

# Action needed now to save our planet

If you have not seen Al Gore's documentary on the environment, *An Inconvenient Truth*, then run, do not walk, to your nearest movie rental location and rent or even buy a copy and



## LETTER OF THE DAY

ensure everyone you know also sees it. This is not a good news story, but one that must be told over and over again until it is understood that we have serious problems with what we as a "civilization" have done to this planet. Corrections have to be made immediately in the way we approach life. The planet will always exist; it is not going anywhere. However, human life as we know it will change dramatically very quickly unless we curb our non-sustainable methods in many things that we collectively do.

I was recently in Denver, Colo., at a GreenBuild Conference where Ira Magaziner, chairman of the Clinton Climate Initiative, professed that we have 3,650 days to change our ways, stating that even Kyoto is not enough if all countries commit. He commented that we have to reduce our thirst for energy by 70 to 80 per cent within the next decade. This is an unprecedented time in human history where we all must act together. At the same event, Prof. Jeffery Sachs from the Earth Institute at Columbia University stated exponential population growth of 70 million a year will carry us from 6.5 billion today to 9 billion in 2070. Earth's ecosystem now stretched cannot take business as usual.

As architects and designers of buildings, we have recently built a series of



Paul Lachine graphic

buildings as best as our budgets will allow. These include schools and major renovations at a local hospital which will be LEED Gold (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). These buildings save up to 75 per cent more energy as required by the Ontario Building Code. They have well-insulated walls, warm-to-touch fibreglass windows, in-floor heating and cooling, and together over 15,000 square feet of green roofs. But it is not enough. It is only the beginning of where we all must go. Green building is not just nice to do but it is a must do. We have to evolve into "living buildings," which produce their own energy and give back to the grid supplying power for other means. Currently, our buildings use approximately 50 per cent of the world's power and con-

tribute the same amount to global warming.

The year 2007 represents the first time that our global community will pass into an urban world with more people living in cities than in the countryside. Now, more than ever, we need to re-learn how to walk to work, to the local markets and our schools, and achieve sustainable urban design for our cities while renovating brownfield sites limiting urban sprawl. Every year we wait we lose more plants, more fish, more wildlife and clean air making our task more difficult to achieve. It is going to take us a millennium of working together to repair this planet. We have to act now, because if not us, who? If not now, when?

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