

# Canada's ties to Olympics span decades



By USSA

This will be the second Olympic Winter Games, after the 1988 Games in Calgary, to be in Canada, but the country's historic ties to the event go back much further.

Canada helped usher in the first Olympic Winter Games – at the Alpine resort of Chamonix, France, in 1924 – by joining with Central Europe to persuade the International Olympic Committee to add an International Winter Sports Week to the Games planned for that year.

For the Games in Vancouver (Feb. 12-28), the Olympic torch relay is expected to be the longest to take place in a single country. Thousands of Canadians will participate in carrying the torch from Victoria, BC, through every province and territory of the country. After reaching St. John's, NL, in the east, the torch will then make its journey back to British Columbia.

More than 80 countries will participate and approximately 5,000 athletes and officials will be involved in the XXI Olympic Winter Games.

At least a million people are expected to travel to Vancouver, a city surrounded by water on three sides with a view of nearby mountains. The main venue for skiing will be Whistler, north of Vancouver.

The number of sports designated for Olympic Winter Games has grown over the years. In addition to those included since 1924

– figure skating, ice hockey, cross country skiing, bobsled, Nordic combined, ski jumping, and speed skating – athletes today compete in Alpine skiing, biathlon, luge, and curling, as well as in the newer disciplines of snowboarding, freestyle skiing, and short-track speed skating.

After making their Olympic debut in Torino, Italy, in 2006, snowboardcross and the team pursuit speed skating will be officially added to the 2010 program, which will also include the debut of skiercross, a race down a technically challenging course resembling a motocross track.