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## **The City of Brampton makes Olympic Torch Relay History Sledge Hockey Player Carries the Flame**

Brampton, ON: The City of Brampton made Olympic Torch Relay History this evening as 21-year-old sledge hockey player Ryan Bennett was the first person to carry the Flame by sledge hockey sled.

Thousands were on hand at Brampton's Gage Park as Bennett received the Flame and carried it along the park's outdoor skating trail. Following a circuit of the trail, Ryan and the Torch transitioned to a wheelchair where he wheeled himself to the event stage, and lit the Olympic cauldron.

"Carrying the Torch was the most incredible experience," says Bennett. "Although I was the only one on the ice, I could feel the energy of the community. I was carrying the Flame for everyone who has helped me to reach my dreams and play a sport I love."

Twenty-seven torchbearers carried the Flame across Brampton before it reached in Gage Park. Bennett, the final torchbearer for this leg of the Relay, was selected to be Community Torchbearer by the City.

A parade, led by Mayor Susan Fennell, welcomed the Flame as it arrived. City Council members, community sports teams, Police and Fire Honour Guard, and marching bands led the Flame into the Park as thousands of Canadians rang cow bells to welcome the Flame.

The evening was topped off with live music and community entertainment. The event was made possible through the support of the Vancouver Organizing Committee, corporate sponsors RBC and Coke, along with the Provincial Ministry of Tourism and Heritage Canada.

"This was a truly once-in-a-lifetime experience" says Mayor Susan Fennell. "It was wonderful to see our community join together to celebrate the Flame and embrace what the Olympics are all about. It's been an unforgettable day."

Brampton's Olympic Torch Relay ceremony was the culmination of the City of Brampton's "Ignite the Spirit" Campaign. Since the campaign was launched earlier this fall, the city has come together in a variety of events and activities, all leading up to tonight's celebration.

The Olympic Flame rests in Brampton overnight. It will leave the City early Saturday morning and make its way to Georgetown, Acton, Milton, Mississauga, Oakville, Burlington and Hamilton.

For highlights of the Brampton leg of the Olympic Torch Relay, visit [www.vancouver2010.com](http://www.vancouver2010.com) and click on daily highlights.

### **About Ryan Bennett – Brampton’s final torchbearer**

A diagnosis of cerebral palsy as a toddler left Ryan Bennett with partial use of his legs, but it has never slowed him down. At the age of 7, a family friend introduced him to sledge hockey, an experience that has dramatically impacted his life. Ever since, Ryan has dedicated himself to the sport – a version of ice hockey that enables disabled athletes to use a low-lying sled to play the game.

Ryan currently plays with the Halton-Peel Cruisers, Intermediate A team. They recently won the 2009 Cruisers Cup Tournament, defeating competition from across Ontario, Montreal and Buffalo, NY.

Sledge hockey is a Paralympic sport and is the most popular event at the Paralympic Games. For the first time, the gold-medal game will be broadcast live on national television.

**About Brampton:** The 11th largest city in Canada, Brampton has a successful, well-diversified economy and is home to more than 8,000 businesses. The City continues to retain a Triple ‘A’ credit rating by Standard & Poors for the third consecutive year, reflecting its debt-free position, exceptional liquidity levels and excellent economy. The City’s 2009 operating budget is \$400.8 million and approved funding for its overall capital program stands at \$700 million. Brampton celebrates its diverse population that represents people from more than 175 distinct ethnic backgrounds who speak over 70 different languages. Offering more than 6,000 acres of parkland, Brampton takes pride in being the Flower City of Canada and won the 2008 International Communities in Bloom competition. It is also the first city in the GTA and one of only 10 in North America to have been designated as an International Safe Community by the World Health Organization. For more information visit [www.brampton.ca](http://www.brampton.ca)

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