Stephen Rich

WBRC, Governor, glad to have you here, everyone else, WRBC Architects and Engineers is a 70 person architectural and engineering firm located in Bangor and Portland, Maine. We are very proud to lead a group of energetic and talented architects and engineers who are out there trying to contribute to sustainability and contribute to making a better environment. I'm here today to represent a few factions; the US Green Building House of Maine Chapter, the AIA Maine Chapter, and by association all the engineers in the state of Maine. I want to talk a little bit about sustainability, but I'm don't want to talk about sustainability in a warm, green, and fuzzy kind of way; I want to talk about it in a very practical sense. I'd like to make some observation about conditions and consumption that we have going on nation wide and in the world; I'd like to talk a little bit about common sense; and then I'd like to talk about return on investment. You'll be getting a packet that I've prepared that'll be coming around summarizing all the speeches today, and I've got some charts. As a visual learner, I need to see things and how they work, so I'll read some of the things that we deal with as a challenge and things were trying to work on to improve.

Buildings constitute 39% of all the energy consumption in the country, and if you look at the country's energy consumption, 32% of it is transportation, 29% of it is industry, 39% is buildings. It's the largest consumption of energy in the country, and it gets the least amount of attention and by far the least amount of regulation. We don't complain too much about the small amount of regulation except when it makes things a little bit difficult for us to accomplish what we need to accomplish. There was a bill that passed, I personally worked on it for 15 years as part of our AIA group, to get a uniform building code and state energy code, and it was finally passed last year. I'm sad to say, and I hope you take a serious look to try to understand all the nuances of why LD43 would be put forwards to pull it away. There may be parts that are difficult to implement now, but we can work through that, there must be ways to nip at it to make it be an easier transition. But if we don't have yardsticks and we don't have guidelines to do both energy improvement and safe building methods, we are stepping backwards and not moving forward.

A couple of other things: if we follow the guidelines of sustainability and small footprint on the universe, working for carbon neutral sides to all of those things, we can easily through engineering and sound construction lower the overall energy consumption of buildings by over 30%; we can lower the carbon off-gassing and our ozone problems and our environment problems by 35%; we can save 30-50% of the water we use. Why would we need to save that in Maine? We've got an abundance of water; we're not Los Angeles and Los Vegas that doesn't have it. Well, let's go to return on investment. Every time you flush a toilet, you're pushing water through it that you pay a water bill for. If you're in a city that has a sewage treatment plant you're spending money to get it taken care of, and then you're obligating some other generation, as we grow we want the population to grow, you're obligating that to build bigger and bigger facilities. So if we cut those down, we get a trifecta. If it's hot water, we get even more, because we're going to use less hot water.

Return on investment is a really, really easy calculation. It's fraught with misconceptions about how it's calculated. I'd like to go over those in detail with some members of your team, but if I had 10 dollars and I put it on the table and said I could get you a 10% return on that for the life of a building, 50 years, I think it's a good investment.

Remarks at "Maine People and the Environment" roundtable with Governor LePage
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