

# View From the Hill

By Brent Rathgeber, MP



By the time this column reaches the printers, I will have returned to Ottawa, the Throne Speech and the Budget will have been read in the House of Commons and Canadians from coast to coast to coast will have returned to normal life. The Olympic Experience, however, will be far from being a distant memory!!

In advance of the Torch Relay coming to St. Albert on January 13, I took an Olympic Torch Prototype to many events, schools and nursing homes around our city. Several schools organized Olympic events and mock Opening Ceremonies. The effort that went into these events and the patriotism they inspired was truly remarkable! The torch prototype was photographed at least three thousand times and everywhere I took it, people wanted to be part of the Olympic experience!

January 13, 2010 will be a day St. Albert will long remember. With over 5,000 citizens jammed into the downtown core, playing street hockey, listening to live music and participating in Olympic Events in Lion's Park, the day could only be capped by the arrival of the actual Olympic Torch. I was proud to sing "O Canada" with the Olympic Flame inches from my head!

The Games themselves were truly spectacular. From the first medal won by Jennifer Heil, to the first Gold won by Alexander Bilodeau and of course the inspirational figure skating performance (and Bronze Medal) by the grieving Joannie Rochette, all of Canada's athletes performed with skill, precision and pride in our great country. I was fortunate enough to be at Olympic Place to view live Kevin Martin's gold medal victory in Men's Curling. Martin's Rink includes St. Albert's own Marc Kennedy throwing second stones. Tears welled in my eyes as our flag was raised to the rafters to the tune of "O Canada".

And could there be a more fitting conclusion to the Olympics than a thrilling overtime goal by Sidney Crosby to capture Canada's 14<sup>th</sup> Goal Medal? I watched the game at Canada Pavilion, the Federal Government's showcase venue to proudly show off Canada's contribution to sport. As you can imagine, the thousands of people gathered there began hugging and high-fiving after Crosby's winning goal, as spontaneous versions of "O Canada" broke out throughout Vancouver (and all of Canada)!!

This has been a wonderful Olympics and I am honoured to have been able to enjoy it as a Member of the Canadian Parliament. We truly did "own the podium"; 14 Gold, 26 Medals and 33 Million very proud Canadians!