



Building SustainABLE Communities:  
innovation through collaboration conference

November 21-24, 2017  
Kelowna, British Columbia

REPORT

Submitted by Peter Smith  
for the Huron County Economic Development Board

“...we want to inspire community conversation for sustainable change - to craft solutions that reflect the best insights, ideas, and passions of our communities, to expedite positive change by strengthening relationships, expanding networks, and preventing duplication of invaluable human and financial resources.”

Joanne deVries  
Conference Organizer/Founder  
Fresh Outlook Foundation

## INTRO...

My father used to say to me, usually following some sort of calamity, that experience can be a hard teacher. And he would add, that if my radar was working properly, it could turn out to be one of the finer teachers in my life. It's taken me a while to get there, and there have been more than a few setbacks, but I have come to understand that lessons aren't always understood when they are taught, and experience can deliver thought long after the time it occurred.

In November of this past year I went to Kelowna to give a presentation at the Building Sustainable Communities Conference. It was an experience that continues to resonate.

Following this introduction there are a few pages on the topics tackled at the conference in keynote, workshop and open forums. Attached to that is a list of the amazing people who journeyed to Kelowna to speak, cajole, and question our current state of being and thinking. Artists, Scientists, Community Builders, Academics, Students, Business Owners, Farmers, Government People – elected and staff – came together to listen and to offer:

Peruse the list of people – look a few of them up – see what they're doing to make this place a better place.

The last chapter of the document I'll devote to some of the things at the conference that stuck; have continued to stir, and could potentially be ideas adapted and adopted for our work in Huron County. Finally, something I've been thinking about since returning from British Columbia – is that the precious time we have, we not waste, that we consider our default assumptions before making decisions, and that we understand there is a lot more room for collaboration in and around what we are attempting to do in Huron County.

Offered with respect and gratitude,

Peter Smith

Project Director ~ Canadian Centre for Rural Creativity

Director ~ Huron County Economic Development Board

## **On the Daily... Workshops, Forums, Keynotes**

### Day 1

#### **Sustainability For Young Adults and Professionals**

*Moderator* Jocelyn Howery – Can North Environmental Services.

Topics included Professional Expectations, Public Service, Sustainable Entrepreneurship, Advanced Education, Entrepreneurial Innovation, Community Leadership

#### **Environmental Economics**

*Moderator* – Dr. John Janmaat, UBC Okanagan,  
Dr. Kurt Schwabe, U of California,  
Hunter Lovins, Natural Capitalism Solutions

#### **Engaging for Change – *The Next Generation of Tactics and Tools***

*Presenters:* Rob Barrs Wayblaze.com,  
Beth Sanders, POPULUS;  
Mark Holmgren, Tamarack Institute

### Day 2

#### **Using Technology to Support Community Engagement and Collaboration**

*Keynote address by:* David van Seters and Rob Barrs – Wayblaze.com

#### **Disrupting The Status Quo with Upside Down Thinking**

*Keynote presenter:* Mark Holmgren, Tamarack Institute

#### **Arguing For the Relocalization of Governance and Economies**

*Keynote Presenter:* Dr. Bill Rees, Professor Emeritus UBC, Co-Founder One Earth

#### **Forum: Climate Action, Water Stewardship, Food Systems, Community Capital/Infrastructure**

Hunter Lovins – Natural Capitalism Solutions (USA)

Karen Tam Wu – Pembina Institute

Akua Schatz – Canadian Green Building Council

Deb Curran and Dr. Val Napoleon – University of Victoria

Dr. Kent Mullinix – Kwantlen Polytech University

Coree Tull – Canadian Freshwater Alliance

Dana Wong – Climate Action Partners Program

Guillaume Couillard – Federation of Canadian Municipalities

Megan Lohmann – Community Energy Assoc.

DG Blair – Stewardship Centre for BC

Tanya Smith – UBC Faculty of Forestry

Naomi Robert – Inst. For Sustainable Food Systems

Sara Dent – Young Agrarians/Farm Folk, City Folk

Petrina McNeill – Lake Country Art Gallery

Sharron Simpson – Author, Historian

Nelson Jatel – Okanagan Basin Water Board

**Provincial Investment in Innovation:**

Jack Wong, Real Estate Foundation of BC

**Nexus Thinking: the Vital Intersection of Energy, Food and Water Systems:**

*Presenter:* Margaret Catley Carlson – Global Water Partnership

*Panelists:* Peter Robinson, Community Energy Assoc.,

Dr. Anna Sears, Okanagan Basin Water Board,

Heather Deegan, Interior Health,

David Hendrickson, Real Estate Foundation of BC

**Forum: Climate Action, Water Stewardship, Food Systems, Community Capital/Infrastructure**

Carol Suhan – FortisBC

Charley Beresford – Columbia Inst.

Oliver Brandes – POLIS Project

Hunter Lovins – Natural Capitalism Solutions

Joel Shaw – City of Kelowna

Dr. Stephen Sheppard – UBC

Lisa Wilson – Okanagan Nation Alliance

Harmony Bjarnason – BC Agriculture and Food Climate Action Init.

Ramin Seifi – Township of Langley

Gregory Battle – Ministry of Agriculture

Alberto De Feo – District of Lake Country

Roy Brooke – Municipal Natural Assets Init.

Deborah Harford – Simon Fraser University

Alex Love – Nelson Hydro

Colleen Hannigan – District of Barriere

Christine Mettler – Social Life of Water

Shaun Burnell – Waterkind Irrigation Consulting

Corine Singfield – Inst. For Sustainable Food Systems

Abra Brynne – BC Food Systems Network

Marc Schutzbank – Fresh Roots

Narissa Chadwick – Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Jim Vanderwal – Fraser Basin Council

Day 3

**Innovating For a Regenerative Economy:**

Hunter Lovins, Natural Capitalism Solutions

**Climate Change and Community Health: The Anatomy of Change:**

Interior Health, Dr. Sue Pollack

**Leadership and Governance: Ecological Governance: Managing A Community's Natural Capital,**

Emanuel Machado, CEO, Town of Gibsons

**Sharing Economy: Share Aware: Mobilizing Local Government for the 'right' Sharing Economy,**

Dan Wilson, Whistler Centre for Sustainability

**Active Transportation: Improved Circulation: getting to the Heart of Community Mobility and Health in the Netherlands,**

Dr. Gord Lovegrove, UBC Okanagan.

**Forum: Climate Change and Community Health, Leadership and Governance, Sharing Economy, Active Transportation**

Zoe Kirk – Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen

Jennifer Houde – Okanagan Nation Alliance

Tony Van Den Tillaart – Fieldstone Organics

Mayor Richard Walton – North Vancouver

Warren Bell – Canadian Assoc. of Physicians for the Environment

Dr. Natalya Melnychuk – Water Policy and Governance Group, University of Waterloo

Des Regier – Trade Exchange Canada

Christian Brandt – OGO Car Share Co—op

Shannon Christensen – Mamas for Mamas

Dr. Amir Niroumand – Abundance Community Farm

Dr. Ahmed Idris – UBC Okanagan

Richard Campbell – BC Cycling Coalition

Heather Stewart – Okanagan Rail Trail Init.

**Conversations for a One Planet Region**

Dr. Trevor Hancock, University of Victoria

**Local Prosperity – Community Transformation: A tour through the Canadian Centre for Rural Creativity**

Peter Smith, Project Director CCRC

**Collaborative Change – Co-Operatives: Re-emerging Tools for Innovation Through Collaboration**

Arzeena Hamir, Merville Organics,

Heather Pritchard, Food Lands Cooperative and Farm Folk City Folk

**Sustainable Development: Lighter Footprint Cities: The Needed Leadership, Innovation and Collaboration**

Dagmar Timmer, One Earth

**Economical Imperatives: The Last Straw: Exposing the Growing Swell of Plastic Pollution in Ocean Environments**

Jan Vozenilek, Copper Sky Productions,

Ryan Cape, Fresh Outlook Foundation

**Forum: Local Prosperity, Collaborative Change, Sustainable Development, Ecological Imperatives**

Sundance Topham, Village of Cumberland

Rupert Downing, BC Community Impact Investment Coalition

Jen Tkachuk, City of Prince George

Eva Antonijevic, Friends of Summerland Garden  
John Perrott, District of West Kelowna  
Trish Hall, Coquitlam River Watershed Roundtable  
Laurence East, Metro Church  
Wayne Wilson, Central Okanagan Land Trust  
Cameron Dodd, WILDEN  
David Hendrickson, Real Estate Foundation of BC  
Dr. Victoria Barr, BC Healthy Communities  
Ross Soward, City of Kelowna  
Darryl Arsenault, Arsenault Environmental Consulting  
Deborah Carlson, West Coast Environmental Law  
Tara Lamothe-Ammerlan, Fair Mining Collaborative  
Audrey Hystad, The Clubhouse Farm  
Bryn White, South Okanagan/Similkmeen Conservation Program

#### Day 4

#### **Exploring the Economics of a Low-Carbon Economy**

Dr. Chris Ragan, McGill University, Canada Ecofiscal Commission

#### **Funding the Changing Climate of Green Energy**

Tom Rand, MaRS Discovery District/Arctern Ventures

#### **Tapping into the Water Meter Debate**

Jan Enns, Jan Enns Communications

#### **Bridging the Age Gap for Innovation and Collaboration**

Joanne de Vries, Fresh Outlook Foundation

Dr. Natalya Melnychuk, U of Waterloo

Dustyn Baulkham, Arts Council of Central Okanagan

*The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place*

GB Shaw

## Through it all...

*Always there is something to figure out...*

That's the last line of a poem by Saskatchewan poet Lorna Crozier. And I believe it to be true. Figuring out takes imagination, can be assisted by creativity, pushed by necessity, employ innovation, be collaborative, and is one of the things that struck me about the figuring going on by the people at the conference in Kelowna.

The greatest challenge identified by all delegates is climate change. What are we doing about it? What decisions do we make on a micro and a macro level that push the needle one way or the other? Without question we have plenty of work to do if we hope to hand the campsite off better than we found it.

## I N D E X

### This Chapter In Brief ...

- Nexus Thinking – three points of a triangle – i.e. Land/Food/Water: making a decision on one needs to consider the impact on the other two. **Idea for Huron County: employ Nexus Thinking as it pertains to economic development.**
- Transition Thinking – “we’re ready to begin the process of keeping things exactly the way they are.” **Idea for Huron County: How do we become unstuck in a single way of thinking?**
- The Real Estate Foundation of BC – a joint venture between the BC Government and the BC Real Estate Board has created the Foundation and has contributed \$75M to community projects since 1988. **Idea for Huron County: explore and implement a model that works for Ontario.**
- Reskilling Communities – Dr. Bill Rees offers a plan for moving forward in a time of diminishing resources and climate change. **Idea for Huron County: continue to explore new ideas to establish a more robust plan for models/programs for sustainability.**
- The Economics of a low carbon Economy – how policy can impact profoundly on our environment. **Idea for Huron County: enact policies within our region and become a leader in a low-carbon economy.**
- Social Public Procurement – Leveraging existing purchasing to achieve social value. Moving from do no harm, to do some good. **Idea for Huron County: connect with staff at the Village of Cumberland, BC, discuss methodologies of Social Procurement and create a model for our County and municipalities.**
- Building Community Capital – developing a model for community investment that impacts directly on the community - builds capacity and fosters growth. **Idea for Huron County: work with an independent not-for-profit Trust to create a Huron Fund for community projects that strengthen our communities, support an entrepreneurial class, and make rural more resilient.**





"Then you put climate change on top of that, which is going to have a significant impact on both agriculture and water availability, and you can see how things will continue to get squeezed over the next number of decades."

From the World Economic Forum in Davos, Jon Williams, partner, sustainability and climate change at PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), says unsustainable resource consumption can only get worse without the nexus. "Water is pretty much used for everything that we do and is already becoming scarce in large parts of the world; the more energy we use, the more water we need to cool power stations ... [And] If the whole world ate like Europeans or Americans there would be no way there would be sufficient food, let alone the water to grow it. The three competing pressures [water, food, energy are] pulling in completely the wrong direction at the moment."



Cape Town and the surrounding region of South Africa are suffering from a severe drought. Three years of low rain levels and an unseasonably dry winter mean that average dam levels are just over a quarter full. The metro area of 3.7 million people has less than 90 days' worth of water in its reservoirs (December 2017), making it the first major city in the world that could run out of water.

China as a case study...

Professor Declan Conway of the UEA Water Security Research Centre has extensively researched water and energy use in the world's most populous country: "Many of the pressures we're talking about globally are all occurring within China," Conway says.

"It is the world's second largest irrigator, using a huge quantity of water for growing crops, much of which is pumped from underground – and that requires a lot of energy. We recently found that 0.5% of China's total emissions come simply from the pumping of groundwater for irrigation."

Potential responses to these issues are still in their infancy, but China's next five year plan includes planning goals for energy efficiency and emissions, food production and water use, including "how much water goes into growing a particular crop," says Conway. "A lot of effort has gone into softening the blow on agriculture while incentivizing much more efficient use of water."

But these are not strident solutions. China is currently pumping water out of the ground at a rate of 20 cubic kilometres per year faster than nature can replenish. Worse still is the Policy has yet to catch up with the rhetoric of international conferences, argues Jeremy Allouche, research fellow at the Institute of Development Studies. "The problem with the nexus at the moment is it hasn't led to any policy concepts ... and it hasn't led to key players taking it forward," he says.

Aligning policy with action

There is a perverse positive: our current usage of water, food and energy is so outrageously inefficient that improvements are not hard to find. "The sad fact is that anywhere between 10-15% of the food we produce ends up in waste," says Williams, who in part blames agricultural subsidies. "It's quite

scandalous that a society produces more food than it can actually reasonably eat. Equally, he continues, "if you look at individual buildings there are examples of 25-75% reductions in energy

When domestic and industrial use of freshwater only account for 8% and 22% accordingly, compared to 70% by agriculture, it may seem that individuals and business are relatively powerless. However, not according to the nexus. "The energy associated with other uses of water can be quite high", says Conway.

"The need to pump and deliver water and to treat it to drinking water standards, can be far higher than the energy requirements associated with agriculture. So although the volumes are different, the energy use can be much higher per unit of water."

Meanwhile, biofuels may be set to make a comeback. Jesper Hedal Kløverpris is sustainability manager at Danish biotech company Novozymes, producer of the enzymes needed to make cellulosic ethanol. "What's interesting in relation to the food-water nexus is we make cellulosic ethanol simply by taking the residues – or waste – from the existing agricultural system," says Kløverpris. "It has a big potential for producing energy without additional agricultural water use."

In theory, while ears of corn are harvested for food – and previously for bio-ethanol – only waste stems are needed by bioethanol refineries, hungry for the cellulose and hemicellulose normally discarded, rather than the starch and protein. Large bioethanol refineries have already appeared in Italy, Brazil, the US and China. Research by Bloomberg New Energy Finance found that by 2030, this has the potential to replace more than 50% of gasoline consumption in some countries. "That gives an indication of the potential", says Kløverpris. And as for the water intensity of bio-refineries and the greenhouse gases emitted by the process, he admits the "science is still progressing", but cites recent studies that have found in favour of cellulosic ethanol versus gasoline.

One thing the nexus highlights is that an awful lot needs to be done in the next two decades and an awful lot faster than it currently is happening.

"We are profiling the need to make these linkages much more than we were", says Conway. "Whether we are making a lot of progress in actually getting there and making those linkages, I'm less sure ... We're still on a trajectory of rapid change that has huge implications for consumption patterns, energy use, the land needed to provide crops."

It's time for nexus thinking to make way for nexus action.

**Making a decision on one needs to consider the impact on the other two. What efficiencies are possible? What considerations made in isolation are actually detrimental to community? Nexus thinking when it pertains to climate change is vital in moving us all forward. And I will suggest that Nexus thinking is also something we can employ in our decision making in Huron County in other ways. If HC is one point on the nexus what are the other two points? Community and Environment? Economic Development and Immigration? Health and Culture?**



As a saying goes "...comes in like a lamb, goes out like a lion"  
 - I'd offer the 21<sup>st</sup> Century has come in like a lion with no change in sight.

## UPSIDE DOWN THINKING

Mark Holmgren – Tamarack Institute

(Information that follows was presented by Mark and includes research from Thinking Focus)

In keeping with different ways of thinking, Mark Holmgren offered the delegation a humorous view of upside down/ transition thinking suggesting it's a way to become unstuck on some of the things we are wrestling with.

When change works for us we think of it as an opportunity, when transition fails we call it change. Almost every project, goal or strategy undertaken in 21<sup>st</sup>-century organizations requires a level of change to take place. This could be something small like a change to a process, or something big like a restructure or merger. Yet, it is estimated that around 70% of organization change programs fail because of 'people issues'; which loosely translates to employees failing to transition to the new. An understanding of how people adapt to change is a key skill for leaders.

We look at transition from the perspective of how people think and therefore act during any change. All of us follow the same process and most of the time it is fairly smooth, even though most people think they are bad at change. By equipping managers with an understanding of transition, the tools to help them understand how different people are reacting, and the skills to help their people move forward, we can speed up the process. By dampening the impact of change the time lost in the change process can be minimized and new behaviours and ways of working embedded.

## THE REAL ESTATE FOUNDATION of BC

Jack Wong, CEO

*History:* in 1985, the British Columbia real estate industry, in cooperation with the provincial government, enacted legislation that established the Real Estate Foundation. Under the Real Estate Services Act (BC), the main purposes "to undertake and carry out real estate public and professional education, real estate law reform, real estate research and other projects intended for the public or professional good in relation to real estate activities."

*Funding:* In most cases, when property is purchased in British Columbia, real estate brokerages will hold the deposit in a pooled trust account until the sale closes. Under the Real Estate Services Act, the Foundation receives any interest earned on these trust accounts. In turn, they use those funds to support the Foundation's activities.

The Foundation works to transform land use attitudes and practices in two ways: through grants to support research, education and law/policy reform; and through initiatives and special projects that bridge gaps in research and collaboration.

*REFBC Grants:* Since launching the grants program in 1988, the Foundation has approved more than \$75 million in funding to support real estate and land use projects across the province. The grants support non-profit organizations working to improve BC communities and natural environments through responsible and informed land use, conservation and real estate practices.

*Governance:* the Foundation is directed by a Board of Governors, which consists of seven appointed members. The British Columbia Real Estate Association, the Real Estate Council of British Columbia, the Real Estate Institute of British Columbia, and the Union of BC Municipalities each appoint one member. The Minister of Finance (BC government) appoints three members. While there are parallel foundations across Canada in the legal field, the Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia and the Alberta Real Estate Foundation are the only two foundations of their kind.

*Is a Real Estate Foundation possible in Ontario?* If so, I believe this is an opportunity worth pursuing. It will involve a concerted, coordinated and concentrated effort and in speaking to Jack Wong at the Conference, he and his staff are certainly open to assist us moving forward. This is a unique investment in community and one that has a proven track record. Stay tuned.

## ARGUING FOR THE RELOCALIZATION OF GOVERNANCE AND ECONOMIES

Dr. Bill Rees, Professor Emeritus, UBC/Co-founder One Earth

“The world has witnessed an unprecedented explosion in the consumptive through-put of just about everything. For example, roughly half the fossil fuel ever burned has been consumed in just the past 30 years. Meanwhile, the material effect of globalization has been to expose the world's remaining pockets of resources to growing numbers of expectant and increasingly affluent consumers.”

Bill was full of passion and compassion and appeared to be working things out in front of us as he paced the stage. He talked about our many constructs, the ones we live by and for. He found it curious that we'd stopped considering them – had accepted them as almost sacred – forgetting that these constructs are of our own invention – that some, if not all, are due for an overhaul, discarding those that have little to do with our 21<sup>st</sup> century reality. He suggested, it's time to think again.

Bill used a pond metaphor to describe our 21<sup>st</sup> century state...

The pond has one water lily on it. The lilies double every day leading to a pond covered in lilies on day 30. When is it one quarter full, he asked us? Half full? I was not near quick enough when the answers were supplied by a shouting member of the delegation: the pond is a quarter full on day 28, half full on day 29, and finally completely covered on day 30, she said. Bingo.

Bill's belief is that we are at day 29 with regards to resources and our ability to do anything about climate change. In conjunction with that, scientists have recently set the Doomsday Clock at two minutes to midnight.

Time to reskill our communities.

What follows is part of a paper that Professor Rees put together. It is a straight/no chaser article and I think worth a read... Agree or disagree or pick and choose what you agree and/or disagree with – I believe Bill's plan comes from an active imagination – from a spirit that believes in the power of community, locally and internationally, and is a thoughtful inquiry into a possible path forward.

**FRAMING AN ACTION PLAN: ARE WE UP TO THE TASK?** We, like Ahab and his crew, rationalize madness. All calls for prudence, for halting the march toward environmental catastrophe, for sane limits on carbon emissions, are ignored or ridiculed. Even with the flashing red lights before us, the increased droughts, rapid melting of glaciers and Arctic ice, monster tornadoes, vast hurricanes, crop failures, floods, raging wildfires and soaring temperatures, we bow slavishly before hedonism and greed and the enticing illusion of limitless power, intelligence and prowess.

Chris Hedges's analogy of the world community and the crew of the Pequod in Melville's *Moby Dick* describes a world in deep denial. Is this an inevitable response to crisis or is there another way? How might a more mindfully conscious world address the (un)sustainability conundrum? Here is some rationale and major elements for a truly transformational approach to sustainability planning.

The proposed strategy will seem impossibly extreme to some so-called practical people. However, unlike mainstream solutions, it is consistent with the dire implications of growth-induced global change. In particular, it recognizes that global-scale ecological and social turmoil ushers in a unique phase in human history. Climate change has already disrupted the lives of millions, and eventually everyone will suffer the consequences of systemic collapse. No individual can implement the policies necessary (e.g. carbon taxes, resource quotas) to significantly reduce their ecological footprint or revamp the social programs needed for social stability. No country, however virtuous, can be sustainable on its own or remain insulated from global turmoil. Thus, the so-called developed world, long steeped in the rhetoric of competitive individualism, must now grapple with the notion that individual and national interests have all but converged with humanity's common interests. Unsustainability is a collective problem that demands collective solutions. Arguably, civilization will not survive without recognition that we are all

on the same fragile spaceship whose safe passage depends on unprecedented inter-institutional co-operation at all spatial scales. Working co-operatively for the common good will require the ardent exercise of several intellectual and behavioural qualities that are unique (or nearly so) to our species:

- high intelligence, the capacity to reason logically from available facts and data;
- the ability to plan ahead, to direct the course of events toward desired ends;
- an unequalled array of socio-behavioural means and mechanisms for co-operation;
- the capacity for moral judgment, the ability to distinguish right from wrong; and...
- the ability to empathize with other people and even non-human species and to exercise compassion toward "the other." (It is worth noting that certain of these capacities have been deliberately repressed in the sociopolitical discourse of recent decades.)

The starting point for any contemporary survival strategy should be to embrace a possibility that mainstream governments and international agencies have thus far been loath to contemplate (at least in the public arena): in coming decades, the human enterprise will likely be forced to contract.

Two basic scenarios bookend the range of contraction possibilities.

#### 1) BUSINESS AS USUAL

Any sustained effort to maintain the growth-based status quo risks triggering systemic collapse in the form of either uncontrollable climate change, wide-spread ecological destruction and the loss of essential life-support functions or diminishing returns to investment in resources, commodity shortages, rising costs/ prices, competition for capital, unrepayable indebtedness and increasing social disparity. Either set of conditions (or some combination) defines a path to economic implosion, civil insurrection, geopolitical turmoil and resource wars.

#### 2) A CO-OPERATIVE, WELL-PLANNED ORDERLY DESCENT

In theory, the global community is capable of deliberately planning and executing a "prosperous way down" and still has the resources to do so. The goals would be to restore and maintain the ecosphere while ensuring social order and reasonable economic security for all. As noted above, this approach requires a complete transformation of national and global development paradigms. Can there be any doubt which end of the spectrum an objective member of an intelligent, forward thinking, plan-capable, morally astute and (mostly) co-operative species should choose? An orderly contraction is the only viable means to a just sustainability and this, in turn, implies nothing less than a deliberate rewrite of contemporary society's grand cultural narrative. In particular, the world would have to abandon its core myths of perpetual progress and material growth and focus instead on degrowth toward a sustainable steady state with greater equity.

The contemporary growth economy is an unsustainable social construct. We need to replace it with an ecologically benign and socially equitable no-growth variant.

Rewriting the social contract consistent with the principles of community, co-operation and people's common interest in an orderly transition, the World Assembly would generate guidelines for individual nations to renew the social contract and repair social safety nets. National plans would include programmatic tax reform based on recognition that taxation is society's means of pooling resources in service of the common good, particularly in times of widespread threat. Specific elements of the program might include:

- A return to more progressive taxation policies encompassing income, capital gains, estate and corporate taxes;
- Using taxes and positive incentives to promote a shift from private capital accumulation to investment in public infrastructure (e.g. transit, community facilities) and human development;
- Recognition that a negative income tax (e.g. guaranteed basic income) may be necessary to assist low-income families through the transition and to ensure access to the basics for life;
- Investment in job training and job placement. Obsolete, unsustainable "sunset" industries must be phased out (e.g. coal-based electricity generation) and workers will need new skills for employment in emerging sunrise industries (e.g. solar energy technologies, passivhaus building);
- Capitalizing on the advantages of a shorter work week and job-sharing to reduce unemployment and improve people's work/life balance (self-actualization);
- Other measures to promote full employment; and...
- Implementing state-assisted family planning programs everywhere to stabilize/reduce human populations.

Bringing it back home: relocalization,

Those people...living in relatively self-reliant, organic, village-scale settlements should be able to ride the change with minimal difficulty and will emerge into the post-civilization phase intact.

The bad news is that evidently things still have to get much worse before we will muster the courage and clarity to try to make them better. The "good news" is that things are indeed getting worse.



#### **Land/Lines**

poster for Powerline Film's exhibit at Guelph Art Gallery/Winter 2018



# EXPLORING THE ECONOMICS OF A LOW-CARBON ECONOMY

Presenter: Dr. Christopher Ragan, McGill University/Canada's Ecofiscal Commission

Dr. Ragan spoke on the final morning of the conference about creating a low-carbon economy, a more energy-efficient community.

A 2012 Deutsche Bank study found that every \$1 million invested in energy efficiency-related retrofits in multi-family affordable housing, buildings generated between \$1.3 and \$3.9 million in energy savings, improving both the sustainability of the buildings and the quality of life of their residents.

Question: *is housing in rural communities defacto "affordable" by virtue of being rural?* If so, that opens up some interesting possibilities.

One of the things that has stayed with me following Dr. Ragan's presentation is the question, *what can we agree on?* Two of the members of the Ecofiscal Commission that he put together were Preston Manning and Jean Charest. Their disagreements reached boiling on more than one occasion. The one thing that they could agree on was climate change, a fight they passionately shared for right now and for all of our grandchildren.

Someone suggested recently that we needed to come up with another term to describe climate change. He said that calling it climate change was akin to calling an invading army a crowd of uninvited guests.

## **So what can we agree on in Huron County in the pursuit of making this place a more energy-efficient place?**

What follows is an interview with Professor Ragan on the establishment of Canada's Ecofiscal Commission.

Posted McGill Reporter – Feb/18 - Chris Chipello

*Economics Prof. Christopher Ragan made headlines with the launch of [Canada's Ecofiscal Commission](#), an independent group of 12 policy-savvy economists determined to promote fiscal changes that will benefit both the economy and the environment. The commission's 14-member advisory board includes prominent figures from across the political spectrum – Paul Martin, Preston Manning and Jean Charest, to name a few – as well as environmental and business leaders. Ragan, who previously served stints as visiting economist at Finance Canada and special advisor to the governor of the Bank of Canada, came up with the idea for the commission and will serve as its chair. He sat down with the Reporter in his Leacock Building office to explain what he hopes it will accomplish over the next few years.*

*How did you come up with the idea for this 'commission'?*

I wish I could say there was a 'Eureka!' moment, but I don't think there was. The evolution of this idea is really the evolution of my thinking over the past few years. I spent a couple of different stints in Ottawa – at the Bank of Canada and at the Department of Finance – where you get immersed in real-world policy and how it gets developed. I've also been thinking about the whole issue of 'green growth': combining good economic policy with good environmental policy. Over time, you just start thinking about: 'Why aren't we doing as well as we can?' Many Canadians believe – or have been led to believe – that you cannot have a cleaner environment without giving up economic growth. And I just think that's wrong.

*How do you expect to change that belief?*

The idea is to get a whole bunch of economists in the room – excellent economists, but more than that, very policy-savvy economists who have spent a lot of time designing, implementing, and analyzing real-world policies across Canada. If a bunch of economists stand up and say this is good for the economy AND this is good for the environment, wouldn't people pay attention to that? That was my thinking. And if that were backed up by an advisory board that was from business, and civil society, and across the political spectrum, wouldn't people kind of believe that? And if all of these people were independent, and non-partisan, and it wasn't part of a political platform, wouldn't people believe that? So an important part of the message of the Ecofiscal Commission is the messengers. We're not connected to any political party. We're not trying to sell people a bill of goods. We're just trying to come up with better policy. All of that kind of gelled in my thinking over the past few years.

*How did your work in Ottawa, on issues including climate change, feed into your thinking?*

I remember giving a going-away speech on my last day there, about the disconnect between academics and policy makers. Academics tend to think about policy issues in a particular way, and government policy makers think about policy in a particular way, and they both bring something very valuable to the table. But they both kind of miss what the other guys have. Bridging that divide, it seems to me, is a really important thing to do. And that's exactly what this commission is trying to do.

*How long have you been working to put this together?*

Roughly three and a half years. It was almost exactly a year ago when this went from being hypothetical to being real, because it was November 2013 when I opened up envelopes in this office that had commitments with financing. Then I thought, 'Holy crap, we've got to do this.' If our requests for funding hadn't come through, it probably would have died. But at this point five foundations and two corporations have come through and supported us, and so the thing went from being hypothetical to real.

*So, no government funding – was that intentional?*

Oh, absolutely. Not interested in government funding, and won't accept it if anybody offers it. Independence is absolutely crucial. I don't want to be dependent on a government decision for financing. But frankly way more important, I think it's absolutely crucial for the recommendations to be made by people who are speaking their mind – so that people can say: 'They're not tied to a company; they're not tied to a party; they're not tied to anything. They are fully independent.' I think that's absolutely essential.

*How did you enlist this cross-section of participants?*

We were looking for prominent, exceptional Canadians from across the country, from across the spectrum, for whom this issue mattered. I've been kind of blown away by how enthusiastic both the advisors and the commissioners are. These people are very passionate about this, they're spending a lot of their mental energy and their time thinking about this project.

*How often will the commission be issuing reports?*

Our "landscape" report came out in November. It's the paper that makes the case for ecofiscal reform: what it looks like, the nature of the benefits created, other countries that have used it. Every four months a separate report will come out on a separate issue. At the end of the landscape report we lay out the kinds of issues: water access and pricing, carbon pricing, road-congestion issues, residential waste and landfill, catastrophic risk pricing – a bunch of things. One report, one topic is the plan. The next report will be out in early to mid-March, I'm guessing.

*The op-ed you wrote recently with Jean Charest notes air pollutants in Canada's cities are expected to impose health costs of roughly \$230 billion between 2008 and 2031. This is an amazing number.*

This is the Canadian Medical Association's estimate of the health costs from air pollutants. So it's only air pollutants. It's not climate change. It's not water pollutants. It's not traffic congestion, or residential landfill issues. And it's only the health costs. It's \$10 billion a year, so serious money. But then you add to that: how about the costs associated with people when they are sick – their lost income and productivity. And then you add in all the other types of pollution and do the same thing... Our environmental damage right now is costing us economically. And the longer we wait, while doing very little, those costs mount.

*We've been dumping pollution into the environment for a long time, haven't we?*

We treat our environment like a free disposal garburator. And we live in a world where that is permitted by law – not everywhere and always, but there is a large amount of pollution that we simply dump into the air or into the water. Some of this is legislated against, and much of it is not. And it's hardly a surprise that if people are permitted to treat their environment like a free disposal garburator; that at some point it comes back and bites you – to mix metaphors. And that's what is happening. So

the focus of the Ecofiscal Commission is on our fiscal structures. These are fiscal experts on the commission; they're not just economic experts more generally.

*What exactly do you mean by "ecofiscal" policies?*

We've kind of created this new word to start a conversation in Canada about these issues. The way we describe ecofiscal policies in our report, there are two halves to it. The first half is: you price pollution into the fiscal system, whether we're talking about air pollution, or water pollution, or carbon, or driving on congested roads. And as soon as you attach a price to pollution, people have an incentive to avoid it. This really is Economics 101. So there are two effects from the pricing of pollution: Number one, people pollute less, when there's now a price attached to their garburator; and number two, they have an incentive to try to innovate their way around it. So there's both an environmental benefit and an economic benefit. And then the second part of ecofiscal policies is just as important: You've just now generated some revenues from the pricing of pollution, so let's now take those revenues and recycle them back into the economy. And let's do that in a very intelligent way. You can use that money to lower corporate taxes, or lower personal income taxes. You can use that money to give back to the most vulnerable, lowest income families. You can use that money to invest in R&D, or clean tech, or public infrastructure.

*The commission sounds like a kind of think tank, but with a limited lifespan.*

Yup, I hope so. I'm absolutely committed for this not to be a retirement project. [laughs]. I'm 52. Our horizon is five or six years. There's a lot to do. But we think we can kind of span the space of ecofiscal issues and reports in five or six years.



BC Bike Race/2017 – Main Street Cumberland BC

## LEVERAGING PROCUREMENT FOR COMMUNITY BENEFIT

Sundance Topham, CEO, Village of Cumberland, B.C.

The Village of Cumberland on Vancouver Island has adopted a progressive Social Procurement plan that has impacted positively on the community. In fact the Social Procurement model employed in Cumberland has been adapted in communities across Canada. It is a plan worth investigating for Huron County.

*What is Social Public Procurement?*

It leverages existing purchasing to achieve social value. Moving from do no harm, to do some good. Over the last thirty years the environmental movement has done an excellent job of educating and increasing awareness surrounding the importance of developing more sustainable practices. This has led

to considerable changes in behaviours and societal norms. Environmental considerations in government procurement have now become normalized. Social procurement seeks to further leverage tax dollars to achieve broad societal goals, increasing equality and diversity, while contributing to improved community wellbeing through the blending of social, environmental and economic considerations in the procurement process. Social procurement leverages the public procurement process for goods and services, to advance positive economic, workforce, and social development outcomes. Social procurement blends financial and social considerations in public sector purchasing to deliver against two bottom lines:

- A commitment to purchasing the best value services and products, in keeping with the MEAT criteria, the Most Economically Advantageous Tender; and
- A commitment to leverage limited public resources to achieve strategic community outcomes.
- What are the key social, employment and economic goals that the Social Procurement framework and Community Benefit Clauses will work to address?
- Contribute to a stronger local economy;
- Increase diversity among suppliers;
- Promote the Living Wage and fair employment practices;
- Improve access to contracts for micro, small business and social enterprises;
- Increase the number of local jobs that support young working families;
- Increase social inclusion, by improving contract access for equity-seeking groups, such as social enterprises;
- Enhance community arts and culture infrastructure;
- Improve and enhance public spaces;
- Increase training and apprenticeship opportunities;
- Help move people out of poverty, providing increased independence and sustainable employment for those in need;
- Improve opportunities for meaningful independence and community inclusion for citizens living with disabilities; and
- To stimulate an entrepreneurial culture of social innovation

## UNLEASHING THE POWER OF COMMUNITY CAPITAL

Rupert Downing, BC Community Impact Investment Coalition

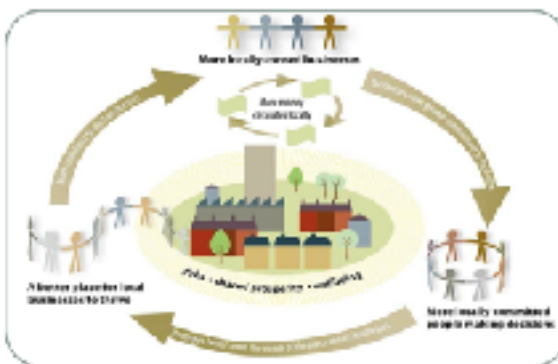
At the conference Rupert Downing spoke about an investment cooperative he is a part of on Vancouver Island. (Rupert recently participated (via Skype) in our Rural Investment Workshop held by the CCRC/Natural Interest in the Blyth Hall in early January) In the last few months Rupert has moved from his position as Director of the Vancouver Island Community Investment Cooperative, and is now Special Advisor to the Minister Responsible for Rural Development the BC Government. His heart remains in the idea of building community capacity via community investment.

Ryan Gibson, LIBRO Professor for Rural Economic Development from the University of Guelph, knows that rural areas are places of wealth, however, wealth that is increasingly mobile. He asks, how do rural communities tap into this wealth and encourage the investment to be place-based? There is an opportunity right now for non-profit organizations to exchange experiences and learn from one another about how to connect local philanthropy with community priorities. With an aging rural cohort not only is time of the essence; this is a once in a lifetime opportunity – an opportunity that may not come around again.

The Vancouver Island Community Investment Co-operative is a member driven co-op that works to create opportunities for residents of Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands to invest in sustainable social, economic and environmental futures for our communities while generating a private financial return to members. They do this by creating funds that members can contribute to that help finance projects of benefit to local communities. Membership is open to all residents for a one-time fee of \$250, redeemable at any time. The Co-operative is governed by a board democratically elected by the membership at its AGM.

### Why a Community Investment Co-operative?

Vancouver Island and Gulf Island communities need local investment to create sustainable jobs for their residents. Over \$500 million in investments by Islands residents every year go into funds that don't benefit the region. Yet we have innovative enterprises that contribute to our communities' social,



economic and environmental futures. They need local investment. Lets contribute locally to create jobs, sustain our communities and nurture our environment. We need to be a part of a growing movement in Canada for buying and investing locally. Local farmers, renewable energy co-ops, clean technology companies, affordable housing societies and others need capital to build their enterprises. The Co-op suggests we put our money where our life is in our local communities.

diagram from: Vancouver Island Community Investment Cooperative

## TO WRAP...

Many years ago when working on the Community Play, *Many Hands*, in Blyth, we discovered a speech that had been written in 1933. The Reeve who'd written and spoken it aloud in the Blyth Hall gave us permission to use it six decades later in 1993. We convinced the Reeve's nephew, a successful farmer but rather reluctant thespian, to give the speech during the play. It turned out to be a highlight. *Many Hands* remains a significant cultural experience in my life, an event that brought together 150 local people in performance, dance and music, and then told the story of Huron County to 500 audience members each and every night for a two week run. *Many Hands* continues to tell its story.

In 1933 the Reeve had suggested the establishment of a conservation authority. It met with opposition from some, and complete support from others. The pro and con arguments grew and then raged on the street, in the cafes, down on the farms, and in the homes. Finally the Reeve decided it was time to bring everybody together: to have it out. The Blyth Memorial Community Hall was booked, 600 people packed the 500 seat theatre, and hundreds more gathered in the courtyard surrounding the building - the Hall windows were thrown open, so those on the lawn could be a part of the 'discussion'. The only thing the Reeve asked was that he be given the last word – anyone who had something to say on the subject was given time and space to do so. The meeting went on for hours, goes the report, with shouts from the house, applause, jeers, declarations from the stage, hoots, hollers, and when it was time for the Reeve to step up he said this (among other things): it's easy to get along with those you agree with, the difficult thing is to get along with those you don't.

I was once asked: can you divorce idea from personality? Can you hear a good idea when it's offered from someone you are in conflict with?

How do you think we're doing in Huron County in getting along with those we don't agree with? And perhaps, as importantly, with those that we do. How open are we to a good idea – regardless of the quarter from where it comes?

Wherever we place ourselves in the spectrum of guiding attitudes and sensibilities, agreement and disagreement, hearing the good idea, I believe the opportunity is here for us to dig down a bit deeper -- and offer up counterpoint that's nuanced, informed, and if we have our radar working properly, perhaps even enlightened.

Peter Smith

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*But the desire to comprehend eventually overpowered the desire to be a fan or evangelist.*

Ta-Nehisi Coates