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## Debut splash for Vancouver Polar Plunge supporting Special Olympics BC

On March 5, brave participants will have a chance to get *freezin' for a reason* as the first-ever Vancouver Polar Plunge for Special Olympics BC hits Kitsilano Beach.

The Polar Plunge is an established Special Olympics fundraiser throughout North America, with a lengthy history of people laughing and splashing for the cause. New to Vancouver, the 2016 Polar Plunge for Special Olympics BC will have families, university students, businesses, and celebrities jumping into the frigid waters of the Pacific Ocean at Kitsilano Beach in Vancouver on March 5. Plunge Day will include a pancake breakfast, hot beverages, a costume contest, and other fun activities.

Funds raised will help support Special Olympics BC's life-changing year-round sport programs and competitions for more than 4,400 children and adults with intellectual disabilities across the province.

"We are so excited to have this fundraising event in Vancouver for the first time," says Carolyn McCarthy, Special Olympics BC Manager, Fund Development. "After attending a Polar Plunge in Seattle last year, I knew we had to bring this very successful, exciting, and worthwhile event to Vancouver, and Kitsilano Beach is the perfect location. We are hoping the community will get involved in a big way and join in the fun to support Special Olympics BC athletes."

Every year, thousands of Plungers across the continent brave icy waters to raise funds and awareness for Special Olympics in a tradition started by the Law Enforcement Torch Run. In B.C., the LETR has raised more than \$3 million since 1990. The Vancouver Polar Plunge, which is being staged in partnership with the BC LETR, will see the Vancouver Police Department and other agencies *get bold and cold* for the cause.

"I've participated in and organized a number of fundraising events for the BC Law Enforcement Torch Run in support of Special Olympics BC, but the Polar Plunge will be the most invigorating one," says Staff Sergeant Joanne Wild of the Vancouver Police Department, a member of the event organizing committee. "The Polar Plunge is an annual fundraiser for many national, U.S., and international LETR groups, with some raising as much as \$2.3 million. Special Olympics athletes are amazing people who inspire me to continue to stay involved in this cause. The athletes have such a joy for life and are truly dedicated and committed to their athletic pursuits. The Polar Plunge will be a chance to have some fun, brave the cold, and raise money for very deserving people who lead the way in displaying true sportsmanship."

How participants can get involved:

- 1) Register online at [www.plunge4specialolympics.com](http://www.plunge4specialolympics.com) as an individual or with a team.
- 2) Collect pledges to help support Special Olympics BC.
- 3) Join the festivities on March 5 – and take the Plunge!

For more information, please visit [www.plunge4specialolympics.com](http://www.plunge4specialolympics.com).

For Polar Plunge photos visit

[www.flickr.com/photos/specialolympicsbc/albums/72157663181003601](http://www.flickr.com/photos/specialolympicsbc/albums/72157663181003601)

Twitter: **@sobcsociety**, **@BCLETR**, **#FreezinForAReason**

### **About Special Olympics BC:**

Special Olympics BC is dedicated to providing individuals with intellectual disabilities opportunities to enrich their lives and celebrate personal achievement through positive sport experiences. In 57 communities around the province, we provide year-round training and competitive opportunities in 18 different sports to more than 4,400 athletes of all ages and abilities, thanks to the dedicated efforts of over 3,400 volunteers.

For more information, please visit [www.specialolympics.bc.ca](http://www.specialolympics.bc.ca)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/specialolympicsbc](http://www.facebook.com/specialolympicsbc)

Twitter: **@sobcsociety**

### **About the BC Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR):**

The Law Enforcement Torch Run was started in 1981 in Wichita, Kansas, by Police Chief Richard LaMunyon. Chief LaMunyon saw an urgent need to raise funds for and increase awareness of Special Olympics. He proposed the idea of police officers running in support of Special Olympics athletes, while raising financial contributions from fellow police officers, private individuals, and the business community. From this modest beginning, the Law Enforcement Torch Run has developed into an inspiring international movement, with Torch Runs, Polar Plunges, and various fundraising events being held in more than 44 countries, including Canada. In 2013, the LETR worldwide raised more than \$50.3 million US for Special Olympics. In B.C., the LETR has raised more than \$3 million to date and has helped SOBC grow significantly.

For more information, please visit [www.specialolympics.bc.ca/letr](http://www.specialolympics.bc.ca/letr)

Twitter: **@BCLETR**

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