

ATA Article for March

Greetings from Ontario, Canada.

I am now at liberty to provide greater details on the 2015 Pan Am Games and specifically the shooting events which will all be held at the Toronto International Trap & Skeet Club located near Cookstown, about 20 minutes south of Barrie, in Innisfil Township, Simcoe County. The “official” media event was held at the Club on January 22, 2014. I did not believe it appropriate to release too many details until the 2015 Pan Am dignitaries et al made the announcement although most of what they released to the public was not a well-kept secret.

I have always been an advocate for all types of shooting – rifle and pistol as well as shotgun and recreational as well as competitive – right up to and including Olympic level. As I have observed previously, English firearm owners years ago decided not to collectively support all of the recreational and competitive firearm disciplines. Many Brits felt that handguns were not that important to them and that if a ban or restriction on handguns took place the anti-gunners and the Government would leave them alone to pursue their “long gun” endeavours. What a tragic mistake. The victory by the anti-gun element over handguns simply emboldened them and the Government to enact very restrictive laws on all firearm owners.

In Canada firearm owners did not make that mistake – we all stuck together and although we still have very repressive firearm laws, it could have been much worse. In fact, with the Federal Conservatives, we have had some limited claw backs with the elimination, for instance, of the long gun registry. For our U.S. friends, the 2nd Amendment is an invaluable tool in protecting their constitutional right to own firearms, but they (like us) must always be vigilant. “Gun control” has many nuances – from the firearms themselves, to the ammunition used, to where you can lawfully discharge them. Our clubs and ranges are always under attack from environmentalists (for anything from lead shot to noise issues) and from those in society that simply don’t like guns. Many local municipalities side with the antis as they are fearful of losing votes and consider their gun clubs to harbour enthusiasts that for the most part do not live or vote in their jurisdiction. So, I hope you feel the same way I do – when the shooting sports get positive coverage like this 2015 Pan Am event – it is a good news story for all firearm enthusiasts.

The shooting community couldn’t buy the type of positive promotion and publicity now being generated. Listen to what some of the dignitaries are saying: “The sport of shooting has a long history at the Pan Am and Olympic Games and Canadians have stood at the top of the podium on several occasions, starting with the legendary Walter Ewing’s Olympic win in 1908”, said the Honourable Bal Gosal, (Federal) Minister of State (Sport). He went on to say: “As a supporter of the 2015 Pan Am/Parapan Am Games, our government is proud that this venue will enable our best to train and compete in a world class facility here at home, as well as leave a lasting legacy for the development of our athletes”.

Rarely do Federal (Conservative) members of Parliament and (Liberal) Provincial Members of the Provincial Government see eye to eye on many issues but...here is what the Honourable Michael Chan, (Provincial) Minister Responsible for the (Pan Am)

Games (Liberal) had to say: "High performance and recreational athletes will benefit greatly from this Games – driven investment in the Toronto International Trap & Skeet Club". "As we prepare for the 2015 Games, we are proud to support the important legacy that the event is creating in our communities".

And, not to be outdone, having heard the glowing support expressed by representatives of the Federal and Provincial Governments, the Mayor of the local municipality, Innisfil, Her Worship Mayor Barb Baguley, had this to say: "As a growing community we are pleased to have the Toronto International Trap & Skeet Club transformed into a world class training and competition facility through the legacy investment of the 2015 Pan Am Games".

There you have it folks – a rare display of solidarity in support of (can you imagine) a "shooting club" by all three levels of government at the same time.

Other dignitaries also spoke and then the last speaker who was supposed to be me on behalf of the Club (but I was out of the country – shooting) took the podium. The Club had asked my son, Drew, if he would say a few things. Drew started by thanking the 2015 funding partners for without them the money needed to upgrade the Club facility would not be possible. He commented that what exists today at the Club came from private sector investment and to have the opportunity for public sector investment in a shooting club is greatly appreciated. This will enable one upgraded and a second (built from scratch) Olympic bunker with super-imposed skeet as well as a 50 metre rifle range with a super-imposed 25 metre pistol range and a new fully enclosed 10 metre airgun range. Rifle, pistol and airgun will all be equipped with state of the art electronic targets. Drew emphasized that the post-Games legacy will benefit Canadian shooters at all levels for years to come. His closing line is reported to have attracted a solid round of applause and went like this: "On behalf of the Club, I want to assure the 2015 Pan Am funding partners that of all the projects you have helped create, you are likely to receive from this investment the "biggest bangs for your bucks". [Well done, Drew.]

During the Games, the Toronto International Trap & Skeet Club will be referred to as "The Pan Am Shooting Centre".

Footnote: Key partners in the Pan Am funding include the Government of Canada, Province of Ontario, Canadian Olympic Committee (COC), Canadian Paralympic Committee, GGH municipalities and universities and Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC) is the lead partner in the Games.

When I represented Canada at my first Pan Am Games in Indianapolis in 1987 I knew nothing about the Games, their significance and what they were all about. I will devote a full article in a few months' time – I think you will learn a lot.

Next month, watch for my article on bringing firearms (by Americans) into Canada. Quebec has the (ATA) Canadians this summer and many Americans would like to attend but want an overview of how they bring their guns into Canada.

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