

Ministry of Economic Development
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B.C. COMMUNITIES FIND OWN OLYMPIC OPPORTUNITIES

VICTORIA -- With the 2010 Winter Games quickly approaching, communities across British Columbia are finding ways of sharing the Olympic experience.

“Cities, towns and not-for-profit groups in every corner of B.C. have been working to establish a legacy from the Province hosting the Games,” said B.C.’s Economic Development Minister Colin Hansen, whose portfolio also includes responsibility for the 2010 Olympics.

While the 2010 Winter Games will be primarily based in Greater Vancouver and Whistler, there are incredible opportunities for all B.C. communities to get involved in the Games, Hansen added.

“That’s why in 2004, the provincial government announced we were investing \$20 million in the creation of the Olympic Paralympic Live Sites program, to help to establish a legacy from the Games.”

As of Nov. 1, 2005, 59 Olympic Paralympic Live Sites projects have been announced across B.C. In some cases, communities are using the funding to purchase equipment to create central locations for public viewing of live, Olympic events. School groups and others would also use the equipment in the lead-up to, and following, the 2010 Games.

Beyond the viewing venues, the Live Sites program is also providing funding for community projects such as upgrades to recreational sites in Mackenzie, Smithers, Lillooet and Prince Rupert and arena or curling rink improvements in Merritt, Sparwood, Sechelt and Hudson’s Hope.

In the spring of 2005, the Village of Granisle, in north-central B.C., received more than \$140,000 from the Live Sites program for upgrading the local ice and curling rinks, which are the only sporting facilities in the area.

“Without the funding both facilities would have continued to fall into disrepair and would have become impossible to use,” said Granisle Mayor Gerald Ewald.

“We are an ex-mining community trying to diversify its economy,” Ewald added. “We have a hotel that would like to promote hockey in Granisle and attract athletes to use the arena as a training facility. Anything we can do to promote Granisle, in order to bring people to the community will be of great value.”

Hansen says there is still plenty of time for other communities to prepare their applications and get involved in the program too.

“Because of the interest in the program and the shortened construction season in some areas, particularly the North, we’ve extended the deadline for applications until Mar. 31, 2007 to allow groups more time to apply.

We want as many communities as possible to make an application,” Hansen said, adding that applications are constantly being processed and evaluated, with funding decisions being made on an ongoing basis. Groups receiving funding have until Mar. 31, 2008 to complete the projects, under the extended timelines.

Communities interested in learning more about the Olympic Paralympic Live Sites program, or applying for project funding, can visit www.gov.bc.ca/ecdev and click on the Live Sites link.