LABOUR GEOGRAPHY AND THE 2010 VANCOUVER OLYMPICS

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Introduction While there now exists a broad literature on the political economy of spectacles such as the Olympics and world fairs,1 very little of this research has dealt in depth with the role of organized labour in shaping and resisting such events. Using the 2010 Vancouver and Paralympic Winter Games as a case study, this paper focuses on the role played by labour unions in the bid for, and subsequent development and use of, Olympics facilities. Social justice activists in Vancouver had early on identified major problems with the Olympics, and began organizing before the city was granted the bid by the International Olympic Committee in 2003. The anti-Olympic movement put forth a number of wide-ranging criticisms, pointing to the misuse of public funds, the loss of civil liberties, the construction of Olympic venues on unceded Indigenous territories, the militarization of the police, and the installation of nearly 1,000 surveillance cameras. While there is some basis for the criticism that organized labour was largely absent from anti-2010 opposition,2 such an approach is far too simplistic.

Drawing on the labour geography approach first developed by Andrew Herod, this paper argues that both public- and private-sector unions in the province of British Columbia used the Olympic bid process to their advantage in order to strengthen their ability to intervene in the local political economy of the Greater Vancouver region. For organized labour, large-scale events such as the Olympics can result in major contracts for construction and services that secure work, expand membership, and improve wages and conditions. The emerging field of labour geography seeks to understand how workers, through their collective labour organizations, shape the geography of capitalism in ways that advance their interests against those of capital. Similarly, this paper attributes greater agency to unionized workers
in (re)producing urban and regional scales, and points to some conflicting interests both within and among unions in the province. In particular, the 2010 Olympics highlight some of the contradictions between public- and private-sector unions. These contradictions are largely expressive of the tensions between what David Harvey calls “managerialism” and “urban entrepreneurialism.”

The analysis presented here points to some of the strategies used by workers’ institutions to develop new scales and methods of organizing in response to the 2010 Olympics. The paper proceeds in five sections. Following an overview of the key arguments made by proponents of labour geography, the second section provides an analysis of the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games (VANOC). The third section looks at Concert Properties, a large development company in British Columbia that operates on union pension funds, showing its relationship to VANOC and local public-private partnerships (P3s). The fourth section documents the experience of the British Columbia and Yukon Territory Building and Construction Trades Council (BCYT-BCTC), a labour central representing 16 unions and 40,000 highly skilled craft workers in British Columbia and the Yukon Territory. The Trades Council, along with the BC Federation of Labour (BCFL) and the Vancouver and District Labour Council (VDLC), advanced spatial and discursive strategies in response to the Olympics to achieve a specific goal: a collaborative labour accord. The final section looks at the impact of the Olympics on the civic strike of affiliated British Columbia locals of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) in 2007. The strike allowed members of CUPE-BC to construct a coordinated “regional settlement pattern” involving the geographies of local municipalities in the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD).

 Labour Geography and the Olympics  The past several decades have seen much debate on the relevance of “scale” for theorizing processes of globalization and neoliberal restructuring. The phrase “politics of scale” was developed by Neil Smith to refer to the idea that geographical scales are socially constructed, but subject to change through social and political
contestation. From this perspective, the mobilization of social power is dependent on the spatial level at which social actors operate, such as urban elites, trade unions, and politically marginalized groups. The concept of scale is useful for understanding how social space is ordered and resisted, and “is also used theoretically to explain how real social practices are constituted in relation to each other.” Like Smith, Neil Brenner has been at the centre of discussions concerning urban governance in the context of neoliberal restructuring. Brenner argues that the rescaling of state institutions towards subnational regions has produced new forms of uneven development and urban governance. Whereas the Keynesian welfare-state is characterized by administrative uniformity and territorial equalization and centralization of decisionmaking at the national level, under neoliberal regimes “city-regions have become key institutional sites in which a major rescaling of national state power has been unfolding.” The main priority is enhancing the international competitiveness of cities and city-regions.

David Harvey identifies this shift as a general transition in urban governance from “managerialism” to “urban entrepreneurialism.” This shift denotes a move away from the management of urban areas within a framework of state-sponsored planning, to one characterized by competition between cities for economic success. In neoliberal discourse, the problem of cities is defined as a problem of economic decline and the need to free enterprise from state restrictions. As a result, cities have been forced to be more competitive, restrict their municipal welfare functions, and integrate with their surrounding regions. This heightened interurban competition for tourism resources prompts cities to become more entrepreneurial in their attempts to secure mobile flows of international capital. Urban campaigns to win mega-events such as the Olympics can be seen as a key example of this broader trend towards urban entrepreneurialism, not only as part of city branding strategies, but as an important way to leverage grants and resources from public and private agencies. Urban entrepreneurialism has as its centrepiece the notion of P3s, which involve a “traditional civic boosterism” integrated with “the use of local governmental powers to try and attract external sources of funding, new direct investments or employment sources.”
The neo-Marxist tradition in human geography has examined the numerous spatial manifestations of capital accumulation and class processes. By the 1980s, Marxist geographers were focusing primarily on understanding how capital attempts to shape the geography of capitalism in ways that facilitate accumulation. For instance, in his 1982 *Limits to Capital*, Harvey suggests that capitalism is inherently expansionary because “geographical expansion...provides a strong basis for sustained accumulation.” Capitalism is also inherently uneven, and, according to Neil Smith, this unevenness is “highly visible in the landscapes of capitalism as the difference between developed and underdeveloped spaces at different scales: the developed and the underdeveloped world, developed regions and declining regions, suburbs and the inner city.”

Neo-Marxist economic geography represented a step beyond the reduction of labour in neoclassical industrial locational studies to a mere “cost” in the production process. However, it continues to hold a static or monolithic view of labour under capitalism. With an empirical focus on the “firm” rather than workers, the approach situates “capital as the primary maker of the geography of capitalism,” and conceives of workers primarily from the viewpoint of capital, as little more than “variable capital, an aspect of capital itself.” The geography of capitalism is seen largely as the product of capital, while labour is assumed to be secondary to processes of spatial production. Andrew Herod argues that workers are not merely “class dupes,” but social actors who struggle to shape economic geography in ways that are advantageous to workers’ own interests. Herod’s recasting of workers as active makers of social space shows how they “actively produce economic spaces and scales in particular ways.” Thus, just as capital attempts to make and shape the material geographies of capitalism, similarly, “workers’ ability to produce particular spatial fixes at particular geographical scales and at particular historical junctures is an integral part of their self-reproduction.”

Herod’s labour geography approach was developed, in large part, in reaction to other geographers, such as Harvey, who have downplayed the agency of workers and their collective labour organizations. Thus, labour geography comprises an emerging and diverse body of research in the broader Anglo-American, Marxist-inspired tradition with roots in the work of radical economic geographers writing in the 1970s.
phers have contributed to Herod’s research agenda with several important case studies,\textsuperscript{18} Ted Rutherford and John Holmes argue that the little attention paid to capital can be restrictive because workers are not equal partners with capital in shaping the world. They write that “as an over-reaction to the earlier narrow focus on capital, at times labour geography has abstracted labour from the broader political economy of restructuring.”\textsuperscript{19} In other words, the emphasis on labour’s agency by some geographers needs to be tempered by considering broader macroeconomic forces. Apart from insights from labour geography, their analysis engages with the growing literature on the social production of scale and the neoliberal rescaling of political and economic institutions. Such a “political economy inspired labour geography” offers an important contribution to neo-Marxist approaches that tend to downplay labour’s agency in shaping capitalist geographies.

Another important case study in this respect is Steven Tufts’ examination of the different ways in which organized labour responded to the City of Toronto’s bid to host the 1996 and 2008 Olympics. Tufts begins his account by conceding that recent theoretical accounts of urban development in Toronto, especially that of Kipfer and Keil,\textsuperscript{20} have come a long way in explaining the significance of the Olympic Games as a central aspect of the city’s urban revitalization strategies. But whereas the Games embody many of the features of Toronto’s transformation into a competitive global city, labour’s contradictory role in urban development remains relatively unexplored. In recent accounts, “workers and their organisations are often neglected outright or relegated to a group of ‘community’ actors who have ‘failed’ to mobilise against the local capitalist state.” Drawing on Herod’s framework, Tufts suggests that by “figuratively and literally ‘building’ the competitive city,” boosterist unions must be repositioned as active participants in the Olympic bid process.\textsuperscript{21}

The Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union (HERE) Local 75, a local union representing 7,500 hospitality workers, used the Toronto bid as a platform to develop a strong voice in urban tourism. However, hotel and construction workers, dependent upon tourism and megaprojects for their income, have a vision of Olympic development that is much different from that of antipoverty coalitions, community groups,
and public-sector unions such as CUPE, all of whom are affected directly by the games’ fiscal and social impacts. The “entrepreneurial city,” Tufts argues, “is a product of both the demands of capital and the needs of workers.” Thus, labour is “not simply an oppositional actor failing to intervene meaningfully against urban capital and the local state. Rather different groups of labour are implicated in contradictory and complex ways, in both resisting and facilitating urban planning and development projects.” Hardly an apologist for business unionism, Tufts argues that the support of pro-Olympic unions does not simply mirror the position of the city’s boosters. Rather, such support can be a strategic choice aimed at creating new employment, strengthening future bargaining positions, and generating new organizing campaigns in nonunion sectors, such as construction and hospitality. This understanding of labour’s complex, pro-Olympics stance is crucial for any political position wishing to challenge Olympic boosterism from a more radical, antigrowth standpoint.

**VANOC and Growth Coalition Politics** The Olympic bid process powerfully symbolizes the transformative features of urban entrepreneurialism from an older municipal welfarist-bureaucratic mentality to one characterized by “dynamic” and “charismatic” business leadership. In a neoliberal context, the Olympics are envisioned as a great opportunity to solve some of the problems of economic decline and interurban competition, “especially in terms of creating a stimulus for changing the urban economy from an industrial to a service based economy as a powerful tool for creating a post-industrial image for the city.” From a related perspective, Erik Swyngedouw suggests that neoliberal globalization is actually a process of “glocalization.” For Swyngedouw, an economic-geographic rescaling has taken place since the 1970s, leading to a new economic articulation between different geographical scales. This process of “glocalization” is characterized by the growing power and influence of new local economic actors, such as elite-driven growth coalitions whose key aim is developing competitive, “world-class” cities. By lobbying elected officials and endorsing international events, urban growth coalitions weave together public and business elites into “a rentier class of local landowners allied with bankers, land developers, utility and other place-
based service providers in a coalition to promote growth.”

Mega-events such as the Olympics are viewed as an excellent opportunity for the growth coalition to publicize and promote its Olympic ideal by shaping media and public support. Thus, the Olympic city is also an “image-creation machine,” whose “symbolism, imagery, and visual metaphors are central to the global cultural economy of hallmark events.”

The major growth coalition in Vancouver, the Non-Partisan Association (NPA), included former Mayor (2005–2008) and Olympic-booster Sam Sullivan along with five other city councillors. The NPA was defeated during the 2002 Vancouver City Council election by the Coalition of Progressive Electors (COPE), a progressive coalition of community-based individuals and organizations. Larry Campbell was the city’s first mayor to be elected from the party. During the height of the campaign, Campbell promised that, if elected, he would hold a referendum on the Olympic bid. In 2002, Vancouver City Council decided to hold a city-wide plebiscite on Vancouver’s participation in hosting the games. The “Olympic Vote” took place on 22 February 2003, with a turnout of 46 percent and 64 percent voting in favour. While initially critical of the bid, Campbell later joined the Yes side and actively campaigned for it. With a broader base supporting the pro-Olympics side, the Vancouver 2010 Bid Corporation was better placed to market the Games than the NPA and, as a largely private-sector initiative, was able to secure strong public-sector support. The 2010 Bid Corporation was created in 1999 to organize and develop plans to host the Olympics, and has its origins in a group of private investors known as the Olympic Bid Committee, who organized Vancouver’s proposal in the late 1990s. By 1998, the committee had gained support from City Council and the provincial New Democratic Party (NDP) government of Glen Clark. After winning the Olympic vote in 2003, the Vancouver 2010 Bid Corporation was replaced by VANOC.

In the leadup to the plebiscite, the main opposition to the Yes side came from the “No Games 2010 Coalition,” which had a very limited budget by comparison. Its mandate was to create “an active mobilization against the Olympic bid,” and to promote “the collective vision of a just, democratic society that uses public funds for public priorities.” The overall strategy
of the No side included lobbying governments, staging demonstrations, and drawing media attention to Olympic opposition. The coalition argued that the provincial government committed millions of dollars to Olympics projects at a time when it was cutting social spending to balance its budget. Local activists and politicians representing Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside (DTES)—the “symbol of urban poverty in Canada”—situated the Olympics and Vancouver’s World’s Fair, Expo ’86, as part of a longer tradition of growth politics in the province. Around the time of Expo, many tenants were evicted from low-rent hotels to make room for tourists paying much higher rates.

In many cities, the construction of Olympics-related facilities and sports venues is often central to development agendas that displace low-income residents. In Vancouver, the urban poor and homeless of the DTES are geographically segregated, across False Creek from the Fairview area, historically an upscale district with expensive condos and restaurants. By the 1990s, neoliberal spending cuts forced thousands of low-income residents onto the streets. The outward diffusion of gentrification from the urban core has resulted in higher land and housing prices even for older, untransformed properties in areas like the DTES. Because of the 2010 Olympics, numerous Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels in the district had their value driven up by the boom in real estate prices and increasing land values, making developers and landlords more willing to “displace students, the poor and Aboriginal people in favour of more lucrative housing opportunities.” In addition to the No Games 2010 Coalition, activists in groups such as 2010 Watch, the Native Youth Movement (NYM), Olympic Resistance Network (ORN), the Downtown Eastside Residents Association (DERA), the Pivot Legal Society, and the Anti-Poverty Committee (APC) argued that Olympic development contributed to processes of homelessness, gentrification, and the colonization of unceded Native territories in the province.

**From Concert Properties to VANOC** While there is some merit to the argument that organized labour was largely absent from anti-2010 opposition, such an approach is far too simplistic from a labour geography
perspective. If organized labour was largely absent from the anti-Olympic movement, it was not absent from the Olympics. This section examines the notion of workers’ self-reproduction in order to probe different forms and factions of trade unionism in British Columbia. It looks at the process by which a number of private-sector unions in the province pulled together a group of pension funds in order to create Concert Properties, a development company with close ties to VANOC, the entity responsible for the planning, organizing, and financing of the 2010 Olympics.

Concert Properties began life in 1989 as the Vancouver Land Corporation (VLC), the creation of Jack Poole, David Podmore, and several union leaders. Until his recent death, Jack Poole was the chairman of VANOC’s board, while David Podmore is the former chairman of VANOC as well as president and CEO of Concert. Poole and Podmore created the VLC along with Bill Clark, president of the Telecommunications Workers Union (TWU), Wayne Stone, then administrator of the BC Carpentry Workers Pension Plan (CWPP), and Bruce Rollick, an actuary who, at the time, was working for several union-employer pension funds. The initial plan was to pull together a group of pension funds in order to create a development company operating solely for organized labour. The funds were to be used to rebuild the provincial economy and provide well-paid construction jobs for unionized members. This model, developed by Clark, Rollick, and others, led to 20 union pension plans pooling nearly $30 million to provide the initial capital to get the company started. With a new management team headed by Jack Poole, the City of Vancouver was especially interested in partnership, “since Vancouver had been losing its stock of rental housing through demolition and conversion to condominium development.”

In 1989, a deal was struck between the new company, VLC, and then-mayor of Vancouver Gordon Campbell (now the current Liberal premier of the province). In exchange for building 2,000 units of “affordable housing” each year, VLC was promised access to $48 million worth of public land. With this combination of capital from pension funds, city land, and a new management team headed by Poole, VLC was able to secure investors from the City of Vancouver, the NDP government, two banks, several property developers, and some private business interests (although pension funds
initially owned 75 percent of VLC).\textsuperscript{36} Provided it was wholly owned by union pension funds, the company was eligible to become a tax-exempt real estate corporation. As a result, VLC was restructured in 1992 and later renamed Greystone. The new company had only pension funds as shareholders, and the larger pension funds were represented on the board of directors by union leaders such as Ken Georgetti. At that time, Georgetti was president of the BCFL. Rafe Mair, writing in the \textit{Georgia Straight} in 1994, noted the relationship between Ken Georgetti, Gordon Campbell, and Jack Poole:

The Vancouver Land Corporation—VLC for short—[which] set up former Mayor Gordon Campbell to build low-cost housing on city land given them for a song, now sees itself in the casino game and is the major local player. One of the main players in the VLC is Ken Georgetti, head of the BC Federation of Labour. He’s there because much of the funding for the VLC comes from union pension funds. One need not point out that Mr. Georgetti has already talked his NDP buddies into taking, with taxpayer dollars, 16\% of the action. The VLC has a main mover—land developer. Jack Poole. Ah, you ask, is that the same Jack Poole who, a few years back, nearly ran for the BC Liberal leadership? The same Jack Poole who is a crony and long-time backer of former Vancouver Mayor, now Opposition Leader Gordon Campbell? You’ve got it! Same guy. Ken Georgetti later went on to join the Board of the Molson Indy, which was also founded by Poole.\textsuperscript{37}

By 1999, Greystone had formally changed its name to Concert Properties. At present, Concert’s board of directors is directly controlled by members of the trade union bureaucracy. When Vancouver won the Olympic bid in 2003, 13 of the company’s 17 members of the board of directors were working, or had worked full time in the trade union movement, including Ken Georgetti, who is now the president of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). Georgetti sat on the board for 15 years until he resigned his seat in July 2004. Moreover, the board currently includes other prominent labour leaders affiliated with the BCYT-BCTC, such as Tony Tennessy, retired president of the Operating Engineers Local 115, and Don McGill, secretary-treasurer of Teamsters Local 213.\textsuperscript{38} Tennessy, in particular, was a member of the board of directors of the Vancouver 2010 Bid Corporation and VANOC.
While Concert Properties is controlled predominantly by members of the trade union bureaucracy, the development industry is also well represented. For instance, as Board Chair and cofounder of Concert until his 2009 retirement, Jack Poole had a lengthy history in major real estate development in British Columbia. David Podmore is another major player in the province’s real estate industry. After Poole’s retirement, Podmore assumed the role of Board Chair and CEO, and as the former chairman of VANOC headed the Yes 2010 side in the leadup to the Olympic plebiscite in 2003. Previously, Podmore had been given the job of implementing the urban development plan for the land designated for Vancouver’s Expo ’86 in 1980. As president and CEO of the Pavilion Corporation, he developed and operated the BC Pavilion at the World’s Fair.

In 2007, the BC government appointed Podmore chairman of a board that merged the boards of two organizations that control several major Olympic venues—the BC Pavilion Corporation (PAVCO) and the Vancouver Convention Centre Expansion Project (VCCEP). PAVCO controls BC Place Stadium, where the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2010 Games took place, and oversaw an $800 million expansion to the Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre. The convention centre expansion was completed in the spring of 2009, and was taken over by VANOC for use as the Olympics’ international media and broadcast centre until after the Games, in the spring of 2010. Podmore replaced Ken Dobell, a government nominee and long-time adviser to Premier Gordon Campbell, who sits on the VANOC board and chairs the Finance Committee. With Concert as a “community contributor” to the committee providing “project management expertise,” Podmore was appointed as Team Leader of Venue Development, responsible for guiding preliminary planning for more than $600 million in new infrastructure proposed for the bid.

Due to the interlocking relationship between members of Concert and VANOC, anti-Olympic critics were quick to point to these links as the main reason behind the lack of any organized resistance to the Games within the ranks of the labour movement. For instance, the unofficial spokesperson for the anti-Olympic movement, Chris Shaw from 2010 Watch, told journalists during the 2003 city-wide plebiscite that “the fight had revealed a
coalition of trade unionists and NDP [New Democratic Party] apparatchiks working with the local business elites supporting the Yes side.” Writing of Concert, Shaw asked:

When the developers and their pals, hand-in-hand with the bought-and-paid-for politicians, wheeled the Olympic torch into view, didn’t you smell that rat? You did, but you shut up because you’re union and your bosses told you the Games would be good for jobs. You probably never thought twice about your pension funds bucking up Jack Poole’s Concert Properties, certainly not with labour bigwigs like Ken Georgetti and Tony Tennessy on Concert’s board of directors.

In another article, he wrote:

All of this goes a long way to explaining why, in spite of significant levels of individual opposition to the games, very little organized resistance has occurred: the unions and NDP follow the lead of Georgetti and Tennessy (the bid really began under former NDP premier Glen Clark), and have been locked in from the beginning. Opposition to the games is thus seen as anti-labour. First Nations leaders—paid to be on-side—decry opposition to the games as anti-native. Ditto the arts establishment. Ditto some anti-poverty groups.

Concert was certainly implicated in Olympic development projects, and along with a number of other major construction firms, was also a member of the 2010 Construction Leaders Taskforce—a self-anointed “Olympic Dream Team”—set up in 2003 to consult and advise VANOC on matters relating to construction. However, Shaw oversimplifies the complex role of labour in the bid process. For instance, the involvement of VANOC members in Concert Properties excluded it from bidding on the construction of the Olympic venues. In the provincial legislature on 5 October 2005, the Minister of Economic Development responsible for the Olympics, Colin Hansen, confirmed that the company “has not and will not be bidding on Olympic construction” because of the potential conflict of interest. Concert had earlier led one of five companies interested in bidding on the $875-million 2010 Olympics Athletes’ Village in the area of South False Creek.

Less than 24 hours later, however, the company withdrew after The Vancouver Sun reported that Poole is chairman of both Concert and VANOC. The
company had offered a letter of interest, but as Podmore recounts, “the city wanted us to participate…we said, ‘well if we participate we don’t want to be left out there when somebody raises the question, isn’t it a conflict?’”

Despite its benefits to some local unions, Concert has been criticized for its contradictory role in the wider labour movement. What the building trades unions view, quite narrowly, as self-reproduction differs from the perspective of many public-sector unions such as CUPE, whose concern for public services is more a question of “social” reproduction. By organizing against neoliberal spending cuts, privatization, and attacks on public-sector workers, the latter unions seek, more broadly, to sustain or perpetuate the role of the public sector. Will Offley, a public-sector union activist in British Columbia, suggests that Concert Properties must be understood as a manifestation of “workers’ capitalism,” “a specific form of capitalism whereby, using the savings of the members whom they’re supposed to represent, a group of trade union leaders have parlayed these savings into a complex and huge corporate empire, run on the same rules, and with the same goal—the accumulation of profit.” Workers’ capitalism is contradictory for the priorities of the working class as a whole, as the accumulation of capital implies the reproduction of a set of capitalist social relations predicated on the expectation of profits and the exploitation of labour.

In contrast to Offley’s critique, some defenders of Concert have noted that the company creates jobs for unionized workers as a form of social investment that targets only organized labour. For example, Jack Quarter and Isla Carmichael describe Concert as “a classic example of economically targeted investment, one of the primary forms of social investment. Arguably, Concert is the outstanding example in Canada and one of the most outstanding internationally.”

Offley, however, does not deny that large development projects create new jobs and organizing opportunities in nonunionized sectors. Rather, he argues that such processes of self-reproduction (i.e., the creation of jobs) are themselves part of the process of capital accumulation. What Quarter and Carmichael describe as Concert’s “social investment” is actually an integral part of labour’s self-reproduction. This includes locals affiliated with BCYT-BCTC. Through its development projects, Concert represents more
than 200,000 workers, has created more than 15.3 million person hours of on-site employment, and contributes to affiliated union pension, health, and welfare plans for members of the BCYT-BCTC.

Likewise, the 2010 Olympics were expected to create thousands of jobs and generate overall economic growth for unionized workers. Citing an economic study by the provincial ministry of Competition, Science and Enterprise, Concert president and CEO David Podmore estimated that the Games would generate up to $10 billion in direct economic activity, create 228,000 direct and indirect jobs across the province, and result in $2.5 billion in incremental tax revenues.\textsuperscript{51} The BCYT-BCTC (and the VDLC) was active in support for the Olympics precisely because of the purported economic benefits to its members. In the leadup to the Olympic vote in 2003, Podmore’s Yes 2010 side was supported by the Impact on Community Coalition (IOCC), a local NGO made up of tenants’ rights advocates and former members of the provincial NDP. The IOCC helped draft the “2010 Winter Games Inner-City Inclusive Commitment Statement,” a document that promised “reasonable wages and decent working conditions for any local worker producing Games related goods and services before and during the Winter Games.”\textsuperscript{52} The coalition was set up to act as an Olympic watchdog, to monitor employment and training issues surrounding development, and to make sure the Games were labour-friendly, and socially and environmentally sustainable. The statement was incentive for Wayne Peppard of the BCYT-BCTC and VDLC President Bill Saunders to sign on to the IOCC, lending significant labour support to the bid.

The preceding analysis of Concert Properties illustrates how, as cities and regions increasingly market themselves in the global economy, subnational politics have become more significant for workers and their collective labour organizations. The case of Concert highlights some of the barriers and opportunities for new organization in an era of neoliberal “entrepreneurialism,” as the company adopts the practices necessary for exploiting the new possibilities posed by the Olympics. As an integral part of the self-reproductive strategies of certain private-sector unions such as the building trades, the company creates jobs and brings economic benefits to affiliated union members. This phenomenon is not without its positive aspects, but,
as Offley suggests, Concert nonetheless represents a specific form of “workers’ capitalism” based on the accumulation of profit. While this critique is not incompatible with the geographies of trade unionism literature, at the same time the analysis of Concert as a form of workers’ capitalism overlooks some of the major tensions between the company and its allies in the BCYT-BCTC, VANOC, and local antiunion construction forces. As the next section shows, these tensions extended to the politics of local labour migration and Canada’s Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP). In opposing an open-bidding, industry free-for-all, the BCYT-BCTC, along with the BCFL and the VDLC, put forth a unique, pro-Olympics position with a certain degree of autonomy from nonunionized forces represented in VANOC and elsewhere. As a result, the labour central was partly successful in connecting their call for a “collaborative labour accord” with many of the problems arising out of previous Olympics, such as shoddy workmanship, “leaky condo” disasters, huge cost overruns, and the exploitation of temporary foreign workers.

The BC and Yukon Territory Building and Construction Trades Council

The governance structure of the BCYT-BCTC is determined by members of affiliated unions who select a delegate to attend an annual general convention. On 19 May 2002, members of the 34th annual convention gave their unanimous support to a resolution supporting the Olympic bid. A public opinion survey of its members was later conducted to determine levels of support. An Ideaworks poll through telephone interviews revealed that supporters outnumbered opponents by two to one. Gary Kroeker, BCYT-BCTC president and business manager for the Operating Engineers Local 115, reported that “more than 62% said new construction, specifically the building of new sports facilities, roads, transit and other infrastructure needed for the games, was the reason to support them.”

The Trades Council’s enthusiasm for the Olympics was not synonymous with the boosterism of the many corporate leaders, athletes, and government administrators who supported them for various other reasons. Rather, its philosophy of class collaboration echoes the classic Gomperist belief in the ideal of “gentlemanly” cooperation between labour and capital, employer
and worker. Gomperism is a craft-based form of unionism structured along craft lines and organization on the basis of skill. The ideology is not class conscious in the revolutionary sense, but “wage-conscious” in the sense of separation from, but partnership with, the employing class. Executive Director of the BCYT-BCTC Wayne Peppard described this strategy in an article from the Council’s newsletter Trade Talk entitled “YES to collaboration, NO to confrontation.” He wrote that “as we look forward to the next 10 years, we can expect to see up to $13 billion spent in BC alone on public infrastructure and Olympic venues.” Elsewhere, he made a comparison with the 2000 Summer Games in Sydney, Australia, and argued that “cooperation and collaboration won the day over competition and conflict. Here in BC, as well, we are going for gold!”

Along with trade unions in other Olympic cities, the BCYT-BCTC participated in a number of global solidarity campaigns that transcended local-based interests in favour of bringing attention to international problems for workers arising out of the Olympics, including wage rates and acceptable working conditions. This expression of solidarity with other workers at different geographical scales has allowed organized labour to, in part, respond effectively to capital’s Olympic strategies. Scale is important for understanding the geographies of labour, first because “different social actors’ interests in different spatial configurations make scale production a political project,” and secondly because unions use scalar political strategies to achieve their particular political objectives. The BCYT-BCTC drew on the lessons learned by their counterparts in Sydney, Australia, who made significant gains in 2000. At Sydney, a Project Labour Agreement (PLA) between government, labour councils, and unions set out shared objectives and dispute resolutions, resulting in the overall cooperation of construction unions and employers. In a similar manner, the collaborative “community approach” endorsed by the Trades Council sought to establish “a tripartite collaborative agreement between labour, organizing committee and government.”

The BCFL cited the Sydney Olympics as “the first unionized Olympics” because specific unions were granted special contracts. On average, union workers received pay rates that were 15 percent above normal market condi-
tions, and those who worked on Olympic sites received free transportation and meals, as well as an attendance bonus of $1.50 for every hour worked. Moreover, the Trades Council envisioned the 2010 Games as an excellent opportunity to provide necessary skills training and to organize local First Nations people and nonunionized workers in the construction industry. The collaborative agreement was also favoured by Bill Saunders, president of the VDLC. Saunders was in contact with the New South Wales Labour Council in Australia to discuss the Sydney labour accord in 2004, and similar meetings were sought out with Alan Ritchie, the General Secretary of the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians United Kingdom, after learning that London was successful in its bid for the 2012 Olympics.

Despite the official rhetoric of Olympic collaboration, the BCYT-BCTC and the BCFL maintain a distinct separation from both the state and the nonunionized private sector. For example, the call for an Olympic labour accord was contested by government officials, VANOC, and local antiunion construction forces, led by Phillip Hochstein of the Independent Contractors’ and Businesses’ Association (ICBA), who is also the Chair of the 2010 Construction Leaders Taskforce. However, their differences stem not from any resistance from the BCYT-BCTC and the BCFL to the Olympics more broadly, but from the competition that arises in capitalist economies when more than one producer tries to sell similar products to the same buyers. The BCYT-BCTC and the BCFL have opposed the idea of an open-bidding, industry “free-for-all,” and have lobbied VANOC officials to negotiate a project labour agreement. Hochstein responded to this call by stating that it was:

Nothing more than a blatant attempt to rig the construction race for the unions before it begins...For the BC Fed to propose an Olympic labour agreement that would give the inside track to union only companies that account for only 20 percent of the market is like buying fire insurance from an arsonist. It won't guarantee anything except higher construction costs for all British Columbians.

The relationship between BC labour institutions and VANOC had been rocky from the start, as Executive Director of the BCYT-BCTC Wayne
Peppard recounts: “We sat down at the beginning during the bid process and tried to negotiate an accord with VANOC, but they dropped us like a rock. We think we could have set standard wage conditions that would have greatly benefited the taxpayers.”

In addition to Sydney, Wayne Peppard’s call for a “community approach” drew on the experience of Vancouver’s Expo ‘86. Despite high levels of unionization in the construction industry at this time, union and nonunion workers clashed over access to construction work on Expo-related projects, and the Expo ‘86 Corporation awarded construction contracts to nonunion firms under pressure from the Right-wing provincial government of Bill Bennett. For the 2010 Olympics, Peppard argued that a labour accord was “the best way to avoid the type of free-for-all low ball bidding wars that lead to ‘leaky condo’ disasters, shady black-market wheeling and dealing, cheating on building materials, shortcutting workers’ regulations, shoddy workmanship and patch-work training.” Peppard’s endorsement of an agreement was supported by BCFL president Jim Sinclair. Sinclair pointed out that the 1996 Atlanta Olympics resulted in huge cost overruns, spiralling wages, building delays, and “severe” labour shortages, and argued that these problems “set off competition among construction firms for workers, which often quadrupled the wage bill.” In the fall of 2004, Stewart Acuff, currently with the AFL-CIO and former president of the Atlanta Labour Council, lent his support during a visit to Vancouver, where he recounted how the City of Atlanta wanted to exclude unionized workers from Olympic construction projects in 1996. Although an agreement was reached eventually, massive demonstrations, sit-ins, and a tent city by the Labour Council and local community activists in Atlanta threatened to disrupt the event.

In a number of ways, the BCFL used the Olympic bid to its advantage, and was active in its support for the BCYT-BCTC. The BCFL even started a campaign for a new statutory holiday to be held annually in February. Jim Sinclair showed his unequivocal support for the Games by suggesting that in 2010, the new holiday would ensure the opening weekend of the Olympics was a long weekend. (The Games would begin on Friday, 12 February 2010, and the holiday would fall on Monday, 15 February 2010.) Furthermore, when 14 workers were killed on construction sites in the
leadup to the 2004 Athens Summer Games in Greece, organized labour, including the BCFL, was quick to point out that a labour accord would have helped avoid future workplace accidents, the use of inexperienced workers, and poor safety regulations. Despite their warnings, however, tragedy struck in June 2006, when Mike Greer, a highly-skilled blaster working on the Sea-to-Sky Highway, was killed after the charge he was working on exploded. The BCFL called Greer’s death, which occurred during blasting for an Olympic access road, “the first fatality in construction for the 2010 Winter Games.” The incident was compared with the experiences of Sydney in 2000: “The entire Sydney Summer Games, a much larger project, was built with a single fatality. We have already had our first casualty. No more.” However, less than two years later, 22-year-old Andrew Slobodian died while working on the Canada Line rapid-transit project, after a crane flipped over along the Fraser River Bridge from Vancouver to Richmond.

Labour geography research has focused overwhelmingly on the scope of new forms of agency, such as the construction of place-based alliances with other workers across space. However, another strategy deployed by British Columbia labour institutions was to connect the Games to the local politics of labour migration. This strategy was irreducible to those actions of capital and local governments in support of worker migration. As Noel Castree argues, it is necessary to connect labour migration more “organically” with existing research on place-based workers. For Castree, “the geographies of labour migration need to become a more integral aspect of the labour geographer’s trade.” Labour geographers have focused largely on workers acting locally or regionally, or in cooperation with others at the national or international scale. As a result, there is an imbalance in recent research with respect to issues of worker migration, a global phenomenon that has affected labour institutions such as the BCYT-BCTC. The BCYT-BCTC discovered in the summer of 2006 that 40 foreign workers from Costa Rica, Columbia, Peru, and the Philippines doing tunnelling on the Canada Line were earning less than $5 per hour, six days a week, at a minimum of 60 hours per week. The workers were employed by the SLCP-SELI Joint Venture, a partnership between SELI Canada Inc., owned by Italian parent SELI, and SNC-Lavalin Constructors (Pacific) Inc., a subsidiary of SNC-
Lavalin. Canada Line spokesperson Steve Crombie responded to the controversy by saying that the project went to international bidding and that SELI won the contract due to “competitive wages.”69

The Costa Rican Workers Federation (CTRN) expressed its solidarity by sending a letter in Spanish to all Latin American workers involved in the dispute. Executive Member Mario Rojas Vilchez also paid a visit to Vancouver in order to meet with Ken Georgetti, Jim Sinclair, and the foreign workers. Georgetti was adamant that “we are not going to allow unscrupulous employers to exploit foreign workers or to try and slash the fair wages and working conditions unions have won in Canada…. The Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) will work with the international labour movement to protect workers’ rights and help all workers be treated fairly.” The company’s offer of $14 per hour remained discriminatory, according to Sinclair, because it amounted to four dollars per hour less than their Canadian counterparts.70 Members of the BC Government and Service Employees’ Union, the BC Teachers’ Federation (BCTF), the Hospital Employees’ Union (HEU), and the BCYT-BCTC rallied outside the tunnel project in October 2006 to show their support for the foreign workers.

The Trades Council worried that Canadian workers were being displaced by foreign workers under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) as a way for SELI and SNC-Lavalin to save money through exploitation. Mark Olsen, Business Manager of the Construction and Specialized Workers’ Union Local 1611 (an affiliate of the BCYT-BCTC), condemned the discriminatory practices, but later explained that “we are not opposed to foreign workers coming to Canada but not to be exploited and not to take jobs that should be filled by local workers.”71 Local 1611 filed unfair labour practice charges to the Labour Relations Board against SNC-Lavalin/SELI, alleging that intimidation and other tactics had been used to defeat a strike vote when members tried to secure their first collective agreement. By mid-November 2007, the BC Human Rights Tribunal found that workers had been pressured into severing ties with Local 1611, and were forced into signing a petition put together by company managers stating that they did not want the union to represent them.72

The response of British Columbia labour institutions to the issue of labour migration is one way in which organized labour developed its capacity
to respond to the Olympics and influence policy in the Vancouver region. This article has shown that perspectives from labour geography are necessary for theorizing the strategic creation of new scales of labour organizing and union responses to specific processes of economic restructuring. Yet even as these contributions explore the ways in which trade unions are rethinking strategies in an era of globalization, they have also pointed to challenges from both outside and within organized labour as it seeks to restructure and re-envision itself. This argument illustrates the tension between the public and private elements of the labour movement, and brings our attention to the role of public-sector unions in resisting and (re)producing the political economy of urban and regional scales. The next section provides an analysis of the BC division of CUPE, which has sought to block the onslaught of neoliberalism by mobilizing geographical scale in a number of strategic ways, including militant campaigns and strikes.

**CUPE-BC and the 2007 Civic Strike** The neoliberal transformation in urban governance from managerialism to entrepreneurialism in the last three decades is part of a broader class project reshaping society and state relations. While this transition is by no means complete, the 2010 Olympics were consistent with some of the policy shifts that have led to the identification of the “entrepreneurial” or “competitive” city. In 2001, restructuring in British Columbia was accelerated following the election of Gordon Campbell’s Liberal Party, and public-sector workers in the province have faced an array of neoliberal attacks, including spending cuts, deregulation, privatization, P3s, layoffs, contracting-out, and imposed collective agreements. Similarly, the 2010 Olympics amounted to a massive P3, which created profit for large corporations at the expense of public services. The province agreed to spend millions at a time when it has cut expenditures on health care, education, and social programs. In this sense, it is hardly surprising that public sector unions such as CUPE were not as supportive of the Games as their private sector counterparts.

For many years prior to the Olympics, however, there has been a deep-seated split in BC labour between public sector unions such as CUPE, the HEU, the BCTF, and some of the major private-sector unions, such as the Industrial, Wood and Allied Workers of Canada (IWA), the United
Steelworkers (USW), and sections of the building trades. The classic manifestation of this split occurred during the so-called Kelowna Accord that ended the Solidarity movement, a united front of labour and community groups, in 1983. Introduced as a legislative package of 26 bills in its 1983 budget, the Bennett government began plans to reduce the size of the public sector through a neoliberal attack on public-sector unions. In opposition to the government’s economic policy of restraint, a number of labour unions and other groups formed Operation Solidarity, along with the Solidarity Coalition, an allied, community-based organization. Tens of thousands of people participated in strikes and protests, and numerous union bodies called for a general strike. However, the coalition was only partly successful in forcing the government to abandon some of its restrictions on public-sector collective bargaining. Under the leadership of Jack Munro, then-president of the IWA and Vice-President of BCFL, representatives of Operation Solidarity reached an agreement (the Kelowna Accord) that put an end to all public-sector strikes, with only minor adjustments to restrictions on bargaining rights. For critics inside the movement, Operation Solidarity ended in a betrayal better known as “Operation Sold Out,” with the powerful BCFL bureaucracy entering into the deal with the government, effectively ending the mass labour conflict.

At present, the British Columbia division of CUPE represents nearly 24,000 municipal workers across the province, and around half of these workers are employed in the communities making up Greater Vancouver. While 2006 saw nearly 300,000 government workers signing contracts ending in March 2010 in order to ensure “Olympic labour peace” during the games, most CUPE civic workers had been without a contract from December 2006 until the spring of 2007, when members launched a public campaign, called Fairness for Civic Workers, to help secure fair contracts. The union was opposing a proposal of the GVRD Labour Relations Bureau to reduce bargaining unit member rights, sick leave and benefits, and vacation and seasonal workers’ wages. Most importantly, workers were resisting the employers’ demands for a special 39-month contract and special management rights to accommodate the ongoing contracting-out of work during the Olympics. The affiliated locals representing neighbouring municipali-
ties in the GVRD were well prepared for a region-wide strike by July 2007, and soon afterwards, Locals 1004 and 389 issued a 72-hour strike notice with the Labour Relations Board. CUPE-BC President O’Neill sent a strongly worded letter to media and local politicians in the early summer of 2007. O’Neill warned of possible labour disputes and disruptions in the event of a refusal to negotiate fair collective agreements by the city:

We are on the brink of a major labour dispute and disruption of civic services in the Lower Mainland that you can prevent...the Bureau’s bargaining mandate is more influenced by Vancouver and the Olympics than it is by what is good for your community, vital public services or the workers that actually make your community work. For instance, no matter how remote your community’s connection to the Olympics, everywhere your bargainers are stubbornly demanding a 39-month contract, which cynically places civic workers negotiating their next contract precisely when the Olympics ends and the bills start rolling in. Of course, we are resisting this demand.77

The locals refused the contract because they anticipated that the enormous debt and cost overruns of the Olympics would act as an excuse to cut back spending on wages and benefits. It was widely believed that the suburban governments in the region would be left with the huge expenses (even though only the City of Vancouver had held a vote on whether or not to host the Games). Following the strike notice, CUPE 454 civic workers from the municipality of Delta overwhelmingly rejected the Board’s final offer. Delta workers did not want a Vancouver- and Olympics-driven bargaining agenda to be imposed on the municipality. Sam Sullivan, mayor at the time, accused CUPE of wanting a contract that expired before the Olympics in order to “shut the city down in the middle of the games.” Sullivan was quoted as saying that “I will never [sign an] agreement that allows the city to be shut down while two billion people from around the world are watching Vancouver at its finest hour.”78

Eventually the Delta workers, and those doing similar jobs in the surrounding municipalities of Richmond, Surrey, Burnaby, and North Vancouver, all reached agreements with their employers. However, locals from Vancouver, the area most affected by the Olympics, were denied the capacity to negotiate similar contracts. With locals 15 and 1004 in a position
to take strike action, Paul Faoro, president of CUPE 15, said that:

The City needs to get to the table prepared to bargain. We believe that they have acted very inappropriately, both legally and in terms of building a positive relationship with unions as we move toward the 2010 Olympics...This is shameful. The City is playing games instead of getting to an agreement that lets us all share the benefits of a strong economy and a vibrant city, where we are able to support and retain experienced workers and offer new workers a fair package.79

Following two votes, with 93.5% and 96% voting in favour of job action, CUPE 15 and 1004 went on strike. CUPE Local 391, which represents 770 workers at the Vancouver Public Library, soon joined locals 15 and 1004 on the picket lines. The strike was the first in their 77-year history, and came immediately after CUPE 394 reached an agreement with the City of Richmond involving a five-year agreement set to expire after the Olympics. The library workers were also concerned with wage parity between the mostly female workforce in the public libraries and the mostly male staff who work inside the city, as well as contract length and the use of volunteers during the Olympics.

During the strike, CUPE-BC was angered by the GVRD Labour Relations Bureau’s decision to hire corporate relations firm Wilcox Group to “pitch” its bargaining agenda. Rather than negotiating at the bargaining table, the City of Vancouver engaged in a costly public relations campaign. The high-priced “corporate communications and strategy consultants” have a clientele that includes the City of Vancouver and a partnership with the Vancouver 2010 Bid Corporation. Wilcox advertises itself as having a PR division “devoted solely to assisting corporate clients with all their 2010 Olympic and Paralympic endeavours.” When CUPE submitted a Freedom of Information Request (FOI), it learned that the July 2007 invoice for Wilcox Group services was valued at $50,000, “a bill that is paid for by Lower Mainland taxpayers and amounts to more than what the average civic worker makes a year.” The company is well known for its work on privatizing British Columbia’s healthcare and cleaning services industries, and has previously managed strikes and labour disputes for leading corporate firms like
Starbucks, Aramark, Telus, and media clients such as BCTV/CHEK TV/CanWest Global Communications, and the Pacific Newspaper Group (*The Vancouver Sun*). With locals in Vancouver still without a contract, the counteroffer put forward by CUPE established a wage and term of 17.5% over five years. The offer was agreed to by CUPE 15, 1004, and 391 because it was part of a “regional settlement pattern” first established in Richmond. The contract was deemed to be “fair and reasonable” because Richmond is the most comparable city to Vancouver in the Lower Mainland in terms of its size and “Olympic commitments.” In this case, the strategy of “coordinated bargaining” between locals in the GVRD had the advantage of delivering common contract expiry dates and coordinated timelines. After 88 days on the picket line, members of CUPE 15 returned to work on 11 October, having voted 73 percent to accept the recommendations because the mediator did not include “the laundry list of concessions the City of Vancouver was demanding.” Workers represented by CUPE 1004 initially rejected the recommendations of the bargaining committee, arguing that the offer did not match up with other negotiated civic deals such as those negotiated in North Vancouver District and the City of Burnaby. The proposal also fell short of what the mediator had offered CUPE 15 members, and continued to offer far too much employer flexibility in order to meet management labour needs during the Olympics. The parties eventually reached a tentative agreement after successfully “tweaking” the mediator’s offer. The “partnership agreement” was adjusted to include an expedited dispute resolution process and a system for assigning Olympic work. Local 1004 agreed to the improved deal in an 80 percent vote on 14 October, ending its 86-day strike. Five days later, the final strike ended when Vancouver public library workers voted 71 percent to accept a deal that sent all city employees back to work.

By developing structures of solidarity across space, locals in the GVRD resisted cuts and privatization during the strike by securing a coordinated “regional settlement pattern” that stabilized wages and working conditions across a specific geographical area. Through a labour-geographical lens, the 2007 strike highlights the agency of public-sector unions in reproducing
regional space through its resistance to neoliberal hegemony. This hegemony is not exercised purely in the economic realm—it also encompasses the cultural domain of symbolism and imagery associated with the “Olympic ideal.” Although its leading elements are composed mainly of growth proponents and coalitions, as the 2010 case demonstrates, a hegemonic, cultural formation is not simply imposed or dominative in character, but results from winning a certain degree of popular consent. The Olympics have developed over time as an accepted and dominant practice, and during the strike, members of CUPE-BC were able to connect the Olympics to “vital public services” and “making communities work.”

Although the 2007 strike did not rest on an anti-Olympic foundation, as a broader struggle against neoliberal restructuring this form of resistance does go beyond what Gramsci saw as the narrow, corporative interests of single unions or sectors. Gramsci used the term corporatism to indicate trade union activity that seeks to protect the sectional interests of a group, rather than the more general interests of society. If the Olympics were mainly about self-reproduction and job creation for the Gomperist trade unions, CUPE phrased its struggle largely in terms of providing quality public services. In the latter case, however, CUPE locals’ resistance to neoliberal hegemony was not secondary to processes of spatial production. On the contrary, the strike validates what Swyngedouw calls a “process-based” approach to scale, which states that “spatial scales are never fixed, but are perpetually redefined, contested and restructured in terms of their extent, content, relative importance, and interrelations.”83 As the CUPE example illustrates, scalar processes are also perpetually redefined and contested by the political strategies of labour unions. According to Holmes and Rutherford, capitalism “is never given, but subject to struggle and the agency of labour.”84 In other words, social space is not pre-existent or formed apart from class struggle.

**Conclusion** This paper has used perspectives from labour geography to understand the discursive and spatial strategies used by Vancouver’s labour unions in shaping local capitalist landscapes. As the case of the 2010 Olympics demonstrates, the labour geography approach offers a potential
solution to the relative absence of labour’s collective agency in neo-Marxist and other radical approaches to urban geography. The theoretical contribution provides a useful tool for looking at the differing strategies and actions of the BCYT-BCTC and CUPE-BC locals as they articulated their message, in a number of different ways, with the boosterism of the Olympic growth coalition. Three main conclusions can be drawn from this case study. First, the 2010 Games are indicative of how different factions of the labour movement did not just “resist” the Olympics project, but displayed significant agency in both facilitating and impeding its logic of capital accumulation. In the case of the building trades, their involvement in the pro-Olympic campaign was as a form of worker self-reproduction, a strategy of “retaining and/or attracting investment to their particular communities as integral to their own livelihoods within particular, spatially embedded contexts.” For CUPE locals in the city of Vancouver, resistance to neoliberal hegemony took the active form of a strike. The ensuing collective agreements helped impede the ability of the city’s bargaining committee to use the massive public spending and cost overruns associated with Olympic Games as an excuse for more privatization and cuts to wages and benefits.

A second conclusion that emerges from such a study is that workers and their collective labour organizations employed different spatial strategies in response to the 2010 Olympics. The BCYT-BCTC launched a campaign in response to the exploitation of foreign workers and actively lobbied in favour of the Olympics, as a strategy for achieving a collaborative labour accord. While the call for an accord was highly contested by the nonunionized construction sector, the Trades Council, along with the BCFL and the VDLC, frequently pointed to some of the benefits of cooperation, as seen in the case of Sydney 2000. In partnership with unions from other Olympic cities, they utilized a number of strategies for facilitating new scales of international organizing. For their part, CUPE locals were successful in securing a civic “regional settlement pattern” that stabilized wages and working conditions across the GVRD. Through a strategy of coordinated bargaining, striking locals argued that CUPE was able to negotiate similar union issues in municipalities throughout the region, but not in the city of Vancouver, the area most affected by the Olympics. After nearly three months on strike,
the parties reached an agreement that was similar to what other CUPE locals negotiated and ratified throughout the region, adjusted to include a flexible system for assigning Olympic work.

Lastly, the different spatial strategies utilized by British Columbia unions in response to the Olympics contributed to a further deepening of some of the longstanding divisions within the British Columbia labour movement. The 2010 Games, in particular, points to some of the contradictions between public- and private-sector unions. The ideology and practice of the Gomperist unions differs significantly from the social-unionist perspective of many public-sector unions such as CUPE. Such conflicts between private- and public-sector workers in resisting or facilitating mega events is largely expressive of many of the tensions between what Harvey calls managerialism and urban entrepreneurialism. While the BCYT-BCTC had ties with, and actively supported, the local growth coalition driving the Olympics, this boosterism differed from the support of local elites and growth proponents. Moreover, as the percentage of unionized employment on British Columbia construction sites continues to decrease, the example of VANOC and Concert Properties illustrates some of the strategies of survival used by private-sector unions in a climate of neoliberalism.

Directly affected by the social and fiscal effects of the Olympics, CUPE locals frequently highlighted the need for members to ensure quality public services during the course of the Games. While CUPE’s 2007 strike can be seen as a mode of labour struggle that goes beyond the narrow, corporatist interests of single unions, this resistance did not rest on an anti-Olympic, or even anticapitalist, foundation, and, as such, CUPE’s actions during the strike were vastly different from, and cannot be reduced to, those of the loose coalition of antipoverty groups and neighbourhood organizations, such as the Anti-Poverty Committee (APC) and the Downtown Eastside Residents’ Association (DERA), environmentalists, and Indigenous activists, who came to oppose the 2010 Olympics for its potentially negative impact on local communities. In this case, the problem was not that members of CUPE looked horizontally to other affiliated locals in the region, but that they did not consider moving their struggle beyond the organized working class. The presence of these groups in local anti-Olympic activity suggests
that the contradictions of the labour movement go beyond the conflicting interests of public- and private-sector unions. If the Games themselves contributed to processes that are posing significant social and environmental costs to the city, the support of labour unions for the Olympics, however tacit, does not reflect the needs and priorities of the working class as a whole. This points to the greater need for British Columbia- and Vancouver-based unions to engage more broadly in “social movement unionism” by building coalitions and place-based alliances, forging new forms of solidarity, and creating stronger links with local communities.

Notes

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20. S. Kipfer and R. Keil, “Toronto Inc.? Planning the Competitive City in the New Toronto,” *Antipode* 34/2 (2002), pp. 227–264. Drawing on the ‘global city’ literature, growth machine theory, regionalist theories and neo-Gramscian approaches, Kipfer and Keil suggest that Toronto is best characterized as a “competitive” or “entrepreneurial city” where, in many cases, policies are designed to foster a competitive, probusiness environment. The competitive city model accounts for much of the promise the Olympics were thought to hold in accessing media attention and establishing the infrastructure needed to make Toronto a world-class “tourist city.”


33. In 2007, a report by the Pivot Legal Society, a DTES advocacy group, warned that if nothing was done, the number of homeless people on the streets would triple by 2010, noting that a total of 1,314 rooms had already been closed or converted since the city won the Games in 2003. The group reported that the number of low-cost housing units in the city was facing a crisis, and called on the government to spend the money needed to build 800 social housing units annually for the next four years. See CBC News, “Olympics Making Vancouver Housing Crisis Worse: Critic,” (12 February 2007), <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/british-columbia/story/2007/02/12/bc-housing.html> (accessed 11 December 2008).


39. It is worth noting that Concert Properties pays $600 yearly in membership fees to be a corporate member of the Canadian Council for Public-Private Partnerships (CCPPP). Canada’s largest lobby group for privatization through public-private partnerships (P3s). David Podmore currently sits on the board of directors for the CCPPP, which has also included VANOC members Tony Tennessy and Ken Dobell. The construction of Olympic venues in the lead-up to the Games involved numerous P3 projects. In his keynote speech to the annual conference of the CCPPP in November 2003, BC Premier Gordon Campbell stated: “I couldn’t leave today without telling you how proud we are that British Columbia is home to probably the largest single public-private partnership initiative going in Canada right now; the 2010 Olympic Games. We sometimes forget when we talk about the Olympics that it is an enormous public-private partnership.” G. Campbell, “Address to P3 2003 Conference in Toronto,” (24 November 2003), <http://www.gov.bc.ca/premier/media_gallery/downloads/2003/nov2003_11_24_Address_to_P3_Conf_Toronto.pdf> (accessed 8 September 2008).

The CCPPP includes corporate members such as Aramark Canada Ltd., Compass Group Canada, and Sodexo. Recently, these companies have benefitted from the provincial government’s commitment to privatize the public sector by contracting out jobs previously performed by members of the Hospital Employees Union (HEU). The HEU is affiliated with CUPE.
a public-sector union that strongly opposes P3s. The CCPPP also includes Canadian giant SNC-Lavalin, which was directly involved in the construction of the Canada Line, formerly known as the Richmond-Airport-Vancouver (RAV-line), a $2.054 billion expansion of Vancouver’s SkyTrain elevated rapid-transit system that included expensive underground tunnelling and used overhead rail lines. While the line was not officially an Olympic project, it was seen as a critical mode of transportation for the flow of tourists and the expected crowds. The project was first rejected by former Mayor Campbell, until the provincial government made a $300,000 contribution to the project contingent upon a P3 structure (Sussmann, “Vancouver’s 2002 Municipal Election,” p. 171). Concert Properties was part of a consortium that had initially submitted expressions of interest in constructing the Canada Line in 2003. C. Smith, “Union Leaders’ Firm Backed Liberals,” Georgia Straight (13 May 2004), <http://mostlywater.org/union_leaders_firm_backed_b_c_liberals> (accessed 2 July 2010).


47. Cost overruns have pushed the project cost to $875 million, which forced the City of Vancouver to ask the province for permission to borrow $458 million to fund its completion. The BC legislature amended the Vancouver Charter, giving the City the borrowing power it required on development to house Olympic athletes. Critics were rightfully worried that the 250 social housing units promised as part of the Athlete’s Village—the affordable housing component—would face the axe due to the new cost overruns. See CBC News, “Latest Cost Overruns May Slash Social Housing in Olympic Village Project,” (16 February 2009), <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/british-columbia/story/2009/02/16/bc-olympic-affordable-housing.html?ref=rss> (accessed 15 March 2009).


49. Offley, “The P3 Files.”


51. See Podmore, “President’s Message.”

52. Ference Weicker and Company Management Consultants, Community Assessment of 2010


59. See "BC Construction Leaders Opposed to Special 2010 Union Deal.”


76. The Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD), the legal title for Metro Vancouver, is the inter-municipal governing body for the metropolitan area surrounding and including Vancouver.


81. CUPE, “CUPE 15 Delivers Counter-Offer to City of Vancouver: Calls City to Return to Table Independently or with Third Party to End Strike,” (27 August 2007), <http://cupe.ca/communications/CUPE_15_delivers_cou> (accessed 9 September 2008).


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164
