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Jobs will skyrocket for 2010: OLYMPICS I Group says a 'construction guru' is needed to ensure projects finish on time

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Olympic construction will almost double the number of workers needed in institutional construction and road-building in B.C. and work must be tendered early if Vancouver is to be ready to host the 2010 Olympics.

That's the warning from Phil Hochstein, executive vice-president of the Independent Contractors and Businesses Association of B.C., who is calling for a "construction guru" to work with the industry in setting up a schedule that allows the numerous Olympic and related projects to be completed in time.

Hochstein said his association has estimated that between now and 2010, there will be \$6.5 billion worth of work in the institutional construction field, which covers public-sector buildings such as schools and hospitals as well as Olympic construction and related projects such as the rapid transit line to Richmond and the Sea-to-Sky highway construction.

The association tallied projects of \$20 million and more.

Hochstein also called on contractors and construction companies to hire trainees now so they will have the skills needed when the Olympic jobs begin.

"In 2006 our estimate of additional manpower needed is 13,860 additional workers and that's from a base of 16,000 workers," said Hochstein, whose association represents more than 500 member companies. "They don't exist at the moment and this is three years away.

"That's why we have to hire those trainees today -- we can't wait until 2006."

On a variation of "build it and they will come," Hochstein is telling association members to hire now and the building will come.

That's contrary to the industry norm of just-in-time hiring, where workers are hired for jobs as needed and laid off when the project is finished.

"In construction, you have a job, you find guys to hire, when the job's over, you lay off, but you can't do that any more," said Hochstein. "You have to start hiring trainees now.

"You can't wait for the job."

Hochstein said the tendering and construction schedule is also crucial and he said it is the task of the Olympic organizing committee to set up what he terms a "construction guru," to liaise with the industry.

"Because of this tremendous flow of work they need to schedule the work properly," he said. "It needs to be organized.

"If you don't tender smart it's going to make it expensive and difficult to complete."

Jane Burnes, spokesperson for the Vancouver 2010 transition, said that with the 2010 Olympic board just meeting for the first time this week, it is too early to respond to Hochstein's advice.

"We're in a transition phase right now," said Burnes. She said the board realizes time is of the essence.

"It's not that there is no work going on," she said, adding that while input from construction and other sectors is welcome, decisions can't be made until the organization is more established.

In responding to Hochstein's concerns, Premier Gordon Campbell gave assurances that work will begin early on Olympic construction to meet the scheduling demands.

Michael Geoghegan, president and chief executive officer of the B.C. Construction Association, which represents 1,700 corporate members in commercial, industrial and institutional construction, said his association is also worried that there will be a bottleneck as Olympic and related projects come due and, at the same time, the non-Olympic demands on construction continue.

But Geoghegan said he was reassured in a recent conversation with the premier that the government understands the issues.

"He [Campbell] made a point of saying there needs to be scheduling so we are not in a situation where the cost of projects is being unduly driven up because everyone is trying to do everything at the same time.

Illustration:

- Graphic/Diagram: Victor Bonderoff, Vancouver Sun / (Deadline 2010: Let the Games building begin)