

April 11, 2008

MUSKOKA WINS THE BID TO HOST 2010 ONTARIO WINTER GAMES!

Ce communiqué est aussi disponible en français

The Sport Alliance of Ontario announced today that Muskoka has been unanimously chosen to host the 2010 Ontario Winter Youth Games. This announcement comes following the lengthy bidding process that included a formal bid submission and the successful site visit, which took place on March 19th.

“The Ontario government is pleased to have Muskoka as our partner in these Games, which will showcase great competition and tremendous community spirit,” said Ontario Health Promotion Minister Margaret Best. “Congratulations to the leaders and volunteers of the Muskoka bid. I look forward to the Games in 2010.”

“The Muskoka Region submitted a very thorough and comprehensive bid,” said Blair McIntosh, Site Selection Chair for the 2010 Ontario Winter Games - Youth. “The pride and enthusiasm of the communities during our site evaluation was a true reflection of their abilities. It solidified for us that the care and comfort of the participants will be a priority and that they will do a great job in organizing and hosting the 2010 Ontario Winter Games.”

Speaking on behalf of the Bid Committee, Kelly Haywood, General Manager – Huntsville/Lake of Bays Chamber of Commerce said, “The Muskoka bid committee is thrilled to receive the news. We believe that positive relationships were formed with the Sport Alliance of Ontario when Huntsville and Lake of Bays hosted a very successful inaugural Paralympic Winter Championships in 2006. “ Haywood went on to say, “We believe that through our partners from all over Muskoka, we will be able to deliver another success for the Ontario Games Program”.

The bid committee comprised of members from all of Muskoka’s communities, representing economic development offices, recreation departments and chambers of commerce have been working on this initiative since late 2007. The members of the committee worked together to build the bid and plan the site visit. “It was a motivating experience, having all of Muskoka’s partners collaborate to execute such a significant task,” says Graydon Smith, District of Muskoka Councillor. “We look forward to the continuation of building great relationships across Muskoka.”

“This will benefit our communities in many ways; there is an obvious economic impact and we anticipate significant development of the involved sports along with the development of our volunteer base,” says John Cowan, Chair of Events Tourism Huntsville/Lake of Bays.

Cowan indicated that, “Hosting an event of this magnitude will not be possible without the help of our communities’ amazing volunteers and we know that volunteerism is alive and well in Muskoka”. The Winter Games will require the recruitment and training of approximately 1000 volunteers. Cowan added, “this event is sure to provide everyone involved with an incredible opportunity to work with some of our province’s best up and coming athletes”.

Competitions for the Games will be hosted throughout the following communities; Bracebridge, Gravenhurst, Huntsville, Lake of Bays, Muskoka Lakes, Mount St. Louis Moonstone and Sudbury.

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The development of shoulder season growth is gaining momentum as the communities within Muskoka continue to search out potential hosting opportunities. Sport tourism is one of the most rapidly developing sectors of the tourism industry. This industry is estimated at having an economic impact in excess of \$2 billion per year in Canadian communities.

The next steps for this exciting initiative will be to form an organizing committee and to appoint a volunteer chair. Sub-chairs from all of the communities involved will also be recruited to ensure that there is adequate representation across the region. In addition, a general manager for the games will be hired for a contract position. This position will serve as a liaison between representatives at the Sport Alliance of Ontario and the Games Organizing Committee.

For more information on the 2010 Ontario Winter Games, please contact Kelly Haywood, General Manager – Huntsville/Lake of Bays Chamber of Commerce, and member of the Muskoka Bid Committee.

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Process in the Bid Development:

The committee partnered with the City of Greater Sudbury and Mt. St. Louis Moonstone on this initiative. Sudbury is home to many outstanding facilities that are not available in Muskoka, and outsourcing to other communities is a common practice when trying to best facilitate the athletes. Mount St. Louis was selected as the ski partner to provide the western area of Muskoka, the opportunity to garner benefits through the hill itself and accommodation partners. While the tendency has been to look further south to accommodate the facility requirements, the bid committee felt it was more appropriate to invite collaboration with another northern partner.

When deciding which community would host each sport, the Muskoka Bid Committee examined which facility would best suit the needs of the athletes, as well as which one had an active sport organization or club for that particular sport. This would serve to better accommodate the visiting athletes, as they would have a host of knowledgeable volunteers and local athletes. The games promise to lead to continued sport development in our area.