



# The Daily Gleaner

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## Are You Changing?

One year ago, I wrote a column called “Would you Change?”. It generated a lot of positive feedback so I thought maybe it would be worthwhile to revisit some of those same themes again as we enter this brand new year.

It is 2009, our New Year has begun and that means “resolution time” for many of us. And given our individual power to change not only ourselves but also our community, I thought I might do my best to provide some inspiration for the effort ahead. Keep in mind, this is not weight loss advice, nor advice to advance your career or adjust your investments during the economic downturn. As we live and breathe, this issue is even larger than all of these. It is climate change with devastating planetary consequences on every level – economic, environmental, social, and political.

And contrary to what many people believe, this issue is not too big for each of us to tackle in our own lives in our own little corner of the earth. Most actions you take have a greenhouse gas (GHG) producing consequence. Running late, you drive to work instead of walk. You keep your heat higher than you need it. You continue to use plastic bags. You forget to recycle. You keep your lights – or the lights at your work - on all the time. You run water when you are washing dishes and brushing your teeth. All of these things consume some type of energy; and currently the majority of our energy is created from fossil fuels, which in turn produces climate change causing GHGs. So, put simply, every single action you take matters.

Each year that passes sees increasing and startling scientific and practical evidence of the consequences of climate change as it impacts people’s lives, their homes, their culture, their food sources and water supply.

One year ago as I wrote this column someone sent me a video called “The most terrifying video you will ever see”. If you choose to watch it, go to [www.YouTube.com](http://www.YouTube.com) and search on this phrase. It clarifies the climate change dilemma in a very logical way. The presenter breaks down how our future is likely to fall within one of four scenarios; think of a square cut into the following four quarters:

1. **Global climate change is false and we still acted to prevent it.** It costs to act – so we have increased taxation and burdensome environmental regulations. Worst case scenario is global economic depression. (Interestingly, word is that President-elect Obama is using the current global economic downturn as an opportunity to introduce major initiatives in the US economy to address climate change.)
2. **Global climate change is true and we acted to prevent it.** Climate change happens and we have all of the above ‘costs of action’, but we curb climate change, manage to adapt to its consequences, and our world is different but still livable.
3. **Global climate change is false and we don’t act.** The best case scenario - we didn’t take action, and we didn’t need to.

4. **Global climate change is true and we don't act.** The worst case scenario - climate change happens and we've done too little to prevent it. There are economic, environmental, social, political, and public health catastrophes on a global scale. (In fact, we are already experiencing climate change catastrophes at varying levels across the globe, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.)

As you can see – in Scenario 4, we get the global economic depression, but some additional scary bonus features that make Scenario 1 look like a cakewalk.

The argument leads to one inescapable conclusion - when faced with uncertainty about our future, the only responsible, defensible choice is to act. The risks of not acting far outweigh the risks of acting.

So in 2009, as evidence and experience of climate change impact us all, are you still betting on Scenario 3? Maybe you're right. How lucky do you feel?

As for me, I am continually encouraged by my fellow citizens' willingness and action to change for the sake of the environment. It is happening all around – people choosing to drive less, buy local, eliminate plastic bags, backyard compost, recycle more, make their home more energy efficient. There is no cause for despair just yet. So now, in 2009, let's turn it up a notch – change your workplace, push your politicians, challenge your neighbors, friends and families to change too.

If you're on YouTube.com, have a listen to the lyrics of a powerful song called "Change" by Tracy Chapman. Hopefully, it will be an inspiration as you set out to make change in the New Year. Here's a poignant piece of it;

*How bad, how good, does it need to get*

*How many losses, how much regret*

*What chain reaction would cause an effect*

*Makes you turn around, makes you try to explain*

*Makes you change*

*If you knew that you would be alone*

*Knowing right, but being wrong*

*Would you change?*

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