



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
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## **Olympic and Paralympic Athletes Tag a Moose to Unite Canadians in Podium Drive**

***High-Performance Herd of 2018 create unique national T-shirt cartoon campaign at <https://highperforma.itemorder.com/sale>***

**CALGARY**—A medal-winning herd of Olympic and Paralympic athletes will use strength in numbers and a truly Canadian animal to unite the country and build support for their drive to the international podium over the next seven months.

Coined the “High-Performance Herd of 2018,” 16 Olympic and Paralympic athletes from all corners of Canada have teamed up with veteran editorial cartoonist, Dave Elston, to rally Canadians via a creative T-shirt campaign. Loaded with creativity and humour suitable for all ages, the campaign features a cartoon moose testing each of the athletes’ 11 different sports.

Led by former CFL star running back and two-time Olympian, Jesse Lumsden of Burlington, Ont., the Herd includes fellow bobsledders Justin Kripps (Summerland, B.C.), Ben Coakwell (Saskatoon), and Melissa Lotholz (Barrhead, Alta.). It also contains speed skaters Gilmore Junio (Calgary); Ivanie Blondin (Ottawa); luge athlete Sam Edney (Calgary); cross-country skier Knute Johnsgaard (Whitehorse); SkiCross Olympian Brady Leman (Calgary); two of Canada’s top biathletes – Rosanna Crawford (Canmore, Alta.) and Brendan Green (Hay River, N.W.T.); skeleton medallist Mirela Rahneva (Ottawa); women’s hockey star Rebecca Johnston (Sudbury, Ont.); and World Champion snowboard athlete, Spencer O’Brien of Vancouver. Two of Canada’s most renowned Paralympians, Brian McKeever and Mark Arendz, round out the dynamic pack of podium-determined athletes. McKeever (Canmore, Alta.) brings 13 Paralympic medals in cross-country skiing to the Herd, while Arendz (Hartsville, P.E.I.) is a two-time Paralympic medallist in biathlon who will look to rally the Maritime Provinces.

“The moose is an iconic animal in the wilderness that embodies what it means to be a Canuck. It is strong, powerful and is a true Canadian icon,” said Lumsden, who rallied The Herd. “High-performance sport has an uncanny ability to unite a country. Athletes understand that, we appreciate it, and we feel that widespread support when we put on the maple leaf and hit the start line. This T-shirt campaign allows us to give a little piece of ourselves to the Canadian fans who are cheering us on; we’re creating our own herd of fans who’ll come together to celebrate the red-and-white next winter.”

Elston, a long-time editorial sports cartoonist, has made a living drawing sports cartoons for Calgary newspapers, some of which have appeared through syndication on Hockey Night in Canada and TSN. He joined the High-Performance Herd of 2018 at Alex Ferguson Elementary School in the Stampede City to roll out the 18 different moose illustrations. The campaign begins with the sale of the Canadian Victory Celebration shirts the athletes were sporting during the campaign launch that features a moose saying “Sorry” while standing on top of the podium.

Each of the athletes will also have a specifically designed shirt for sale later this month, highlighting their sports and personal stories. Be it the family tree Rahneva sports on her skeleton sled, a piece of wheat from Melissa Lotholz's farm, a special ring Rosanna Crawford's grandmother left her that she wears at each major event, Rebecca Johnston's famed #6, Justin Kripps' puka shell necklace that he brings on Tour to represent his Hawaiian roots, or Brian McKeever's trademark double-poling, the designs will personally connect fans with their favourite athlete.

The shirts will be branded on the back with the supported athlete's name, along with the maple leaf, which is consistent throughout each shirt.

Fans will be able to select an athlete of choice to support when purchasing the four general sport-themed cartoon shirts, which also includes a baby moose coined "High-Performance Herd Trainee," a hockey moose dominating the face-off circle, a "Don't Mess with a Canadian Moose or you Get the Antlers," along with the Canadian Victory Celebration.

"My two loves have always been cartooning and sports, so to be able to marry these two worlds while supporting many of our Olympic and Paralympic heroes is extremely gratifying," said Elston, who led the athletes and nearly 100 Grade 1 and 2 students through a cartoon drawing class during the launch event.

"There is nothing that has the power to unite a country like sport does, and this campaign allows us all to brand ourselves as patriotic fans of our relentlessly dedicated Canadian athletes, while celebrating the fun that is at the root of all sport."

Athletes will sell the high-end T-shirts for \$30 (plus GST and shipping in Canada). Shirts can be purchased in men's, women's and youth sizes on-line at <https://highperforma.itemorder.com/sale>

Athletes will begin selling the shirts immediately through their social media channels and at a number of community outreach events throughout the summer. An event for the complete Herd is being planned for September – just prior to the start of the competitive season. Sales will continue throughout the winter season. Elston will continue to entertain the each of the athletes' fan bases with editorial sports cartoons that will be shown on their social media pages throughout the 2017-18 season.

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