

# The HISTORY of WINNIPEG'S BID

**XIII Pan American Games**

**July 23 - August 8, 1999**

Winnipeg had previously played host to the 1967 Pan American Games, an event that was not only a significant achievement for PASO, but also a major milestone for the city, leaving a legacy of facilities, pride and volunteerism which can still be seen today. It was only natural, then, that when thoughts turned to the possibility of holding another major event in Winnipeg, the city looked south, to the Americas. In 1991, on the heels of a very successful 1990 Western Canada Summer Games, Winnipeg City Council overwhelmingly approved a motion to support a bid to return the Pan American Games to Winnipeg in 1999.

In April 1991, then-Mayor Bill Norrie approached Don MacKenzie and Barbara Huck to co-chair the bid process. With the assistance of a dedicated Board of Directors, an inexhaustible committee that represented a broad cross-section of the Winnipeg business, sports and cultural community, and support from the City and Province, the Winnipeg Bid Committee went to work. The competition was formidable: Toronto, which had just lost a bid for the 1996 Olympics; Edmonton, which had staged a very successful Commonwealth and World Student Games; and Sherbrooke, representing an influential province that had not had a major games since 1976.

Twenty months and thousands of hours of effort later, the Winnipeg team presented its Games plan to the Canadian Olympic Association Board of Directors in Toronto on December 5, 1992. The decision went to three ballots before Winnipeg was selected by a one-vote majority over Toronto.

The international bid process lay ahead and with it, the task of convincing the 42 nations of the Pan American Sports Organization (PASO) that Winnipeg was the best place to stage the 1999 Games. With the assistance of the Canadian Olympic Association and the three levels of government, the bid committee rolled out the red carpet for the PASO delegates to visit Friendly Manitoba and made a series of visits to the nations of the Americas in order to win the hearts of the voting members.

In late July 1994, a delegation of nearly 40 Manitobans landed in Guayaquil, Ecuador, the site of the final selection process. As it had been in Toronto nearly two years earlier, the competition involving Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, and Bogotá, Columbia, was fierce. Once again, however, it took three ballots to decide the eventual winner. Bogotá was eliminated on the first ballot, the second was a 25-25 tie, and it was only on a tie-breaking third ballot that PASO President Mario Vázquez Raña announced Winnipeg the winner by 28 votes to 22.