

Registration now open for those interested in being Pan Am torchbearers

For 41 days next year, the torch will visit five cities outside Ontario (Calgary, Winnipeg, Montreal, Halifax and the Greater Vancouver Area) and 130 communities in the province — including Hamilton, home of the soccer competition — before a cauldron for the games is lit in downtown Toronto July 10.

Hadfield, a former fighter pilot and International Space Station commander, said the games will challenge young people to push themselves to the edge of their capabilities.

"The inspiration of it is the key," added Hadfield, who introduced the torch run with Olympic gold medallists Catriona Le May Doan and Simon Whitfield.

There are several criteria for torchbearers, including being at least 13 years old when the relay begins. They can register online at TORONTO2015.org. Registration closes December 1 at 11:59 p.m. Names will be chosen by a random draw and announced beginning in March 2015.

The full Pan Am torch relay route will be

announced in February. Some of the 3,000 bearers of the flame — to be lit at an Aztec ceremony at the Pyramid of the Sun in Teotihuacan, Mexico — will be chosen by communities on the route or games stakeholders. Hamilton will have spots for about 70 torchbearers for its part of the route, which will see the flame come through the Ambitious City on June 21.

Tickets for the sporting events, as well as opening and closing ceremonies, are on sale now. Games CEO Saad Rafi said the torches will be carried by people on two wheels, four wheels, in canoes and on horseback.

Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne said she's excited about the approaching games. "The torch relay starts to make it very real," she said, adding a message of support for the young

athletes she said were rising early to train at a pool, track or gymnasium. "We are right there with you."

Some 7,500 athletes and 250,000 visitors are expected at Toronto's Pan American and Parapan Am Games, which start 35 weeks from now. Tickets start at \$20, and there are discounts for seniors and children.

Stacey LaForme, councillor of the Mississauga of the New Credit First Nation, a people whose territory was Toronto before the city was founded, said the games "allow us to be better today than we were yesterday."

"When the torch passes, remember it represents pride, honour, unity and growth."

A separate Parapan Am Torch Relay will take place prior to the start of the Parapan Am Games on August 7.

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