



Vancouver's Public Legacy? **Report on a Public Forum (June 26, 2007, 7 - 9 pm)** **Organized by the Impact on Community Coalition (IOCC)**

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

Acronyms Used in This Report

DES = Downtown Eastside

IOC = International Olympic
Committee

IOCC = Impact on Community
Coalition

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

Introduction

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. The public forum is being hosted by the IOCC as an open dialogue on various issues related to the Games. The forum was held in the Alma VanDusen & Peter McKaye Rooms at the Vancouver Public Library, Central Branch. Approximately 80 people attended the forum.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, two speakers sent their regrets - Rob VanWynsberghe (IOCC) and Janice Abbott (Atira). The panel was composed of the following four speakers:

Vanessa Richards (Public Dreams
Society)

David Fields (Society Promoting
Environmental Conservation)

Wendy Pedersen (Carnegie Community
Action Project)

David Eby (Pivot Legal Society)

A brief summary of each speaker's
comments follows.

Vanessa Richards

Public Dreams Society

Vanessa lived in London, England for 12 years and found that arts and culture was very active there. She is interested in a sustainable and living society, and the role of arts and culture in this. How can we engage all sectors in dialogue? How can we work with the magic and spirit of the Olympics? An important way is to open up to artists who are interested in social responsibility and the environment, and work with them to find creative solutions.

Unfortunately, Vanessa had to leave immediately after her talk, so could not be a part of the open discussion.

Vanessa can be contacted at Public
Dreams at

performance@publicdreams.org.

David Fields

Society Promoting Environmental Conservation (SPEC)

David is a transportation campaigner at SPEC. He would like to see no negative impacts on air and water as a result of the Olympics. He would also like to see improved rail capacity with the Olympics. David noted one positive action that has happened so far – VANOC has adopted energy efficiency at the outset in their immediate operations, e.g., offices, construction, etc. There are other developments that are related to, but are not, the Olympics directly, such as at the convention centre, the Sea-to-Sky Highway, and the Canada Line. When Vancouver became the host city for the 2010 Games, transportation priorities changed. During the planning and running of the Games, VANOC will bring in temporary buses during the Games only. However, VANOC should also work to improve transit and Skytrain services. David would like to see better transit for the whole region.

Wendy Pedersen

Carnegie Community Action Project (CAP)

Wendy is the community organizer for CAP. She has lived in the DES for 12 years and has brought her kids up there. A few years ago, she noticed development applications coming up in the neighbourhood. She had heard that people were getting displaced, and has even seen people outside her window. In the last 6 months since she started

working for CAP, she has been “blown away by the crisis.”

CAP holds regular meetings (City-Wide Housing Coalition) that include people living in social housing in the neighbourhood. The squeeze on housing is happening all over the city, but housing is important for establishing roots, especially for families.

Wendy made a plea for people to sign up to speak at the June 28, 2007 meeting at 2pm at City Hall. She added that the Olympic promises related to housing won't happen if people don't speak up at this meeting. It was an Olympic promise to not displace people. Twenty-five representatives of business, community groups, developers, etc. had been convened by VANOC on how to keep promises related to housing. A “Report of the Inner-city Inclusive Housing Table” (March 2007) was published, and it was recommended that 3,200 housing units be built and that welfare rates be increased. Then, the three levels of government (federal, provincial, and municipal) and VANOC met after, and now this report is going to Vancouver City Council. It now sounds like it's questionable whether there is money to make it happen, i.e., the promises are not going to be met. The City can't be the public relations machine for the provincial and federal governments, and therefore we need to advocate.

CWHC also hosts fun events to raise awareness, like the opera “Condemned.” The CWHC also has an

email list and encourages people to endorse the Olympic housing promises.

David Eby

Pivot Legal Society

David started working with Pivot Legal Society two years ago. The three levels of government have been meeting with various groups, such as the BC Homebuilders Association, etc. A set of 25 recommendations was drafted, of which 23 were agreed upon by government. For example, the welfare rate would be increased by 50%, and 3,200 housing units would be built. The most common issues that David hears are: 1) how will 3,200 housing units be built; and 2) who will pay the tax increases? David then circulated a plan (see Appendix A) that he developed that outlined how the Housing Commitments for the 2010 Games could be achieved. He feels that the government should talk about real solutions, and encouraged people to attend the City Council meeting of June 28 (that Wendy Pedersen had mentioned previously), or to call their NPA City Councillors (who are in the majority).

Dialogue

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

- *Regarding security guards on buses, is this related to state policy that gets put in place when a city hosts the Olympics? Should there be talks with the IOC, instead of just with VANOC? The transit police are actually under provincial jurisdiction, and are not under the municipal policy act. Security transit guards aren't police, and can't give tickets.*
- *The phrase "broken promises" has been used in the story about the Housing Commitments. The phrase "broken contractual obligation" should be used instead. Could this be taken into the court of law and made legal? David Eby encouraged community organizing around this, and to not rely on lawyers because the law won't help here. It would be good to see people in the provincial and federal government advocate for this too (not just the municipal).*
- *It is important to understand that the province has bought a number of hotels, and has paid a lot of money for them. People can't rent a room in these hotels (not accessible), so in essence about 800 rooms are actually lost by what the province has done. We should appreciate what David Eby and Wendy are doing.*
- *Regarding the 3,200 housing units that were recommended to be built, who are they for, e.g., family, working poor, supportive housing or not, etc.? Right now, none of the 3,200 units are guaranteed, except for market rental housing units. Community discussion could lead to these units being divided differently, e.g., for*

- deep core housing needs (those on social assistance).
- *We need a broad-based coalition re: housing. We also need to attack the property endowment fund. David Eby's plan should be in the media.*
 - *We were promised the greenest games ever, and VANOC has published its sustainability report. However, 42,000 trees have been cut down, and construction is not in the accounting for the carbon footprint. What can we do to get the promises back on track? To date, there is an incomplete picture of greenhouse gas emissions. VANOC has yet to plan and pull off a carbon-neutral games (carbon offset program). Efforts could focus on this, which could be a legacy.*
 - *Those who grow up in neighbourhoods that are considered richer than the DES only see the DES in passing (e.g., in a car). However, it is actually a proud, engaged community. We need public awareness and engagement, a shared city of people from different communities.*
 - *Since David Eby just got back from the housing conference in Geneva, could he share some of the experiences from other host cities? David Eby reported that in Athens, 3,000 units from the Olympic Village were designated for housing for families. Vancouver won the bid because of its sustainability promises, which future bids will have to consider, e.g. in London for 2012.*
- *The Vancouver District Labour Council supported the referendum (on whether or not Vancouver should host the 2010 Games). The Labour Council is interested in training for people (employment and training is one of the Commitments), and supports an increase in welfare rates. It is good that the audience today is diverse. The Labour Council should endorse the recommendations of the City-Wide Housing Coalition. In fact, CAP is being invited to the Labour Council's July meeting. Am added that training and employment and business opportunities were identified early on even during the bid phase, along with other topics, although the housing issue has become acute.*
 - *People often ask why there are so many homeless people when there are so many jobs out there? Many people don't understand the barriers that these people face, e.g., no telephone, lining up for food, etc. We should keep raising awareness.*

Appendix A

A Plan to Achieve the 2010 Olympic Housing Commitments

Step 1: Cancel the quick fixes and give back to the community

- Vancouver to cancel \$1.3m for Project Civil City.¹
- Vancouver to cancel planned increases in “beat police officers” and planned video surveillance program, estimated total cost between \$500,000 and \$2m (one police officer = \$72,000 + unknown surveillance program costs).²
- VANOC to cancel \$44.5 million dollar employee incentive program.³
- British Columbia to take \$250m housing fund from last budget out of the bank.⁴
- City of Vancouver to contribute \$64.5 million profit on the first phase of SE False Creek⁵ and 12 social housing lots.

Step 2: Combine resources to achieve Olympic promises

- All parties listed in step one to contribute funds saved or received to B.C. Housing for dedicated housing legacy project funding.
- Combined available resources are \$360.8m, plus 10 lots owned by Vancouver,⁶ plus 2 latest lot purchases (Drake⁷ & Broadway/Fraser⁸).

Step 3: Build the housing

- On March 8, 2007, the Urban Development Institute estimated that the construction cost of a 240 unit rental building built in downtown Vancouver would be \$36.5m, or \$152,000 per unit (all units 400 sq. ft., self-contained).⁹
- Assuming no economy of scale, 2373 units to be constructed in Vancouver with the \$360.8m creating ten 237 unit buildings on 10 lots.
- If those 2373 units each have one low-income single renting at current welfare shelter rates (\$375/mo), that income stream is at least \$889,875 per month.
- Rents to be directed to a 40-year mortgage (6.05%, 7 year term), leveraging an additional \$162.2m from a conventional lender, secured by the other properties.¹⁰ (Government would likely receive a lower rate, freeing resources.)
- Assuming all costs as above, BC Housing to build another 1067 units. These units to be built on the social housing lots, and/or could be distributed throughout market housing developments as part of an amenity agreement with developers *Note:* All 3440 units could preferably be distributed in mixed-income market buildings throughout the city using the City lots, amenity fees, and density bonusing to leverage middle-income housing as well, and creating healthier mixed-income developments.
- These 1067 units will produce \$400,125 per month in rental income. This annual \$4.8m income stream to be re-directed to offset operating costs.
- When combined the minimum total number of new units is 3,440.

Step 4: Maintain and staff the housing with feel-good savings

- B.C. and Canada to fund programs (mental health, addiction, life skills) and maintenance with savings from criminal justice, healthcare, and emergency shelter programs. (Cost of homeless individual is \$30-\$40,000 per year x 2,000 street homeless in Vancouver = savings of at least \$60m per year¹¹).

**Resources available:
\$360.8m**

Add 12 free city-owned housing lots

**2373 units can be built with
\$360.8m**

Rents and equity from 2373 units can create 1067 more units

Total units built: 3,440

**Savings from housing the homeless:
\$60m per year**

Appendix A

References for cited statistics, costs, and savings:

- ¹ News Release, Mayor's office, "Project Civil City tackles crime, public disorder and social issues in Vancouver", November 27, 2006. <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/ctyclerk/councillors/mayor/announcements/2006/112706.htm>
- ² "Frosty response from Coun. Lewis to Police Funding Request", Vancouver Courier, Jan 17, 2005, <http://www.vancourier.com/issues05/013105/news/013105nn2.html>
- ³ "Officials refuse to detail \$44m staff fund", Vancouver Province, Jun 15, 2007 <http://www.canada.com/theprovince/news/story.html?id=b7a89ef5-7669-428d-86d0-6c36562349b1>
- ⁴ Budget and Fiscal Plan 2007/08 - 2009/10, Ministry of Finance, Feb 20, 2007, <http://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2007/bfp/default.aspx?hash=2>
- ⁵ "Redevelopment of Southeast False Creek" Memo, undated, Jody Andrews, P.Eng., Project Manager, SE False Creek and Olympic Village; source: Chris Shaw, FOI request.
- ⁶ "City owned and city optioned sites reserved for social housing" Map, undated, City of Vancouver Housing Centre: <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/reservedsites/index.htm>.
- ⁷ "City buys Drake hotel for \$3.2m as social housing fix" Vancouver Province, June 22, 2007, <http://www.canada.com/theprovince/news/story.html?id=e6fc2af5-02a6-4fe1-8c1f-d03434bc63b3&k=95953>.
- ⁸ "Mayor Sullivan Welcomes Purchase of Potential Social Housing Site in Vancouver" Press Release, Mayor's Office, May 18, 2007, <http://www.mayorsamsullivan.ca/mayor-sullivan-welcomes-purchase-of-potential-social-housing-site-in-vancouver.html>
- ⁹ "Affordable Housing: Analyzing the Crisis" Presentation by David Negrin, Senior Vice-President Concord Pacific, Urban Development Institute President, Pacific Region. Presentation to GVRD Sustainability Breakfast March 8, 2007. Powerpoint. Available on request to UDI Head Office.
- ¹⁰ ING Mortgage Payment Calculator, <http://www.ingdirect.ca/en/mortgages/index.html> accessed June 26, 2007.
- ¹¹ M. Eberle et al, *Homelessness – Causes and Effects: The Costs of Homelessness in British Columbia*, vol. 3 (Victoria: B.C. Ministry of Social Development and Economic Security and B.C. Housing Management Commission 2001) at 28, online: www.housing.gov.bc.ca/housing/homeless/vol3.pdf.