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Security budget for Olympics soars to \$900 million

The security budget for the 2010 Winter Games and Paralympic Winter Games in Vancouver has ballooned to \$900 million, more than five times the original estimate, but experts say the original \$175 million budget did not come close to taking into consideration the full scope of the event.

The revised security budget and cost-sharing agreement was released Feb. 19 and includes a \$137 million contingency budget. The bulk of the funds are going to the Department of Defence, Transport Canada, RCMP and Canadian Security Intelligence Service.

Under the provisions of the new financing arrangement, the Government of British Columbia will pay the remaining portion of its \$87.5 million commitment by March 31, 2009, and increase its commitment for the joint staging of the Olympic Games by an extra \$165 million through an increased share of joint federal-provincial major infrastructure costs over the next three years.



Artist's rendering of Olympic and Paralympic Village Vancouver

By consequence of these agreements, British Columbia's contributions are equivalent to \$252.5 million of the cost of securing the 2010 Winter Games. The federal government will pay the remaining \$647.5 million, and assume the remaining costs and any additional unforeseen costs in the development and delivery of security operations for the Games.

"As hosts of the 2010 Winter Games, we are committed to providing a safe and secure environment for athletes, visitors and Canadians," said Peter Van Loan, Minister of Public Safety in a statement. "The Government of Canada and its partners have a comprehensive approach to security planning, and we are on track to host a secure Games."

"Our objective is to deliver a safe and secure Games, so that what people remember is the excitement of the competition and

the celebration — and not any questions of security," said Van Loan.

Despite the significant increase over the original security budget of \$175 million, experts say it's not a surprise.

"Any security professional would not be

surprised at the number, given the software and hardware needed and the manpower and integration of services that will be required," said Gene McLean of McLean Security Advisory & Associates Inc., based in Toronto.

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McLean, who consulted with officials on the 1994 Lillehammer Olympics in Norway, is also the former CSO for Telus and a former RCMP officer, says the security budgets for Olympics in Turin, Italy and Athens, Greece were in excess of \$1.4 billion.

"I think \$175 million was a very limited view of what the budget would look like," said McLean, pointing out that as Vancouver is a port city and sits on the border with the U.S., there will be additional measures taken to secure crossing points during the Games.

As the Winter Olympics will demand a heightened level of security, the budget is not out of line, says Terry Hoffman of Hoffman & Company Security Management Consultants.

"Inaccurate estimates and cost overruns have been part of the Olympic history for decades," said Hoffman. "The B.C. security consortium will be dealing with insufficient infrastructure, manpower, overtime requirements while installing the most up-to-date security and readiness technology."

Concerns about terrorism will be at the top

of the list, says McLean, noting that even the mention of a terror threat could throw security operations into overdrive.

"Should Osama Bin Laden speak from the cave and merely mention the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver this would have a major impact

on evaluating the 'risk', which could very well heighten the security level, which would draw upon additional personnel, more stringent processes and all of this will increase the dollar cost."

—Jennifer Brown

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