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## Participants from Every Nation on the Podium for the 31<sup>st</sup> Gatineau Loppet

Gatineau, February 14, 2009 – The lovely weather was with us for this first day of competition. The only thing skiers were missing was the starting signal before throwing themselves on the trails of Gatineau Park.

In the 53 km men's Classic, Norway's **Geir Strandbakke** was the one who finished first. With a time of 2:25:27.8 hours, he just beat Rosemère's **Phil Shaw**, who finished in 2:25:30.4 hours. A regular at the Gatineau Loppet, Phil Shaw has made it to the podium every year since 2000. Both kept up a pace of 21.9 km per hour. Alberta's **Phil Villeneuve** followed a few minutes behind, finishing in third place.

On the women's side, it was the opposite story. In 2008 America's **Taylor Leach** from Oregon came in second after Rimouski's **Louise Martineau**. This year, she took first place with a time of 2:59:12.1 hours, coming in a few minutes ahead of Ms. Martineau, who completed the race in 3:05:05.2 hours. **Vera Guyeva**, from Moscow, earned the bronze medal.

Three Gatineau residents were crowned in the 28 km Classic! **Samuel Dostie-Ménard**, who stood on the third step of the podium for the 5 km in 2007, came through on top, with a time of 1:17:50.2 hours. He was followed by **Bruno Cyr** (1:18:37.5), who will also take part in tomorrow's 29 km freestyle. **Patrice Doré** came in third, finishing in 1:19:13.9 hours.

Among the women, St-Bruno's **Myriam Paquette** (1:30:26.1 hours) raked in the honours, followed by Ottawa's **Christa Ramonat** (1:35:23.5 hours), who returned to the podium, after finishing third in this same race in 2000 and 2003. **Stephanie Rees**, also from Ottawa, earned the bronze medal with a time of 1:36:33.1 hours. She had finished this race in second place in 2008.

For the 16 km, we were treated to a fine face-off between both the men and women. Kanata's **Julie McVicar**, who finished second in the overall ranking, took the women's gold. Gatineau's **Sofia Attali**, fourth in the overall ranking, took the silver. Finally, Gatineau's **Sarah Dostie-Ménard** took the bronze, finishing sixth in the overall ranking.

Chelsea's **Jeremy Selwyn** made the best time, finishing the 16 km in 50:12.6 minutes. The silver went to Plattsburgh's **Justin Collier**, who finished third in the overall ranking, and Ottawa's **Christopher Nussbaum** earned the bronze and fifth place in the overall ranking.

Participants in the 5 km, which included families looking for an outdoor activity as well as future cross-country ski champions from regional clubs were also on hand. On the podium, Chelsea residents cut a fine figure, winning 5 of the 6 spots.

Thus, among the boys, **Pierre-Philippe Lafontaine**, **Chris McMahon** and **Reme Laprade**, respectively took the honours. As for the girls, **Émilie Stewart-Jones**, **Katherine Stewart-Jones** and **Alexandra Joy** from Ottawa won the top prizes.

The 31<sup>st</sup> edition of the Gatineau Loppet continues tomorrow, with the freestyle day and the 2 km Mini-Gazifère.

The Ski Show and the registration booth will open at 7 a.m., so...everybody on the trail!

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Source:

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