

FINANCIAL POST

Wednesday, May 14, 2008

Presented by



Joining The Green Charge

Social Conscience; Law firm pledges funds and gets business boost

Tyler Kekewich, Financial Post Published: Wednesday, May 14, 2008

One of Victoria, B. C.'s oldest law firms is the new kid on the environmental awareness block. Horne Coupar Barristers and Solicitors took an innovative step for a law firm by joining One Per Cent For The Planet (FTP), an environmental fund-raising initiative.

"It is in the nature of a movement," said Mark Horne, partner at Horne Coupar. "There is consciousness-raising that is constantly going on with respect to the planet and this is a way for everyone in business to make their contribution. It's a fairly simple concept and if everybody signs on, then we can make a huge collective difference."

Members of the FTP business community contribute 1% of their gross revenue to approved environmental groups in exchange for exposure and peace of mind.

"The awareness and the goodwill that membership generates does translate into more business activity," said Terry Kellogg, executive director at FTP.

The partners at Horne Coupar are already experiencing an upswing in awareness since joining 1% FTP late last year.

"It's been overwhelmingly positive from clients basically saying, 'Good on you, it's the right thing to do,'" said Mr. Horne. "If you've got a choice between working with firm A, that has a demonstrated social

conscience, and firm B, that may have a social conscience, but isn't overtly demonstrating it, maybe that makes a difference."

It was Mr. Horne's close working relationship with the Victoria Foundation, a nonprofit organization that provides grants to charities, that was the catalyst for his firm's membership. An honorary governor at the foundation, Mr. Horne decided to get on board the FTP train after the foundation partnered with the environmental group in 2006.

Expanding its Canadian membership was a top priority for FTP.

"We really recognized that we could help each other," said Mr. Kellogg about the partnership. "The community foundations were interested in boosting their funding of environmental work and we were interested in growing brand recognition, awareness and membership across Canada."

The partnership allows companies to steer their funding options.

"Law firms are in the driver seat as far as where the money goes," Mr. Kellogg said.

Horne Coupar is a "family business," co-founded by Mr. Horne's father, Ian, in 1944. So it is little wonder that Mr. Horne considers family values when making business decisions. He points to a conversation he had with his son, when the teenager chastised him for screwing up the planet, that got him worrying about the legacy of his generation.

"It's the feeling that we don't have a lot of time left on our watch in terms of the Boomers," Mr. Horne said. "You either have to try to do something or just resign yourself to going down with the ship and we thought the choice was an obvious one -- to do something."

Launched in 2002, FTP has more than 800 members worldwide. Mr. Horne says Horne Coupar is only the second Canadian legal services firm to gain membership, along with Longueuil, Quebec, patent agency, Benoit & Co. It's a statistic that puzzles him.

"It's a win-win situation," Mr. Horne said. "Your clients like you for doing something like this and your staff are proud of being involved, so I can't see anything other than good things coming from other professional firms, law firms and accountants signing on and I would encourage them to do so."