

# Vancouver Games helping athletes, not homeless: study.

Tiffany Crawford, Canwest News Service: Thursday, December 3, 2009

VANCOUVER - Canadian athletes have benefited since Vancouver won its bid to host the Winter Games, but the homeless have not, says a study measuring the pre-Games impact of the 2010 Olympics.

The study released Friday is the second of four designed by the International Olympic Committee to assess the overall social, economic and environmental impact of the 2010 Winter Games.

The report says that since 2003, when Vancouver won its bid to host the Games, programs such as Own the Podium 2010 to support athletes have improved Canada's medal count in elite amateur athletic competitions.

As well, the number of medals won at Olympic Winter Games by Canadian athletes increased by 41 per cent, to 24 medals in 2006 in Torino from 17 medals in 2002 at Salt Lake City.

While there has been a notable social benefit for Canada's athletes, the report suggests the social plight of Vancouver's homeless remains unchanged.

The construction of new affordable-housing and social-housing units has not kept pace with the number of homeless people, the report says, noting a number of social-housing units are being built while others are simultaneously being lost.

According to the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count, there were at least 2, 660 homeless people in the Vancouver area, a 373 per cent increase since 2002.

However, overall, there has been a slight positive impact from the Games so far, said University of B.C. human kinetics professor Rob VanWynsberghe, who led the Olympic Games Impact Pre-Games Report.

“Our approach to (the Olympic Games Impact) is designed to explore whether or not the Games have had an impact on the host, if that impact is positive or negative, and where possible, to determine the size of the impact,” said VanWynsberghe.

“So far, in combining the social, economic and environmental spheres we see a slight positive impact.”

Since Vancouver won the Games, the number of companies in the Metro Vancouver area has increased by 17 per cent and in the Squamish-Lillooet region by 36 per cent, the report found.

“It is also plausible that the unemployment rate in B.C. has been positively affected by the selection of Vancouver as the 2010 Games host through an upsurge in employment opportunities,” the authors conclude.

The University of B.C. team will follow with two additional reports - one in late 2010 and the other in 2013.

The Fraser Basin Council, a non-government agency, prepared an Olympic Games Impact Program baseline report in 2007.

The five-year study, underwritten by a \$300,000 grant from the Vancouver Olympic Organizing Committee, is part of a long-term project to introduce a standardized cross-Games method of monitoring, measuring and reporting on the long-term impact of hosting an Olympic Games.

The Olympic Games Impact study uses 126 indicators to measure economic, social and environmental

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