



February 17, 2014

Thomas Bach
President, International Olympic Committee
PO Box 356, 1007
Lausanne, Switzerland

Dear President Bach,

RE: The International Olympic Committee's role as inspiration to all communities, including the LGBT community

The Whistler Chamber of Commerce is the voice of business in Whistler and represents 700+ businesses in the resort community of Whistler, British Columbia. It was our honor to host the Olympic Winter games in 2010 and we have readied ourselves to celebrate the games again in 2014 with a robust program of festivals, events and animation. It feels like Whistler is hosting the games all over again.

We would like to congratulate the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in all it has done since 2010 in partnership with Russia, the National Olympic Committees, the International Sports Federations, the athletes, and the Organizing Committees for the Olympic Games to produce another sporting spectacle that will inspire the world. But it is on this subject of inspiration we wish to express our concern to the IOC.

We appreciate the IOC is above all an organization that champions sports and the highest level of human achievement. The IOC is not a political body or a world-parliament with a mandate to impose measures on sovereign states. Yet the 2014 Winter Olympic games are being held in a country that does nothing to support its large domestic LGBT community. In fact, Russia's anti-gay laws actively oppress this community. Yet in practice, the same LGBT community will be very *pro*-Olympics in 2014. Its members will participate as athletes in the Games themselves, spend money on event tickets and – as visitors – drive the local economies of the host country. As a previous Olympic Games host-town, we find little inspiration in this.

As a business community, we encourage the IOC to recall its Olympic Charter when it says it will cooperate with competent organizations and authorities in the endeavor to place sport at the service of humanity, as Russia's anti-gay stance threatens to overshadow the games. We are heartened to hear about the *Olympic Agenda 2020* initiative and hope the IOC will continue its stellar efforts in this regard.

Whistler has a long and proud tradition of supporting the LGBT community. This town has hosted Whistler WinterPRIDE for 22 years. Just three weeks ago there were groups of visitors and locals standing in front of the Olympic rings waving the rainbow flag – a symbol that calls us to remember our humanity. It would be inspiring to see similar images coming from Sochi in 2014, and to know that somehow the IOC encouraged that moment.

Sincerely,

Val Litwin
Chief Executive Officer
Whistler Chamber of Commerce

Government of British Columbia

- Member of Parliament for West Vancouver – Sunshine Coast – Sea to Sky Country, John Weston

Resort Municipality of Whistler

- Nancy Wilhelm-Morden (Mayor)

Whistler Blackcomb

- David Brownlie, CEO

Tourism Whistler

- Barrett Fisher, CEO

Whistler Chamber of Commerce

- All members