

# IPC president Sir Philip Craven encouraged by Canadian Paralympic movement ahead of 2015 Parapan Am Games

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By Israel Fehr

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TORONTO – There are two things that are required to push forward any movement: passion and money; the former is the heart of the equation but its beat is undoubtedly and unfortunately dulled by a lack of the latter.

Sir Philip Craven, president of the International Paralympic Committee is committed to a vision that continues to build awareness around Paralympic sport and he knows that a combination of passion and money is vital to that growth.

"I think the thing that we want to do with Toronto 2015, then moving onto Rio 2016, is to inspire and excite the entire world. Of course, you get to the entire world by having more and more broadcast television and media coverage and that's grown exponentially," Craven said during his visit to Toronto in preparation for the 2015 Pan Am and Parapan Am Games.

1,500 of the world's best para-athletes will be in Toronto, and since the games act as a qualifier for the 2016 Paralympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, it ensures the top performers will be there. With the opening ceremony now less than two years away, Craven is enthusiastic about the environment around the movement in Canada.

"I'm really excited by what I've been told. I think they're realists. I think they've realized that Canada has maybe slipped a little from the position Canada had previously," said Craven. "I think the wheels are going to be put in motion with Toronto 2015 as maybe the prime mover, then with Rio 2016 coming forward, to get a resurgence of the practice of para-sport in Canada."

That sort of surge is in full-effect across the Atlantic in Britain. Channel 4 invested significant time and resources in their broadcast of the 2012 Paralympic Games in London. The network produced a memorable 90-second ad that ran in the weeks before the 2012 Games and received universal praise.

Television coverage in North America for paralympic sports is non-existent compared to the United Kingdom, Brazil, and Australia among others.

CBC, Canada's official broadcaster for the 2015 Toronto Pan Am and Parapan Am Games as well as the Olympic Games in Rio, are set to meet with Channel 4 and discuss the success the British channel is having televising para-sports.

"This broadcasting thing is about taking a perceived risk, it's not a risk I can tell you, but it's a perception of it being a risk, taking it, moving forward with it, and having incredible success," said Craven. "I am encouraged with CBC and the fact they've got the host broadcasting contract which ensures there will be more coverage than ever before in Canada."

While the most famous para-athlete ever, Oscar Pistorius, [is embroiled in a murder trial](#), the movement is larger than the individual. Craven cites Canadian wheelchair basketball player Patrick Anderson as a figure that should capture the attention of his country. Anderson led Canada to a gold medal at the 2012 Games in London with 34 points, 10 rebounds, and 8 assists in the championship game over Australia.

"I just think he can do amazing things, he should be a national hero" said Craven. "Well, he is for me. Some of the skills he's got, they're greater skills than anybody has on their feet. Really that performance [in the gold medal game] was as great if not greater than any by Michael Jordan for the Chicago Bulls."

It's the true spirit of competition and the essence of sport. Craven hopes that Toronto and Canada will embrace athletes like Anderson and that a strong TV audience watching on CBC will play a part in legitimizing their cause.

"It's really selling Paralympic sport as great sport; as a fun and unique experience," said Craven. "Sport is in the heart and it's in the mind. It's an amazing jewel in the crown when it's real sport, and I think we've got real sport."

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