

## Research and accountability in the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games

*Milena Parent, University of Ottawa*

*Benoit Seguin, University of Ottawa*

*Rod Windover, 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games Federal Secretariat*

**Governance**

**Thursday, May 29, 2008**

**Presentation (25-minute)**

**Session 2**

**8:30 AM - 8:55 AM**

**Abstract 446**

The 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games are becoming a turning point in both the Canadian sport system (e.g., increased focus on amateur (winter) sports, increased cooperation between actors in the system) and the Olympic Movement (e.g., presentation of the Games' Multi Party Agreement, MPA, signed in the Bid phase, as a good tool for focusing and coordinating government involvement in the Games by the International Olympic Committee). As well, there is a growing sense of needing to empirically validate and quantify the commonly attributed benefits of hosting major sporting events; for example, do they increase sport participation at the grass-roots level; what is the extent of the economic impact across the country; can they effectively foster knowledge creation and transfer mechanisms, as well as cooperation, among key stakeholders? In Canada and arguably in the rest of the world-there is a growing movement for accountability related to the public funding of mega events like the Olympic Games (i.e. evidence-based policy development). But how is this performance and accountability determined, measured, used? We will present an emerging partnership between academia and the Canadian federal government in relation to measuring performance and examining accountability.

First, we will argue that a solid understanding of accountability in relation to the 2010 Winter Games must include topics such as 1) evaluating the extent of planning of performance and accountability mechanisms and compare with the actual outcomes (e.g., definitions, processes, complementarity of mechanisms, impact of bureaucracy, and transparency considerations); 2) determining who is accountable to whom and for what; 3) determining the perspective of the other stakeholder groups related to the VANOC-government governance structure, performance, and accountability; and 4) providing recommendations to the government policy makers in terms of hierarchical and horizontal management, as well as for performance and accountability of major projects. In this light, we will introduce the concept of democratic governance (Bevir, 2006) in order to examine performance and accountability in the 2010 Winter Games. Combined with stakeholder theory (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Freeman, 1984; Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997), democratic governance allows for a dynamic and multi-perspective examination of issues such as decision making (e.g., Eisenhardt, 1989), managerial issues and strategies between stakeholders, and horizontal and hierarchical management processes (Bardach, 2001; Damgaard, 2006; Page, 2001). The researchers will therefore present a government-supported longitudinal program of research applying the preceding concepts with initial (baseline) findings, which will be compared to data collected over the next 3 years (pre-, during-, and post-Games data).

Second, governments must face difficult choices everyday in investing scarce resources toward all manner of public goods, including: national defense, health care, education, infrastructure, social programs and economic development initiatives. Therefore, strategic investments in hosting major international sport events have to be justified on the basis of solid, evidence-based policy. The rationale for these public contributions must increasingly be substantiated by clarifying and quantifying the sport, economic, social, and sustainability benefits for citizens. As well, the rationale must be accompanied by a strong emphasis on measures protecting the public interest and ensuring a positive return on the government's investment. The Government of Canada intends to capitalize upon the unique opportunity of hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in Canada in 2010 in a variety of ways to maximize the benefits for Canadians. From the research and public policy development perspective, it is marshalling its own resources and building research partnerships to better understand the sport, economic, social, and sustainability impacts on the Host Nation. The Government's overarching research goal is to contribute toward a strengthened body of knowledge and improved public policy, both domestically and globally. The purpose of this part of the presentation is to provide an overview of the joint Canada - British Columbia study on the sport, economic, social and sustainability impacts of the 2010 Winter Games. As well, it introduces the steps being taken with a view toward eventually establishing a broad-based, national 2010 Research Network of researchers, policy leaders, and other sport, tourism, and business practitioners.

In conclusion, this academia-government research partnership is an innovative, multi-dimensional approach to studying sporting events, organizing committees, host regions, and governments, which will inform the practices of both sport event management researchers and event policy makers for many years to come.

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## **2008 North American Society for Sport Management Conference (NASSM 2008)**

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