

THE TORONTO OLYMPIC COMMITMENT: TOWARDS A SOCIAL CONTRACT FOR THE OLYMPIC GAMES¹

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Mega-projects like the Olympic Games require a tremendous investment of human, financial, and physical resources from the communities which stage them. They challenge (or distract) the best talents available for the better part of a decade, well beyond the term of most governments. They play a decisive role in the character and pace of a region's economic development, often reshaping the pattern of land use and the transportation, communications and industrial infrastructure of the localities where they take place. At the level of ideology, they illuminate competing notions of the public good. Not surprisingly, bidding for and staging a public festival on this scale can be a highly charged political exercise, requiring the most consummate skills of negotiation and consensus building from those in the leadership.

Such, at any rate, is the Canadian experience. Virtually every attempt to stage multi-sport international games during the last 30 years has touched off widespread public debate, if not outright opposition. The 1976 Montreal Olympics were buffeted right up until the Opening Ceremonies by the clash of English- and French-Canadian nationalisms, explosive class conflict and the protests of athletes and environmental groups.² In Edmonton, proponents of the 1978 Commonwealth Games had to fight a municipal plebiscite to get the funding for the Games.³ In Calgary, despite the pervasive hegemony of conservative oil interests, the organizing committee for the 1988 Winter Olympics was compelled to involve thousands of volunteers in decision-making and to open board meetings to the public to maintain community support. Even then, the popular torch relay and the major exhibit of the arts and culture festival encountered a national protest from aboriginal groups.⁴

¹ I am grateful for the assistance of Phyllis Berck, who conducted the public participation process for the City of Toronto's Olympic Task Force.

² Nick auf der Maur, *The Billion Dollar Game* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1975); Brian McKenna and Susan Purcell, *Drapeau* (Toronto: Penguin, 1981); and Bruce Kidd, "The Culture Wars of the Montreal Olympics", *International Review of Sport Sociology*, forthcoming.

³ Batya Chivers, "Friendly games: Edmonton's Olympic alternative", in James Lorimer and Evelyn Ross (Eds.), *The City Book* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1976), 183-85; for a statement of concerns, see Edmonton Social Planning Council, *Report of the Task Force on the XI Commonwealth Games* (1974).

⁴ Charles Reasons (Ed.) *Stampede City* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1984); Phyllis Berck, "The Olympics, Culture and Community", a paper presented to the First International Conference on the Olympics and East/West and North/South Exchanges in the World System, Seoul, August 16-19, 1987; and Kidd, "The Lubicon Boycott, Korean Democratization and the Olympic Dilemma", *Canadian Dimension*, 22 (1), 1988, 18-20.

That public debate on the desirability of hosting the 1996 Olympics was likely to occur in Toronto should have been reckoned a certainty. The city has long prided itself on an open decision-making process, the encouragement of diversity, and a fondness for contestation and argument.⁵ The left-of-centre New Democratic Party (NDP), whose federal members had opposed the Montreal Games, has become a significant force on city council. Few major developments in the last 20 years have been approved without careful scrutiny and lengthy debate. Toronto is also the centre of English-speaking Canada's communications industry, with seven independent television stations, three daily newspapers, and several mass circulation weeklies. In such a competitive market, the media corporations often try to lure viewers and readers with controversy. They, too, could have been expected to treat the project warily.

Yet the principals behind Toronto's bid for the 1996 Olympic Games underestimated these risks, concentrating instead on the task of winning International Olympic Committee (IOC) votes abroad. As a result, well after the bid was launched, at a time when they felt they had a commanding lead among the IOC, they were thrust into a time-consuming, often bitter public consultation process, fueled by mounting media criticism. From that point on, the dominant narrative of the Toronto Olympic bid became the story of divergent ambitions and political struggle, dramas considered anathema to the conservative IOC. To this day, Paul Henderson, the president of the bidding Toronto Ontario Olympic Council (TOOC) and many of his supporters are convinced that the city's penchant for public consultation cost it the Games.⁶

The purpose of this paper is to examine the nature and the outcome of the debate which came to define the Toronto Olympic bid, in the context of the changing political economy of Toronto and Canada. I will argue that the social contract which emerged from the public debate, known as the Toronto Olympic Commitment, significantly changed the character of the Toronto bid, transforming what began as the handmaiden of finance capital into a project of social democracy. In terms of the slogans of the debate, the Commitment replaced the neo-conservative ideology of "excellence" to "bread and roses", while rejecting the uncompromising opposition of "Bread Not Circuses". This process left the bid team divided, which may have cost it IOC support, but it greatly increased public support for the Games. I will conclude by suggesting that a pre-bid public consultation process on the Toronto model would enhance the humanitarian goals the Olympic Movement purports to pursue. My perspective is that of a political economist and lifelong Olympic enthusiast who played an active role in the events which I will describe.

⁵ Rick Salutin, "Who We Are and How We've Changed", *Toronto Life*, 25 (16), 1991, pp. 68-71 and 128-130.

⁶ James Royson, "Layton, supporters get blame for failure", *Toronto Star*, September 19, 1990.

Uncontested beginnings

The initiative for the Toronto bid came from a small group of Canadian Olympic sailors, led by Henderson, in the mid-1980s.⁷ Theirs was a familiar, perhaps universal ambition: they wanted to bring the Olympics which they loved to the city where they lived. Calculating that Athens could not win the 1996 Games and that it was North America's turn, they sought to clone the commercially successful 1984 Games in Los Angeles. It was a neat ideological fit. As successful small businessmen with nothing but disdain for politics, they felt the Games could best be run by a small tightly knit corporation as LA had, with only the vaguest accountability to the municipality and national Olympic committee which bear the legal and financial liability under IOC rules. Their only concern was getting the leading corporations as sponsors. "Once I had them on side, I knew we had a bid," Henderson explained. They suggested that most of the events could take place in inexpensively renovated facilities, in close proximity along Lake Ontario, and television and advertising would pay for it. They clothed their pitch in the themes of "excellence"--the unrelenting pursuit of the competitive bests⁸--and the multi-culturalism of the 20th century diaspora. "Everyone in the world has a relative in Toronto," became Henderson's refrain.

Initially, the winds seemed highly favourable. In 1986, City Council unanimously endorsed the bid and declared TOOC its official representative. In 1987, the Canadian Olympic Association added its unanimous approval (no other city applied) and the federal and provincial governments promised their support. But in reality, support for the Games was much softer than the votes indicated. On council, several members of the NDP only supported it because they felt the IOC would turn it down. In the COA and in both provincial and federal sports ministries, the bid touched off a fierce behind-the-scenes debate: many felt that the continual efforts to host international events left little energy and resources for infrastructural and grass roots development. Yet those who held these concerns kept silent, convincing Henderson that he no opposition. These were heady times for the businessmen at the helm of the bid. The southern Ontario economy was booming, corporate profits soared through expansion, mergers and leveraged buyouts, and the universe seemed to be unfolding according to neo-conservative plan. With their dazzling office towers and new stadium with the retractable roof, the corporate elite Henderson had recruited to the bid

⁷ It was Toronto's 4th try, following bids for the 1940, 1960 and 1976 Olympics. Henderson had been part of the 1976 group, which lost out to Montreal in the COA voting. Given the two cities' historic rivalry, it was almost inevitable that someone from Toronto would try again. The first version of the bid was presented in Cresap, McCormick and Paget/Barnard Management Consultants, Toronto as Host to the 100th Anniversary Olympics (Toronto: TOOC, 1986).

⁸ See Kidd, "The Philosophy of Excellence: Olympic Performance, Class Power and the State", in Pasquale J. Galasso (Ed.), Philosophy of Sport and Physical Activity (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 1988) 11-31.

seemed on the edge of turning Toronto into a “world class city”.⁹ Surely the Olympics would follow.

Bread Not Circuses and the Olympic Task Force

But while TOOC was out wooing the world, the city and its politics were rapidly changing. As in other North American cities, there was an ugly underside to the glitzy prosperity for the corporate elite, property developers and speculators, and fashionable marketeers of luxury. The changes of the 1980s lowered the standard of living for many in the middle and working classes. Corporate restructuring had cost many their jobs, while governments cut back on assisted housing, social services and other public programs, and the boom drove up rents and food prices. As a consequence, poverty increased dramatically. By 1988, there were 15,000 homeless in the city and 200,000 who lived in sub-standard basement apartments and other illegal, cramped quarters. An estimated 80,000, including many working people on low incomes, depended on food banks, an institution which barely existed when Henderson launched the bid three years earlier. (Critics pointed out that “there were more food banks than Macdonald’s”). Boosters could no longer claim that Toronto was “the city that works”. In the 1988 municipal election, held during the last week of the bitter “free trade” federal election, a loose coalition of anti-poverty organizations, neighborhood groups, environmentalists and the NDP ran on an anti-development platform and won the majority of seats.

By this time, TOOC’s supporters had convinced Torontonians that the 1996 Games were theirs. (Many still believe that if the vote had been taken -at the IOC session in Seoul, or even the San Juan session a year later, Toronto would have won.) But in the changed political climate, these predictions prompted many to take a second, more critical look. Two new groups now enter the story. The first were the senior bureaucrats at City Hall, who began to realize that the Games would determine the social agenda for the city for the next decade, and sought to inject themselves into the decision-making process to protect the city’s interest. With the support of the new Council, they set out to vet the major features of the bid before they went to the IOC. The mechanism they created for the purpose was the Olympic Task Force (OTF), composed of department heads and chaired by the Commissioner of Parks and Recreation. About the same time, a group of inner-city social housing activists, church groups and labour organizations created the Bread Not Circus (BNC) coalition to shift the focus of the city’s politics away from mega-projects and unchecked development to the challenge of poverty and homelessness. BNC grew out of two decades of opposition to a domed stadium, and a successful protest campaign for mayor in the 1988 municipal elections, in which welfare rights activist and single mother Carol Ann Wright, running on a shoe-string budget, received 24,662 votes against long-time incumbent and Olympic booster Art Eggleton. (He polled 92,043). The coalition immediately set out to defeat the already well advanced plans for a downtown Ballet Opera House, a World’s Fair, and the Olympics.

While the Olympic Task Force began to review TOOC’s plans in behind-the-scenes meetings and lengthy, bureaucratic reports, BNC took to the streets. They demonstrated

⁹ This breed of businessmen was epitomized by Trevor Eyton, Henderson’s fraternity brother at the University of Toronto and the TOOC co-chair. See Patricia Best and Ann Shortell, The Brass Ring: Power, Influence and the Brascan Empire (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987).

against visiting IOC members, staged a “anti-Olympic” torch relay through the poor neighborhoods of the inner city, and flooded the media with flyers about Olympic embarrassments. They didn’t have to dig very far. The nightly televised summary of Mr. Justice Dubin’s hearings into Ben Johnson’s disqualification for steroids revealed an Olympic sportsworld far removed from the amateur ideal of humanitarian education and fair play.¹⁰ It was also becoming clear that the vaunted SkyDome, the bid showpiece, had cost twice as much as budgetted, leaving the taxpayers responsible for several hundred million dollars in debt. Built primarily for baseball and football, it could not accomodate the Olympic sports of track and field and soccer, forcing the costly construction of another Olympic Stadium. The SkyDome consortium was headed up by TOOC co-chair Trevor Eyton, and was composed of many of bid’s corporate backers. Could these men be trusted to keep the Olympics out of the red? BNC asked.

Under different leadership, the OTF would have been welcomed as a valuable ally, and BNC either coopted or marginalized. But Henderson treated both as enemies. As an Olympian and businessman, he felt he knew best what the Games and the city needed. He deeply resented the “interference” of the bureaucrats’ questions, stalled them as much as he could, and took every opportunity to disparage them. Because he staunchly believed that “social issues are not sport issues”, BNC made him apoplectic, and he repeatedly red-baited and threatened them. But in response to the questions that these diatribes inevitably raised in the media, he could not always keep his answers consistent, and when found out, went on the attack again. When reporters no longer accepted his version without checking, he attacked them too, and phoned their editors to complain.¹¹ This behavior only served to undermine his and the bid’s credibility. By the spring of 1989, what had once been a closed question had become a raging debate.

The “Toronto Olympic Commitment”

Unlike their predecessors, who had been content to attend the splendidly catered receptions for visiting dignitaries, leaving TOOC to make all the decisions, the new “reform” councillors were thus forced to take an active interest in the bid. And the vast distance between the TOOC and BNC positions--an intrasigent “YES” confronting a militant “NO”--left them with considerable room to maneuver. During the summer of 1989, the six-person NDP caucus won support for a three-step strategy: Council would enunciate a statement of principles--called the “Toronto Olympic Commitment”--to govern the bid. The amended bid would first be submitted to public scrutiny in a social impact assessment and a series of public meetings. Then TOOC, the Canadian Olympic Association, and the senior levels of government would be asked to guarantee the terms. The idea was to hold off final approval

¹⁰ John MacAloon, “Steroids and the State: Dubin, Melodrama and the Accomplishment of Innocence”, Public Culture 2 (2), 1990, 41-64.

¹¹ For profiles which describe some of these episodes, see David Olive, “Higher, Faster, Louder”, Toronto Life, April 1990, and John Stackhouse, “Race for the Gold”, Report on Business Magazine, September 1990. On more than one occasion, the author heard Henderson fashion answers to questions out of whole cloth. “What about day-care facilities in the Olympic Village,” he was asked in one public meeting. “Don’t worry about it,” he replied. “The IOC Charter stipulates that day-care be included in every Village.”

until these steps had been successfully negotiated. Then and only then would the completed bid be submitted to Lausanne.¹²

The Toronto Olympic Commitment identified a number of targets which Toronto Olympics would be expected to achieve (see Appendix I). Heading the list was the requirement that all Olympic housing be “affordable” by provincial standards,¹³ and 60 percent of it “social housing” for persons with low incomes. In addition, it required that no resident be displaced because of visitors to the Games, that facility renovation and construction be designed to improve affordable recreation, and that there be a plan for subsidizing Olympic tickets for low-income Torontonians. To enhance gender equality, the Commitment pledged Council to “work to achieve parity between men and women on all Olympic organizing committee structures, to equip Olympic facilities with day care, and to “use the City’s influence in planning sports and events selection to address the imbalance of the sexes in the Games”. The Commitment also promised to maximize the number of unionized jobs, involve the corporate sponsors in any financial risks, and submit all major construction projects to environmental assessments.

The idea of a social contract for the Games grew out of two currents. The first was the social democratic belief that private initiative should serve public purpose, and it could be accomplished as easily by regulation as social ownership. The Toronto NDP councillors shared that pragmatic approach: as long as the Olympic Games enhanced the city’s goals, they felt, they had no a priori reason to stop them; the only question was how the bid could be improved to justify their support. The Toronto Olympic Commitment was their answer. In an increasingly polarized political climate, with the housing crisis and poverty topping the public agenda, that strategy quickly captured the middle ground. Given that the corporate sponsors were so well positioned to gain financially and ideologically, very few other politicians objected to enlarging the list of beneficiaries. The only real opposition came from BNC and traditional friends of the NDP, such as tenants, the Labour Council and environmental groups. They argued that the municipal caucus had stepped into an unwinnable compromise. If housing, social equity and the environment were so important, critics asked, why did they have to be piggybacked on the Olympics? What guarantees could the NDP provide that the Commitment would ever be implemented? The authors of the Commitment stressed the politics of the possible (including the need to harvest the estimated \$1 billion in outside funds the Games was expected to germinate) and the importance of popular festivals. NDP councillor Barbara Hall frequently evoked the dream of “Bread and Roses”, the hymn sung every spring on the annual International Women’s Day March through the city streets. She was supported by a broad coalition of visual and performing artists and the leaders of the “multi-cultural” communities, who were proud of their adopted city and saw the Games as a means of opening up its avenues of power.

¹² Department of the City Clerk, City of Toronto, “To All Interested Persons”, September 27, 1989. The whole process was painstakingly recorded by city officials. All the documents associated with the bid are located in the Toronto Public Library, City Hall Branch.

¹³ By that definition, “affordable” means a price or rent that would be affordable to households within the lowest 60 percent of the income distribution. In 1989 in Toronto, that meant a household income no greater than \$55,800 a year.

The Commitment also stemmed from an older, more humane Olympic tradition which was brought into the debate by progressive athletes and sports leaders. In this view, most closely associated with the ideals of Olympic founder Pierre de Coubertin, the Games were regarded as a demonstration project for an ambitious program of ethical physical education, intercultural exchange, and public festival. The Coubertin ideals--sometimes referred to as "the aspirations of Olympism"--are barely known, let alone actively pursued at the highest levels of high performance sport in Canada. But during the 1980s, these aspirations were well publicized at the grass roots by the Canadian Olympic Association's Junior Olympics and Olympic education programs, and the community relations programs of the Calgary Winter Olympic Games. In addition, at the COA's annual Olympic Academy of Canada, a small number of athletes and coaches began to wrestle with how they might be realized under modern conditions.¹⁴ These ideas surfaced to the public discourse during the Dubin hearings and were carried over into the Olympic debate. A Games staged to pursue the "aspirations of Olympism" could be consistent with overall social policy, several prominent athletes assured Hall and her colleagues.¹⁵

Public participation

Toronto's council chamber is well designed for public meetings, and the scrutiny of elected officials. The councillors sit around a horseshoe in the centre of a large bowl, while citizens look down from the sides. The acoustics are as good as in any concert hall. On September 15, 1989, the tiers were overflowing, as Council met to hear an up-to-date report from the Olympic Task Force and public depositions on the Commitment and the bid. 53 individuals and groups--from sport, community and service clubs, tenants' and social housing associations, organized labour, and environmental groups--showed up to make presentations. The meeting began at 7:00 pm and lasted until two the following morning. Although supporters and opponents were about evenly balanced, Council voted overwhelmingly to proceed with the bid and continue the public consultation.¹⁶

During the next three months, there were 15 smaller scale public meetings were held in neighborhoods throughout the city. To conduct the social impact assessment, the OTF identified 15 areas of concern and invited representatives of special populations (e.g. labour, young people and the homeless) and community groups to workshops to comment. (147 such groups eventually took part). In addition, intervenor funding was made available, upon application, to enable non-profit interest groups to investigate the probable impact of the Games upon their constituencies (see Appendix II). The reports from these activities were presented--a majority of the funded intervenors came out against the Games--and public depositions heard again at another marathon meeting in City Hall on January 15, 1990. Two weeks later, before another packed chamber, Council met to decide. Every councillor spoke

¹⁴ See Olympic Academy of Canada, "Discussion document for the 7th Session", Canadian Olympic Association, 1989.

¹⁵ Rob Beamish, Bruce Kidd, Ann Peel, Glynis Peters, and Steve Podborski, among others, presented briefs in support of the Commitment to the various public meetings. Some sportspeople supported BNC. Former national field hockey player Jan Borowy wrote much of the coalition's anti-bid book.

¹⁶ Department of the City Clerk, "For Interested Persons", September 27, 1989.

at length in the day-long debate. No two views about the Olympic project and its impact were the same. Even with the Commitment firmly in place, the NDP caucus eventually split down the middle. But the bid was approved, the 12-5 vote enabling TOOC to send off the bid book to the IOC.¹⁷

Down to the wire

The politicking was far from over. The next requirement was to obtain firm financial guarantees from the senior levels of government, and an agreement on the abandoned downtown railway lands designated for the Olympic Village. Council had set a deadline of April 30th for these commitments, to enable it to have them before finally signing the contract the IOC required of all bidding cities. It had been encouraged to do so by a management consultant's report which pointed out that the assumptions underlying TOOC's favourable financial forecasts could not be tested.¹⁸ None of the necessary undertakings would be easy. Although the federal government had contributed \$200 million (in 1981 dollars) to the Calgary Games, it had recently been slashing programs all across the country. With its popularity plummeting in the wake of unemployment and the dislocations of the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement, it stood to gain little from helping out Canada's wealthiest city. There were fears that it would limit itself to the indirect costs of security and protocol. While the provincial government promised support, it refused to indicate a firm amount until Ottawa had made a decision.

Obtaining agreement on the valuable railway lands--a 200-acre tract in the city's downtown just 300 metres north of Lake Ontario--would be even trickier. The "reform" councillors not only wanted to place the athletes' village on one large section of them, but to downsize the office towers which the previous council had approved for another section--They were convinced that further commercial development would cripple the city's transportation infrastructure, while placing a new barrier between inner city neighborhoods and the lake. The railways--including the publicly-owned Canadian National (CN)--were only prepared to accept Olympic housing in exchange for the confirmation of their commercial

¹⁷ For the bid, see TOOC, Toronto '96: Toronto's Proposed Sports Venues (Toronto, 1990). Council also amended the Commitment to add provisions to protect and include persons with disabilities, and to require strict waste management. (Since TOOC did not include it in the bid book, a special parchment edition of the Commitment was mailed to every IOC Member.) To make TOOC more representative of the community, Council added 13 persons, including the author, to the Board. The full record of these activities, along with the results of the social impact assessment and intervenor's reports, is contained in City of Toronto, Committee of Department Heads Olympic Task Force, Report to City of Toronto Executive Committee, January 9, 1990, and City of Toronto, Department of the City Clerk, "Overview--Toronto's Bid for the 1996 Summer Olympics--Toronto Olympic Commitment", January 30, 1990.

¹⁸ Peat Marwick, Financial Analysis of Toronto's Proposal to Host the 1996 Olympic Games (Toronto: City of Toronto Finance Department, 1989).

zoning. A failure in any of these negotiations would have sunk the bid.¹⁹ Meanwhile, Bread Not Circuses continued to agitate against the Games²⁰ and the media to raise fresh doubts,²¹ provoking Henderson and TOOC into ever more ill-tempered reactions.²²

The deciding vote was a nail-biter. None of the guarantees had arrived when Council began to meet, on Friday April 6 at 10:00 am, so that meeting was delayed, first an hour, and then three hours, then another hour, while negotiators for the governments and CN wrestled over the final wording of the guarantees. The federal government finally committed itself to an amount no less than the \$200 million Calgary received, Ontario undertook to cover any deficit, and CN apparently agreed to unlink Olympic housing from its plans for commercial development. But by the time the agreements came in, it was too late in the day to proceed. When the meeting started on Monday, a councillor requested clarification of the status of the railway lands. CN's president faxed in another letter saying that it was still intent on linking zoning densities between the two projects. This put Council in an uproar. Barbara Hall, the NDP's staunchest Olympic supporter, rose to say that if this was the railway's final offer, the bid was dead. Rather than vote against it, she moved a three-day adjournment to enable one last round of talks. Prime Minister Mulroney would be in town (hosting US president Bush at the Toronto Blue Jay's season opener), she noted. Perhaps he could be persuaded to pressure the crown corporation to cooperate.²³ Three days later, just as the meeting resumed, the required guarantee came in.²⁴ Then there was another round of impassioned speeches, as one by one the councillors explained their final positions. The eventual tally was 12-4 in favour.²⁵ Much relieved, the bid's supporters quickly moved to the mayor's office, where while champagne corks popped, the IOC contract was signed.²⁶

¹⁹ See Susan Pigg, "Games bid barely over the starting line", Toronto Star, January 30, 1990 and Jim Byers, "Putting Olympics in Focus", Toronto Star, February 3, 1990.

²⁰ For example, BNC prepared its own anti-bid book and mailed it to every IOC Member. See Stop playing games with Toronto: the People's Anti-Olympic Bid Book (Toronto, 1990).

²¹ See the editorials, "On the dotted line", Toronto Star, January 31, 1990, "Olympic guessing games of 1996", The Globe and Mail, Feb. 3, 1990; and "A view from Vancouver: An Olympic re-run?", Toronto Star, Feb. 3, 1990. A full clipping file on the bid is contained in Toronto Public Libraries, City Hall Branch.

²² E.g. Randy Starkman, "Olympic bid's 'pit bull' raises council's hackles", Toronto Star, April 1, 1990.

²³ William Walker, "Ottawa scrambles to save Games bid", Toronto Star, April 10, 1990.

²⁴ The last-minute crisis also enabled the City to settle several other long-standing disputes with CN.

²⁵ Except for one oppositional councillor who was out of town, the positions were unchanged from January.

²⁶ Department of the City Clerk, City of Toronto, "Toronto 1996 Olympic Bid--Commitments Respecting Venues, Olympic Housing and Financial Support", April 13, 1990.

Only Bread Not Circuses continued its opposition after the April vote, eventually sending two protesters to the IOC meeting in Tokyo. On September 6, just 12 days before the IOC vote in Tokyo, Ontario voters surprised themselves and the country by electing their first NDP provincial government. The new government immediately decided to continue the bid. “Our only reservation about the Olympic Commitment was that the other guys couldn’t be trusted to deliver,” one senior strategist told me. “But with our people, we have a chance.” That chance never came, as the IOC chose Atlanta.

Did Toronto’s public debate harm the city’s chances of winning the Games, as some have suggested? Certainly Paul Henderson’s constant denunciations of the process and those who opposed the Games gave the impression of disunity. Perhaps some IOC members were dissuaded by what they heard. But the question needs to be turned on its head: Could Toronto have had a Games bid without a full public discussion and an accountable process? The answer is clearly no.

I am confident the social impact assessment and the wide-ranging discussion actually won (or confirmed) a measure of support for Toronto. A number of the IOC members who came to inspect the city during the final year of bidding, from fledgling and well established democracies alike, told me how much they admired the extensive public review process and how it served as a model for other cities. The bid greatly benefitted from the planning and government guarantees which were undertaken in response to the public participation process. If the Games had been awarded, valuable lead time would have been gained and a broad public consensus around what needed to be done would have been in place. The process also contributed to the future planning for the city. In its final report to Council, the heads of departments urged Council to “reaffirm the goals of the Toronto Olympic Commitment as appropriate for the city to achieve.” Although southern Ontario is in the depths of a recession, the city already has approved a gender equity program for girls and women in sport and recreation as a result of the bid.²⁷

Future bids

The decision in Tokyo cost the IOC a good deal of credibility, however, as journalists, politicians and sports fans around the world wondered out loud about the influence of Coca Cola in the closed doors vote.²⁸ If its 1991 session in Birmingham is any guide, the IOC seeks to answer its critics by involving athletes and the international federations in the choice of future sites. But if the bidding cities are to be protected, other steps will be necessary. Some have proposed the electoral safeguards familiar to many western democracies, such as time and audited expenditure limits on official bids, and a public voting process. In a post-

²⁷ See Committee of Heads Olympic Task Force, “Action Plan for Post Olympic Bid Benefits”, February 14, 1991. The gender equity program was approved by Council on April 28, 1991.

²⁸ E.g., Terry Edith, “Games decision linked to greed”, The Globe and Mail, September 18, 1990; and David Miller, “IOC feels pressure as credibility is at stake”, (London) Times, December 12, 1990.

Tokyo submission, TOOC recommended that the IOC establish a system of zones throughout the world, and restrict bidding for each Games to cities from one zone.²⁹

I would go further and suggest that the IOC require each candidate city to conduct a social impact assessment and a public consultation before submitting its bid. The obligations of the host city are growing with each Olympics, while the IOC is taking more and more of the revenues for its own purposes.³⁰ Entire communities--not just sports people--are affected by hosting the Games, and the calculation of social costs and benefits is no easy matter.³¹ At the very least, the decision to bid should be made in the context of full public information and widespread consultation.³² To do otherwise is to risk the continuing spectre of protesters at the time of the Games and the very legitimacy of the Olympic project's humanitarian mission.³³ The IOC must ensure that a Games bid represents more than the elites.

That it can be done is the lesson of the Toronto bid.

²⁹ Presentation to the Executive Board, January 1991.

³⁰ Richard W. Pound, "Financing future Games", presentation to the International Symposium on Sport ... The Third Millennium, Quebec, May 21-25, 1990. One member of 1988 Winter Olympic organizing committee has estimated that if the 1996 formula were in place for those Games, Calgary's \$85 million surplus would have been a \$15 million deficit.

³¹ See, for example, Neal Pierce, "Atlanta Olympiad Raises Tough Questions About Housing the City's Poor Population", The Washington Post, June 22, 1991; and Ezawa Masao, "Leveling Nagano to Lure the Olympics", AMPO Japan-Asia Quarterly Review 22 (2-3), 1991, 56-58.

³² This was also the conclusion of Ontario Olympic Secretariat, Ministry of Tourism and Recreation, An Analysis and Report on the Toronto Ontario Bid for the 1996 Summer Olympic Games (Toronto, 1991). The report was highly critical of Henderson.

³³ I share John Hoberman's view that the "worst crime in Olympic history (was) the Tlatelolco massacre of October 2, 1968", when the Mexican Government slaughtered several hundred protesters against the Games; The Olympic Crisis (New Rochelle, NY: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1986), 1. For the Seoul protests, see Craig Mulling, "Dissidents' Perspective of the 1988 Seoul Olympics", Koh Byong-Ik et al. (Eds.), Toward One World Beyond All Barriers (Seoul: Seoul Olympic Anniversary Conference, 1990), Vol. 1, 394-407.