



Imagination



PARALYMPIC FOUNDATION
FONDATION PARALYMPIQUE



NEXT ►



MESSAGE FROM CAMPAIGN CHAIR

We believe in the power of sport, in fostering potential, in celebrating achievements. Para sport gives Canadians something to rally around. It creates role models for more Canadians with a disability. It showcases what is possible when a country comes together to support the drive and ambition of others.

But before Para athletes can make their mark on the world stage, they must first know that these opportunities in sport exist for them. Canadians with a disability need to access the tools and resources that will allow them to expand their potential in a sport they love.

The Paralympic Foundation of Canada is proud to support Canadians with a disability and the Next Generation of Para athletes through the ImagiNation initiative.

When this initiative began in 2017, the goal seemed straightforward: raise funds to be able to leverage the Government of Canada's match of \$1 million per year and make a lasting impact on the Canadian Paralympic Movement.

Now, as the third year of this four-year campaign is complete, it's clear ImagiNation is more than a fundraising goal. Funds raised are helping to create a sustainable Para sport system in Canada, for the current roster of Next Generation Para athletes, but also for those still to come.

After all, winning the race begins with ensuring that every single Canadian can imagine themselves at the start line.

Thank you for your continued support,



MIKE SHAIKH
CAMPAIGN CHAIR

\$ 3,000,000

TOTAL GRANTED TO
NEXT GENERATION
PARA ATHLETES



**HON.
STEVEN GUILBEAULT**
P.C., M.P.



**NEXT GEN
DONATIONS
THROUGH
IMAGINATION**

**GOVERNMENT
MATCH
FUNDING**

MESSAGE FROM MINISTER OF CANADIAN HERITAGE

Sport plays an important role in the lives of Canadians, and we will do everything we can to support sport in this difficult time. Our government supports all our athletes at every step, particularly the next generation who will proudly represent Canada at the Olympic and Paralympic Games. But we cannot do this alone. That is why we are happy to work with the Canadian Paralympic Committee and the Paralympic Foundation of Canada by matching the Next Generation funds raised through the ImagiNation campaign.

As Minister of Canadian Heritage, I would like to thank the foundation and its generous donors, who support the rising stars of sport. Thank you for making Canada more inclusive by ensuring sport is accessible to all.


[BACK](#)
[RETURN TO COVER](#)
[NEXT](#)




IMAGINATION

ImagiNation is especially focused on supporting Canada's Next Generation of Para athletes through five key areas of programming:

COACHING

Coaching is at the heart of athletic performance and the development of athletes who will be future champions. ImagiNation supports the athlete-coach relationship and ensures Para athletes have the best teams on their side.

TRAINING ENVIRONMENTS

Funding provides increased support for sports to develop world-class daily training environments and competition opportunities, where

athletes can train and compete together under optimal conditions.

EQUIPMENT

For performance and for safety, the proper equipment is required for Para athletes in all disciplines. Para sport equipment is often custom to each athlete and adaptations are almost always required.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

In order to succeed, Canadian Para athletes need to be healthy, fit and physiologically ready for optimal

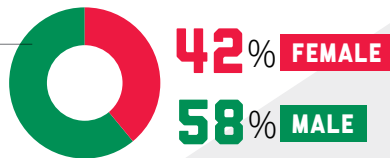
performance. Integrated Support Teams (ISTs) support coaches and Para athletes and include experts in exercise physiology, mental performance, sport nutrition, strength and conditioning and sport medicine.

SPORT SCIENCE

The difference between good and great is often mere seconds. Providing access to the latest research and data as well as high-tech tools and facilities can provide Canadian Para athletes the edge they need to reach the top.

207

TOTAL NUMBER OF
ATHLETES IMPACTED BY
IMAGINATION'S NEXT GEN
FUNDING IN YEAR 3



DONOR ACTIVITIES

Thank you to the donors and supporters who have shown their commitment to Para sport's Next Generation by hosting their own events.

Canadian Paralympic Committee President Marc-André Fabien elevated his latest birthday party and turned it into a fundraiser to support the Paralympic Foundation of Canada's ImagiNation initiative.

At the party, hosted in December under the Honorary Presidency of Dr. Guy Breton, Rector, Université de Montréal, more than 100 guests were joined by numerous athletes to celebrate Mr. Fabien and the Paralympic Movement. Through the generosity of guests, more than \$100,000 was raised to support ImagiNation and the Paralympic Movement's Next Generation!



MARC-ANDRÉ FABIEN (BOTTOM, CENTRE) IS JOINED BY, FROM TOP LEFT, 20-TIME PARALYMPIC MEDALIST BENOÎT HUOT (PARA SWIMMING), OLYMPIC DIVER ALEXANDRE DESPATIE, PARALYMPIAN CHARLES MOREAU (PARA CYCLING), AND WHEELCHAIR RUGBY'S MÉLANIE LABELLE.



PARA SWIMMING

At the 2019 Lima Parapan American Games, Canada's Para swimming team was young, with an average age of just over 19.2 years, and eager to gain more experience on the world stage.

All 13 members of the squad were Next Generation team members and just one had any previous international experience, says Michel Bérubé, NextGen & Pathways Coach for Swimming Canada's Para swimming program.

Despite their youth, they certainly made their presence known.

By the end of the Games, Canadian Para swimmers had won 21 medals, accounting for about one-

third of all medals Canada claimed during the 10 days of competition. Sixteen-year-old Para swimmer Arianna Hunsicker from Surrey, B.C. won the most medals of all Canadians at the Games – five bronze medals (four in individual events, one in a team medley event). Parksville, B.C.'s Nicholas Bennett, age 15, wasn't far behind, winning four medals in the pool – three gold medals and one silver.

Bérubé chalks their success in the pool up to preparation. It's one of the things Para swimming's Next Generation program is really focused on, he says, and it's something they do very well.

Before leaving for Lima, all 13 team members plus staff, Integrated



NICHOLAS BENNETT

Support Teams (ISTs), managers and coaches traveled to Spain where they replicated what their experience at the Parapan Am Games would be like, from



counting the kilometres they'd need to walk within the Athletes' Village to mentally preparing themselves for long bus rides to and from the swimming venue.

Next Generation funding through the ImagiNation campaign to support planning and preparation at this level is key, says Bérubé.

"There's no way we'd have had the success we had in Lima without Next Gen support."

Bérubé says the future of Para swimming is bright. There is a lot of great talent rising through the ranks, so the support to develop that talent now is essential.

"Next Gen funding is the greatest thing that can happen for swimming," he says. "It's more than

just swimmers winning a medal or going to a championship, it's life skills. They're learning skills that

they'll use for the rest of their lives. That's the biggest bonus."



ARIANNA HUNSICKER



BACK

RETURN TO COVER

NEXT





MÉLANIE LABELLE

WHEELCHAIR RUGBY

"The first time I went to a Next Gen camp, I was actually sick before I got on the plane," says Mélanie Labelle. It was the first time since her accident that she'd be traveling without her partner Mike.

"It's pretty scary doing something for the first time when you're disabled," she says. "There's a lot of anxiety because you're vulnerable and I don't have the personality of someone that's going to ask for help, either."

It was 2018 and Labelle was heading to her first wheelchair rugby Next Generation training camp, just two

years after she broke her neck after a fall while swing dancing.

Without her partner at her side, Labelle had to hire an aide to travel with her, to help her get dressed, make meals and get ready to go to practice.

Funding covered the costs for the camp and for her travel, so she could afford to have help with her. "Having this paid for was key," she said.

"I wouldn't have been able to afford to go. I couldn't have gone."

It's a good thing she did. Labelle has earned her spot on the national wheelchair rugby team and won a silver medal at the 2019 Lima Parapan American Games. But it wasn't always her first choice of sports. It was at the urging of two of her kinesiologists in

rehab that got her interested in the first place.

"It was pushed on me," Labelle says with a laugh. But it's been a game changer in her post-accident life.

"Independence and community," she says. "That's what rugby's brought for me. I couldn't have imagined how far I'd be or how independent I'd be."

When she was introduced to the sport, she wasn't comfortable in her wheelchair. She couldn't transfer from one chair to another. She had problems maneuvering on the streets.

"People had to push me around," she says. "When that's what you're facing, you don't know that you're going to get better or stronger. I thought I'd always have to have someone next to me."



Until the guys from rugby starting showing up for me at rehab.”

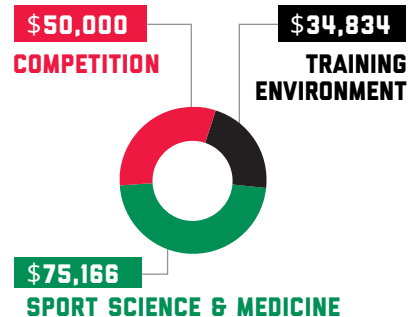
Team members started texting or calling, offering their suggestions on wheelchair rugby or life, especially on adapting to life after a significant injury. They’d offer tips

about winterizing her wheelchair. They offered perspective on their recoveries. These conversations eased Labelle’s mind. They made her realize that while not all paths to recovery are the same, she was in a good place. She was growing.

“It wasn’t a struggle anymore,” she adds. “In rehab, you’re in survival mode. In rugby, you’re playing. You’re having fun. It changes the mood completely. You’re not just facing barriers. You’re doing things. You may fail, but you’re failing constructively.”



MÉLANIE LABELLE



WHEELCHAIR RUGBY PROGRAM SPENDING BY ACTIVITY



BACK

RETURN TO COVER

NEXT





LYNE-MARIE BILODEAU

PARA NORDIC

One day, Para nordic skier Lyne-Marie Bilodeau wants to represent Canada at the Paralympic Games.

"Maybe in 2022," the 19-year-old from Sherbrooke, Quebec says. "I'm training every day for that, especially now since it's just two years away."

It's something she's been working toward for years, and now as a Next Generation team member she understands the hard work required to get there.

"Para sport is as difficult as any sport to reach the high level," she says. "It's not easier because we have disabilities. We still need to train the same number of days, for the same amount of hours for us to get to that high level."

Bilodeau, who was born paralyzed on her left side, has been active her whole life. When she was four years old, she saw her older brother ski, so she started stand-up skiing alongside him. A little later, she started running, swimming and cycling as well, eventually participating in some Para triathlon events around the world.

After attending a Para nordic event in 2017, a national coach spotted her and recognized her potential.

He convinced her to try sit-skiing and that's when things changed. She found a new community and people who had similar interests and abilities.

"I saw other athletes who had disabilities, I thought if they can do that, I can do that," she says. "It was very inspirational."

Her skill in the sit-ski became apparent. At the 2019 Canada Games, Bilodeau claimed top spot in three events: Para nordic sitting 2.5 km, 5 km, and sprint.

Bilodeau credits her coach Patrick Laliberté and the Next Generation resources from Nordiq Canada, funded in part by the ImagiNation initiative, in helping her reach the higher levels she's strived for.



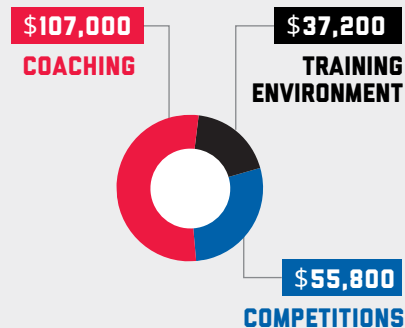
"The Next Gen program has helped me learn how to train correctly," she says. "It's helped me move from being an athlete to becoming a high-level athlete."

"It's like a step," she adds, one that bridges the gap from being an up-and-coming athlete to an athlete with podium potential.

"Next Gen programs help an athlete like me get ready to be on the Canadian team. It helps me get all I need to win the gold."



LYNE-MARIE BILODEAU



PARA NORDIC SKIING PROGRAM SPENDING BY ACTIVITY

ANTON JACOBS-WEBB

PARA ICE HOCKEY

Anton Jacobs-Webb admits he didn't know much about Para ice hockey until a few chance encounters with Paralympians.

Growing up in Williamswood, Nova Scotia he played street hockey with his friends and neighbours and when winter came, they'd move their games to the local frozen pond. That was about the extent of his hockey playing.

"I never played stand-up hockey in a league," Jacobs-Webb says now. "I can skate, but I was never the greatest skater."

Born with his left leg shorter than his right, Jacobs-Webb has worn a prosthetic since birth. He's undergone several surgeries, including one in 2012 to remove his knee and turn his foot, allowing the heel to lock into his prosthetic and act as a knee-like hinge.

When he and his family moved to the Ottawa-Gatineau area, his prosthetist connected him to Hervé Lord, a three-time Paralympian in Para ice hockey. Lord gifted the young Jacobs-Webb a handful of autographed photos of the national Para ice hockey team.

It instantly sparked an interest in the sport. He joined local club teams and began competing across Eastern Ontario and Western Quebec.



ANTON JACOBS-WEBB

"Then I made the Quebec provincial team and met Jean Labonté," he says.

Labonté, the former captain of Canada's national Para ice hockey



team helped him find his passion for the sport, even driving him to Montréal for training camps.

From there, he excelled. Now 19 years old, Jacobs-Webb has found a spot on the national team roster.

While his sights are set on the Beijing 2022 Winter Paralympics, Jacobs-Webb is still trying to balance school – he’s looking at a pursuing a career in engineering – work, and sport.

His teammates are scattered across the country, so each athlete must train individually before coming together for training camps for one week each month, on average.

Next Generation funding helps ensure that Jacobs-Webb can remain focused on his Paralympic goals.

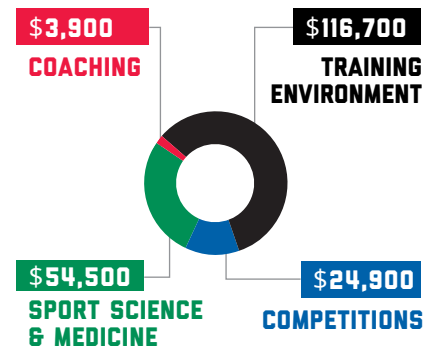
“Having funding means I don’t have to do a part-time job, study and train. I work in the summer as a bike mechanic but in the season, I can focus on schoolwork and hockey.”

“The amount of money you have to train makes a direct impact on your training results,” he adds. But it’s not always easy.

“Usually when I train, I train at the school gym just because it saves time. But that gym is closed on the weekends, so I have to find another gym to go to. I had to get another membership, and that’s just one extra cost to pay.”

Jacobs-Webb also recognizes the impact that Next Generation and early athlete funding has on strengthening the Paralympic Movement.

“The amount of people we get at the top level to represent Canada depends on how many people get to try Para sports in the first place,” he says. “And that’s something we need.”



PARA ICE HOCKEY PROGRAM SPENDING BY ACTIVITY



CIRCLE OF CHAMPIONS

DONOR LIST AS OF
MARCH 31, 2020



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BACK

RETURN TO COVER

NEXT



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LOOKING FORWARD

Though the end of the historic four-year ImagINation campaign is nearing, the need to support the Next Generation of Para athletes continues.

While Canadian Para athletes continue to shine at the Paralympic Games and at championships around the world, bolstering the Next Generation is about more than the medal count. It's about ensuring that all Canadians with a disability can choose sport. It's about eliminating the barriers that currently exist so that sport is inclusive for all. It's about showing the world that a strong Canadian sport system includes Para sport.

"Sport," said Nelson Mandela, "has the power to change the world. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair."

Together, we're creating those sport opportunities for Canadians with a disability.

Pledge your support for Canada's Next Generation of Para athletes by contacting Dean Brokop, Director, Paralympic Foundation of Canada at dbrokop@paralympic.ca or 613-569-4333 Ext. 249.



**NEXT GEN PARA ATHLETE
KYLE BARBER (PARA NORDIC)**



BACK

RETURN TO COVER