Contemporary scholarship on the Olympic Games has turned to consider the negative long-term effects associated with hosting the Games, but has not looked at unsuccessful Olympic bids. Since bidding for the Games is expensive and time-consuming, cities will only bid if it can be shown to provide positive outcomes. This paper responds to the question "Did the unsuccessful Olympic Bids of Toronto 2008, New York City 2012 and Chicago 2016 act as policy windows for public policy or development projects?" It analyses the three bids, determines their success or failure as policy windows, and creates recommendations for future bid projects.