

Prosecute IOC Member for Alleging Sochi Olympic Theft, Yakunin Says

By [The Moscow Times](#)

January 16, 2014

The  **Moscow Times**

An International Olympic Committee member who alleged massive theft at the Sochi 2014 Winter Games in Russia should be taken to court over the comments, Russian Railways head Vladimir Yakunin said Wednesday.

Gian-Franco Kasper told Swiss radio last week that he believed up to a third of Sochi's estimated \$50 billion budget for the Games had been siphoned off, pointing the finger at businessmen close to the Kremlin and to President Vladimir Putin.

The comments provoked a strong response from Yakunin, the government-appointed head of Russia's vast state-run railway company and one of the country's most powerful men. Russian Railways is also a major Olympic investor and constructor in Sochi.

"Did [Kasper] take part in this theft? Then he should be judged," Yakunin said. "If he has received some sort of materials proving it is true, then put him on the stand, but otherwise

you are a slanderer and you need to be judged according to the law."

With three weeks to go before the Olympic opening ceremony in Sochi, Yakunin's remarks could cause friction between the Russian government and the IOC. As head of the International Ski Federation, Kasper is expected to attend the Games.

Kasper is not the first to allege massive corruption in the Sochi construction process. Opposition figure Boris Nemtsov, a former minister, published a report last year that claimed up to half of the budget had been stolen.

Putin has said in the past that he expects "critical remarks" about corruption, but that the issue is confined to "financial institutions" and will not affect the smooth running of the Sochi Games.

The Olympics run from Feb.7 to 23.

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