

Date: November 25, 2005



TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Olympic Handover and Countdown Celebrations, February 2006

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the Board approve waiving user fees for skating sessions on February 26, 2006 to celebrate the handover of the Olympic Winter Games from Torino to Vancouver and mark the four year countdown to the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games;*
- B. THAT the Board approve capital improvements for and ceremonial lighting of the Inukshuk on English Bay, reflecting its role in inspiring the official emblem of the 2010 Winter Games.*

BACKGROUND

On November 1, 2005, Council endorsed celebrations in late February 2006 to locally commemorate the handover of the Winter Games from Torino, Italy to Vancouver and to mark the beginning of the countdown to the 2010 Winter Games. These celebrations present an opportunity to build resident awareness, encourage engagement in sport and cultural activities, generate excitement about the 2010 Winter Games, promote tourism and brand Vancouver as the Host City.

The celebrations will cover a four or five day period, starting February 26, 2006. They will be open and accessible to all with a particular focus on promoting participation by children and youth in sports and culture. Proposed activities are:

- an event surrounding the transfer of the Olympic flag to Vancouver;
 - a flag raising ceremony at City Hall;
 - a community event for viewing the Torino closing ceremonies;
- unveiling of the official countdown clock;
- free access to designated recreation and cultural facilities;
- ceremonial lighting of the English Bay Inukshuk;
- installation of street banners leading to and around future Olympic venues; and
- installation of new “Welcome to Vancouver” signs.

The City has received funding from the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) Community Tourism Program for some of the February 2006 celebrations. Additional funding and sponsorship support for the celebratory activities is being sought from the Vancouver Olympic Organizing Committee (VANOC) and other sponsors. Funding is also required from the City and Park Board to supplement these outside sources. Should any of the proposed funding sources not materialize, the scope of the program, including events and capital improvements, will be scaled back accordingly.

DISCUSSION

Details of the events proposed for Park Board participation are laid out below.

Free Skating

On Sunday, February 26, 2006, following the City's downtown celebration event celebrating the simultaneous Olympic flag transfer in Torino, there will be designated free skating sessions (advertised as the Olympic handover free skate) at all Park Board rinks, and Britannia will also be invited to take part. These sessions will be open to participants of all ages to celebrate the upcoming Olympics by providing the opportunity to actively participate in skating. Average attendance is estimated to be 200 people per rink.

Local athletes from the Vancouver Giants, women's hockey, ringette and figure skating will also be approached to attend, helping to promote winter activities and active living.

An additional arts component celebrating the Inukshuk as Vancouver's symbol for the 2010 Olympics is proposed at Killarney, Trout Lake, Kerrisdale, and Riley Park rinks. Stations will be set up for stories relating to Inukshuks and to help children make their own small take-home stone sculptures.

Cost

For the free skating program, the Park Board will forego approximately \$2,000 in revenues, which will be absorbed in the 2006 operating budget.

Costs for the arts component (estimated at \$1,000) have been requested under the special UBCM Community Tourism Program grant.

A sponsor is being sought by the City via VANOC to pick up the cost of other related expenses.

Advertising for the free recreation program will be part of the City's promotion of the series of Olympic handover and countdown celebrations.

Ceremonial Inukshuk Lighting and Celebration

To beautify the area and improve public safety, the Inukshuk will be lit from below by recessed fixtures which will be flush with the ground. To allow fuller visual appreciation of the sculpture, bushes surrounding the Inukshuk will be removed and replaced by plantings of low, drought tolerant specimens more in keeping with its seaside environment.

An official Inukshuk lighting and celebration event is planned for Wednesday, March 1, 2006 following the Olympic flag's arrival at City Hall. The public will be invited to a sunset ceremony featuring free music and entertainment and culminating in the official lighting of the Inukshuk by VANOC, City, Park Board and other dignitaries.

Cost

The cost for lighting and landscaping improvements is estimated at approximately \$50,000 and will be funded from the Park Board's 2005 Capital Plan Park Enhancement account.

All costs associated with promoting and staging the ceremonial lighting event will be funded from the special UBCM Community Tourism Program grant.

SUMMARY

In support of the February 2006 Olympic handover and countdown celebrations, it is recommended that the Board work with the City and VANOC to host free skating events and a ceremonial lighting of the English Bay Inukshuk. These activities will encourage the public to get involved in sport and excited about the upcoming Winter Games, and increase awareness of Vancouver as the 2010 Host City.

Prepared by:
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