

Report on Sustainability Conference – 22 October 2007 to be given to the CFUW General Meeting,  
February 2008.

Four members of the Actions and Issues Committee attended the Sustainability Conference in October. Organisations and websites mentioned in this report will be put on our website.

The conference was organized by the **Fresh Outlook Foundation** based <sup>1</sup> in Lake Country. [www.freshoutlookfoundation.org](http://www.freshoutlookfoundation.org). It was a conference entitled Building Sustainable Communities: From Awareness to Action. 320 delegates representing 68 local governments, various universities, NGOs, citizens' groups, businesses, and consulting firms attended: we attended as representatives of a non-profit organization. We were most impressed with the organization and the high-calibre of speakers and information.

The first speaker was **Andrea Reimer** from Vancouver. She had been asked by Al Gore to be one of the presenters for showings of his now-famous film *An Inconvenient Truth*. A key point in Ms. Reimer's speech was that to stabilize climate change for 25 years would take 1% of the global GNP. But if we do nothing, we will have to spend 5 – 20% to remediate the damage.

**Author Guy Daucey**, [www.earthfuture.com](http://www.earthfuture.com) who co-wrote the book *Stormy Weather: 101 Solutions to Global Climate Change*, spoke next. He asked the audience to picture 10,000 years of human life before the use of fossil fuels, followed by a short period of 300 years when fossil fuels are used, and then another 10,000 years without fossil fuels. He said some experts estimate that we need to learn to operate without fossil fuels in the next 15 years, because supplies are beginning to decline. **“We already have the technologies to power everything in a permanently carbon neutral future,” he said.**

Dave Biggs, of **Envision Sustainability Tools**, got the audience to examine the effect of our own lifestyles on climate change. He distributed small electronic devices that enabled him to instantly tally the group's responses to questions he put to them. The most memorable question was: “If everyone lived your lifestyle, would the world be a better place?” (yes or no). Caught by surprise when he first asked us this, 65% of the audience said “yes”. But by the next day when he repeated the question, most of us had changed our minds. We were learning something!

Famous both for developing the concept of “Our Ecological Footprint” and for writing a book of the same name, UBC professor **Dr. Bill Rees** spoke on the topic: “Is Humanity Inherently Unsustainable. “We have to override humanity's innate expansionist tendencies and culturally ingrained habits and work together,” he said. “We have the technology today to reduce energy consumption by 75 – 80 %, yet we do not act.” *[he was voted the best speaker]*

**Dr. Gabor Zovanyi**, a professor at Eastern Washington University said that the world is facing a “paradigm shift” in which the only path to sustainability is no growth.

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<sup>1</sup> The Fresh Outlook Foundation is a non-profit organization that uses community-based social marketing to target specific audiences with customized, leading-edge programs that enable, encourage, and empower sustainable behaviours.

Extreme energy efficiency for buildings was the focus of speaker Helen Goodland, a representative of the **Lighthouse Sustainability Building Centre**. She called her talk, “Green Buildings and Net Zero Neighbourhoods”, and she showed the audience actual examples of highly energy efficient buildings that have already been built in B.C. and Europe.

## **THURSDAY SESSIONS.**

### 1) **What Does the Public really think about Sustainability.**

- Nancy McCarb and James Hoggan of James Hoggan & Associates gave us the results of their Sustainability Survey.
- 3000 participants in the survey.
- **Results** People don't understand the word sustainability – could not define it<sup>2</sup>
- The public embrace sustainability - their values are in line with sustainability but seek leadership and they don't trust business and government
- Canadians believe that Government should bring in more strict regulations, such as:
  - i) Fazing in mandatory standards
  - ii) Tax rebate on vehicles that produce less carbon
- Canadians are concerned about cost, not because they are miserly but because they do not trust government and business. Being socially responsible should not cost more.

The speakers gave Advice to Local Gov.

- Effective communications are essential.
  - i) Communicate through action – your action should not contradict your words. *One council gave approval for a drive-through at a fast food restaurant – that contributes to Global warming.*
  - ii) Talk about specifics which can be measured or confirmed
  - iii) Develop trust which is crucial to introduce any change

### 2) **From Red Tape to Green Development: Removing Bureaucratic Barriers.**

- David Reid of Lanarc Consultants Ltd. (landscape architect) [www.lanarc.ca](http://www.lanarc.ca) gave examples of sustainable communities.
- **Examples were:** Simon Fraser University in Vancouver and N. Campbell River.

#### **Characteristics of these communities:**

- University preserved 80% of land as green space
  - i) Created compact complete community
  - ii) integrated community with campus – reduced car trips by 40%.
  - iii) Used geothermal and solar hot water.
  - iv) gave contractors training sessions.
  - v) Vegetation and soil cleans the water at SFU.BC Rain – 75% drizzle, 20% heavy and 5% extreme.
- N. Campbell River mixes land use in a compact community: commercial, residential, retail and open space.
  - i) Habitat greenways for wildlife, e.g. for salmon. Micro pools provide amphibian habitat. Streamside re-vegetation.
  - ii) Preserves open spaces and parks
  - iii) Uses green infrastructure.

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<sup>2</sup> The need to balance social, cultural, and economic progress with environmental stewardship. The Brundtland Commission reported in 1987 that “sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

### 3) **Break Out Session.** *Sustainability Values: Perceiving Land as a Resource.*

- Build Green B. C. Jennifer Shaw.
- 80% of buyers want to save money when buying green & want to improve their quality of life & health.
- **Built Green Society of Canada** [www.builtgreencanada.ca](http://www.builtgreencanada.ca) was formed in 2005
- Energuide rating system can be applied to new & existing homes.
- Provincial Sustainability Incentives Laura Tate & Danielle Lukovich (from **Ministry of Community Services** [www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd](http://www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/lgd) ).
- Infrastructure Grants-up to \$500,000/yr for building "green communities"
- Transit Grants-for providing corridors in higher density communities.
- Emissions Grants-for providing space for urban forests & community gardens to reduce emissions.
- Smart Development Partnership Programme Grants-for land use innovations by communities.
- Location Efficient Mortgages-available for people who choose houses close to transit.
- Definition of Insanity-"continuing to do things the same way but expecting different results."

### 4) **Working Together for Conservation in the Okanagan.**

- Tasha Sargent. Grasslands BC Conservation Council [www.bcgrasslands.org/occp.htm](http://www.bcgrasslands.org/occp.htm).
- Wildlife love the Okanagan and so do people. Ecologically diverse area.
- 58 species at risk. 350 in the province of BC that are at risk. They support a healthy ecosystem.
- Often groups working in isolation so an Alliance has been formed.
- Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Programme - its inception was May 2007. They have held many meetings. A prospectus has been completed. Includes both north and central Okanagan.
- Now has 24 partners, including five local governments. Designed to be less bureaucratic. Various organizations have information not always readily available to others.
- **Purpose of Alliance** is Sharing information and mapping sensitive areas – information which is available to local government so they can make informed decisions.
  - i) Foreshore inventory mapping for Okanagan Lakes in the area. Working on Okanagan Lake now. [Docks can be a problem].
  - ii) Promoting research on species at risk.

### 5) **Private Sector.**

- Barry Milner, Geotility. [www.geotility.ca](http://www.geotility.ca) Change now before it is forced upon us
- Using heat from the ground.
- The first Geo-thermal system was registered in Sweden in 1932.
- Heating and cooling systems. – efficiency rated 300-500%. We can stop Green House Gases. Buildings produce 40% of our greenhouse gases – residential homes 2/3 of that.
- **Okanagan Environmental Industry Alliance.** [www.oeia.ca](http://www.oeia.ca)<sup>3</sup>

### **Civic Sector**

- Jodie Stu. Smartgrowth B.C. a nonprofit organization working toward sustainable communities.

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<sup>3</sup> The Okanagan Environmental Industry Association exists to promote the development and growth of residential, commercial and industrial markets for environmental products, services and technologies. Our Alliance is focused on collaboration and mentoring among its members to enable their business success. We are also key influencers of policy for the viable development of our industry”

- Promotes more livable communities, provides public empowerment and community assistance with tailored workshop presentations, educates voters, does research, and provides advisory services.

**Academic.**

- Economics Professor from **UBCO** John Janmaat. The Okanagan Sustainability Institute (OSI)
- The OSI mission is collaboration with researchers in different disciplines.
- Prof. Janmaat gave us information about the various projects that graduate students were working on regarding sustainability.
- URL: <http://web.ubc.ca/okanagan/academic-research/osi.htm>.

The last speaker, Thomas Osdoba – Executive Director, Canada Carbon Trust.

Toward Sustainability:

- Gave us an example of how China is building sustainable neighbourhoods – self-sufficiency in heat.
- Trying to change a large city is too complicated – start on a small scale, neighbourhood by neighbourhood.
- Requires institutional reform and people who act as if they are serious about enacting change.
- Sustainability will provide a vibrant culture and sustainable cities will be full of green buildings as cities rewrite their building codes where reduction in energy consumption will be a priority.

The Fresh Outlook Foundation is planning another conference for next year *[24-26 February 2009 at The Grand]*