

High time for PCS: Scores best Canadian ranking for sustainable business practices

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Potash Corp. of Saskatchewan Inc. has been given a positive rating on a world ranking of companies that are adopting sustainable business models.

In fact, PotashCorp is ranked 33rd among the top 50 global companies rated by SustainAbility, Inc., a global consulting firm and think-tank. It is the highest ranking for a Canadian company. The biannual benchmark is published as a partnership with the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and Standard & Poors.

Despite being in both the mining and fertilizer sectors, which are traditionally high users of natural resources and energy, PotashCorp had a higher ranking than the other two Canadian companies on the list: Vancity, a financial service company, and Telus, a telecom business.

Telecom giant, BT of the United Kingdom, tops the global list with a score of 80 per cent. PotashCorp was given a score of 53 per cent.

Speaking from the company's Illinois office, Potash-Corp official Tom Pasztor said it is quite a challenge for a mining company to make the list, but noted the firm has been charting its own sustainability record for all of this decade.

Pasztor, PotashCorp's senior director of corporate and government relations, says bringing to light data such as energy use shows a company is prepared to shine a light on its operations.

"Good reporting is the good and the bad," he said. "We feel we have a lot of good news to report. In areas where we can't capture the information or have more work to do, we report that." For example, PotashCorp is proud of its record in human rights and demanding adherence to high human rights standards from its suppliers, but Pasztor said greenhouse gas emissions aren't where the company wants them to be.

"Clearly we can report that greenhouse gas emissions are down on a per tonne of production basis, but on a net basis -- based on any given date -- the total gas emissions could be high and you report that," he said.

"For reporting that, the real issue is one of transparency.

You're telling the public what you have done and where you stand on any one of a number of areas." PotashCorp pulled numbers together for its first sustainability report in 2002 and has produced similar volumes each year. Pasztor says there is a gold mine of information in such reports that make them an interesting companion to the company's financials that appear in its annual report.

With commodity prices so high and the company posting record earnings in recent quarters, Pasztor says it would be difficult to attribute PotashCorp's focus on sustainability as contributing to the current healthy

bottom line.

"I will say that a company's prospects in the marketplace is clearly enhanced by the level of transparency it has, which includes its sustainability reporting," he said.

"That reduces risks associated with the company.

"It takes away any uncertainty about how companies are being managed." mlyons@sp.canwest.com

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