

Canadian Paddling Champs Officially Open First Venue for TORONTO 2015 Pan Am Games

\$10-million upgrades at Welland Pan Am Flatwater Centre include multi-sport training tank

WELLAND, ON July 10, 2013 – With packed stands and fans cheering them on, Canadian Olympian Mark Oldershaw and defending Pan Am champion K.C. Fraser raced down the canal at the Welland Pan Am Flatwater Centre today, officially opening the site of Canoe Sprint races for the TORONTO 2015 Pan Am Games.

The athletes, who both hope to compete for gold here in 2015, also took part in the ribbon cutting for the \$10-million facility, which will be the first venue completed for the Games. The improvements to the venue were jointly funded by the Government of Canada and the City of Welland.

“It’s wonderful to be back racing on the water here and see all the amazing upgrades for the Games. Welland was great before but now it’s truly a world-class facility,” said Oldershaw, who won bronze for Team Canada at the London 2012 Olympic Games and eagerly looks forward to competing in front of hometown fans in 2015.

During the TORONTO 2015 Pan Am Games, up to 5,000 spectators will watch 120 top athletes as they take to the exceptionally calm waters of the canal, originally used by massive ships transporting goods between the Great Lakes of Ontario and Erie.

“Today, with two years to go to the TORONTO 2015 Pan Am Games, we’re officially opening our very first venue,” said Ian Troop, chief executive officer of the TORONTO 2015 Pan Am/Parapan Am Games Organizing Committee (TO2015). “This is an incredibly exciting day for the residents of Welland and our partners—we’re witnessing the beginning of a remarkable legacy for this city and Canadian athletes.”

“Our Government proudly supports the 2015 Games, including the redevelopment of the Welland Pan Am Flatwater Centre,” said the Honourable Bal Gosal, Minister of State (Sport). “This world-class facility, one of several we’re helping build for the Games, will leave an important sport legacy that will assist in the training and development of top Canadian paddlers, while also promoting the growth of sport tourism in southern Ontario.”

In preparation for the Games, TO2015 widened a section of the canal to meet international competition standards, built two new buildings, including a timing tower and the athlete centre, and added a plaza, start towers and permanent seating for 500 spectators.

In addition, a state-of-the-art, multi-sport training tank has been installed in the new athlete centre. The tank will enable Canadian high-performance athletes and fledging local paddlers to perfect their strokes in the off-season in a controlled testing environment against a variable current.

The tank is built to handle training for sculling, sweeping, canoe, kayak and dragon boat. With two channels, which are separated by a concrete divider that houses the shells for the different boats, the tank can hold two canoes at a time, enabling athletes to train and race against each other.

Given its uniqueness, the tank is expected to also draw international teams to train in Welland during the winter months, an important addition for enhancing the facility's international reputation and drawing even more international competitions to the city.

This summer, Welland is hosting the 2013 International Canoe Federation (ICF) Junior and U23 Canoe Sprint World Championships. In 2015, along with the Pan Am Games, it will host the International Dragon Boat Federation World Championships.

"Today marks a new beginning for the re-developed Welland Pan Am Flatwater Centre. Welland will not only host exciting canoe sprint events during the Games in 2015 - but these improvements will also attract many other world-class international competitions to the region," said Michael Chan, Ontario Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games. "The Centre is a key part of the Games legacy in Ontario serving as an excellent training facility for our future stars and athletes."

Through its funding of the Games' operational budget, the Province of Ontario is supporting short-term facility improvements (overlay) and equipment at the venues.

Welland Mayor Barry Sharpe added: "I'd like to thank all of our partners for making today possible. The canal is central to our history and with these amazing enhancements, it's also the key to our future as an international sport tourism destination and a vibrant, healthy, active community. We're looking forward to welcoming the athletes of the Americas when they compete here in 2015."

In 2015, Team Canada is expected to have a good showing at the Welland Pan Am Flatwater Centre. At the Guadalajara 2011 Pan Am Games, Canadian paddlers brought home four gold medals, two silver medals and a bronze. Cuba was the top country in overall medal standings for canoe sprints.

About TO2015

The TORONTO 2015 Pan Am/Parapan Am Games Organizing Committee (TO2015) is tasked with the responsibility of planning, managing and delivering the Games. Its mission is to ignite the spirit through a celebration of sport and culture. The TORONTO 2015 Pan American Games will take place July 10–26 and the Parapan American Games August 7–14.

The 2015 Games are funded by the Government of Canada, the Province of Ontario, as well as other partners and sponsors. CIBC is the Lead Partner of the Games.

For more information about the Games, please visit TORONTO2015.org

For more information about the Welland Pan Am Flatwater Centre, please visit www.wifc.ca

TO2015



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Host of the 2013 ICF Junior & U23 Canoe Sprint World Championships

Host of the 2013 RCA Canadian Masters Rowing Championships

Host of the 2013 RCA National Rowing Championships

Host of the 2013 National Canoe Polo Championships

Venue for Canoe Kayak, 2015 Pan American Games

Host of the 2015 World Dragon Boat Racing Championships