

Statement on the 2010 Olympic Winter Games

2010 Olympics Should Stand for More

The Council of Canadians, one of Canada's largest public advocacy organizations, with members and chapters across the country, views positively the Olympic goal of friendly international competition between athletes who excel in their respective sports. We understand and appreciate the pleasure and enjoyment so many around the world share in the spectacle and achievements of the Olympic Games.

However, we are gravely concerned by the increasing evidence that these worthy aspects are being overwhelmed, if not totally supplanted, by an "Olympic industry" focused on real estate development and massive corporate marketing opportunities. An "Olympic industry" founded and based in undemocratic and unaccountable national and international structures, implicated in numerous corruption scandals that undermine everything a truly noble Olympic movement should stand for.

In particular, the Council of Canadians believes the February 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver and Whistler will leave a negative legacy contrary to the goals set forward during the application and approval process to host the games. There is now no doubt that the Vancouver Organizing Committee (VANOC) and its affiliated partners will fail to meet their commitments with regard to the environment, social programs and fiscal accountability.

The Council of Canadians is committed to working with activists who are highlighting the negative aspects of the 2010 Games, especially the fact they are being held on un-ceded First Nations territories and are providing mining, resort, real estate and energy developers with opportunities to continue expansion of projects on indigenous territories throughout the province.

As well, we are concerned that the civil liberties of local communities and those who have a critique of the Games are being undermined by an unnecessary security presence. The security budget for the games has ballooned to \$1 billion, while security and law enforcement agencies have identified protest groups as the most significant threat to the Games. Over 4,500 Canadian military troops will be deployed to the 2010 Vancouver Olympics – twice the number Canada has in Afghanistan.



Federal Privacy Commissioner Jennifer Stoddart and the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association have both raised serious concerns about the threat to fundamental rights to privacy and protest arising from the installation and introduction of new surveillance and security measures. Almost a year before the start of the Games surveillance cameras are being installed in Whistler and Vancouver and, according to several credible reports, harassment of protesters has begun.

Residents of Whistler, site of the nordic and downhill venues, are already living in what amounts to a "security zone," which is only expected to escalate as the opening date approaches. Critics of the Games, including a Council of Canadians board member, have allegedly been placed under surveillance, while hikers and mountain bikers find favourite wilderness trails blocked by mysterious military operations.

As with Beijing 2008, there are plans to suppress legitimate dissent, including restricting demonstrators to areas far away from venues, visitors and the media. The Council of Canadians is concerned for the civil liberties of those who challenge the negative impacts of the Olympics and asks: Will those who ignore such undemocratic limitations be pepper-sprayed, tear-gassed and arrested? Will they be labeled "terrorists" and face global travel bans for exercising their democratic rights?"

As an organization focused on global justice we are especially concerned that the 2010 Olympics are providing a prime "green-washing" opportunity for corporations involved in the most egregious threats to the survival of humanity and the earth through their active participation in the privatization and commodification of water and massive environmental degradation exemplified by the exploitation of the tar sands.

A Worldwide Olympic Partner, **Coca Cola** (also a sponsor of the Torch Relay), is notorious for depleting groundwater in areas of India and Latin America with scarce water resources. Furthermore, Coca Cola is a leading promoter of water commodification as one of the largest producers of bottled water in the world. The Council of Canadians is actively promoting bottled water bans in communities across the country, and has grave concerns about the impact of Coca Cola's sponsorship on public water infrastructure support in Vancouver and Whistler.

EPCOR, an Official Supplier for the games, has been working to privatize the water utilities of municipalities across the country, including BC. Epcor tried to bid on the privatization of waste water treatment in Whistler in 2006. The bid was successfully overturned as a result of efforts by the Council of Canadians and community members in Whistler. **General Electric**, another Worldwide Olympic Partner, is a major financier of private power projects in BC, including the enormous Bute Inlet proposal through its subsidiary Plutonic Power. The Council of Canadians has taken a stand against private power projects in British Columbia through the 'IPP' model.

The **Royal Bank of Canada** and **Petro Canada**, both National Partners for the 2010 Games, are directly involved in the Alberta tar sands, one of the most environmentally destructive projects in the world. The Royal Bank is a major financier of tar sands projects and is also a sponsor of the Torch Relay. Ironically, their ad campaigns for the relay ask individuals to make a "green pledge" by volunteering to carry the torch. The Council of Canadians is campaigning for no new approvals in the tar sands and a halt to any development infrastructure designed to increase the capacity of tar sands exploitation.

Dow Chemical is also an Olympic sponsor. Currently Dow is suing the Government of Canada for \$2 million, through NAFTA's Chapter 11 investor-state dispute process, as part of a challenge to a Quebec ban on the use of lawn pesticides. Dow claims that the ban has amounted to an unfair expropriation of Dow's Canadian pesticide business. The Council of Canadians has long campaigned against NAFTA and Chapter 11's harmful impact on public regulation.

At a time of economic crisis when federal, provincial and municipal governments should focus on public projects that create a lasting positive social and economic foundation the 2010 Games appear set to leave a legacy of social and environmental destruction and massive debt that will hobble our ability to make positive change and respond to the serious challenges facing communities across the province and the country.

For more information on the Council of Canadians and our work to promote progressive independent policies on fair trade, clean water, energy security and public health care, visit our website at www.canadians.org or call us at 1-800-387-7177.

