

CAN YOU SEE YOUR HOUSE FROM HERE?



URTHECAST CORP.

Vancouver-based UrtheCast will share 'incredibly inspiring' pictures of the Earth taken from space, founder Scott Larson says.

Vancouver company offers stellar new view

UrtheCast developing streaming video feed shot from space station

ADRIAN HUMPHREYS

NATIONAL POST

A Vancouver company is promising a unique summer photo op — a view from space of your backyard party or golf tournament — but its joint venture with NASA

for high-resolution, near-real-time photo and video of Earth from the orbiting International Space Station also offers less self-regarding activity.

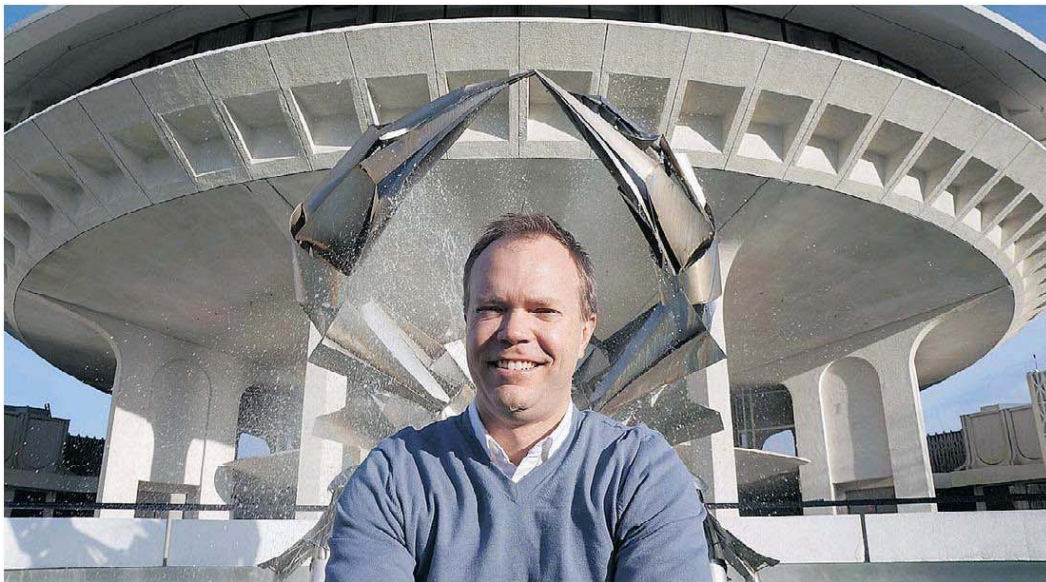
"I've spoken with several astronauts and they all say going to space changes them — they see the planet without borders, how small it is in the universe — and we want to stream a little bit of that feeling out to the rest of the world," said Scott Larson, chief executive and founder of UrtheCast Corp.

"We'll tap into a view of the world that is not only breathtaking, but incredibly inspiring."

For the past four years, UrtheCast has been developing what it calls the world's first ultra-HD video feed of Earth, streamed from space in full colour.

The existing and planned camera arrays on board the ISS will stream images that can be used to monitor the environment, geological changes, disasters and humanitarian relief, agricultural and reforestation progress, and views of the world's troubled regions, Larson said.

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DANNY BRADBURY/NATIONAL POST

Scott Larson, CEO of UrtheCast, says the video cameras his company uses can pick out objects as small as a metre from outer space.

Company offers stellar view

Two of its cameras are already installed on the Russian module of the ISS in a deal with the Russian space agency, one shooting video, the other still photos. Another two are planned for the U.S. module in 2017, including a radar sensor that can peer through clouds.

On Thursday, UrtheCast announced a deal with NASA to allow the company also to use the full data from the agency's four cameras on the ISS's European module, installed and streaming on a NASA website for the last year.

Larson said the resolution of his video cameras allows them to pick out objects as small as one metre in size. So they can see a golf cart, a rooftop or a gathering of people.

UrtheCast plans to let people to enter their address and find out when the ISS will pass overhead, allowing them to see an astronaut's view of

their neighbourhood or plan a social event to be caught by the camera.

"It won't be capturing faces, licence plates, the guy mowing the lawn or people sunbathing. Our mandate is to show people what the Earth looks like from space. It's not trying to spy on your neighbour," he said.

Dismissing the notion his company is adding to surveillance concerns, he said it is also obliged to follow Canadian and United Nations regulations.

Dan Huot, a NASA spokesman, said the space agency's deal with UrtheCast allows the company to weave the lower-resolution stream from the commercial-grade cameras NASA sent into space last year into its network.

NASA has no security concerns about the public use of the space imagery. Seeing the Earth from space is a force for good, not evil, he said.

"People are always captivated

by what you can see from space. There is always something about seeing the Earth from outside that really makes you see the place we are living on in a whole new way. You get a whole new perspective of what you live on and what's around you," he said.

He said the ISS passes over 95 per cent of the planet's populated areas, allowing people to see first hand the changes around their homes and in their regions.

"There is a lot that can be gained. Plus there is the wow factor," Huot said.

The enthralling view of Earth from space captured Canadian attention in 2013, when Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield, while commander of the ISS, took a stream of beautiful pictures and posted them on social media.



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