

# 19 per cent of Olympic tickets raffled to students

UBC purchased 442 Olympic tickets, and the way in which they've been distributed have left many students out in the cold.

The 2010 Olympics are less than five days away, and spectators and the provincial government have dished out millions of dollars for Olympic and Paralympic tickets.

As a venue host for the Games, UBC has purchased and distributed tickets to various stakeholders on campus. Of those, 82 tickets (19 per cent), were allocated to UBC students.

The rest of the Olympic tickets were allocated to six groups: 98 tickets were given to staff and faculty, 118 for UBC Alumni Affairs, 58 for UBC executives and the Board of Governors (BoG), 18 for the 2010 Secretariat, 34 for UBC Athletics, and 34 for the University Neighbourhoods Association (UNA).

In addition, all of the tickets were for events at the Doug Mitchell Thunderbird Winter Sports Centre, home of men's, women's, and Paralympic sledge hockey. The information was disclosed after queries from freelance journalist Stanley Tromp.

According to the Vancouver 2010 website, an "A" ticket to women's ice hockey preliminaries at the Doug Mitchell Thunderbird Winter Sports Centre costs \$75. An "A" ticket to the men's ice hockey quarterfinals is the highest price at the on-campus venue at a price of \$300, and an "A" ticket to the gold medal ice sledge hockey game is \$50.

## Student distribution

"The tickets were allocated across several groups on campus....In an ideal world, we'd love to be able to offer many more tickets than we were able to," said Michelle Aucoin, Director of the UBC 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Secretariat.

Each group was responsible for distributing those tickets as they saw fit, explained Aucoin. The \$40,000 for the tickets was an amount set aside in her department budget.

Associate Director of Student Development Chad Hyson and the Student Olympic Collaborative (SOC) were responsible for distributing the tickets to students. They did so through raffles, contests and draws, such as a photo contest and an essay contest.

"I think the [SOC] was really conscious around the idea of not finding themselves in the position where they were giving groups tickets," Hyson said, "but really trying hard to

use them in a way that would engage students in Games-related activities...[so] students had equal access to win.”

“They were really looking for events that were open to all students on campus,” said Hyson, citing the Student Leadership Conference and the upcoming Torch Relay as examples.

First-year Commerce student Michelle Qi said that she heard about the contest through her residence. “If all your floor members all signed something, [you could have] won tickets....It was just encouraging everyone to do a survey,” she explained.

Ten out of the fourteen students randomly surveyed in and around the SUB on Friday afternoon did not know Olympic tickets were up for grabs. There were mixed feelings on whether they would have signed up.

First-year Law student Zack Ng didn’t know about the raffle. “I think that UBC is rather decentralized in terms of student life,” he said. “I’m not surprised. Maybe they could have done more about it, but I wouldn’t have known about it anyway.”

The AMS was not given any tickets. Outgoing AMS President Blake Frederick said that he had not even heard that the university purchased any or allocated an amount of tickets to students.

UBC’s VP Students office is currently conducting a survey on academic experience, where students will be entered in a draw to win Olympic tickets.

### **Mixed givings**

BCIT and SFU also obtained Olympic tickets. Both institutions raffled off all of their tickets to students, staff and faculty, reported *The Globe and Mail*. UBC only distributed a limited number of their tickets in this manner.

The UNA used contests, raffles and draws to give away their Olympic tickets. A household could only win once, and the draws were widely advertised through the residents’ program guide that is sent to all homes twice a year.

Alumni Affairs disseminated the tickets via a “stewardship strategy,” or from a list of individuals who had done significant work in alumni and student engagement. UBC Athletics used a similar approach, giving tickets to alumni and partners.

“We wanted to do something for alumni who have come back and helped out...given something back to UBC,” said Chris Petty, Director of Communications at UBC Alumni Affairs.

Representatives from both groups said that they decided against giving away the tickets via lottery because there was a limited number allocated to them.

“When we collected the names...we had about as many people as we did tickets,” Petty explained.

The UBC executive and BoG members were given tickets, and Board members got two tickets each.

“It’s not like we’ve been blocking off 50 per cent of the tickets,” said Aucoin. “Each member of our Board of Governors is going to get to go to one game.

“I don’t think that that’s an unreasonable expectation, that members of our Board have an opportunity to understand what the Games mean to the university and they have the chance to represent the university as ambassadors.”

### **Declining free tickets**

Not all university administration accepted the tickets. UBC VP External, Legal and Community Relations Stephen Owen was one such individual.

“I didn’t want any appearance of preference,” Owen explained. “I was happy to let other people share the tickets who have attributed [sic] more to [the Games] than I have.”

Owen feels that UBC’s distribution of tickets was done fairly. “Michelle has created a really balanced availability of tickets to various parts of the UBC community...and they have each come up with their own plans of how they could most fairly distribute them,” he said.

The provincial government spent about \$1 million to purchase 3200 Olympic tickets, with 200 of those given to MLAs and ministers. David Cadman, Vancouver City Councilor, declined tickets to the Opening Ceremonies.

He feels that UBC administration should have done the same.

“If there are people in the administration who are going to these events simply because of their position, then I would question that,” he said.

“Those are the people, quite frankly, who are paid the most and can easily afford to pay for their tickets,” he added. “Why would the university use public dollars to subsidize their participation?”

Aucoin argued otherwise. “I think the university is in a unique situation, compared to many of the other government situations.”

*With files from Sarah Chung and Roel Moeurs*

Ubysey Editorial, Feb. 8, 2010:

## 'Cause we don't have a golden ticket

We've sat through the years of Olympics-related construction. The only information session we were given about the Olympics happened months before anyone on campus started to care. And since then, communications from the university informing us about the Games have been essentially non-existent.

But hey, the Olympics are finally here, that means we'll finally get our payoff, right? All our inconvenience will be rewarded with a giant celebration? Isn't that how it works? Well, only if you went out and paid for your own tickets, because it seems like UBC would rather you didn't attend.

The university purchased 442 Olympic tickets at \$40,690. There's nothing wrong with an organization purchasing a mass amount of tickets, as long as the various stakeholders in it see the benefits. But UBC has allocated only 82 tickets to be given away to students. Alumni have gotten 118. *Former* students have received more tickets than *current* students.

BCIT and SFU also purchased Olympic tickets, which they raffled away to their students, staff and faculty. Unlike at UBC, none of these were given to administration, former students or stakeholders. Students are feeling the impacts of the Games more than any other university students in the Lower Mainland—we've already seen road closures and fields paved over—yet we're the least likely to get into the Games?

Imagine if your landlord decided to throw a party in a house you were leasing and not only took forever to tell you the details of when it was happening or what to bring, but made it clear that *you weren't invited*. Worse, imagine you were handed a mop to clean up after the party, then found out all of the house's former tenants and your friends were invited.

Most of those few tickets that were given out to students were not made common knowledge. The VP Students office just sent out a mass e-mail survey to all students with the chance to win Olympic and Paralympic tickets, but it seems a little late at this point, doesn't it? The only other tickets that were given out to students were the ones given to Associate Director, Student Development Chad Hyson and Student Olympic Collaborative (SOC), a student group at UBC which promotes the Olympics, who distributed them as they saw fit.

The SOC was partly responsible for setting up raffles and draws to disseminate the tickets. They held a raffle at the Student Leadership Conference, a photo contest and a contest through a UBC Housing survey, to name a few. They also plan to give away some tickets during the Torch Relay. But the only way you would know about any of those is if you were following the SOC or going to the events they were working on. Unsurprisingly,

barely any students we asked knew that dozens of tickets were being given away to students. Not that this is atypical for the SOC—try finding out any details about their Olympic Torch Relay. It's less than a week away and they still haven't announced the main entertainment or even nailed down the event's time. There will be a "flash mob" that is about as spontaneous as tax season, though.

At this point, it's too late for UBC to do very much more for us when it comes to the Games. Students have already planned out their reading break; they're going to the celebrations, leaving town, or watching the events. The time for the campus to do much celebrating around a once in a lifetime event has come and gone, and that's sad. This is a campus whose biggest failing is a continual lack of student engagement, and if you want an example of how, this Olympics tickets fiasco is front and centre.

We're not saying that UBC intended to leave students out of the loop when they were planning for the Games. More than anything, it seems like they forgot we even exist.