

## **The Olympic bid 'ignores social impact'**

by Randy Gaudreau  
Vancouver Courier  
March 21-27, 2002

Vancouver's final proposal about how it plans to host the 2010 Winter Olympic Games will be in the hands of the International Olympic Committee in January.

But Am Johal, chair of the Impact of the Olympics on the Community Coalition, a group overseeing Vancouver's Olympic bid, feels the possible negative impacts of the games are being neglected while plans proceed.

"What we want to do is open up the dialogue, because the information coming out of the bid corporation and the city isn't reflecting the reality of hosting these events especially in regards to social issues," said Johal. He believes long standing projects such as the Woodward's housing project, should be a priority. "If we're going to put up a \$50 million speed skating oval, then we'd better the hell have Woodward's completed as a project," he said.

Johal said a bylaw restricting the conversion or demolition of single room occupancy hotels would help prevent the loss of affordable housing. That bylaw, presented before council on March 14, was voted down.

"If provisions aren't put into place, we are going to see evictions," said Johal.

"Every hallmark event that we looked at, where legislative tools weren't in place, evictions occurred," said Johal. "We say, Yes, let's have the Olympics here, let's get all the positive sides of it, but no one should have to lose their home over it," he said.

Michelle Penz, manager of media relations for the Vancouver/Whistler 2010 bid corporation, said that impact issues would be addressed after the initial bid is prepared.

"This is an issue that we are seriously considering, and are concerned about," said Penz. "If we were to produce a bid that would result in people losing their homes or in price gouging, that certainly would not be a sustainable bid," she said.

"We've only just started moving forward on the community development and sustainability issues. Not because we've done anything wrong, it's just that you have to face this process. This is actually a fairly recent movement to really take into consideration community

impact."

According to Penz, Vancouver has an advantage in temporary housing.

"Between the athletes' villages and the high hotel inventory, it is very unlikely that an eviction would ever become necessary," she said.

Senior housing planner Jill Davidson assured that impact studies will be done.

"We want to make sure this is a socially inclusive Olympics. We have set up a process, including the Impact of the Olympics to assess the impacts," she said.

Glenn Bailey of the Salt Lake Impact 2002 and Beyond coalition, who monitored the impacts of the Salt Lake City Games for seven years, was invited for a public forum on March 26. Bailey explained it was too little, too late in the case of the Salt Lake Games.

"It was too late to build affordable housing. If that had been started when we first brought it up, we could have done some tremendous things," said Bailey. "But as it was it was very disappointing. Initially, very little consideration was paid to our group," he said. The bid corporation puts forward the technical bid for the games in May; then the IOC creates a short list for cities. If selected, Vancouver would submit the final bid proposal in January 2003, and the IOC would visit the candidate cities. The host is selected in July 2003.