

Greetings from Ontario, Canada

IN JULY, THE TORONTO 2015 PAN AMERICAN GAMES UNFOLDS

That’s right, after years of hard work, planning and billions of dollars, Toronto (and area) will host the largest multi-sport event in this province’s history. There will be approximately 25,000 volunteers representing the largest call for volunteers in Canadian peacetime history – surpassing the 1976 Montreal Olympics.

Forty-one countries and territories will be competing in 51 sports with play of field venues throughout the Greater Toronto and surrounding area.

For the shooting sports alone, there are 15 shooting events with rifle, handgun (and air in both) as well as shotgun (Olympic trap, double trap and skeet). The Pan Am Games is a qualifier for the Rio Olympic Games for those athletes skilled and fortunate enough to win a quota starting place at these Games for their country.

All of the shooting events will be held at the Toronto International Trap & Skeet which is about 20 minutes south of Barrie, just west of Hwy 400. There will be 250 athletes from twenty-five countries all vying to do their nations proud and all trying to secure one or more elusive Olympic starting positions. Here is a list of the Countries who will send shooters to the Pan Am Games:

Argentina	Barbados	Bolivia
Brazil	Canada – 25 athletes	Chile
Colombia	Cost Rica	Cuba
Dominica	Ecuador	El Salvador
Guatemala	Honduras	U.S. Virgin Islands
Mexico	Nicaragua	Panama
Paraguay	Peru	Puerto Rico
Trinidad	Uruguay	USA – 25 athletes
Venezuela		

To put this into some perspective, Canada had only two shooters at the 2012 London Olympics, one in men’s rifle and one in ladies’ handgun. We had no shotgunners in 2012 and for the first time, that I can remember, the U.S. team did not have a men’s entry in the trap events and the U.S. has not won a quota in trap at any of the qualifying tournaments thus far. There is a lot of pressure obviously on all countries and the competition is excellent with viable threats in shotgun events alone from over a dozen countries in the Western Hemisphere. The days of showing up at the Pan Am Games and claiming your quota spot for your country have long gone.

There will be a maximum team size of 25 athletes in the shooting sports. Since there are 15 shooting events and a maximum of two shooters per event, countries have to decide which events will have a single (or no) entry and which events will be filled with two shooters. To some extent this is academic because a country can't simply show up at the Pan Am Games with a team of shooting hopefuls. Even at the Pan Am Games, shooters must earn a starting position for their country to be able to send a shooter to the Pan Ams. The qualifier was the Championship of the Americas tournament held in Guadalajara in November.

For Canada, we have 26 quota places (for 25 shooters). One of our handgun lady shooters won a quota starting position in two events and saved our country the challenge of deciding which of the 26 eligible events for which we have starting positions does not get filled. She will "double-start" in two events – problem (for Canada) solved.

The U.S. and other countries will have to decide which events they will send a full contingent of two. You can bet the farm, they will be sending two in men's trap as the 2015 Pan Am Games may be the last reasonable prospect of securing an Olympic quota spot.

Now for the shooting venue. The Toronto International Trap & Skeet Club has been for the most part a trap club that throws registered ATA targets over 9 fields although only 6 are regularly used for registered shoots. It also has a three field superimposed skeet layout and has had sporting and five stand. There was also a single Olympic trap bunker.

Sports Canada, and the 2015 Pan Am organizers, approached our Toronto International club early in the Pan Am planning process querying as to whether our club would consider holding some of the Pan Am shooting events – essentially the shotgun events of Olympic trap (men and women), Olympic double trap (men) and Olympic Skeet (men and women). The expectation was that we would have to fund a significant portion of the reconstruction expense, which at that time was still unknown other than expensive. We passed. Borden, a military base west of Barrie was prepared to host the shooting events – all of them, and active negotiations were pursued for many months. This came to a rather dramatic end when Borden announced that all of the civilian ranges would have to be removed immediately after the Games. That was not acceptable to Sports Canada because an investment of sizable dollars deserved to have a "post" Games legacy. That is when I received a series of calls inquiring as to whether Toronto International would consider hosting all the shooting events.

I rallied our Board. We listened to the Pan Am presentation. We recognized that rifle and pistol ranges would be an added dimension that would forever alter the complexion of our facility. It would mean that for the foreseeable future, our facility would be home to not just shotgunners but also rifle and handgunners. We would also be a national training center for high performance shooting athletes across Canada – and one of the best multi-discipline shooting facilities in all of Canada. I am delighted to report that the shareholders (and their elected directors) were and remain visionaries and see the wisdom of giving shooters a choice of many shooting disciplines. Shotgun, especially ATA trap, will benefit from a re-invigorated global membership. Shotgun sports will earn the respect of other shooting disciplines and vice versa. And with the previously unheard of government support of the shooting sports – we, as firearm owners, benefit.

The public perception (so far at least) has been very favourable and supportive. Local governments love the publicity of a venue in their municipality. Local media have sung the praises of this fabulous facility.

The Chief Firearms Office has been very accommodating. All firearm owners in Ontario (and perhaps Canada too) benefit. Our shooting sports have legitimacy. The public is clamouring to pick up tickets. Our ATA shooting sport (while not an Olympic event) has to benefit. I have already personally mentored dozens of people that went to try their hand at shooting clay targets. Many are now in the process of taking firearm licencing courses and obtaining their Possession & Acquisition Licence(s) (PAL) and many have asked for our OPTA shoot calendar and want to know how and where they can participate.

The Sport Canada funding injection, when I last heard, was 6.2 million dollars. Our old Olympic bunker has been removed and two new ones will be added as well as two skeet fields.

For rifle and handgun there is a monstrous (up to) 50 metre range, fully baffled so that no shot can escape. A year round air gun range will occupy the second floor. The range(s) are fully accessible.

The facility is scheduled to be completed by May 30. Rather than show you a picture of the ranges currently under construction, I am showing you a "schematic" picture of what the facility will look like. You will note that only one of the two shotgun bunkers have been depicted.

Although ticket sales have (I am told) been brisk, it may still be possible to obtain tickets from Ticketmaster at www.ticketmaster.ca/artist/1515475?brand=to2015enca . Some may be available at last minute – call me.

The shooting events take place July 12 to July 19, 2015.

Thanks to the many, many volunteers who have and continue to provide their time and talents to these Pan Am Games and the shooting legacy that will follow.

Paul Shaw

Ontario Delegate