

Vancouver mayor says \$1.5-million Olympic boost pays off in jobs, investment

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Vancouver mayor Gregor Robertson (right), Surrey mayor Dianne Watts (middle) and Richmond mayor Malcolm Brodie (left) were joined by other regional mayors and representatives at a press conference back in November to unveil details of an initiative to attract new business to the Lower Mainland using the 2010 Winter Olympics as the hook. Robertson says the effort has paid off with hundreds of new jobs and millions in investments.

Photograph by: Jason Payne file, PNG

An investment of \$1.5 million to promote Metro Vancouver during the 2010 Winter Olympics as a place to do business has paid off in deals worth approximately \$60 million.

Metro Vancouver Commerce was started by Vancouver, Richmond and Surrey in 2007 to take advantage of the region's profile from hosting the Olympics.

The investment total announced Wednesday, just 60 days after the Olympics, was supposed to be the goal reached after 18 months.

Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson was pleased with the progress achieved so far.

"By partnering with cities throughout Metro Vancouver, we've been able to capitalize on the Olympics to secure new jobs and investment in the region — and strengthen our economy in the process," said Robertson.

Robertson said the deals announced Wednesday would result in 300 jobs in the region.

Money for the initiative came from the municipalities involved, along with \$800,000 from the federal government's Ministry of Western Economic Diversification.

The process during the Olympics included meetings and presentations with 100 business leaders from around the world. Those visitors also attended some Olympic events, although spokesman Laura Balance said just \$72,500 was spent on Olympic tickets.

Joining Vancouver, Richmond and Surrey in Metro Vancouver Commerce are the District of North Vancouver, the City of North Vancouver, New Westminster, Port Moody, Coquitlam and Maple Ridge, all of whom are busy working on more deals.

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