

## **OLYMPIC BID DEAD IF IT DOESN T HAVE A HEART**

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As Vancouver 2010 Olympic Bid Corporation officials get back from their \$700,000 taxpayer financed trip to Salt Lake City, the sobering reality of hosting a hallmark event will hopefully have become evident to the staff of 60.

While the provincial government has written a report promising economic riches, it fails to mention that Rule 40 of the Olympic Charter only allows revenues associated with the Olympic Games to be used for operating expenses. In other words, all the capital expenditures of hosting a Games such as luge tracks and speed skating ovals have to be paid for by the public.

All this while legal aid is drastically cut back, low-income seniors are deciding whether to buy their pharmaceuticals or food for the month after recent provincial cuts and the province has a \$4 billion dollar deficit. All this while Woodward s and many other social housing projects are currently on hold. Deciding to host the Olympics is, after all, not a debate about sports, but a debate about public spending priorities.

What the Bid Corporation must acknowledge is that events in Salt Lake City weren t accessible to the vast majority of people. Figure skating tickets cost \$350 a piece. Security costs were over \$300 million US. It s one thing to watch and enjoy the Olympics on TV, it s quite another to host them in your own city with your own tax dollars used to subsidize the viewing pleasure of those rich enough to be able to attend.

Not only were there evictions in Salt Lake City of low income hotels where rents jumped from \$180/week to over \$700/week, but promises for a legacy of social housing units ended up being far less than originally promised.

What the Bid Corporation also fails to mention are the homeless sweeps to move people out of sight from tourists by police in LA, Seoul, Atlanta and other cities hosting Olympic Games. Many people living on the streets were arrested for jaywalking and other selectively enforced offenses.

The Olympic Bid Corporation has yet to finance an independent impact study to assess what the full impacts and possible legislative and programmatic remedies could be here in Vancouver.

Cities like Los Angeles had many problems but one of the things they did manage to get right was passing a conversion bylaw so that low-income people wouldn t get evicted. It doesn t cost any money and the City of Vancouver could pass it right now. We can ensure that projects like Woodward s proceed to ensure we leave a social legacy as well as an economic legacy. The Central Valley greenway could be funded as an environmental legacy.

If Jack Poole can stand up at an open cabinet meeting and demand that the highway to Whistler be fixed, he can surely ask for better public transit and for loopholes to be closed that would allow landlords to unfairly evict tenants.

Building creative solutions into the planning process would be rewarded by both citizens in the region and the International Olympic Committee.