

**Have You Been to Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Lately?**

Trails are still very good, despite weather and wind

February 6, 2009

Edmonton – Even though the windstorm last weekend left the ski trails covered in fallen branches, organizers of the Canadian Birkebeiner Ski Festival are assuring everyone interested in participating that the trails will be in tip top shape for the 14<sup>th</sup>.

Park officials at the Elk Island and Cooking Lake-Blackfoot parks worked tirelessly to clean up the trails after very heavy winds littered the trails with branches and trees. At one point, they were even joined by a skier who was skiing before the crews arrived to clean up.

“A skier called me to report that the trails were covered in branches,” said Doug Kelker, Chief of Course for the Birkebeiner Society. “I explained that park employees clean up branches as fast as possible and groom the trails but it was a big storm and it is a huge job. Later, a park employee told me that the skier found the trail crew and volunteered to help them clear the trails.”

New tracks are usually laid on Fridays to ensure good weekend skiing. However, tracks can only be laid when the temperature is below 0°C, so the snow will be left as is. With the courses set outside the city, festival officials note that there is still plenty of snow despite warmer weather.

“This weather will be perfect for us,” Cathy Schreiner, Executive Director for the society said. “We’re looking at smooth renovated tracks and mild weather for Birkie day. The sun is expected to shine, and the skiing is going to be perfect.”

The Canadian Birkebeiner Ski Festival will be held on February 13 and 14, 2009. Participants can register online at [www.eventsonline.ca](http://www.eventsonline.ca) until February 11 or by mail before February 7. Trail conditions and more event information can be found at [www.canadianbirkie.com](http://www.canadianbirkie.com).

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