



For immediate release November 18, 2009:

Leading Swiss Scientist Keynotes Clean Energy Seminar at SFU
BC experts to discuss impact of melting glaciers on water supply and energy generation

Vancouver, BC - The Alps are often called the “Water Towers of Europe”, the source of the legendary Danube, Rhine, Po, and Rhone rivers. But temperatures in the Alps are rising at twice the global rate; glaciers are melting; the snowline is climbing and Europe faces droughts and shortages if the trend is not reversed.

Sound familiar?

We face much the same problems here in British Columbia: for example, the famed Athabasca Glacier in the Rockies is melting faster now than it has in the last 40 years; at the current rate, a glacier which has existed for hundreds of thousands of years will be gone in three centuries.

While we argue about the causes of climate change, the world’s permanent ice and snow packs are melting, leaving us with a huge challenge to maintain enough water for drinking, agriculture, endangered species, and a key challenge for a hydro-dependent province like BC: energy generation.

To address these issues, we’ll need to exchange knowledge with experts from around the globe, experts such as Michael Lehning, the head of the snow and permafrost research unit at the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow, and Landscape Research.

Dr. Lehning will be the keynote speaker at a seminar on Clean Energy Solutions, Tuesday, November 24 at the Simon Fraser University (SFU) Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue. He will be joined by a panel of experts from BC, including Tim Lesiuk, Executive Director, Business Development for the Government of BC’s Climate Action Secretariat; Mike Walkinshaw, CFO of Chrysalix Energy; Joe Thwaites, President of Taylor Munro, a company helping to bring solar technology to First Nations; and Eamonn Percy, President and CEO of BC Hydro subsidiary Powertech.

The panel will be moderated by Bruce Sampson, Chair of the International Center for Sustainable Cities, and former VP Sustainability for BC Hydro.

Sampson was recently appointed by SFU’s Adaptation to Climate Change Team (ACT) to be the policy author for “*Energy*,” the third in its series of investigations into ways to address the impacts of climate change. The first two, on biodiversity and extreme weather events, led to policy recommendations to municipal, provincial and federal governments, and captured national headlines.

Sampson promises that the panel will address the urgent questions posed by melting glaciers and other climate-driven environmental crises. “How do we bring greater awareness of the enormity of the task, and awareness that the winners in the next century will be those countries and jurisdictions that can brand themselves as models for a new world?” he asks.

The seminar is hosted by the Consulate General of Switzerland, in partnership with ACT and the GLOBE Foundation. From Nov. 25-Dec. 11, the Swiss Consulate General is presenting, at locations around Vancouver including SFU, the interactive display “Climate Trail,” demonstrating Swiss contributions to addressing climate change. The exhibit will be on display at the Wosk Centre for the panel event.



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ACT (Adaptation to Climate Change Team)

Background Information:

ACT (the Adaptation to Climate Change Team) of Simon Fraser University is a policy and planning initiative designed to develop timely options for sustainable adaptation to climate change impacts.

The GLOBE Foundation is a Vancouver-based, not-for-profit organization dedicated to finding practical business-oriented solutions to the world's environmental problems.

Dr. Michael Lehning is the Head of Research Unit “Snow and Permafrost,” Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research, Davos, Switzerland. He also teaches at the University of Innsbruck and the University of Zurich.

Bruce Sampson is Chair of the Vancouver-based International Center for Sustainable Cities and is former VP Sustainability of BC Hydro. He is the policy author for ACT’s third session: *Energy*.

Climate Trail Exhibit details: The exhibit addressing the challenges of climate change will be on display at SFU Vancouver (main entrance hall) from November 25-27, at SFU Burnaby from November 30-December 3 and at the University of British Columbia (in front of the Koerner Library) from December 8-10.