

BC organizations buy into sustainability purchasing

Vancouver businesses and other organizations are using their purchasing power to influence social and environmental change and build a more sustainable economy

For Immediate Release

VANCOUVER, BC (December 5, 2006) – Vancity Credit Union, the City of Vancouver, the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games (VANOC) and Bell Canada are some of the organizations in BC using their purchasing power to influence social and environmental change in the marketplace.

According to a research report released today by the Sustainability Purchasing Network, these organizations are among a growing number that are making purchasing decisions, not only to secure the best value for money, but also to improve their social and environmental impact. The Sustainability Purchasing Network supports these organizations by promoting, developing and improving sustainability purchasing practices throughout BC.

“Sustainability purchasing means integrating economic, social and environmental considerations into the selection of products to minimize their impact on society and the environment throughout their life cycle, and also to generate positive benefits,” says Tim Reeve, a program advisor who organizes a number of the Network’s educational initiatives. “This means looking at what products are made of, where they have come from, who has made them and how they will be disposed of. As more organizations adopt sustainability purchasing policies, the market will respond to meet the demand.”

Vancity is one organization that makes sustainability purchasing a priority. Vancity’s Procurement Policy and its associated Ethical Policy govern all corporate purchasing decisions, representing an annual purchasing power of \$75 million. The City of Vancouver also has an Ethical Procurement Policy, which covers all food and clothing goods and services — roughly \$400,000 per year.

VANOC’s purchasing policy incorporates sustainability specifications in bid documents and contracts. As one of VANOC’s Premier National Partners, Bell Canada has integrated sustainability principles into their Olympic technology development, representing a value-in-kind commitment of \$60 million.

“These organizations are demonstrating a growing trend—they want to use the power of purchasing to influence change in the marketplace,” says Coro Strandberg, an advisor to the Sustainability Purchasing Network. “Collectively, organizations in the Lower Mainland are channelling hundreds of millions of dollars toward sustainable and social purpose businesses.”

This trend is supported by the findings of a survey conducted by the Sustainability Purchasing Network earlier this year and released today in their *Sustainable Purchasing Survey* report. The Network found that 78% of purchasers from a sample of Greater Vancouver businesses and organizations wish to work on common

efforts to promote the growth of a sustainability-driven economy through their purchasing power. Other survey findings include:

- 75% of respondents are interested in training and education to help them develop and implement sustainability purchasing policies and improve their practices.
- 88% are interested in sharing knowledge and resources on sustainable purchasing issues and best practices with their peers.

“If we increase the number of organizations that use sustainability as a key criterion in a purchasing decision, we can leverage this to increase the supply of such products and services available in the marketplace,” says Richard Kouwenhoven, General Manager, Hemlock Express and Chair of the Sustainability Purchasing Network. “The ripple effect on other organizations and individuals will be tremendous, which will ultimately make a positive difference in our economy.”

About the Sustainability Purchasing Network

Established in 2005, the Sustainability Purchasing Network supports corporate, not-for-profit, academic, labour, and government organizations to develop and improve their sustainable purchasing practices, as well as influence positive environmental, social, ethical, and economic impacts for BC and beyond. The Fraser Basin Council acts as the Network’s Secretariat.

Participation in the Sustainability Purchasing Network is open to individuals and organizations with an interest in sustainability purchasing. Through its website (www.buysmartbc.com), the Network provides access to information and resources on sustainable purchasing, including a business case tool to educate senior executives and purchasing managers about the financial, social, and environmental benefits of sustainability purchasing.

To register for upcoming sustainability purchasing workshops and for a copy of the 2006 *Sustainable Purchasing Survey*, visit www.buysmartbc.com.

– 30 –

Media Contact:

Denise Palmer
Communications Manager, Fraser Basin Council
Tel: 604 488-5352
dpalmer@fraserbasin.bc.ca

Attachment: Backgrounder