



## Join Us for Victoria's Paralympic Torch Relay and Celebration!

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For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC — The City of Victoria is one of 11 Celebration Communities that will host the 2010 Paralympic Torch Relay, which will begin three days after the Olympic flame is extinguished in Vancouver. The community is invited to cheer on torchbearers at Victoria's Paralympic Torch Relay and Celebration on Saturday, March 6, from noon to 2 p.m. at Ship Point and Victoria's Inner Harbour.

"Being part of the 2010 Paralympic Torch Relay is another wonderful opportunity to showcase Victoria to the world," said Mayor Dean Fortin. "This celebration of sport gives us a chance to honour our Paralympians and inspire the community."

The 10-day, 2010 Paralympic Torch Relay will begin in Ottawa where a new flame will be lit next Wednesday by torchbearers from across Canada. The Paralympic flame is created anew in each celebration community by local First Nations in a fire creation ceremony. In Canada, approximately 600 torchbearers will pass the flame during the 2010 Paralympic Torch Relay as they share the message of courage and determination. The relay will conclude at the Opening Ceremony in Vancouver, signaling the start of the Paralympic Winter Games on Friday, March 12, 2010.

On the morning of Saturday, March 6, the Paralympic flame will be created in a fire creation ceremony in Esquimalt, part of the celebration and relay hosted by the municipality and CFB Esquimalt in partnership with the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations.

Following the Esquimalt celebration, the Paralympic flame will travel by navy boat across the harbour, where there will be an exchange to dragon boaters from CFB Esquimalt, who will bring the flame to shore. The Paralympic flame will make a short ceremonial stop at the lawns of the Legislature before Victoria's relay commences.

Victoria's Paralympic Torch Relay will take place in a continuous loop along the Lower Causeway from Belleville to Ship Point. Thirty-one torchbearers have been selected to carry the torch in Victoria. The Upper Causeway, Inner Harbour and Ship Point will serve as excellent vantage points to take in the event.

The celebration at Ship Point will feature top talent from Victoria's music community – artists who have achieved national recognition for their musical contributions, including award-winning Victoria jazz artist Joe Coughlin and his seven-piece band. Coughlin is the winner of the 2008 and the 2009 National Jazz Award for Male Vocalist of the Year.

Sara Marreiros is a Victoria-based singer whose beautiful voice was also featured in the Olympic Torch Relay celebration last October. Sara performs traditional Portuguese folk music, known as “fado”, which she will sing with her quintet during the relay. Both Coughlin and Marreiros live with disabilities and serve as role models to the community and the country as outstanding artists in their discipline.

The City of Victoria in conjunction with the Greater Victoria Spirit Committee and a variety of local organizations, were invited to nominate members of the community to serve as torchbearers. Five community nominated torchbearers were selected to participate in Victoria's relay and include:

- David Cook - an avid sailor who is the founder and manager of the Victoria Sailing Foundation, a registered charity since 2000, that helps youth-at-risk and people with disabilities build their self-esteem. He has Spinal Muscular Atrophy, a deteriorating neurological disease.
- Stephanie Dixon - a 26 year old Canadian swimmer, who before the 2008 Paralympic Games in Beijing, had accumulated 15 Paralympic medals and is considered to be one of the best swimmers with a disability in the world. Born with only one leg, she started swimming at the age of two.
- Boyd Farrell - a versatile athlete with a great personality and very high personal standards. He is a role model to many Special Olympics athletes. He always has a word of encouragement to give and supports every athlete in their dreams and hopes. Boyd is high-functioning and was nominated athlete representative by fellow athletes.
- Peter Lawless - who started the first wheelchair athletics training group on Vancouver Island. Athletes from this training group have gone on to win over 30 national championship medals worldwide. He is currently a Director of the Coaches Association of BC and Director of Coaches of Canada.
- Candace Lester – who has two children that face physical and/or mental challenges. She understands their struggles and will show her support for them by carrying the torch in Victoria's Paralympic Torch Relay. Candace has worked at the Times Colonist for seven years and has led the company's employee campaign for United Way every year along with playing a vital role in many other fundraising efforts and community charity campaigns.

For the first time in history, the Paralympic Torch Relay will take place in a non-linear way, with the flame being carried around each hosting community while celebrations take place. The Paralympic flame shines a light on the extraordinary achievements of Paralympians and the endless possibilities of the human spirit.

Victoria's Paralympic Torch Relay and Celebration is presented by the City of Victoria in cooperation with the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Winter Games. For more information, visit:

[www.victoria.ca/paralympictorch](http://www.victoria.ca/paralympictorch)

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