

CONSTRUCTION AND REAL ESTATE



BRENDAN HALPER/SPECIAL TO THE VANCOUVER SUN

Sitka Log Homes manager Walter Bramsleven stands in the company's manufacturing yard near 100 Mile House. Sitka won a \$2.9-million contract to provide a log building for the Turin 2006 Winter Olympics as part of B.C.'s efforts to promote the province for the 2010 Winter Olympics.

Expectations high for 2010 Winter Games

ECONOMY | Studies estimate up to 77,000 worker-years of employment will be generated

BY DERRICK PENNER
VANCOUVER SUN

Expectations are that the Vancouver 2010 Olympics will pump between \$5.8 billion and \$10 billion worth of new activity into the British Columbia economy by the time the Olympic flame is extinguished in 2010.

RBC Financial Group economist Derek Holt estimates that the Olympics could boost the size of B.C.'s economy by as much as 1.2 percentage points per year, with the economic lift adding up to two-times that amount in 2010.

"This is a significant, positive lift to long-term growth prospects in B.C.," Holt wrote in a November report.

John Furlong, president of the Vancouver Olympic Organizing Committee, has said that Holt's forecast would equate to an annual \$2.1 billion to \$3.3 billion direct and indirect boost to the economy.

"It's incredible," Furlong said to the Vancouver Board of Trade. "This is mostly due

to construction and labour up to 2009."

Furlong noted that Vanoc will eventually award more than 10,000 contracts for goods and services. To date, some 300, worth more than \$93 million, have been tendered.

Economic impact studies estimate up to 77,000 person years of employment could be generated by the Games with billions of dollars in new construction ranging from \$660 million on direct venue spending and billions of dollars on indirect projects ranging from the Sea to Sky Highway upgrade, Canada Line rapid transit line and Vancouver Convention and Exhibition Centre expansion.

Vanoc will contribute some \$145.6 million to projects in 2006 including the upgrading of facilities at Cypress Mountain for the Olympics' freestyle skiing and snowboarding events, construction of a new arena at the University of B.C. and the tenders for athletes villages in Vancouver and Whistler.

Venue costs, however, could escalate substantially



WARD PERRIN/VANCOUVER SUN FILES

John Furlong: Some 10,000 contracts will be awarded.

before the games take place. The Independent Contractors and Businesses Association of B.C. estimates that construction costs in B.C. could rise 50 per cent by 2010.

Right now, companies beyond big construction firms are beginning to capitalize on the Games in some surprising ways.

Sitka Log Homes in 100 Mile House, for instance, won a \$2.9-million contract from

the provincial and federal governments to provide a log building for the B.C. Canada Place at the Turin 2006 Olympics in February.

Walter Bramsleven, Sitka's general manager, said the idea came from the provincial government's 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games Secretariat and Ministry of Economic Development "as a way to network the 2006 and 2010 [Winter Olympics] together, but also a great opportunity to promote British Columbia to the European sector of the world."

While the Turin project isn't directly part of the Games, Bramsleven is optimistic that his 30-employee firm in B.C.'s interior will receive additional benefits, not only for the 2010 Games but beyond.

"There's going to be a lot of private-venture developments that are happening and a lot of those will be log and timber buildings, we would expect," Bramsleven said.

As far as he is concerned, opening the B.C. Canada Place as a venue to showcase B.C. and Canada to the inter-

national audience at the Turin Olympics was "absolutely the right thing to do."

Economic Development Minister Colin Hansen, the minister in charge of B.C.'s Olympics secretariat, said the province is borrowing ideas tried by other Olympic jurisdictions and improving on them to make sure British Columbians wring all the opportunities that they can from the Games.

For example, the B.C. Olympics secretariat created the 2010 Commerce Centre, a spot where all Olympics-related contracts that are put out to tender are posted and can be accessed online.

The provincial government also created the arm's-length 2010 Legacies Now, a non-profit society aimed at encouraging and helping communities to initiate projects in sports and the arts, linked to the Games, that will have lasting impacts on their health and social well-being.

However, Hansen said B.C. has started these initiatives