

Speech to Hamilton Rotary: Tuesday, September 20, 2011

Dr. Judith Landsberg, Greenrock President

Good afternoon everyone.

Thank you for the opportunity to talk to you today. As you have heard, I'm here today to talk to you in my new role with Greenrock.

I was recently appointed as President of Greenrock. I succeeded Andrew Vaucrosson, who as many in the community are aware, had spent 6 years in the role and decided to step down to make way for new leadership.

We are grateful that Andrew will still be involved with Greenrock - which he helped to foster to become a recognized and worthy charity - here on the island. Andrew's service is to be highly commended - he had unbridled passion, enthusiasm and a vision of seeing what is achievable in sustainability for Bermuda.

Andrew was also part of helping to define Greenrock's mantra - "Changing the Mindset" - which many of you may recognize from event posters, our website or logo.

We define "Changing the Mindset" simply as this:

- *To change the way that Government, business and residents of Bermuda operate, live and treat the environment, so as to live more sustainably.*

Greenrock has long been identified as an environmental group. But we go further and will continue to focus on promoting education, social awareness and encourage respect for the environment in people of all ages.

We believe that living sustainably is the most important issue facing us today - it is a gift we make to our children and future generations.

But the question is this – why should the environment be part of our mindsets? Government, businesses and individuals?

Why put the environment at the top of the agenda when there is what many deem more pressing issues facing our country? Some of the pressing issues include:

1. The economy – we are in a severe economic downturn, the government is in debt, international business in Bermuda is shrinking, people are losing their jobs and families are under stress...
2. Disenfranchised youth, turning to gangs and crime. These are young people who feel that they do not have control over their lives and are not important to their communities.

So why put the environment at the top of the agenda...with these other economic and social issues?

Where does the environment fit in?

Because living sustainably is an important part of the solution - it HAS to be on the table when solutions are discussed.

What do I mean by this? Let's have a look at the cost of living. Take electricity bills. BELCO is predicting that electricity usage will increase 1.5% annually for the next 20 years – this may sound quite modest, but as it is COMPOUNDED, year on year, it results in a roughly 35% increase in demand.

We have among the highest electricity costs in the world, yet there is no concerted effort to conserve electricity.

There are solutions that are not difficult, or new technology, and should be included in Bermuda's planning code – solar thermal hot water can reduce household electricity demand by 10%; grey water recycling can reduce household water use by 30% and reduce the need for purchase of fresh water from desalination plants – powered by electricity – to almost zero.

One of Greenrock's Green Building Forum members, the ACE Group, has demonstrated that businesses can reduce their electricity use. In the period 2006 to 2010 - in their Hamilton building - the ACE Group reduced their electricity bill by more than 12%, achieving an EPA Energy star rating of 74, well above the 69 standard rating required by the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design).

BELCO - in response to our usage - is projecting \$500M of expenditure in the next 10 years to upgrade and expand its plant. This does not come from some investment pool but from increases in the cost of electricity to individuals and businesses - in round numbers, up to \$10,000 per person. Much of this can be avoided with a few simple steps - now THAT is an impact of the cost of living!

The Government of California has put in place strict emission and usage criteria and they have not increased their electricity demand for 40 years (1972).

Copenhagen has recently announced that they intend to be the world's first carbon neutral city and are looking at more innovative solutions such as solar passive buildings and energy requirements on businesses ... we could do that without significantly changing the cost of building.

Victoria Place was built to LEED specifications for within the same price range as other office buildings in Hamilton, but with the goal of reducing tenant electricity costs by 25-30%. So ask yourself - which should we do first? Focus on electricity conservation or expand our electricity generation capacity?

Greenrock is directly addressing these cost of living issues in certain areas - for example:

- Our Green Building Forum is bringing together businesses, such as ACE, to share ideas on how to work more sustainably.
- And then there is our Green School Pilot Project which identified the potential to reduce electricity bills at Elliot Primary by 17% or roughly \$10,000 dollars a year - and we would like to do that in every school.

Let's look at another pillar of our economy: tourism.

The Government is talking about paying up to \$70M to widen Town Cut in St George's to bring larger cruise ships in but the tourists who really bring money to the island are not cruise ship passengers, it's the hotel guests.

In January, Minister Lister quoted figures for the 2011 cruise ship season. The Government expects cruise ship passengers to contribute an average of \$210 each to the economy.

At Rosewood Tucker's Point, the tourists who are paying \$500-\$700 a night are demanding a 'greener' product. They expect to see sustainable practices. They are the ones opting to re-use their bed linen and towels, instead of washing them each day, and they are asking where the recycling goes. Why are we considering degrading the environment when our tourists, who have the most potential to add jobs and dollars to our economy, are demanding that we think 'green'? Thinking of the environment is core to our tourism offering.

Let's look at our use of other resources.

Just about every single item we wear and use - from underwear and toothpaste, to wedding rings and dishwashing soap - is all shipped into Bermuda using fossil fuel. And we pay for that shipping, then we throw most of it away!

What proportion of what we buy is disposable? Think about it: coffee cups, the container for your chicken dinner, plastic straws and a bottle of water. Why do we do this?

Earlier this year, Greenrock took part in judging an environmental photo competition run by the *Bermuda Sun*.

The winner of that photo competition was a mother who demonstrated how she was living green and in the winning photo was a picture of her husband hanging out cloth diapers - on a clothes line in the natural sunshine - with their young baby lying in the foreground looking on.

That picture spoke volumes to the fact that a simple action could have a tremendous impact on our environment. Think about how many disposable diapers are thrown away by one family. Think also of the 6% of the electricity bill that goes into drying clothes.

The photo also served as a reminder that not so long ago, everyone was using cloth diapers and hanging the wash on the line. My grandmother and mother would have likely seen disposable diapers as items of extravagance and waste. Today, it seems that many people's attitudes are that they could not think about giving up such an item.

We are masters at producing items of convenience...but at what expense?

We would like to get Bermuda back to some of our old habits. Let's use the water off our roofs, not out of a pipe under the road. If we can buy local tomatoes and chickens, why do they have to be shipped in from Israel or America?

Greenrock has several key initiatives looking at and addressing these ideas in our community:

- Healthy Harvest, an initiative which hopes to rejuvenate community gardens and orchards, and encourage people to use local produce
- Hydration Stations – or water bottle filling stations. This is a joint project with the City of Hamilton to provide water at certain locations so that you and I don't need to buy single-use water bottles. Instead, we can carry a reusable bottle with us. If we can get into the habit of carrying and refilling a reusable bottle, think about how much we can reduce our plastic waste?
- Green grocery bags. In the past, we helped to introduce these with support from Lindo's and now we are looking at a new campaign coming up to reduce the use of single use retail bags.
- Also, vehicle/metal recycling. Last December, you may have heard in the press about the potential for reusing and recycling our car parts instead of disposing them at the airport to leach into Castle Harbour – why are car parts considered to be disposable when

80% of a car can be reused and repurposed? This has proven to be an effective and sustainable model in other parts of the world, and can also create green jobs. We think it can happen here, too, and will reduce the cost of parts and possibly the order time.

I'd like to return to the other big issue I mentioned at the beginning: the disenfranchisement of our youth.

It is a well-known educational principle that children learn best when their education is linked to their experience.

I mentioned the Green School Pilot Project. Bringing the environment into the classroom is going to help students achieve better and it also helps them to feel empowered – something that they do today in the garden will effect what happens tomorrow such as plant seeds to see flowers grow or attract butterflies. Getting students' hands in the dirt or getting out for a walk through Spittal Pond is directly addressing attention issues and learning styles typical of boys. Many of the so-called 'green jobs' appeal to boys because they are practical.

At a higher level – attention to the environment empowers and connects communities.

Greenrock's Healthy Harvest program will bring communities together to plant and harvest, and to care for less fortunate people.

Each year, Earth Hour is about showing the power of individual actions - that is turning off one light at a time to plunge Hamilton and across the island into darkness. This empowers youth in a positive way and shows them how individuals can make a difference. It links them to other people in their community and this directly addresses some of the underlying issues that lead to socially delinquent behaviour.

Basically, we believe that a healthy environment will lead to healthier lives, economically and socially. The old way of thinking: "Let's tackle the real problems and focus on environment later" doesn't work!

If you want to tackle poverty or sickness or education issues in the community, then look to create and protect a healthy environment as well. They go hand-in-hand.

Our environment is connected in all that we do so environmental sustainability not only deserves a seat at the table, in fact, it is critical to include it in our decision-making. Sustainability and how we use resources is the foundation of our cost of living. And reconnecting our young people to their social and physical environment is critical given the issues they are faced with today.

But there are also a host of other reasons to think sustainably – would you depend on the Middle East for your security? Well you are! 95% of our electricity is generated using a resource which is dependent on reserves in the MOST politically unstable region of the world and this puts our lifestyle at risk.

And oil is about to become more scarce. The Bermuda Government's Green Paper cited a widely-used report that says that oil supplies will peak in the next 5 to 10 years. We need to change our mindset if we expect to sustain our current lifestyle.

In the longer term - do you remember Sarah Palin memorably saying that "A changing environment will affect Alaska more than any other state, because of our location"? Well, Bermuda is in the same position – a changing climate will result in increased frequency and severity of storms, ocean acidity that negatively impacts marine life and rising sea levels.

Unlike Sarah Palin - who went on to say "I'm not one though who would attribute it to being man-made" - 86% of Bermuda residents believe that greenhouse gases from human emissions are changing the climate and this is also the belief of the US National Academy of Sciences, a body established by Abraham Lincoln to advise the US Government (not that they are listening).

Don't you think we should be paying attention to this?

According to the Footprint Network (a UN organization), we are using up resources at 1.5 times the rate at which the Earth can produce them and this is at current population levels. If this was a college student or a young person in the workforce going into debt that fast, we would be horrified at how irresponsible they are behaving! Don't you think we are behaving irresponsibly and that this is unfair to our children?

We have the luxury of being a wealthy island with a small population – so we can include every person on this island in the conversation.

We invite you to partner with Greenrock in changing the mindset so that when our Government, as well as ALL Bermuda residents, makes decisions, they include the environment in their decision-making.

Thank you.

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