

BUSINESS IN VANCOUVER

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Branson's carbon conference calls

➤ Virgin Group founder's Carbon War Room spearheads initiative to reduce carbon emissions from major cities

➤ International summit in Vancouver to provide major opportunities for B.C. green businesses to export technology and expertise around the world

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Roughly 100 mayors, business leaders and sustainability directors from around the world are converging on Vancouver to study the city's approach to sustainable development and to discuss how entrepreneurs can take a lead role in addressing climate change.

The February 15 to 17 summit is being led by Vancouver Mayor **Gregor Robertson** and **Richard Branson's** Carbon War Room.

Branson, founder of the **Virgin Group** media and business empire, launched the Carbon War Room as a challenge to business, corporate and social entrepreneurs to drastically reshape the global economy to reduce carbon emissions.

Discussions and workshops at the summit will focus on promoting and developing best practices for the retrofitting and sustainable construction of buildings.

The Green Capital Global Chal-

lenge initiative is also being launched at the summit. It's essentially a scaled version of Vancouver's Greenest City initiative and calls on cities around the world to compete for the title of the World's Greenest City.

Other international business leaders such as **José María Figueres**, the former president of Costa Rica, will also be at the summit.

Figueres, who is a director of the Carbon War Room, told *BIV* that the summit will attempt to raise awareness among business leaders and government officials of the business opportunities that come with shifting to a low-carbon economy.

"We also have to admit that this transition to lower carbon is very much uncharted waters," said Figueres.

"So we're going to have to learn from each other. We're going to have to innovate and take best practices forward."

The summit was announced with few details last December in Copenhagen, but it's now emerged that a

number of B.C. businesses are participating, including **Pulse Energy Inc.**, **Nexterra Systems Corp.** and **Offsetters Clean Technology Inc.**

Vancouver is being used as a case study at the summit, which provides B.C. businesses in attendance with the opportunity to build the relationships required to export their technologies and expertise around the world. Figueres noted that Vancouver has reduced its emissions to 1990 levels.

Meanwhile, the population has grown by 27% since 1990 and jobs increased 18% between 1991 and 2006.

"We want to build on that example," said Figueres. "We want to partner with Vancouver and scale up to get many more cities involved at the global level."

Vancouver's **Greenscape Capital** is also attending the summit as a sponsor, after being contacted by the Carbon War Room. The company was formed last year as a one-stop shop for sustainable construction and retrofit projects.

"Part of the reason companies don't undertake the retrofit process is because it's fragmented, convoluted and there's not a one-stop place to go," said **Bryan Slusarchuk**, Greenscape's CEO.

For its clients, it does everything from preliminary consultation to construction and project financing.

Its flagship project is the construction of the "world's greenest" parking facility at **Denver International Airport**. Greenscape will operate the 4,200-stall lot and own 90% of it. The lot will cost roughly US\$18 million to build and is expected to generate US\$5.1 million in net operating income each year.



José María Figueres, former president of Costa Rica: in town to push private sector to take lead role in creating a low-carbon economy

During the summit, Slusarchuk will be promoting the company's unique turn-key sustainable development model and glean information about projects and businesses in other jurisdictions around the world. "We have a model that we know is working in B.C., so we want to share that model with the rest of the world. We think that if we do, we're going to walk away from the Carbon War Room with multiple potential contracts all over the world."

Figueres added that the summit will also address how to attract the large capital required for carbon-reduction projects and programs.

"I'm convinced that unless our governments create the proper regulatory frameworks to make the transition to the low-carbon economy, we're not going to draw into this important space all the capital, leadership and entrepreneurship that comes with the private sector's participation." ■

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