



## **Hills of Headwaters - TO2015 Pan Am Games Tourism Strategy**

### **Background**

Caledon Equestrian Park (CEP), located in the Hills of Headwaters region, is a municipally-owned facility that will host dressage and show jumping competitions during the 2015 Pan Am Games. As the equestrian hub in Ontario, the Park has hosted 15 World Cup qualifiers, four Pan American Game selection trials, two Olympic selection trials and more than 150 National Grand Prix events.

In November 2011, the Corporation of the Town of Caledon entered into an agreement with TO2015, the organizers of the Games, to develop the CEP as the main venue for the equestrian events (dressage and show jumping) to be held during the 2015 Pan/Parapan Am Games. The development of the CEP is unique in that the work will be undertaken as a three-way partnership between the Town, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) (the owners of the land, who have entered into a long-term lease with the Town), and the Equestrian Management Group (EMG) (the Park operators).

### **Pan Am Games Overview**

The TORONTO 2015 Pan American Games will take place July 10 to 26 and the Parapan American Games August 7 to 14. The TORONTO 2015 Pan Am Games are expected to draw more than 10,000 athletes, coaches and team officials and feature 51 sports in municipalities across the Greater Golden Horseshoe area. The TORONTO 2015 Pan American Games will be the largest sporting event ever hosted in Canada.

Measured by the number of participating athletes and sport competitions, the Pan American/Parapan American Games are the world's third largest international multi-sport event. Only the Summer Olympic Games and Asian Games are larger. The attention generated by hosting this international, multi-sport event is also expected to provide economic benefits before, during and after the Games for tourism related businesses, and the legacy opportunities for communities that serve as event venues will further expand the economic impact of the Games.

### **Hills of Headwaters Tourism Association**

The Hills of Headwaters Tourism Association (HHTA) is the recognized destination marketing organization representing the Town of Caledon, County of Dufferin and Town of Erin. The Board of Directors of HHTA has identified and are supporting tourism development strategies focusing on five major sectors:

- Equine
- Arts/culture/heritage
- Culinary tourism/local food
- Festivals & events
- Outdoor touring



## **Why should the Hills of Headwaters Tourism Association develop a PanAm strategy?**

While the PanAm Games extend over only a few weeks, the full impact of the Games will be told in the legacy that they leave in a community. According to the Canadian Sports Tourism Association, and based on data prepared by Statistics Canada, spending by sport travellers helped the industry generate \$3.6 billion in 2010. Perhaps more importantly, however, they provide tremendous infrastructure benefits for communities, and often provide the launch point for attracting more international events in the future.

Since 2007, the Hills of Headwaters Tourism Association has been exploring the potential for developing the equine sector as a tourism demand generator. In 2013 the province of Ontario, through its Ontario Trillium Foundation, recognized the work being done by Headwaters for the equine industry by providing financial support for a 3-year period. This work will be primarily focused on positioning Headwaters as Horse Country as a centre of equine excellence in Ontario.

With the world arriving at our doorstep for the equine events of the TO2015 PanAm Games, it seems clear that now, more than ever, is the time to position the region as an international venue for equestrian events and a centre of equine excellence in Ontario. The legacy of the Games will provide Headwaters Horse Country a unique opportunity to become one of North America's top equine destinations.

## **Goals for a Headwaters PanAm strategy**

Keeping in mind that visitors to any destination generally travel for a specific reason or activity (this is often called the demand generator or trip motivator), what truly makes a visit memorable is when it is enhanced by ancillary activities that complete the overall experience. The more authentic the overall experience, the higher the likelihood of visitor satisfaction. As such, it is recommended that a Hills of Headwaters Tourism PanAm strategy have three clear goals:

1. To brand & position Headwaters as Horse Country
2. To support our communities and our business operators through legacy tourism development that will live well beyond the duration of the TO2015 PanAm Games
3. To provide a memorable experience for visitors to our PanAm equine events by leveraging and promoting our unique ancillary experiences, which will support the positioning of Headwaters as a sophisticated, rural destination, just a short drive from Canada's largest urban centre.

## **Specific areas of focus for a Headwaters PanAm strategy**

Specific areas of activity will support the goals above, and will focus on the identified sectors that enhance a compelling visitor experience:

1. Regional signage welcoming visitors to Headwaters Horse Country
2. Tourism ambassador program for front line staff throughout the region
3. Local food
4. Arts & culture
5. Outdoor trails & heritage



### **1. Regional Headwaters Horse Country signage program**

In partnership with the Headwaters Equine Leadership Group (HELG), opportunities for erecting gateway and community signage throughout the region will be explored, as well as integrating the Horse Country brand in other community collateral, all reinforcing Headwaters as Horse Country, and positioning the area as a centre of equine excellence. Opportunities to leverage funding to support this initiative will be investigated, including potential partner funding from OMAF RED funding program and Central Counties Tourism partnership funding program.

### **2. Tourism ambassador program**

Building on the highly successful model developed by Lexington Kentucky for the World Equestrian Games in 2010, the Hills of Headwaters Tourism Association will approach Central Counties Tourism to partner in developing a Central Counties tourism ambassador program for the TO2015 PanAm Games. Since each of the three DMOs within Central Counties (Headwaters, York and Durham) are hosting events for the PanAm Games, a pan-regional strategy for this program makes imminent sense, and will support Central Counties' goals of product and workforce development.

### **3. Local food program**

It is a well-known fact that many iconic sporting events are known for a signature food or beverage. In 2014 the Hills of Headwaters will host in a region-wide contest to develop a signature food & a signature beverage for the events of the TO2015 PanAm Games. This contest will provide a unique opportunity to showcase our local food & beverage industry, support our growers and producers, and provide many opportunities to promote our region through local, regional and provincial media channels.

The intent of the contest would be to name a signature food & drink that could be served at the Caledon Equestrian Park venue during the course of the Games, and that local area restaurants and food establishments could also highlight on their own menus.

### **4. Arts & culture program**

In 2014 the Headwaters Equine Leadership Group (HELG) will be announcing a region-wide art contest, soliciting submissions for a signature image to represent their work positioning Headwaters as Horse Country. The multi-media contest will provide an opportunity to integrate the robust arts and culture sector in the Headwaters region, with the work being done in the equestrian sector. It is intended that the winner of the contest would be announced on the opening weekend of the Caledon Equestrian Park in 2014. The piece that is the overall winner in the contest will become the signature image that will be used in Headwaters Horse Country branding, and may be integrated into the regional Headwaters Horse Country signage program. During 2014 the entries from this contest would be showcased in an art exhibition that would take place at Headwaters venue(s) throughout the region.



Moving into 2015, the intent would be to host a PanAm wide art contest, where entries would be solicited from participating PanAm countries. The overall winner of the 2014 Headwaters Horse Country art contest, along with the winners from each class of entry would be automatically included in an art exhibition that would take place during the PanAm Games.

#### **5. Outdoor trails & heritage program**

The Hills of Headwaters Tourism Association will reach out to the Town of Caledon to investigate opportunities to become part of the PanAm Path, a multi-use path to connect Toronto's trails and create an active-living legacy for the Games. In Toronto the Path will connect over 80km of trails and bring together residents, local organizations, artists and businesses to create truly vibrant public spaces that are reflections of those communities along the route.

Given the extensive trail system that winds its way through the Headwaters region, there may be opportunities to link to the Toronto PanAm Path or alternately create our own Headwaters version of the Path.

#### **Other considerations**

At this point in time (September 2013), the Hills of Headwaters Tourism Association has not been able to obtain estimated visitor numbers for the equestrian events that will be hosted in our region from either the TO2015 organizing committee or the host venue. While we have been told to expect approximately 130 horses, each travelling with an entourage of approximately 10 people per horse, there is no sense of the number of visitors who will be travelling to our area as spectators, and whether or not these visitors intend to stay in our region during their visit, or whether they will be day trip visitors from Toronto.

As such, this proposed Headwaters PanAm strategy does NOT include any initiatives for accommodation or transportation services to support the Games. Should more information become available, these areas of focus may need to be addressed.

#### **Conclusion**

The Headwaters region is well positioned to take advantage of the equestrian events for the TO2015 PanAm Games being hosted at the Caledon Equestrian Park. Not only will this help showcase Headwaters Horse Country as a centre of equine excellence, but the Games will also provide opportunities for us to highlight the other visitor experiences available in the region, that make Headwaters one of the province's most sophisticated rural tourism destinations, just a short drive from the country's largest urban centre.

**September 26, 2013**

