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Canadian Author on Urban and Environmental Sustainability Promotes Renewal and Innovation During Airdrie Sustainability Speaker Series

Airdrie, AB – Chris Turner, author of the national bestseller *The Geography of Hope: A Tour of the World We Need* and international bestseller *Planet Simpson: How a Cartoon Masterpiece Documented an Era and Defined a Generation*, is passionate about change, especially in the realm of climate and energy.

He's on his way to Airdrie Wednesday, November 18, 2009, to share his thoughts on how municipalities and residents can leave a lighter environmental footprint while creating a viable and self-sustaining community. He's the final presenter in a speaker series that focuses on Airdrie's five pillars of sustainability.

"I'll give an overview of climate and energy facts that compel us to basically rethink everything we do," he says. "Then I demonstrate the wide range of tools now available to us for a richer and more desirable world. For the Airdrie audience, I'll be focusing on urban sustainability, mixed-use development, walkability, and multimodal transit."

Turner says for cities of any size in western North America, there are two key steps that speak to environmental concerns without being trapped inside a narrow marginal silo.

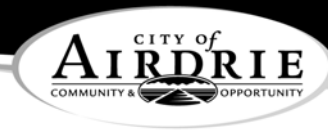
"The first is to put public space ahead of private space as a planning priority—commercial streets and public squares, that is, not more shopping malls and commuter arteries," he says. "The second is to invert the last 50-plus years of transport planning and put people ahead of cars."

The ideal, Turner cites, is building great, livable, multiuse communities that are walked, biked, or accessed by transit. The imprint of great sustainability—environmental or otherwise—is taken care of.

Turner says change isn't an option, especially in the realm of the earth's climate and energy scarcity. He believes any community that fails to recognize the absolute necessity of radical, thorough and rapid change will simply fail to adapt to the base conditions of the 21st century.

"We have created a set of priorities and a self-justifying system that is encouraging the unsustainable ways of life we are currently living," he says. "Melbourne and Copenhagen that have turned this corner ahead of us, and in neither case did the process of change begin with some grandiose future-tense vision. Instead, in both cities leaders and citizens alike recognized the necessity of change and understood that it began by reordering their communities' priorities."

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Lorne Stevens, Director of Community Infrastructure with the City of Airdrie, says that before any infrastructure begins, environmental, economic, social, and health concerns are strongly considered.

“Hard infrastructure has to be ensured for adequate capacity before you bring new residents into the city. You look at all aspects such as water, sewer, safety, transportation, including transit and walkability, is really the answer.”

Stevens agrees with Turner’s views on embracing change. He notes that Airdrie staff are constantly thinking ahead, and stay in tune with continued education, studying municipal trends, and networking.

Front line staff regularly contribute valuable ideas which are blended in present and future projects. Residents have also stepped up, embraced the mindset for change and regularly chipping in ideas for growth and enviro-friendly practices.

“It used to be that we would want to get rid of rainwater from an area, rather than preserving the water,” he says. “Now people want more emphasis on waste and water management, traffic calming, streetscapes, and low impact development. It’s a huge shift, but we’re doing it together, and it’s working.”

Airdrie Sustainability Speaker Series Information

Five renowned Canadian and America speakers will discuss different aspects of sustainability, their importance in a growing and thriving city such as Airdrie, and how the community can benefit from sharing a voice in future planning.

Speaker Ticket: \$5

Location: Bert Church Live Theatre - 1010 East Lake Boulevard, Airdrie, AB

Tickets can be purchased online at www.airdrie.ca/sss

For more information, call (403) 948-8824.

About enVision Airdrie

The enVision Airdrie project is the City’s sustainability initiative/plan, working to achieve success in the five pillars of sustainability: social, economic, environmental, cultural and governance. 2007 marked the beginning of Airdrie’s process to develop a Sustainability Plan. Developing a plan is a long-term process and the City has been working closely with the community on this journey toward sustainability. Now, enVision Airdrie is proud to present the Sustainability Speaker Series as part of our sustainable journey.

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For more information on this series, and to request interviews with series speakers, please contact:
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