

## BUSINESS BC

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S & P/TSX  
12,284.31  
59.50Dow Jones  
11,149.82  
170.89S & P 500  
1,159.27  
18.33Nikkei  
8,772.36  
132.75Dollar  
1.0134  
0.02Gold  
1,763.20  
5.90Oil  
85.30  
0.14Natural Gas  
3.93  
0.01

## BRIEFINGS

## Buffett buys into Bank of America

Warren Buffett will invest \$5 billion US in Bank of America Corp., stepping in to shore up the largest U.S. bank in the same way he helped prop up Goldman Sachs and General Electric during the financial crisis. Bank of America shares rose nearly 26 per cent at one point Thursday but gave up most of those gains by early afternoon, standing 10 per cent higher at \$7.72. Buffett and Bank of America said he made an unsolicited call to the bank Wednesday morning offering to make an investment. Buffett told CNBC the idea came to him while taking a bath, and the deal was done in 24 hours.

Reuters

## NUMBERS

0.3%

Increase in the average weekly wage of Canadians from May to June, to \$867.25, a rise of three per cent from a year earlier, Statistics Canada reported Thursday. In B.C. the average wage in June was \$849.69, up 4.5 per cent from 2010.

## TOP STOCK

## New Gold

The most active B.C. company on the TSX Thursday closed at \$12.68, up 64 cents.

## BLOG WATCH

Interesting post by Holly Reism Hanna on Forbes.com this week listing 25 of the "most influential women tweeting about entrepreneurship."

From Darah Hansen's blog. Read more at [vancouver.sun.com/workplace](http://vancouver.sun.com/workplace)

## BIOENERGY | Clean emissions report boosts Nexterra's prospects

That's good news for exports of biomass-burning plants, firm president says

BY JENNY LEE  
VANCOUVER SUN

A bioenergy plant at the University of Northern B.C. is performing better than expected, giving its Vancouver-based developer credibility to expand into new markets.

"In a market that's dramatically growing, with our technology developed and proven here in B.C., we're now in a position to out-compete and win projects and what that means is exports and more jobs back here in B.C.," Nexterra Systems Corp. president and CEO Jonathan Rhone said in an interview.

Global investment in renewable energy last year totalled \$250 billion, compared with \$35 billion in 2004, Rhone said. Of that, \$10 billion to \$15 billion was invested in biomass, that is, technologies dedicated to converting plant material into energy.

The biomass challenge for decades has been poor air emissions.

But recent third-party studies of the UNBC installation show dramatically lower emissions when compared to 17 conventional biomass combustion plants built within the last decade in North America. They also show emissions results that are as good as, or better than, natural gas.

"It's a watershed," that "validates use of woody biomass as a clean energy system," BC Bioenergy Network executive director Michael Weedon said.

UNBC president George Iwama agreed. "When we compared it to like facilities in the U.S. and Canada, we were much, much lower by many fold," Iwama said. "We were two to 10 times lower than natural gas outputs. We have improved the air quality in Prince George by installing this facility."

The UNBC Nexterra system uses wood waste from a nearby sawmill. The wood is heated to a high temperature with minimal oxygen.

This produces a synthetic gas that is combusted to produce hot water or steam to heat UNBC's buildings.

Typically, the operating cost for a woody biomass system is a quarter to a third of a natural gas system, Rhone said. Those



University of Northern British Columbia president George Iwama in front of the Nexterra biomass gasification system installed at UNBC. The plant's emissions were as good or better than natural gas, dealing with the thorny issue of air pollution from such plants.

savings can then offset capital cost.

The \$15-million UNBC project — the biomass system alone cost \$6 million — started operating in March, so it's too early to calculate solid energy savings numbers.

"We are very confident there will at least be savings on the fuel cost alone, but [return on investment] is far more than just fuel savings," and includes attracting research funding and students, UNBC vice-president of external relations Robert van Adrichem said.

In a comparison with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's air emissions factors for natural gas, UNBC emissions were two times lower in particulate matter, 21 times lower in carbon monoxide, 11 times lower in volatile organic compounds and on par in NOx emissions.

The UNBC emissions testing was conducted by LanFranco and Associates.

Rhone expects to double Nexterra's staff to 75 by the end of next year. Core proprietary manufacturing is outsourced to Kamloops, Kelowna and Vancouver's Lower Mainland, where the high-end machining, metal fabrication and electrical and controls software development probably account for several hundred B.C. jobs, Rhone said.

Nexterra expects to have six biomass plants operating (four in Canada, two in the U.S.) by year's end. A typical sale is \$6 million to \$15 million. A project for the U.S. Department of Energy in Tennessee will begin operation in October.

Two university projects are complete. Two more universities, including a \$27-million University of B.C. project, are

upcoming. The UBC project, a partnership with Nexterra and General Electric, will be operational in early 2012.

At UBC, G.E. will pair Nexterra's technology with their engines to produce electricity. The project will use City of Vancouver tree trimmings, among other wood waste, for fuel.

"What's so exciting about UBC is it's combined heat and power, so you're getting electricity and heat," Vancouver deputy city manager Sadhu Johnston said. "You're taking a waste product and producing heat and electricity in a way that's cleaner than natural gas."

Nexterra has several hundred biomass technology competitors worldwide.

Nexterra will now seek to expand into industrial and public institution markets in North America, as well as

international markets such as Brazil, which has high energy prices and lots of wood waste.

The private company acquired technology developed in the U.S. in 2003 and invested \$40 million to commercialize it. Private equity firm ARC Financial is Nexterra's largest shareholder.

Biomass is suited to small-scale projects because it is limited by the volume of nearby wood waste, Rhone said.

"Our strategy has been small scale. To build these plants inside the fence of our customers and replace their existing energy. A lot of other renewable energy technologies are grid scale."

China is not in the immediate picture. "China is a challenging place to work for a small company," Rhone said.

[jennylee@vancouver.sun.com](mailto:jennylee@vancouver.sun.com)

City of industry

Mine Derrick Penner's blog for what's happening in forestry, fishing, mining and more at [vancouversun.com/resources](http://vancouversun.com/resources)

Your Money


Kathleen Wallden learned the hard way the importance of writing up a will properly so that your wishes are carried out after you die.



Tourism

American tourists aren't coming in quite the same numbers we're used to this summer, but the Chinese and Brazilians are helping pick up the slack.





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