

MEDIA ADVISORY

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## CHARITIES LOSE ECONOMIC GOLD OVER OLYMPICS

*Olympics 2010 Net Contribution to Economy: Zero**Charitable Contributions: Priceless*

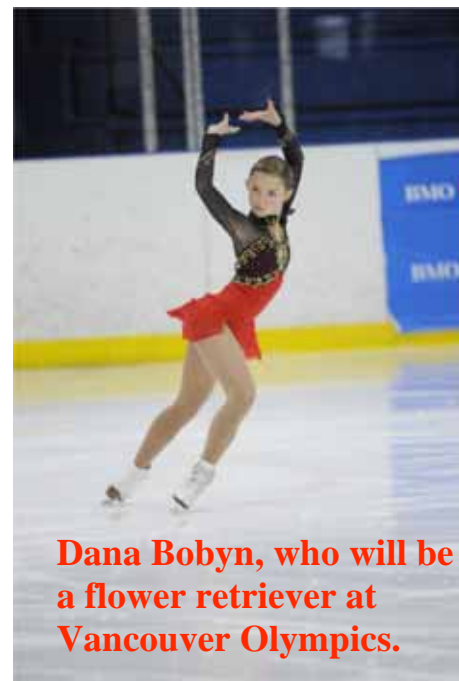
Despite BC government claims of rosy economic boosts from the Olympics, recent reports from the UBC *Sauder School of Business* and *PriceWaterhouseCoopers* suggest the Olympics will merely contribute a "feel good vibe" in our province.

By contrast, "charities deliver vital services rather than vibes," says the BC Association for Charitable Gaming Executive Director Cheryl Ziola. A 2006 study *Defining the Social Economy*, by John Restakis, for the Vancouver Cooperative Association found that BC non-profits generate \$11B in revenue and employ 147,000 people. This compares to \$16B reported by BC's manufacturing sector, employing 167,000. BC's non-profits have 1.5 M volunteers contributing over 100 million hours of work year round for public services. The *Vancouver Sun* recently reported for every dollar invested in charities, taxpayers get a return of \$1.36 in taxes, taken from the BC government's own report, the *Socio-Economic Impacts of Arts and Cultural Organizations in BC*.

To finance this Olympic party and the associated debt hangover, with costs estimated at well over \$6B and counting, **charities & non-profits fear they may be further sacrificed in the March 2nd provincial budget**. The BCACG questions how the government justifies the slashing of sports grants to BC children while welcoming the world's athletes to BC? This anticipated bloodletting will occur with the endorsement of Gaming Minister Rich Coleman, who is also rumoured to be taking a run at the leadership of the BC Liberal Party. "Perhaps the Minister should show some real leadership and restore funding cuts to the charitable sector. You don't finance a drowning economy by standing on charities' shoulders," states Ziola.

And, for a province that prided itself on the 'green games', to cut environmental groups funding is counterproductive and shortsighted, she added. However, the human cost is the number most people feel, she said. BCACG has seen many emails and phone calls on the impacts. Patrick Hull, President/District United Way in Powell River, said, "As someone who is a banker for non-profit organizations, I know how important this funding is. These funds were always meant to support community organizations and should continue to do so!" Dr. David Bobyn, a Kelowna dentist, wrote: "Children and adolescents involved in sports across BC are suffering because of the loss of (gaming and bingo) funds. Shameful. That was a great source of funds to keep our figure skating club here ... and... good young talent in the system, both coaches and students alike. I have actually seen ... kids drop out because of lack of funds to support their dreams. Parents just couldn't afford to keep their child in the program. And it is not just figure skating, but minor hockey, speed skating, and so on. As a local dentist here in Kelowna, I find it difficult financially to keep my daughter (**Dana in photo**) in figure skating at a level...she can perform competitively.

An on-line petition protesting the gaming funding cuts at:  
<http://www.petitiononline.com/VCBS2010/petition.html> with 2,000 signatures, comments and counting.



**Dana Bobyn, who will be a flower retriever at Vancouver Olympics.**

And, if I find it to be monetarily a hardship ... I could easily imagine other families as well ... especially those with more than one child in sports. I guess the government's aim is to see more young athletes drop out of their sporting programs and turn them into... "mall-rats" ... kids who have no aspirations or guidance and ... just 'hang out' ... or steal for kicks. It would make sense for the gaming funding to... actually increase. Thus, everybody wins. Especially the young people... our future."

Dan Jay Pollard of Prince George BC wrote: "Gordon Campbell, think about what you're going to say to your grandchild when he or she asks to go fishing and you have to tell them that there are no fish because I cut all the funding to the clubs that protected the fish and wildlife." Katie Freer of Ladysmith, BC wrote: "Without gaming money, our kids will have no extra-curricular activities. You can only do so many fundraisers in the school till the parents can't handle them anymore." William B. Bailey, of Prince George, said: "Please do not destroy our seniors club, Spruce City Wildlife clubs, Photo clubs, air search and rescue." James Mark Fraser of Salt Spring Island called the sports cuts a "penny wise, election-foolish blunder."

Amidst all this public criticism, Ziola lauded the provincial Finance and Government Service Committee, including MLAs from all parties, which recommended unanimously that arts funding be restored to 2008/09 levels, roughly \$40 million. But arts/culture is only one sector that's been heard. The environmental groups, health and social services, PACs, sports and many others pleas are falling on deaf ears. So charities and non-profits are joining forces with the BCACG to become one voice in an effort to restore funding. In fact, the BCACG has partnered with the Charity Gaming Council of Ontario's Karen Mortfield, Executive Director, who has confirmed a similar attack on that province's charity piggy bank. "Charities are the backbone of our country," says Mortfield. "Every dollar raised by a charity benefits our communities many times over. Governments need to value the work done by charities instead of erecting endless roadblocks that threaten charities' survival."

This pressure campaign will be taken to the community level where local charities will remind voters where their MLA stands on supporting community volunteers. "No politician ever gets elected without a lot of volunteers," said Ziola, adding, "we will be interested to see how much they really value volunteer commitment."

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***BCACG Mandate:*** *The BCACG is a registered non-profit society that provides a collective voice on behalf of all organizations in the Province of British Columbia with a history of applications for gaming licenses and/or direct access to charitable gaming funding, in order to represent their interests, issues and concerns on all charitable gaming activities, policies, regulations and procedures, and to participate actively in any processes and decisions that impact on any of these interests, issues and concerns. [www.bcacg.com](http://www.bcacg.com).*