

For Immediate Release

## Project Blue Sky

### *Athletes and Students Tackle Climate Change and Issue Challenge to Olympic Organizers*

**Vancouver (July 8, 2009)** – Canada's Olympic and Paralympic athletes have teamed up with the Masters of Digital Media (MDM) students to launch Project Blue Sky ([www.projectbluesky.ca](http://www.projectbluesky.ca)).

Inspired by athletes, built by students and supported by the Official Carbon Offset Supplier to the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, Offsetters Clean Technology Inc. (Offsetters), and the Vancouver 2010 Organizing Committee (VANOC), Project Blue Sky uses the latest in on-line digital tools to motivate individuals and groups to take steps in their personal lives to fight climate change through increased physical activity and sustainable travel.

"Project Blue Sky is a place where you can connect with your favourite athletes, challenge your friends, tell your story and use kilometres to track your efforts to reduce your carbon emissions. You can cut your carbon emissions by cycling, walking, taking public transit or by coming up with other physically ingenious ways to save energy," said B.C. Olympian Dave Calder, silver medallist (Rowing), a member of the Canadian Olympic Committee's (COC) Athletes' Council that has spearheaded development of the project.

Calder and his fellow COC athletes believe the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games represent an important opportunity to encourage more people to take action on climate change as well as draw attention to carbon saving initiatives already underway. "VANOC and its partners have set an ambitious goal of convening carbon neutral Games. Project Blue Sky's goal is on an equally ambitious scale: by the end of the Closing Ceremonies for the Paralympic Games in March 2010 we want to have inspired individuals who care about climate change to contribute 1 billion kilometres of carbon-reducing activities from their daily lives."

As part of its 2010 sponsorship, Vancouver-based Offsetters is supplying offsets from carbon reduction projects in British Columbia's growing clean technology and renewable energy sector to 'neutralize' an estimated 110,000 tonnes of direct emissions from the Games. This includes emissions from all of VANOC's activities since 2003 and all Games-based emissions during the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games as well as post-Games dissolution. Offsetters and VANOC also are working with other interested Games participants on a voluntary program to offset an additional 190,000 tonnes of indirect carbon emissions from air travel during the Games period.

To track progress against its target of 1 billion kilometre's worth of carbon reductions, Project Blue Sky has developed an easy-to-use online 'widget' that can record the number of kilometres individuals or groups contribute towards the one billion kilometre target. The widget can be shared across other social networks and web applications, including Facebook and iGoogle, and it can aggregate every participant's kilometres in one place. Contributors can form groups or teams, interact directly with their favourite athlete and share their stories of carbon savings through posts, photos and short video clips.

"Athletes thrive on competition," explained Calder, "so we are using the launch of Project Blue Sky to challenge VANOC and other Olympic partners and participants to a 'race' to the finish line on our respective climate goals: in VANOC's case a further 190,000 tonnes of carbon offsets for the Games and in Blue Sky's case 1 billion kilometres of carbon reductions."

Leading the race for the Project Blue Sky team are some well known Canadian athletes and Olympians including silver medallist Calder, Olympic gold medallist Beckie Scott (Cross-Country Skiing), Paralympic gold medallist Stephanie Dixon (Swimming), professional trials rider Ryan Leech, and Sam Whittingham, a local cyclist with a global reputation for bike design and a multiple world-record holder on a recumbent bike.

The B.C.-grown on-line technology behind the project has been developed by students in the Masters of Digital Media (MDM) program at the Centre for Digital Media in Vancouver.

“We were inspired by the athletes to make this project happen,” said Luke Johnson, one of the students working on the project. “With a seed grant from the Province of B.C., we built the tools it requires in the digital media space. We believe the Blue Sky widget marks the first time this kind of data can be collected all in one place. We wanted it to be a powerful aggregator with the ability to show simply how small steps can add up to big change. We’ve also built a social networking site so that the on-line community involved with generating Blue Sky content has a viral opportunity to grow.”

The project is supported by Offsetters, as a means of using the carbon story of the Games to inspire individuals to take steps to reduce their own carbon footprint. James Tansey, President and Co-founder of Offsetters states, “Project Blue Sky is a public engagement opportunity that uses efforts by 2010 Games organizers and participants to take responsibility for their carbon emissions to encourage broader awareness and responsibility for reducing personal emissions.”

“We congratulate the athletes and students behind Project Blue Sky for their leadership and creativity in putting together this initiative,” said VANOC CEO, John Furlong. “More importantly, we accept their challenge of a ‘race’ to the finish line for our respective climate goals between now and the Games.”

Andrew Larstone, member of British Columbia’s Northeast Citizens’ Conservation Council on Climate Action, states, “The seven regional Citizens’ Conservation Councils on Climate Action are proud to support this challenge. It’s a great way for citizens throughout our province to take local action to reduce their personal carbon footprint as a way of demonstrating their support for the climate change goal of the Games.”

The next step for the athletes and students involved in Project Blue Sky is to reach out to other local and global initiatives working to combat climate change through carbon reducing action in everyday life. “So many different organizations and communities are working on carbon reduction at the grassroots level with their own imaginative programs and approaches,” said Project Blue Sky organizers Dave Calder and Luke Johnson. “In the run-up to the 2010 Winter Games we hope our tools and site can help provide much needed recognition for their accomplishments as well as serve as an online forum and resource for all. So sign up and use the Blue Sky widget to log your carbon-saving kilometres. We will add them up for all the world to see.”

<b>Contact:</b>	
Grace Battiston	Isabelle Hodge
Masters of Digital Media Program	Canadian Olympic Committee
<a href="mailto:Grace_battison@gnwc.ca">Grace_battison@gnwc.ca</a>	<a href="mailto:ihodge@olympic.ca">ihodge@olympic.ca</a>
Tel: 778 370 1013	Tel: 416 324 4122