



Victoria Welcomes Queen's Baton Relay

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For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC — Today, Victoria welcomed the 2018 Queen's Baton Relay to the Capital City. The Queen's Baton Relay is a tradition that connects the 70 nations and territories in the Commonwealth and builds excitement and momentum prior to the next Games, which will take place in Gold Coast Australia in April 2018.

Launched on March 13, 2017 by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Head of the Commonwealth, the Queen's Baton is in Canada July 27 – August 1 visiting the four Canadian cities that hosted the Commonwealth Games (Hamilton in 1930, Vancouver in 1954, Edmonton in 1978 and Victoria in 1994).

The City of Victoria and PISE (Pacific Institute for Sport Excellence) partnered to host the Queen's Baton Relay, which started at Victoria City Hall and travelled along Pandora Avenue, Vancouver Street and Rockland Avenue to Government House. The community was invited to come out during the lunch hour to cheer on the Relay, which included Mayor Lisa Helps, marathon runner Bruce Deacon, para-runner and para-soccer player Liam Stanley, Parliamentary Secretary for Sport and Multiculturalism and international field hockey player Ravi Kahlon, and Commonwealth Games swimmer and triathlete Suzanne Weckend.

"We are honoured to welcome the Queen's Baton to Victoria," said Mayor Lisa Helps. "The Queen's Baton Relay celebrates diversity, inspires community pride and excites people about sports and culture – values that the City of Victoria shares."

At each Baton hand-off, the new Relay participant was joined by those previous, with all five Relay participants arriving in front of Government House where the Baton was presented to The Honourable Judith Guichon, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia.

"It was my great pleasure to participate in the Queen's Baton Relay, and to welcome all participants and representatives to Government House," said Her Honour. "The incredible journey of the Queen's Baton is a symbolic linking of all countries under the Commonwealth; the legacy of the Victoria 1994 Commonwealth Games is still felt here today. I greatly enjoyed hosting a day of sports and physical literacy activities with the Pacific Institute for Sport Excellence, and meeting young athletes who will perhaps represent Canada in a future Commonwealth Games."

Prior to the start of the Relay, a ceremony was held at Victoria City Hall to officially welcome the Baton to Victoria, with Greg Maychak, Chair of Baton Relay Canada for Commonwealth Games Canada, presenting the Baton to the Mayor. Maychak is one of six international members of the Queen's Baton Relay Team who is traveling with the Baton during its 230,000-kilometre journey from Buckingham Palace to the XXI Commonwealth Games in Australia next year.

"The Queen's Baton Team from the Gold Coast is thrilled to visit the beautiful City of Victoria, the Canadian host of the 1994 Commonwealth Games," said Greg Maychak, Chair of Baton Relay Canada for Commonwealth Games Canada. "Your storied past of hosting successful events combined with your spirit of volunteerism make Victoria a must stop as the Baton travels to every country of the Commonwealth."

At this morning's ceremony, Mayor Helps was joined by Hugh MacDonald, Executive Director of SportHost Victoria, a not-for-profit society spawned by the 1994 Commonwealth Games, dedicated to increasing the quality and quantity of sport related events and activities hosted in Greater Victoria.

"Welcoming the Queen's Baton and our special guests today provides the opportunity to reflect on the 1994 Games hosted in Greater Victoria. It shows the world that our community could be and is a leader in fostering sport tourism partnerships, to attract sport related events and to enhance our economy and quality of life," said Hugh MacDonald, Executive Director of SportHost Victoria. "We thank the Commonwealth Games International Federation and Commonwealth Games Canada for bringing the Queen's Baton to Victoria."

Following the Queen's Baton Relay, a private welcome ceremony was held at the Government House Bandshell, where The Honourable Judith Guichon was joined by Mayor Lisa Helps, Robert Bettauer, CEO of PISE, the Relay participants, and 150 day camp children five to eight years of age and their caregivers. Bettauer invited the children for a group photo in front of the Bandshell and to participate in a range of interactive sport stations and physical literacy activities courtesy of PISE.

A legacy of the 1994 Victoria Commonwealth Games, PISE is a non-profit that supports health and wellness through state-of-the-art facilities, programs, education and services – accessible to all community members and all of their abilities.

"PISE is delighted and honoured to be a part of the Queen's Baton celebrations at Government House. The Commonwealth Games inspire pride, culture, sportsmanship, and competition. I hope the summer campers here today will be inspired to stay involved in physical activity and sport and continue on their journey of leading healthy active lives," said Robert Bettauer, CEO of PISE.

Before arriving in Canada, the Queen's Baton visited the Bahamas and Bermuda. It travelled to Hamilton and Edmonton before coming to Victoria, and will be in Vancouver on Tuesday, then departing for Belize. The XXI Commonwealth Games will be held in Gold Coast Australia from April 4 -15, 2018. The Queen's message that was placed inside the Baton will be read aloud at the Opening Ceremony. For more information: www.gc2018.com/qbr.

**ATTACHMENT: Backgrounder – 2018 Queen's Baton Relay / Victoria Relay Athlete Bios
 #QBR2018**

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