has been launched and organizers hope it draws many visitors, including more volunteers, to the Muskoka-based event.

The site's official launch happened at Bracebridge Town hall last Wednesday. There, members of the Games organizing committee extolled the virtues of the site, calling it easily-navigable and information friendly.

The official site is located at www.2010ontariowintergames.ca

"There are some great aspects to it," said Games manager Myke Malone. "The website is crucial to us - it's an information portal for the 3,000 athletes that are participating in the games and the 500 coaches involved with these athletes. We also expect between 7,000 and 10,000 visitors..."

It will be a busy website, predicts Malone, especially when local resident and volunteer interest is factored in.

Volunteers will be an especially important component to the 2010 games, said Jamie Hopkins, the Games' chair of accommodation and volunteers.

"We've learned from people who have run the games in the past that volunteers really will be the backbone and success of this," said Hopkins. "We've really been aggressively trying to recruit some interested people."

Hopkins said the committee is expecting it will need upwards of 1,100 volunteers, who will be involved in an array of duties including being minor officials at the different sporting events.

“Obviously, the venue set up and take down will be big things that we’ll need lots of volunteers for,” he added. “There’s also a whole number of duties in medical and security functions, as well as souvenir sales and administration positions (and) food and beverage areas, too.”

The website has an online registration form, which will hopefully make volunteer registering easy to accomplish. “That’s so people can, from the comfort of their own home sign up,” said Hopkins. “It’s also important for us, so we can find out what their interests are and where we can place them.”

Volunteers will not be compensated, but will receive some perks.

“As volunteers they can expect to receive a volunteer identification T-shirt,” said Hopkins. “There will also be meal vouchers and a volunteer wrap-up party.”

Orientation sessions must be attended by those wanting to become volunteers. A certain minimum of hours also must be committed to.

“We’re hoping to get each volunteer to commit to two, four hour shifts,” said Hopkins. “They will be required to attend the orientation event for obvious reasons. We want to enlighten them on the sorts of things they can expect to be doing. As well, each volunteer will be required to complete a police check. We want to set the standard for our games to show we are committed to operating a safe winter games.”

Hopkins added that the OPP is waiving the \$25 fee people usually pay for these police checks, just for winter games volunteers.

With 26 different events taking place between March 4-7, 2010 and cross-country skiing events taking place Jan. 14 and 15, the committee is expecting lots of exciting action.

“We’ve got venues booked all over Muskoka,” said Scott Aitchison, chair of the event. “It’s exciting to see much of the infrastructure that’s been invested in, in these areas being showcased by the youth athletes from all across Ontario. It’s showing people what we have to offer here in Muskoka beyond just lakes, rivers and great shopping in our downtowns.”

The interest in the games will also translate into great economic spin-offs for Muskoka, he indicated.

“We expect to see a massive influx of people,” he said. “We’ve basically booked every major hotel/resort we can find in Muskoka to house all the athletes. We expect all the hotels and motels to be full and we expect to see an awful lot of business from people who come to visit. It will be a huge impact in terms of what goes on with the local economy.”