

Vancouver Winter Olympics focus on sustainability

By Kathryn Reed



Until these Winter Olympics close on Feb. 28, the true greenness of them won't be known. Green as in environment, not the cash collected.

The goal from the outset of the Vancouver Olympic Committee was to make the 2010 Games the greenest to date. (London has already said it will out-do Vancouver when it hosts the 2012 Summer Olympics.)

An early goal was to offset 300,000 tons of carbon dioxide the Games were forecast to produce. Officials say 110,000 tons of carbon dioxide would be direct emissions, while two-thirds of the total would be from air travel.

Part of the off-set comes by building venues in clusters so transportation needs are cutback; expansion of public transit; hydro power replaced some diesel generators; and energy from ice refrigeration plants and the heat put off from them at places like the Whistler Sliding Centre being harvested to be turned into renewable energy.

Twenty hydrogen buses are traveling along the Sea to Sky Highway that goes from Vancouver to Whistler.

Critics say Olympics can't really be sustainable because of the transportation issues as well as the billions of dollars in construction that is required.

Vancouver Olympic Committee officials did not return multiple calls.



Coke is doing its part to make the Games sustainable.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

To reach sustainability goals it has taken the cooperation of government, corporations and the public.

Coca-Cola, a major sponsor of the Olympics, is all about recycling. The company said its goal is to have a minimum of 95 percent of the waste during the 17-days of the Olympics be diverted from landfills.

In addition, 100 percent of plastic, single-serve beverage bottles and other recyclables are being taken to a recycling center near Vancouver.

At the Richmond Oval, which is just outside of Vancouver and is the speed skating venue, rainwater is collected to be reused for irrigation and plumbing.



Richmond Oval
Photo/Provided

When the Nordic venue just outside of Whistler was established, trees needed to be cut down. More than 30,000 cubic yards of wood waste was left. The material was chipped, then an organic compound was added to it and all of it was placed in plastic bags. When it's ripe the material will be spread out to help revegetation occur.

Eight sports venues and two athletes' villages were shooting for at least silver designation in Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. Two have hit gold. But in today's construction world, LEED silver is becoming the norm and is no longer an anomaly.

Methane gas from an old landfill near Whistler is being captured and turned into a heat source.

Software company Pulse Energy partnered with utility firm BC Hydro to track energy consumption at nine Olympic venues.

For more information about sustainability efforts at the Vancouver Olympics, [click here](#).