

*“I’m not Warren Buffett. I’m Tom Rand”*



#### **Enviro-state**

If VCI Green Funds is Rand's way of joining the fight for climate change, he's certainly wielding a battle-axe with Planet Traveller, the joint "green" hotel/hostel project with Toronto real estate developer Anthony Aarts. From the moment of its planned grand opening this August 2008, Planet Traveller will provide 24 guest rooms geared toward young globetrotters. The redeveloped building, located at 357 College St. in Toronto, is planned to operate with 80 per cent fewer greenhouse gas emissions, or "80 per cent below business as usual" as Rand puts it. This will be achievable with Geothermal technology. But there's more to Planet Traveller than just being an enviro-conscious hotel. Rand is looking at it as a platform to learn more about the real estate sector.

"I'm going to find out, in a real application, what technologies work, what technologies don't, what are economical, what aren't economical," he says. "It's a test lab for me to find out what sort of investments I should be making outside of the hotel!"

Rand's plan to meet the 80 per cent reduction mark is not a concern. "I can do that – I know I can do that," he says. The difficult task is in using Planet Traveller as a way to educate other developers.

"My challenge is in getting my message out to other building developers in an environment where, most times, the building is built by someone who isn't going to be running it," he says. "There's an economic gap there, in that those who build the building don't pay the energy bills ... the developer doesn't care because it is the condo owners that are going to pay the energy bills."

#### **Money's green too**

But Rand is not stupid. He has two master's degrees, was recently granted a PhD – and he's very much a businessman. He believes there is a profit to be made in being green and saving the planet from itself and he plans on turning one. If he wanted to give his money away, he would.

"I don't see how it's my responsibility to give my money away on something," Rand says. "That's what governments are for. We collectively put our tax dollars towards some common goal. I'm not Warren Buffett. I'm Tom Rand. I would be pissing my money away in the wind, then it would all be gone and then where would I be?"

The bottom line is that Rand is trying to make a change for a cleaner, healthier environment. He's just not willing to go broke in the process.

"You don't have to put yourself on a cross to be legitimately engaged in a project to change," he says.

Perhaps, come the end of summer, when Planet Traveller is up and running and doing its part for the environment, Tom Rand will be able to sleep a little better. Maybe he will even sleep in his own green hotel. •