

U of A to bid for Universiade

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For the third time this decade, the University of Alberta, in conjunction with the city of Edmonton, will put forth a bid to host the Universiade Games.

A bid will be put forward this summer to host the 2015 Summer Universiade, and unlike the previous two bids, this one appears to have better momentum going forward with the full co-operation of the necessary governing bodies—specifically, CIS, Sport Canada, and the federal government—appearing to be in place. In previous years, whether due to political or financial uncertainty, circumstances prevented the U of A from gaining the necessary resources to have their bid materialize as a legitimate contender.

“Unfortunately, we got caught in the midst of an election; the Liberal government became a Conservative government, everybody was lulled, and it became difficult to make a decision on funding another bid for another Games when they knew that Halifax was bidding for the Commonwealth Games, and they knew they had to fund the Olympic Games in Vancouver,” John Barry, the Phys Ed and Rec Department’s capital projects director, said.

“A year passed, and now this time around, it seems as though CIS and Sport Canada are on the same page, partially now because they know the financial impact of the Olympic Games in Vancouver, and they know that Halifax is no longer bidding for the Commonwealth Games.”

For this bid, the U of A faces competition for the Summer Universiade from a consortium of five Montreal-based Universities, including Concordia, McGill, and l’Université de Montréal, as well as a Laval-and-Quebec City-based bid. The timeline for Alberta to process their bid will begin in May when the University will be required to send their bid to CIS officials, followed by a visit from a three-person



INDY RANDHAWA

CAN YOU FUND BUTTERDOME? The U of A’s Pavillion, and several other facilities, are legacies from the last time Alberta hosted the Universiade Games.

selection committee later that month.

Barry believes that Alberta’s in the best position to become the Canadian partner to run against other world cities bidding for the right to host the games. Given the facilities in Edmonton, both University and public-use, Barry feels that Alberta has an advantage over other cities that may require further funding to alter infrastructure to accommodate the necessary facilities.

“I think it would probably cost us less to run a major games than other cities because we have a lot of the major facilities—we have Rexall Place, Kinsmen, the Butterdome, Commonwealth Stadium, etc. Those are big-ticket items; if you’re Halifax or some other city, to be able to build those facilities, the infrastructure costs are enormous,” he said.

“So, for example, the infrastructure for the Vancouver Olympics is probably over \$1 billion; whereas, our capital budget for an event like this would probably be \$100 million. If the province is paying half of that and the federal government is paying half of that, and you spread that out across seven years, it’s not a lot of money to ask them for. If you ask them for \$1

billion, everyone starts to hurt.”

But hosting the Games is more than just a boost to university pride, Barry said. The Alberta committee’s belief is that Edmonton as a whole would further benefit from the creation of new facilities that can be shared between communal partners, as well as the exposure to a world audience, showing once again that the city’s one that can hold its own on the world stage.

Edmonton was the host last time the Games were in North America. For those Games, the University built facilities like Butterdome, as well as establishing a legacy fund for sports and cultural programs in Edmonton. If Edmonton is given the 2015 Games, much of the money will go to updating the existing infrastructure and broadening the endowment.

“Bidding for these games allows us an opportunity to create some legacies that might otherwise take 20 or 30 years for the University to be able to fund,” Barry said. “This way we can create them through provincial and federal government money and get a jump on the competition because we’ve lagged behind in terms of facility development in the last 20 years.”

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The Bears basketball team is heading to nationals, and so is the Gateway!

Gateway sports editor Robin Collum will be following the team in Ottawa this weekend, and will have coverage of the tournament starting on Friday when the Bears take on number-one seed Carleton. **Check www.thegatewayonline.ca** every day of the championship for updates.



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