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## Link of 2010 Olympics to homeless said inconclusive

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By Allan Dowd

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (Reuters) - It is impossible to say if preparations for next year's Winter Olympics have increased Vancouver's homeless problem, as critics charge, a report released on Friday said.

Poverty activists say Olympic-related development has reduced the Vancouver area's supply of affordable housing and forced more people on to the streets - an allegation that Games supporters and local officials deny.

The number of homeless people in Vancouver has increased in recent years, but it is impossible to say if that was caused by the Olympics because the data is incomplete or unreliable, University of British Columbia researchers said in the report, which is part of long-term study of the Games' impact.

The increase in homelessness may not be caused by lost housing, but by more people moving into Vancouver without housing, the report said. If that has been happening, researchers said they did not know if the people were drawn by Olympic-related jobs or by other factors.

"A lack of available data does not allow for conclusions to be made with reasonable certainty about the situation," the report said.

The researchers said while they were not able to include the homelessness in their calculations of the Games social impact, they hope there will be the data available when the study is updated next year or in a 2013 look at post-Games impact.

"Overall, as a pre-event outcome, it is concluded that the Olympic Games impact was found to be slightly positive, mostly due to the economic and sociocultural spheres," according to the report.

It said one of the benefits was improved performance by Canadian athletes preparing to compete at home.

The report, while conducted independently, was funded by the Vancouver Organizing Committee and done at the request of the International Olympic Committee. The IOC has also authorized a study of the impact of the 2010 Summer Games on host city London.

(Reporting by Allan Dowd, editing by Peter Galloway)

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