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## **EDMONTON IS CANADA'S COOLEST WINTER CITY NEW "WINTER LIGHT" CELEBRATION ANNOUNCES 2009 EVENTS**

(EDMONTON, AB) Edmonton's long winter season is about to get a lot more interesting. Winter Light, a new civic celebration, is taking aim at making Edmonton "Canada's coolest winter city", says event director Pamela Anthony.

Today, Winter Light launched its website ([winterlight.ca](http://winterlight.ca)), which showcases the Winter Light festival programming line-up for 2009.

Opening Ceremonies and the Winter Light Gala will launch the event January 8 at 10:00 AM in City Hall and Churchill Square. The Opening Ceremonies will preview highlights of Winter Light 2009 programming with outdoor performances, a "Blessing Fire", and a media launch with special guests, dignitaries and hot chocolate.

Other featured events, promoted on the site, include public "Snow Daze", recreation parties at the city's snow hills; "Illuminations", a large-scale spectacle of light design and fire artistry in Churchill Square; "Close to the Flame", culture and heritage campfires encampments in the river valley, "Shine Your Light" community lantern parades; Aboriginal winter heritage and story telling; "Snow Reels", a film series; "Star Parties", and a wide variety of light-hearted outdoor performance and art happenings.

The Opening Ceremonies will offer a sneak peek at new programming, and also draw attention to "Deep Freeze" on 118 Avenue (Jan 10 -11), the first major event of the 'winter season' that Winter Light is designed to promote.

Winter Light's mission includes promotion and collaboration with Edmonton's existing winter festivals, Deep Freeze (Jan 10 - 11); Ice on Whyte (Jan 15 - 25) and Silver Skate Festival (February 20 - 22) as well as new programming, Winter Light Welcome tents and special events will take place in the context of all three events.

"I think winter has been one of Edmonton's best kept secrets for too long," says Anthony. "Our goal is to showcase all the wonderful aspects of our winter city - the incredible recreation opportunities, the gorgeous river valley environment, and the culture and heritage of winter peoples."

"These three winter events have been putting on interesting and popular celebrations of winter for years, and I think that has shown us that people are actually very eager to enjoy winter activities. There is room for a lot more winter celebrations. Edmonton is Festival City - I think winter can be as lively as summer."

Winter Light has an operating budget of \$750,000, and is funded by the City of Edmonton, and will be produced by a new Winter Light festival team. The Civic Events Office and the Edmonton Arts Council will provide oversight for event, and a Steering Committee of community leaders will help guide the vision, provide evaluation and community input.

"Winter Light 2009 is just the beginning," says Anthony. "Edmonton is not only a great place to live in the winter, but it's well poised to become one of the truly great winter cities. We have everything we need - we just need to recognize the joys of winter and champion Edmonton's true winter spirit."

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