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Royal inquiry about Pitt Meadows business

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It's not often you get a royal inquiry about your business, but on Nov. 7 that's exactly what Vladimir Roncin received at a Canadian Youth Business Foundation awards event in Vancouver.

The Pitt Meadows owner of Vertical Suits spoke with Prince Charles just briefly as he visited the CYBF show at the Olympic Village. The Canadian Youth Business Foundation is the Canadian counterpart to the Prince's Trust, a U.K. organization that helps young entrepreneurs.

His Royal Highness asked Roncin where he got his materials from to make his suits.

And while it's difficult to say how chatting with the prince may have helped his business, there's no question what the Youth Business Foundation did for Roncin.

It gave him a \$15,000 loan and a program two years ago that helped him get his Vertical Suits, two-person company that makes skydiving suits, off the ground.

Before that, he completed instruction in running his own business at BCIT's self-employment program.

Although mainly catering to the custom needs of serious skydivers, Vertical Suits is also looking at beyond that as a more user-friendly version of the sport develops.

The company supplies outfits to SkyVenture, a company that builds vertical wind tunnels.

With giant blasts of air directed upward, SkyVenture can keep a would-be skydiver floating for a few minutes compared to an outdoors fall of about 50 seconds, allowing them more time to practise their techniques. The device is also for recreation users. "It's kind of like an attraction of the future," says Roncin.

The most recent SkyVenture wind tunnel to open was last year in Montreal where Vertical Suits provided all the suits for the instructors and students.

SkyVenture is also looking at another in Richmond, but no decisions have been made.

"It's the best tool ever to train," said Sandra Dussault, the other full-time employee at Vertical Suits.

Vertical Suits uses spandex, nylon and taslan to custom make the suits for individuals or for skydiving schools. The location is next to the Pacific Skydivers club at Pitt Meadows Regional Airport and both pursue the sport. Roncin is an instructor and Dussault a coach at Pacific Skydivers.

"We test everything we do. We're trying to test our stuff as much as we can – stand out from the competition," Dussault said.

The company already sells across North America but Roncin wants to go worldwide. Its expertise in embroidery also has Roncin thinking about spinoff products for the ground-bound market.



Prince Charles talks to Vladimir Roncin of Vertical Suits during awards event in Vancouver.

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