

The Challenge

The Pan/ParaPan American Games (“The Games”) are coming to the Greater Golden Horseshoe in 2015 – an incredible opportunity for the Toronto region to advance the value of sport, enhance economic development, host a world class event, showcase our strengths, and engage residents in a unique event right in their backyard. Through community engagement initiatives, The Games’ organizer, TO2015, aims to generate interest, excitement and community benefit by leveraging opportunities created by The Games. For TO2015, “community engagement” is the process of working collaboratively with groups of people that have been brought together by geographic proximity, common characteristics, or a special interest in order to address issues affecting their community (not unlike the CivicAction Summit). As such, engagement is central to the success of The Games. Children and youth in particular are a key pillar for TO2015’s community engagement strategy. How do we realize The Games’ commitment to youth?

Current Situation

The Pan/ParaPan American Games are held every four years, taking place the year before the Summer Olympics. The host city for each Games is selected through a vote of 42 member National Olympic Committees. The Pan American Sports Organization (PASO) is affiliated with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and has a mission to promote, develop and celebrate sports in the Americas and Caribbean.

The countries participating in The Games include:

 Antigua & Barbuda	 British Virgin Islands	 El Salvador	 Netherlands Antilles	 St. Vincent and the Grenadines
 Argentina	 Canada	 Ecuador	 Nevis	 Suriname
 Aruba	 Cayman Islands	 Grenada	 Nicaragua	 Trinidad and Tobago
 Bahamas	 Chile	 Guatemala	 Panama	 United States of America
 Barbados	 Columbia	 Guyana	 Paraguay	 Uruguay
 Belize	 Costa Rica	 Haiti	 Peru	 Venezuela
 Bermuda	 Cuba	 Honduras	 Puerto Rico	 Virgin Islands
 Bolivia	 Dominica	 Jamaica	 Santa Lucia	
 Brazil	 Dominican Republic	 Mexico	 St. Kitts	

The Games is the second largest world multi-sport event after the Summer Olympics and, as such, the largest multi-sports event that Canada will have ever hosted. It will be bigger than the Vancouver Winter Olympics in terms of sports played (48 versus 20), venues (50 versus nine), and number of athletes and officials in attendance (10,000 versus 7,000). What makes the Toronto 2015 Pan/ParaPan American Games particularly unique is the footprint upon which The Games will be held.

A Municipal Forum was established in the fall of 2010 to coordinate the activities of The Games across the region and create targeted community initiatives.

The PanAm Games will be held July 10-26, 2015 and the ParaPan Games will be held August 7-14, 2015. A total of 48 sports will be played, including 28 Olympic sports, nine Pan American specific sports, and 11 Paralympics sports.

The seventeen host municipalities include:

Ajax	Minden Hills	Richmond Hill
Brampton	Mississauga	St. Catherines
Burlington	Niagara Falls	Toronto
Caledon	Oro-Medonte	Welland
Hamilton	Oshawa	Whitby
Markham	Pickering	

TO2015 Community Engagement Vision & Mandate

Vision: Residents of the Greater Golden Horseshoe must cultivate excitement and celebrate the Toronto 2015 Pan/ParaPan American Games by actively participating in a variety of ways and encouraging their networks in Ontario, across Canada and beyond, to do the same.

Mandate: Develop relationships and programming that facilitate the participation of individuals, young people, families, neighbourhoods and communities, and feel a part of the Toronto 2015 Pan/ParaPan American Games.

TO2015 is currently defining specific TO2015-led initiatives and opportunities for partnership with organizations across the Greater Golden Horseshoe with an aim to leverage or engage with existing youth networks and initiatives. One program that has been initiated in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and will soon enter a pilot testing phase is the School Athlete Program. Athletes will be matched with schools as part of a motivational outreach program.

Chief Barriers to Progress

- While there are a number of existing youth sports initiatives, one of the goals of The Games is to motivate those who are not regularly active to be so. TO2015 and its partners will need to compete with processed food, the Internet and TV, and develop innovative methods of engaging youth in sport. We need to appeal to those who do not normally take part in sports in a way that makes active living more exciting and accessible.
- Given the variety of youth programs that currently exist, TO2015 needs to create distinct programming and delivery to attract youth, using The Games as a catalyst for action.
- Interest in The Games has been overwhelmingly positive, with a number of organizations interested in working with TO2015. Nonetheless, with so many agendas on the table, the engagement strategy can be easily derailed and appear uncoordinated.
- The Games' footprint is significant. It will be a challenge to unify the 17 municipalities involved in a coordinated effort that will offer equal opportunities to all youth.

Opportunities for Action

- 1. Work with existing funding bodies to establish a pool of funds that youth groups can access to develop initiatives that promote active living and The Games.** We can help make this happen by:
 - funders collaborating to share costs and opportunities and reduce individual burdens;
 - community organizations encouraging youth to participate in the development of youth-focused initiatives; and
 - schools promoting this opportunity through their networks to both students and parents.
- 2. Establish a Youth Advisory Council to inform the community engagement youth strategy and provide input into program development.** We can help make this happen by:
 - diverse organizations and businesses sharing the information with their networks to ensure diverse representation on the Council; and
 - schools and community organizations promoting this opportunity through their networks to both students and parents.
- 3. Convene major youth & sports organizations to collaborate on a signature youth program.** We can help make this happen by:
 - organizations agreeing to work together for the purpose of one significant program owned by all;
 - education experts, particularly in curriculum development, advising on best practices to ensure success; and
 - schools leveraging the program and incorporating it into day-to-day lessons in the classroom.
- 4. Create 'active' opportunities that tie into The Games that are not sport specific (i.e., dance).** We can help make this happen by:
 - government, schools and organizations encouraging alternative means for becoming physically active, in their general promotion of active living; and
 - arts and culture organizations creating opportunities within their own agendas that tie into The Games.
- 5. Tap into the community at large for their ideas on engagement opportunities.** We can help make this happen by:
 - establishing an online forum or means by which ideas can be submitted to TO2015;
 - municipalities establishing 'Community Councils' that would tap into local ideas;
 - citizens taking an interest in the outcome of The Games and looking for opportunities to become champions and cheerleaders for its success; and
 - government facilitating connections where they can and informing their networks of opportunities through The Games.

6. Get existing programs that encourage active living and determine how to add a PanAm 'lens' to their initiatives.

We can help make this happen by:

- organizations that promote active living and/or ones that work with youth stepping up to see how to incorporate The Games in their initiatives;
- businesses and schools providing expertise to community organizations on how best to leverage The Games for their future initiatives; and
- organizations working collaboratively on initiatives in order to reduce workloads, maximize impact and broaden their base of supporters in the future.

Questions for Discussion

1. What are the key attributes of a successful youth engagement initiative? What does success look like (i.e., an engaged community of youth)?
2. In an age of 'everything now', how do we build and sustain excitement over the next four years?
3. How do we ensure inclusivity, not only in terms of cultural background but regionally, youth at risk, etc.?
4. What's the legacy (if there is one)?

This paper was prepared by the Toronto 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games Organizing Committee.