



Downtown UBC campus will host media in 2010

Provincial government funds centre to serve as many as 3,000 Olympic journalists

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The provincial government will convert a portion of the University of B.C.'s Robson Square campus into a massive international media facility to serve as many as 3,000 journalists coming to the Vancouver 2010 Winter Games.

The centre will serve members of the media who are unable to obtain accreditation by the International Olympic Committee for access to the main media facility at the Vancouver Convention & Exhibition Centre.

On Thursday, Annette Antoniak, the CEO of the B.C. Olympic and Paralympic Secretariat, confirmed that the government will spend upwards of \$1 million on the centre, which will be next to the provincial government's Olympic pavilion.

She also confirmed that well-known communications specialist Laura Ballance won the contract to fit out and run the 2600-square-metre facility, which will take over parts of the University of B.C.'s Sauder School of Business campus.

Antoniak said the province's "unaccredited media centre" follows a long tradition of host cities offering facilities to journalists who represent daily and weekly newspapers, radio stations and broadcasters but who don't qualify for the limited number of IOC passes.

Those journalists often produce stories that cover the tourism, industry and economy of the host city and country, she said.

Ballance, who until Wednesday was a partner in Curve Communications, said her new company, Laura Ballance Media Group, plans to build a high-tech facility that will include editing booths, access to real-time Olympic results, and Internet-enabled desks.

Antoniak said the province surveyed international journalists and examined similar unaccredited media centres at the 2002 Salt Lake and 2006 Turin Winter Games and the

2004 Athens Summer Games. One immediate improvement she said Vancouver will make will be to offer free Internet access to any journalist.

"We want to really make it an environment that is inviting and fun and create a mood that is different than what we've seen in the past," she said. "We want to make it easy for the media who are not able to get into the venues."

Antoniak said she's also working with the Vancouver Organizing Committee to put in a staffed information desk that can help reporters who are covering events but have limited access.

Ballance, who started Curve with partner George Affleck seven years ago, put in the bid under her own name with two new partners, Proshow Audiovisual, which has long provided government audio and visual services, and **GLOBE Foundation**, which handles accreditation services for the biennial GLOBE conference and produced the recent World Urban Forum in Vancouver.

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