

# It's seven o'clock

in the morning in New Westminster. Cold rain lashes the windows of a local college where a dozen citizens gather. They head straight for the coffee urn before seating themselves around a boardroom table. It is December 14, 2004 and if it seems a little early to be talking about the economic outcome of the 2010 Vancouver-Whistler Olympic Winter Games, in fact, it's not early at all.

The non-profit Vancouver Organizing Committee (VANOC) has been beavering away on organizing the Games and constructing the physical sites ever since it won the bid in July 2003. It's a whopping challenge. Olympic Games are multi-billion-dollar spectacles of sport and entertainment that attract more television viewers than anything else on the planet. So far, VANOC has satisfied the International Olympic Committee (IOC) that it is on track. But it falls to the B.C. government, which is underwriting VANOC, to channel the dizzying flow of dollars, jobs, supplies and publicity into an economic benefit not just for the IOC but also for the province and people of B.C. When B.C. leapt on the bid wagon in 2003, supporters placed great

significance on the financial pay-off of hosting the Games. Premier Gordon Campbell promised extensive strategies to ensure that the real gold B.C. would win in 2010 would be economic – and long lasting.

But more than 18 months after snaring the Games bid, the provincial strategies aren't even worth a bronze medal. Much of the elaborate initiatives the province promised or unveiled in May 2004 have been scrapped or pared down. For example, the government abandoned a confidential 2003 PricewaterhouseCoopers plan for a \$37-million program using the Olympic Games – the world's best-known brand – to recruit foreign investment to B.C. It was deemed too expensive. A second, much less specific plan without dollar figures was introduced last spring and later substantially changed

to reflect "more realistic" (lower, less expensive ambitions and longer-term (to 2015) targets). The new plan is scheduled to be revealed late this year, according to government officials.

Government programs to turn B.C. firms into winners in the global scramble for 2010 Winter Games contracts are still stuck on paper. The government's special Secretariat assigned to ensure that the event benefits the B.C. economy, first drafted its business plan in April 2004. Almost a year later the plan, with its deadlines, budgets and promised outcomes, was still being rewritten behind closed doors. And a Secretariat report on VANOC and provincial progress toward delivering the Games that was promised in 2004 is now expected to be released in May 2005.