

## Canada seeking Paralympic glory in Paris

By Michael Riley

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Paralympic Games in Paris began on Aug. 28 and go to Sept. 8. Over 4,000 athletes from across the globe are competing in 549 medal events across 22 sports all over France's capital city. The opening ceremony was held outside a stadium for the first time, as athletes paraded through the Avenue Champs-Élysées to Place de la Concorde, with over 60,000 spectators taking it in along the way. On opening day of the Paralympics, Minister of Sport and Physical Activity Carla Qualtrough said that Patrick Anderson (wheelchair basketball) and Katarina Roxon (para swimming) would be leading Team Canada at the opening ceremony. To the 126 Canadian athletes who will represent our country and compete at the Games: this is your time to shine. You've trained relentlessly for years, and now rank among the world's best. All of Canada knows that you'll compete with the same heart and determination that got you here. Be proud of your achievements and enjoy your experience. To all Canadians at home and around the world, let's come together and cheer on Team Canada! Let's show the world the strength, unity and spirit that make us who we are. Go Canada Go! she said. As of Sept. 2, Canada has done very well so far in the Paralympics this year. Our Paralympians have won 10 medals so far; four silver and six bronze. Austin Smeenck, a wheelchair racer from Oakville, won our sixth bronze medal on Sept. 2 in the men's T34 100 metres, with a time of 15.19 seconds, finishing just 0.05 seconds behind the silver medal finisher, Tunisia's Walid Ktila. Track cyclist Kate O'Brien got Canada started on the medal board on Aug. 28, winning a bronze in the women's C4-5 500 metre time trial, her second Paralympic medal, getting a silver medal in the same event at the Tokyo Paralympic Games in 2021. Aurelie Rivard also got her 11th Paralympic medal in the women's 50 metre swimming freestyle S10 event on opening day. This ties her with wheelchair racer Brent Lakatos for the most medals among Canadians competing in Paris. On Sept. 1, Rivard would get her 12th medal, a silver in the women's S10 100 metre freestyle. Lakatos would restore the tie with a silver medal win that same day. Canada has participated 11 times in the Summer Paralympic Games and in all Winter Paralympic Games. They first competed at the Summer Games in 1968 and the Winter Games in 1976. Overall, we are ranked fourth in medals earned, with 400 gold, 340 silver and 346 bronze, a total of 1,086. Canada has also hosted the Paralympics twice; once in Toronto in 1976 and the other time in Vancouver in 2010. Swimmer Michael Edgson is the most decorated Paralympic athlete in Canadian history, winning 21 medals, including 18 gold, and setting nine world records over three Paralympic Games. The Paralympics date back to 1948, when they were called the Stoke Mandeville Games, later becoming the Paralympic Games in 1960, featuring 400 athletes from 23 countries. Since then, they've taken place every four years. Since the 1988 Summer Games in Seoul Korea and the 1992 Winter Games in Albertville, France, the Paralympics have also taken part in the same cities and venues as the Olympics, due to an agreement between the International Paralympic Committee and the International Olympic Committee. So, congratulations to our Paralympians so far for an outstanding job representing Canada at these Paralympic Games in Paris so far. Here's wishing you continued success going into the home stretch and the closing ceremonies on Sept. 8. Your fellow Canadians are proud of you!