

Session: **Workshop: Sport management and stakeholders - Panel session 3.**
Abstract nr: **EASM-0036**

Issues and strategies pertaining to the Canadian governments' coordination efforts in relation to the 2010 Olympic Games

M. Parent¹, B. Leopkey¹, C. Rouillard²

¹University of Ottawa, School of Human Kinetics, Ottawa Ontario, Canada

²University of Ottawa, School of Political Studies, Ottawa Ontario, Canada

mparen3@uottawa.ca

Planning a mega-event like the Olympic Games is a complex undertaking. Many stakeholders (i.e., the organizing committee's workforce, governments, media, community, sponsors, sport organizations, and delegations) are involved in this undertaking as organizing committees cannot plan and host such events by themselves (Parent, 2008). While the workforce/human resources (e.g., Xing & Chalip, 2009), sponsors (e.g., Séguin & O'Reilly, 2008), and the community and spectators (e.g., Jinxia & Mangan, 2008), are being examined, the complexity of the government stakeholder group has not. As well, these studies have generally assumed that the stakeholder group of interest is generally homogenous. Yet, the belief in possible intra-stakeholder group differences, or heterogeneity, has been noted in the past (cf. Parent, 2008; Wolfe & Putler, 2002). This is doubly important if we consider the Canadian case, with three levels of government often not seeing eye-to-eye on topics needing to work together – as well as coordinating their own multiple departments – to meet their goals and deliver on their responsibilities. While many aspects could be examined such as human resources, risk management, infrastructure, political considerations, operations, financial considerations, and legacy (Leopkey & Parent, 2009; Parent, 2008), one aspect is of particular interest to governments: interdependence (Parent, 2008). Moreover, while stakeholder group issues have been identified (Parent, 2008), strategies to resolve these problems are lacking; only risk management specific strategies have been identified (Leopkey & Parent, 2009).

As such, the purpose of our paper is to understand the issues governments faced while coordinating their planning efforts for a mega event and understand the strategies they used to facilitate that coordination. We use the case of the 2010 Olympic Winter Games where three levels of government (federal, provincial and two municipalities) had to coordinate their efforts; between them, they had 89 departments which needed coordinating.

Our study is grounded in the sport event management (described above), issues management, and public administration literatures. Issues management has become a “widely adopted and endorsed corporate activity as well as a legitimate object of academic study” (Wartick & Heugens, 2003, p. 8). Wartick and Mahon (1994) proposed that an issue is a gap between the stakeholder's expectations and the focal organization's performance. Public administration has long emphasized accountability in a hierarchical (i.e. vertical) environment. Over the last decade, under the influence of managerialism, the emphasis on accountability has been juxtaposed with an emphasis on performance. This twin emphasis has furthermore taken place in an increasingly horizontal environment, in both intra and inter-governmental perspectives (Rouillard & Burlone, 2008).

Three data sources were used for this case study (Yin, 2003): 1) archival material, 2) semi-structured interviews (used as the primary data source), and 3) ongoing meeting notes and internal, ethnographic observations. Obtaining data from more than one source allowed for richer data, as well as the opportunity to create stronger and more trustworthy findings. Over 500 documents, 35 semi-structured interviews, and three years of observations were incorporated into ATLAS.ti 6 for analysis. Data analysis was undertaken by two of the authors who independently open-coded the data in an inductive manner (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Issues were then grouped into categories, and then they were compared between governments. The coders were consistent in their coding; only three grouping instances were discussed and resolved quickly. The same process was repeated for the strategies. Findings were then compared between issues and strategies to find higher-order themes and patterns, such as certain issues impacting other issues and certain strategies being used to resolve certain issues.

The first key finding is that issues and strategies were not discussed by participants in relation to sport. This would indicate that the coordination issues faced and strategies used would be applicable to other whole government or inter-government mega projects. Next, data analysis resulted in 5 context-based (e.g., time and geography) and 11 other issue types (e.g., knowledge management and operational), as well as 8 strategies (e.g., engagement and flexibility). We found links between issues and strategies for specific issues. For example, secondments (HRM strategy) were used to resolve funding issues due to the recession. Issues, strategies, and other links will be discussed further in the paper and presentation.

In conclusion, this paper provides an in-depth analysis of the coordination efforts needed for an inter-government mega project. As our interviewees noted, good intergovernmental relationships resulted in increased power when facing the 2010 Winter Games organizing committee (i.e., VANOC) and became the strength or measure of success and sustainability of the efforts and their results.