



## **A Sustainable 2010 Olympics? Report on a Public Forum (October 3, 2007, 7 – 9 pm) Organized by the Impact on Community Coalition (IOCC)**

This report was prepared for the IOCC by Brenda Kwan (volunteer).

### **The Impact on Community Coalition (IOCC)**

The IOCC began in 2001 to ensure that the Olympics are environmentally and socially responsible. To this end, the IOCC has been involved in various activities over the years, such as pushing for a referendum on the Olympics during the bid phase. Public forums are hosted by the IOCC as an open dialogue on various issues related to the Games. Reports from all public forums will be available (<http://www.vcn.bc.ca/ioc/>).

### **Acronyms Used in This Report**

**DES** = Downtown Eastside

**IOCC** = Impact on Community  
Coalition

**VANOC** = Vancouver Organizing  
Committee for the 2010 Olympic and  
Paralympic Winter Games

### **Introduction**

The forum was held in Labatt Hall at SFU at Harbour Centre. Approximately 50 people attended the forum, including politicians and individuals from community groups, VANOC, the media, etc.

Am Johal (IOCC) moderated the forum. He read some excerpts from a letter (see Appendix) that is as relevant today as it was in 2002 when it was sent to Jack Poole, who was CEO of the Vancouver Olympic Bid Corporation.

One speaker sent his regrets – David Fields (Society Promoting Environmental Conservation). The panel was composed of the following four speakers:

**Andrea Reimer** (Western Canada  
Wilderness Committee)

**Conrad Schmidt** (Director of the  
documentary “Five Ring Circus”)

**Richard Campbell** (Transportation  
Advocate)

**Rob VanWynsberghe** (UBC School of  
Human Kinetics, and IOCC)

**Harry Bains**, who is an MLA and serves as the Opposition Critic for the Olympics, also attended the forum and was invited to speak as well. A brief summary of each speaker’s comments follows.

**Andrea Reimer**

*Western Canada Wilderness Committee (WCWC)*

Andrea began by suggesting that “sustainable Olympics” is a paradox. Andrea is the Executive Director of WCWC, which has become the largest wilderness group in Canada. Due to its size, coming to a consensus at WCWC on issues such as the Olympics becomes more difficult. People have different opinions about the Olympics; for example, some people think the Games should go where infrastructure already exists.

Andrea expressed a great affection for sport. Sport can be a politically neutral space for cultures to come together, and includes artistic activities. However, the modern Olympic Games are about building infrastructure with much investment. The Games are 17 days of party, but 100 years of infrastructure.

The Provincial Government gets credit for consulting with the community about the Games and the environment. However, this is rhetorical, and the “green” Games is a lie. The environment is already being damaged. Will the Provincial Government bring in legislation to protect the environment, species, and old growth areas? Will the Government back off on the Gateway Program highway construction? The Government could mitigate some of the negative impacts if they take appropriate action.

**Harry Bains**

*MLA and Opposition Critic for the Olympics*

Harry began by suggesting that forums are for debate and solutions. He was not scheduled to speak as a panelist today, but came to listen and learn.

Harry agreed with Andrea that what people say and what they do are different. Harry has been working on accountability and transparency with respect to the Games. He suggested that the Government is the least accountable, while VANOC is the least transparent. VANOC is not subject to freedom of information – he can not get information nor can the media. Therefore, the information we get from VANOC is filtered. For example, there is no explanation from VANOC as to why it took two years before a business plan was developed (when it is one of the first things that should have been done). There is also the matter of what gets included as an item for the budget for the Games. The Auditor General agrees with Harry that Legacies Now should be an item that is included in the provincial budget for the Games.

If there is no accountability or transparency, then no sustainability can be expected either. Harry is not optimistic that the Games will be “green.”

**Conrad Schmidt**

*Director of the documentary “Five Ring Circus,” and founder of the Work Less Party*

Conrad suggested that it was impossible to make the Games “green,” which would mean that it is something that is good for the environment. The Games, however, are very much about consumerism. We are really talking about mitigating negative impacts, rather than promoting the environment.

The Games will create an estimated carbon footprint of three megatons of emissions. This amount is 5% of the emissions for British Columbia for one year. VANOC’s sustainability report did not even mention the carbon footprint. The report talks about recycling, when the biggest problem is really the carbon footprint.

**Richard Campbell**

*Transportation Advocate*

Reflecting on sustainability issues in the city, Richard wonders what we have done for Vancouver recently. There was action in Vancouver in the late 1970s. Some examples include South False Creek, traffic calming in the West End, Granville Island, car-free Granville Mall, stopping the freeway, and the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). These initiatives laid the groundwork for what Vancouver is today. Vancouver has been selected as one of the most livable cities in the world.

Richard thought that having the Games come to Vancouver would pave the way

for great things in the city and make Vancouver a leader in sustainability in the world. However, having the Games come to Vancouver has not led to anything groundbreaking or overwhelming. For example, car-free didn’t happen. There have been disappointments, such as work on the Sea-to-Sky highway when there could have been a train or ferry, and the Eagle Bluffs. The curling venue might be OK, as long as traffic doesn’t end up on Ontario Street. The coming of the Games is an opportunity for great public spaces, like public squares, but nothing has happened. There could have been bike lanes down Cambie Street.

In summary, we have a malaise and are not looking at sustainability in the region for 30-40 years from now. Let’s bring back the spirit of the 70s.

**Rob VanWynsberghe**

*UBC School of Human Kinetics and IOCC*

Rob suggested that it is important to bring the focus back on the IOCC, as it provides a tie between community organizations and sustainability. Sustainability can be defined as the carbon footprint, and there are different dimensions that go into sustainability, such as the social, and the IOCC is this piece.

The IOCC has been around since 2001. It was involved in pushing for the plebiscite (to vote on hosting the Games in Vancouver), and for the Inner-city Inclusive Commitment Statement that

went beyond the Bid phase (<http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/commsvcs/housing/sra/pdf/statement.pdf>). One of the Statements says that VANOC should work with and be accessible to a watchdog group. IOCC has been a watchdog group without much funding, but has benefited from the support of endless hours of volunteer hours. It is also important to recognize that sustainability is one of three pillars of the Games.

Offsetting the carbon footprint can be social, such as a dialogue about the issue. Mechanisms need to be put in place for people to get along, such that there is a legacy of dialogue on important issues and on our future. We need a more permanent, healthy debate. Community legacies can also be created around social sustainability. For example, the issue of homelessness and housing could be addressed. This seems to be an important issue in the city, as everyone agrees that it is a priority. The IOCC tries to bring people together. If someone brings forward an idea, the IOCC can help this individual connect with other people working on the same issue.

### Dialogue

This section highlights some of the questions and comments from the audience (in italics) and the responses from the speakers/audience:

- *Some women are on the streets or in places that are not safe, so we really need answers. Government money is for shelters, not "housing." The government has promised more money, but there are no real solutions yet.*
- *The housing crisis is increasing. These Games, nor any other ones, will be sustainable. The IOCC hasn't stood up, and has failed in its role as a watchdog. What does the IOCC hope to get out of its meeting with John Furlong (CEO of VANOC)? That is a good salient point, and the IOCC listens to criticisms about the IOCC. It has always been broad-based, and has included organizations that receive government funding. Unfortunately, the IOCC has no funds for community organizing.*
- *One criticism of "social sustainability" is that we were told at the time of the plebiscite that there would be legacies. We should also talk about responsibility, such as for the social housing in False Creek that was promised. Regarding the 3,200 units of housing (the Housing Sectoral Table), VANOC says it is not responsible, and we have heard nothing from the federal government. We need to hold them responsible. The governments are worried that the homeless will be there during the Games. On paper, the governments are responsible for legacies, but it is our collective responsibility to make sure they are accountable. Therefore, joining community groups and organizations is very important. Talking is not enough – we need to act. Although there is budget for legacies from different*

levels of government, keeping after the government is the only option we have left. In 2000, the Vancouver Agreement was signed, where all levels of government are supposed to work together. The City should be using the Games to leverage more housing, with money from the provincial and federal governments, but they are inexperienced, especially with negotiations.

- *The inner-city people have not been involved. Information has not been shared with them, and therefore real input has not been collected from people who live in the inner-city. There has been “reddening” rather than “greening” of the Games – there should not be more deaths in the DES. When will people from the DES be involved? How can governments be educated? Governments have way more money than organizations to conduct consultations. Benefits will depend on legislation that protects the environment. UBC (researchers) are not the ones to say what inner-city folk would say. We need to create an atmosphere where change is the norm, rather than resistance to change. The community really needs to be involved, so governments and public servants are willing to take a chance and fail, rather than no chance at all. The first two forums the IOCC hosted were in the DES (Carnegie, Sunrise Hotel). Groups in the DES were approached, but did not join the IOCC because the groups wanted to oppose the Games (the IOCC is for maximizing benefits while minimizing negative impacts). Wendy Pedersen was a*

speaker on one of the panels at a forum hosted by the IOCC. Pivot Legal Society is a member of the IOCC. Only Bladerunners has been involved in construction for the Games, and no other groups have been involved – this is unacceptable.

- *A legacy of the Games is the UBC Thunderbird parkade, which is now completed and open, but mostly empty. What does it mean to build a parkade that will be around for the next century? This is an opportunity to pressure the government. Gateway will lead to massive freeway expansion. Question to Conrad: Did automobile sprawl get included in the 3 megatons (carbon footprint)? The 3 megatons is a conservative figure. For example, construction was not included.*
- *In its meeting with John Furlong, or any of its other activities, would the IOCC make it a point to speak to VANOC to ensure the safety of sex workers? Security will be increased, and females working on streets will be pushed into new areas that they are not familiar with. VANOC and governments are not addressing this concern. The IOCC is a coalition that welcomes members, as no one person alone knows everything that goes on. The IOCC will raise this issue with John Furlong. There is a lack of democracy, as VANOC is only talking with security experts and not the public.*

**The next IOCC public forum on arts and culture will be on November 7, 2007.**

## Appendix

IOC - Impact of the Olympics on Community  
:a community-based coalition



July 4, 2002

Jack Poole CEO, Vancouver Olympic Bid Corporation Suite 500 – 375 Water Street  
Vancouver, BC V6B 5C6

Dear Mr. Poole and members of the Board,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with representatives of the Impacts of the Olympics on Community Coalition on July 3. Although it has been some time since our original request for a meeting date December 21<sup>st</sup>, we are grateful for the opportunity to work productively in addressing some of the community concerns regarding the Vancouver Olympic Bid. *We are pleased that there is common ground and room to develop the bid in a uniquely Canadian way and are writing to review our discussion and hope the following accurately reflects your understanding of our meeting.*

Though the three pillars of the Olympic movement may be sport, culture and the environment, we believe that a fourth pillar of setting a high standard on the social side could transform the Olympic movement in a more positive direction. Just like Lillehammer transformed the Olympic approach to the environment, we believe Vancouver could do the same in regards to setting a high standard in building a social legacy for the people of BC and ensuring that the negative effects of hosting hallmark events do not happen here. It would certainly raise the standard of future Olympics. In order for that to happen, the quality of planning related to the Games must take a novel and creative approach.

*We discussed the potential for Olympic related evictions and agreed that there is a role the Bid Corporation and its' Board can play in assisting to leverage protections for tenants. One key piece is a Vancouver by-law that would regulate the conversion of Single Room Occupancy hotel rooms to ensure no net loss of these rooms to tourist use prior to, and during the games. We were heartened by your agreement that if Vancouver does win the games, this should not result in people losing their homes. We would appreciate your assistance to champion this by-law with the City and Province.*

*As the Downtown Eastside community borders on key Olympic facilities such as GM Place and the Trade and Convention Centre, we agreed that promoting the development of affordable housing in Woodward's is vital to rebuilding this neighbourhood. As it stands now the vacant building and deteriorating street is an embarrassment for the City of Vancouver and indeed the Downtown Eastside.*

*We agreed that there is a role for the Bid Corporation to play in facilitating community economic development in the way of meaningful employment training programs such as*

## Appendix

*Bladerunners and a policy for the Bid Corporation and later the Organizing Committee to obtain goods and services where ever possible from local inner city businesses and organizations. We spoke about the “DESTAn’EZ initiative as a model for including local business.*

*We agreed there is a role for the Bid Corporation to actively promote a legacy of environmentally sustainable transportation priorities for the region – in addition to the Sea-to-Sky highway and Richmond rapid transit projects already being championed. Clean fuel transit vehicles, expanded bus service, and pedestrian and cycling facilities such as the Central Valley Greenway would have broad and long-term community benefits for relatively modest public investment.*

*As we work together to make this a truly inclusive and socially sustainable Bid for the games and throughout this process related to housing, civil liberties, transportation, the environment and economic distribution, a specific recommendation that we touched on today at this point may be helpful to you:*

### **2010 in 2010: An Olympic Legacy**

Much has been said in recent weeks that the investment in Olympic infrastructure can be recouped four-fold in tax revenues to the different levels of government. Furthermore, it has been argued by the Premier, that this revenue can be used to pay for investments in health care, social programs and education.

Based on that economic argument, we would like some of the forecasted Olympic revenues earmarked towards the construction of 2010 new affordable housing units for the low-income families, singles and seniors of British Columbia prior to the beginning of the Olympic games. These units would not in any way take away from the existing social housing program funded by the Province of BC or the Government of Canada, which already have commitments into 2006.

We would view this legacy of 2010 units built prior to the Games as separate from the need to create affordable housing for the Woodward’s project and any conversion to units attached to the athlete’s village after the Games. These are pre-existing projects already under the planning process.

We believe that British Columbians would view this as a positive legacy that can be shared equitably throughout the Province including the Lower Mainland. The **2010 in 2010 Program** in addition to legislation protecting tenants would go a long way in ensuring that evictions do not needlessly happen related to the Olympics. The Impact of the Olympics on Community will continue to play a watchdog role and will work with the Vancouver Olympic Bid Corporation in ensuring an open, democratic and equitable bid which meets the needs of British Columbians and respects the environment. On specific projects, *we will also work with the First Nations community to make sure the necessary support is present for projects of this kind.*

## Appendix

*Once again, we thank you for taking the time to meet with us today and we look forward to forging a new and progressive working relationship with the Bid Corporation and its Board of Directors.*

Sincerely,

Am Johal Chair, Impact of the Olympics on Community Coalition  
[www.olympicsforall.ca](http://www.olympicsforall.ca)

Cc Federal Cabinet Ministers Provincial Cabinet Ministers City of Vancouver Councillors  
Resort Municipality of Whistler Councillors International Olympic Committee Media