



HOUSE OF COMMONS
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HARPER CONSERVATIVES SQUANDER WINTER OLYMPIC OPPORTUNITY

OTTAWA – Liberal MPs are decrying the Conservative government's stunning lack of foresight in the wake of their decision to cancel a major conference that would have attracted global business leaders to British Columbia on the eve of the 2010 Olympic Winter Games.

"Instead of using the Olympics to market business and investment opportunities in British Columbia, the Conservatives have just told the world's business elite to stay home," said MP Keith Martin, Liberal Critic for the Vancouver Olympics.

Mr. Martin was commenting on the discovery that the Harper Conservative government cancelled the Forbes CEO Forums, scheduled for February 2010 in Victoria, without offering the province a chance to host the event. The Forbes CEO Forums attract hundreds of the world's top business leaders, representing some of the largest companies in the world, each with over \$100 million in annual sales.

"Can there be a more striking example of the Harper government's short-sightedness?" asked Hedy Fry, MP for Vancouver Centre. "In order to save the \$1 million cost of hosting the conference, the Conservatives have thrown away hundreds of millions of dollars in potential economic growth for British Columbia."

"Expo 86's enormous economic legacy came from showing the world's investors the best that British Columbia had to offer," said Ujjal Dosanjh, MP for Vancouver South. "We're wasting a golden opportunity at a momentous time in our province's history."

This is only the latest Olympic blunder by the Harper Conservatives. Unlike a dozen other countries, the government has yet to commit to building a national pavilion to market Canada to foreign visitors at the 2010 games. This follows the example set by Prime Minister Harper, who refused to attend the 2008 Beijing Olympics, sparking a diplomatic row with China with harsh economic consequences for Canada.

"Marketing our province to the world during the Olympics should have been a no-brainer," concluded Mr. Martin. "The Harper government has let British Columbia down. What a terrible waste."

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