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TOURISM BC *Update*

By Sheliza Mitha

BC's Tourism Industry Seizes Opportunity for Gold

Now that the 2006 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in Turin are over, it's natural for the curious eyes of the world to turn to us - the future host city, province and country for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

So what are we doing to maximize our Olympic opportunity as we go for tourism gold? The answer is simple: travel media relations. It's something we do well.

Once we became an Olympic hopeful, Tourism BC's travel media relations efforts stepped into high gear - capturing the attention of media across the world. For instance, BC received more travel-related print media coverage in the US (totalling nearly \$55 million in advertising equivalency value) than any other Canadian province in 2005.

The 2006 Winter Olympic Games gave us the opportunity to accelerate our many travel media relations initiatives as the "media torch" was passed to BC. A case in point was BC Canada Place in Turin, an important provincial initiative coordinated by both the Olympic Games Secretariat and the Ministry of Economic Development.

BC Canada Place was a log home and exhibition centre built specifically for the 2006 Games. Situated in Turin's downtown core - minutes away from the medal ceremony podium - it was also strategically located next door to the unaccredited media centre.

At the 2002 Winter Olympics, Salt Lake City welcomed some 10,000 accredited media and more than 5,000 unaccredited media to its games. Similar media figures have been expected to

descend upon Turin during its games.

Tourism BC joined other tourism organizations and the provincial government in showcasing our destination to visitors and media during the 2006 Winter Olympic Games.

So how did we work together to engage the media in Turin? By making their jobs easier.

One key initiative created and coordinated by the provincial government, the Olympic Games Secretariat and the Ministry of Economic Development was the BC Canada Times newspaper - BC's very own travel publication for media and Olympic guests. Other efforts included the creation of daily "fresh sheets," the hosting of a Tourism Night, and providing satellite-fed B-roll footage of BC.

In order to convey how much BC looks forward to welcoming the world, the BC Canada Times newspaper featured various stories about visiting, working and playing in BC - covering everything from food and wine to skiing, surfing, golf, adventure and more. With some 5,000 unaccredited media situated next door and an anticipated 60,000 guests walking through BC Canada Place, the BC Canada Times distribution was immense.

"Having more than 5,000 media from across the globe on our doorstep, literally, provided us with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to familiarize ourselves with these journalists," said Mika Ryan, Manager of Travel Media Relations at Tourism BC. "In fact, we arranged for various travel media to visit BC immediately after the 2006 Turin Games to specifically inspire coverage at the next Olympic Winter Games."

In Turin, daily print-ready "fresh sheets" were also created that featured additional stories and

images of Super, Natural British Columbia in order to keep news exciting and fresh for the circulating media.

Realizing the immeasurable value of personal interaction, a meet and greet was organized to generate additional interest and coverage of BC. Known as "Tourism Night," the event offered selected travel media the opportunity to meet and interview provincial representatives, including Olga Ilich, BC's Minister of Tourism, Sport and the Arts, who served as official host of the event.

Beyond the friendly and knowledgeable staff at BC Canada Place, guests and media were also greeted by a breathtaking seven-minute show featuring BC and Canada.

B-roll footage was also made available via satellite for media to download and broadcast on their respective stations prior to the closing ceremonies.

"The presence of BC Canada Place and our access to the unaccredited media centre allowed us the opportunity to make personal business connections that would otherwise not have been possible," added Ryan. "And all of these efforts were undertaken with one goal in mind: setting the stage for BC as the next host for the Olympic Winter Games."

By working together as an industry in collaborative partnerships towards strategic initiatives, the 2006 Olympic Winter Games was another great opportunity to build on BC's tourism success.

For more information on Tourism BC's Travel Media Relations efforts, please contact Mika Ryan at 604-660-3762 or email Mika.Ryan@tourismbc.com.

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