

A MANAGEMENT JOB OF OLYMPIC PROPORTIONS

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Winning the opportunity to host the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games has provided Vancouver and British Columbia with a once-in-a-lifetime chance to not only stage the world's most celebrated amateur sporting event, but also to significantly accelerate economic development in the province and showcase the unique attributes of Canada's third

largest city and its surrounding area.

Realizing this opportunity, however, comes with risks. Among the biggest: cost management of planned capital projects, including the \$620 million in investments directly related to the Games. Ensuring that B.C.'s labour force is equipped to handle the work is another factor.

"Between now and 2015, the expected growth in construction employment alone in B.C. is projected to be 81,000 jobs. Of those,

more than 2,400 will be directly related to 2010 Winter Games facilities. And if you include the convention centre and the Sea to Sky Highway, it's more than 12,000 construction jobs," says Kerry Jothen, chief executive officer of Victoria-based consulting group Human Capital Strategies. "In total, the Games will create 77,000 person-years of employment. To prepare, we need more flexible training programs,

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better use of existing and non-traditional labour pools, proper scheduling and co-ordination of projects and collaboration across industries.”

Clearly, Vancouver's organizing body and its partners must develop and execute concrete plans of action. To be a successful Olympic Games host involves more than having everything run smoothly during the actual event. As the legacy of the 1988 Calgary Olympic Winter Games has shown, leaving a sound infrastructure in place following the Games can continue to boost a region's economic health and quality of life years afterwards.

To its credit, 2010 Winter Games planners have already earmarked approximately \$110 million as endowment or legacy funds to help the Olympic facilities remain financially sustainable and continue to benefit Canada's top athletes and the general public long after 2010.

Already, the Games are providing near and long-term benefits for

Vancouver, the Lower Mainland, and corridor north into Whistler – an area that includes more than half of B.C.'s residents. And the work has only just begun.

After having experienced a slowdown in its economic growth during the late 1990s and early 2000s, Vancouver's economy has been performing very strongly of late, in spite of recent negative factors such as the outbreak of SARS, the softwood lumber dispute and forest fires in the interior of B.C.

Even before the Games were awarded in 2003, the Conference Board of Canada predicted that Vancouver would be among the top metropolitan economies in Canada, with an average annual growth rate of three per cent between 2004 and 2007. Managed effectively, the preparations for the 2010 Winter Games should have an enormous additional impact on the region's continuing prosperity. ■

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