

commitment to making the 2010 Games B.C. economic engine has been paltry. The Secretariat hoped that the private sector would help pay for the Commerce Centre beyond the initial website – funding more elaborate services such as an office location and a hospitality centre for corporate tourists during the games, similar to what Australia did in 2000.

Australia's private sector crafted and directed the country's Games-based marketing strategy to reposition Down Under as a magnet for investment: a program called Investment 2000. The Australian Chamber of Commerce also developed a Games procurement website and ran a giant business centre and investment advisory service for corporate visitors during the Games. Being private sector-led enabled Investment 2000 "to sidestep the red-tape, adverse nature of government, a business constrained by politics or other concerns," says Investment 2000 CEO Andrew Gilchrist. Renamed AustralianAccess, the organization recently won the contract to create China's 2008 Olympics Games investment development campaign.

But corporate B.C. has not yet joined in provincial efforts. "I'm not even aware of something called the Commerce Centre. We're not involved," says Tera Group spokesman Dean Pelkey. A quick survey of other corporate heavyweights including the Bank of Montreal and The Patten Group produced similar responses. Some of them, like Teck-Cominco, MacDermid Dettwiler & Associates and PMC-Sierra are also unlikely to bid on becoming major advertisers at the games because "the Olympics are not the best way to reach our customers," explains MDA's Iqbal Aboud. But even the Royal Bank, which back in May of 2004 co-funded a marketing conference launching the government's first strategies for making the games a moneymaker for the economy, is not on-board with the Commerce Centre. "We're looking at future opportunities," says spokesperson Lynn Hatcher-Brand.

The provincial government is disappointed that the corporate sector doesn't see that the future begins now, and hasn't been forthcoming with ideas and contributions, according to Antoniuk who says the government "had to step in," and paddle the flagship 2010 Commerce Centre web site by itself. "We wanted to get it up and running," albeit with hitches and delays. The government certainly "wants to initiate getting the business community included in any way possible, she insists.

"It's taking some time to get started," Antoniuk admits. But time is running out. □