

QuickTime™ and a  
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

[www.e-dialogues.ca](http://www.e-dialogues.ca)  
Royal Roads University

## **Governance for Sustainable Development: As if it Mattered?**

January 10, 2007

Moderated by Drs. Lenore Newman and Marilyn Hamilton

### **Participants**

**Ann Dale**, Trudeau Fellow, Canada Research Chair in Sustainable Community  
Development, Professor, Royal Roads University

**Jim Hamilton**, Hamilton, Thomas and Associates Ltd.

**David Bell**, Professor Emeritus, Senior Scholar and Former Dean, Faculty of  
Environmental Studies, York University

**Steven Huddart**, Vice-President of the JW McConnell Foundation

**Jon Purkis**, Senior Sustainability Advisor, The Natural Step

**Bob Slater**, Former Deputy Minister of Environment Canada, School of Public Policy  
and Administration, Carleton University

### **Dialogue**

---

#### **Lenore Newman**

Welcome everyone. Today we will be talking about governance and its role in sustainable infrastructure development. My name is Lenore Newman, and I am the research manager for the sustainable infrastructure project. I am personally interested in the adoption of sustainable practices. To begin today, could everyone post a brief introduction and a short statement explaining your interest in governance.

#### **Jim Hamilton**

---

Good afternoon, Jim Hamilton

## **John Purkis**

---

Hello, my name is John Purkis and I've worked with municipal governments on various aspects of their sustainable infrastructure issues for several years with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Green Municipal Fund. I've very recently joined The Natural Step Canada as a Senior Sustainability Advisor. I'll start with a quote I found on the Alberta Urban Municipal Association (AUMA) web site, which should help to explain my interest in governance:

"The future is not something we enter. It something we create." (Leonard I. Sweet, Author/Futurist)

Within all orders of government (Municipal, Provincial and Federal) governance issues have a significant impact on our health, the environment and the economy. The way in which decisions are made must change in order to address the complex issues (social/cultural, environmental and economic) modern societies face. Governing bodies tend to get lost in the multitude of issues they face and, as a result, they continue to make the same decisions that lead us on a path that is unsustainable. Fortunately, as a species, we are very good at dealing with complex issues, just not in groups larger than 5! Fortunately, again there are a few models that can help large groups make sense of these issues and help them make decisions, which will move them in a direction that is sustainable. One of the models that I've been most impressed with is The Natural Step Framework (<http://www.naturalstep.ca/framework.html>). Essentially the framework provides a simple yet concrete way to assist decision-makers by providing them with a pragmatic analytical tool for understanding and integrating sustainability principles into their organization.

## **Jim Hamilton**

---

The reason I am interested in governance is that for me it is the one critical gap in the management of public and private infrastructure that leads to non-observance of climate change matters. Put differently, those in charge of institutions or corporations (such as hospitals or private sector firms) receive little direction to pay attention to environmental matters. Indeed, one can truly argue that they receive the opposite. They are legally and politically enjoined to maximize profits or minimize costs or increase the number of hospital beds etc. I will elaborate later on this.

## **Marilyn Hamilton**

---

Good afternoon, I am Marilyn Hamilton, the moderator of the e-audience. Governance is of interest to me because it affects all the other areas of infrastructure management. I also notice that with the most multi-cultural city in the world (Toronto) plus many others in Canada, we have cities where very different worldviews of governance are competing with one another.

### **Lenore Newman**

---

Hopefully we will have some engaging questions! I will be asking Marilyn to bring them to our attention in the last half hour of our conversation.

### **Ann Dale**

---

My research passion is sustainable community development, and of course, many in my field have identified as one of the main issues for its effective implementation is governance. My interest in governments, now broadened to governance, goes back to 1976 and my first job in the Federal Government was with the Anti-Inflation Board, as their compensation and legal affairs officer, responsible for recording legal decisions of the Board concerning compensation decisions, including roll-backs. After six months, I observed that many of the seeming rational decisions being taken at the table involved so many off-table conversations and trade-offs that often, it appeared as if the most mediocre decisions were made, thus, began my study of government decision-making.

### **Jim Hamilton**

---

Yes, but remember the adage: with politics, mediocrity is just a perspective.

### **David Bell**

---

Clearly governance for sustainability is a key research and intellectual focus for me. I define governance rather broadly to include the transformation in decision-making practices, policies, institutions and culture that will be necessary to support sustainability in the public and private sectors.

Infrastructure decisions are particularly key because of the long timeframe they affect. I have recently been involved in advising York Region on how to plan and implement sustainable infrastructure; and in helping Parc-Downsview-Park develop Guidelines to ensure the sustainability of the infrastructure of the green-space and of the homes and other buildings that will be constructed (or

retrofitted) on this 573-acre site in the heart of the GTA.

### **Robert Slater**

---

Hello everybody, my name is Bob Slater and I am a recovering bureaucrat having spent over 30 years working for Environment Canada, which by and large I found a worthwhile experience. These days I teach environmental policy at Carleton University in the School of Public Policy and Administration at the postgraduate level and also to first year undergraduate students in the Faculty of Engineering. I have a Consulting Practice in SD and Environmental issues which has clients on 3 continents and a burgeoning pro bono practice to NGOs, universities and individuals.

### **Lenore Newman**

---

Welcome, David and Bob, great to have you here. The first question we are going to consider is: in your opinion what are the biggest barriers to the realization of sustainable development in Canada?

### **Jim Hamilton**

---

What are the biggest barriers? That depends on your definition of governance. Mine is quite simple actually. What makes people responsible for what they do, and what makes them accountable for what they do? Right now in terms of the environment and climate change, there is not much. In my opinion we are relying way too much on goodwill, and that is simply poor governance. You would never run a corporation that way.

Put differently, what causes the people in charge of municipal or other infrastructure to pay attention to global change and environmental matters. There is little. In fact, the opposite is usually the case. Fiduciary responsibilities usually force those in charge to put other priorities ahead of the environment. One beautiful example: energy performance contracting was designed to substitute energy savings investments within public infrastructure to reduce the use of energy. In PEI, several years ago, a school board used energy performance contracting to switch to cheaper Bunker C fuel from other energy alternatives to save money. They saved a lot of money and did a lot of additional messing up of the environment. The point here is that the primary objective of the school board was to save money; not assist in climate change.

Consequently, with most institutions that lay down infrastructure, there is little in place of a legal nature to make them responsible for their decisions vis-s-vis the environment.

## **Lenore Newman**

---

It seems, Jim, that an example such as the oil example you give is classic short term thinking. Is government doomed to think in four or five year cycles, or is there a way to plan for the long term?

## **Jim Hamilton**

---

I could not agree with you more. The real issue here is getting those in charge to think in the long term. From a short term perspective, what they did was quite rational. It is almost as though any corporation should be enjoined somehow to develop a long term plan with the government???? Somehow giving some terms of reference. Is this not what the feds are already doing with municipalities?

## **Ann Dale**

---

Jim, fiduciary responsibility and the limited view that many Board of Directors take is an issue, but I think another major issue is let's get the bloody prices right, use the market signals to induce the corresponding changes in behaviour and decision-making that we need. For example, we have billions and billions of dollars in deferred building maintenance in just colleges and universities in this country, what government programs and incentives could be put in place to create meaningful movement towards more sustainable buildings, not to be confused with green buildings. There are lots of monetary incentives for new buildings, but no emphasis on old buildings, which are more problematic and not nearly as sexy. For the difference between a green building and a sustainable building, go to the e-Dialogues archives.

## **Jim Hamilton**

---

Yes and no. Even if the prices are right, are the returns high enough to pay attention to. This is a major question in that if you are on the board of a hospital, for example, you have to deal with the issue of where you invest your scarce resources.

As to getting the prices right, that, I think is ultimately a regulatory issue. They just will not occur all by themselves. But if we are going to use regulations to

adjust prices, why not just state clearly that certain behaviour is simply not allowed. Automobiles can only be a certain size and that is the end of it. I have just come to the conclusion, maybe wrongly, that price mechanisms etc are too subtle. I would rather see a "don't do it" approach and have those in charge start thinking about long term plans to bring that about.

## **Ann Dale**

---

Jim, I can't believe you and I are disagreeing on price signals, and you one of my favourite intelligent economists:) I think we need both, you and I live in a very wealthy and well-educated city, Ottawa, and yet, I keep hearing again and again from relatively wealthy people that they feel their tax burden is too high, not progressive, and we have heard in other e-dialogues that the property tax system is badly in need of modernization, in fact, I would argue that the entire municipal/provincial/federal system must be brought into the 21st century, and I would argue that Bob Rae should lead this long-term initiative, desperately needed for this country's innovation. However, back to prices, we need land-fill fees to reflect the total life-cycle of a land-fill, we critically need to price water and we need to price waste disposal, particularly, electronics, and create a multiple of attractive incentives to induce behaviour change through all sectors of society. What about tax incentives and government inducing banks to give zero interest loans to home owners for energy efficiency improvements that can be paid back through energy savings, a form of corporate social responsibility, a certain percentage of each bank's loans at the community level?

## **Jim Hamilton**

---

The issue is not prices, but how are you going to set them. Take land-fills. Dumping tariffs (or whatever they are called) are cheap because it is a fact that in Canada there is lots of land. consequently, the only way we can set reasonable prices is to legislate/regulate them. alternatively, we can simply regulate the amounts that someone is permitted to dump. I think the latter is easier to do. That is why I lean towards regulations and away from price-based solutions.

## **Ann Dale**

---

In addition to narrow fiduciary responsibilities, key to the meaningful implementation of sustainable infrastructure are laws and policies designed to reduce Canadian consumption of energy and resources. To quote David Boyd from his book, *Unnatural Law*, "The Canadian system of environmental law is weak, inconsistent, narrow, unscientific, plagued by discretion, undermined by budget cuts, inadequate enforcement, and a lack of effective checks and balances, and subject to manipulation by society's most powerful interests" (p.350). And the forces against change coupled by powerful vested interests, and risk adverse decision-making make for very poor governance, but don't quote me on that:) Attached is a ppt presentation I made to Justice Canada during last year's Environment Week.

**File attachment** [JusticeFinal.ppt](#) (903 KB)

## **David Bell**

---

Sustainability involves new learning, greater appreciation of the importance of planning for the long term, integrated decision making that considers the (at least) triple implications and impacts of all major policy decisions. These are all necessary but not sufficient. To "realize" sustainable infrastructure requires informed leaders and champions who are prepared to implement new strategies and actions; and who have the political, financial and human resources to turn ideas into action.

So this is a tall order for any organization or government. For many of them the innovation sustainability requires directly challenges established patterns and vested interests both within the org and among its key stakeholders.

## **Lenore Newman**

---

It is interesting that you mention champions, David. Our research team has found that almost every innovative infrastructure project we study has one or two people willing to go the extra mile to make the project happen. What can be done to make things easier for these people?

### **David Bell**

---

Let me comment on this from the perspective of the work I did in the early years of the "Sustainable Enterprise Academy" (SEA) which was designed to provide professional development to sustainability leaders in the private, public and NGO sector. Much of the program aimed to help each participant devise feasible strategies to bring about change in their home organizations. Over the years SEA has helped produce scores of sustainability leaders who will I believe ultimately help transform their orgs. We even toyed with the idea of a special variant of SEA for municipal politicians and officials, some of whom have already attended.

I don't want to recapitulate the org change strategy taught at SEA (it is spearheaded by Bryan Smith who works with Peter Senger). Let me simply suggest that some sort of training/education for leaders/leadership is a big help.

This takes us to a later topic, viz the role of postsecondary education. All professionals should get sustainability leadership training as part of their formal education. I will say more about that later.

So we have the identification and support of leaders as one component. But of course these leaders and champions operate in a context of nested systems, all of which need to be transformed over time by the sorts of changes and innovations being discussed more generally on this and other e-dialogues.

### **Jim Hamilton**

---

Someone made reference to the use of "champions". I know why we rely on them, but from a governance perspective where things should be a little more organized, the use of "champions" is a real hit or miss solution.



## David Bell

---

I have already addressed this to some extent in my response to Lenore. Let me be more explicit. Champions (like "the future") are not something that happens by chance. We can and must take steps to identify and nurture them. But they are only one aspect of the broader sustainability governance framework which I have sketched as having (at minimum) the following elements.

Framework for Sustainability Governance:

A government that wishes to embrace sustainability governance as a guideline and framework for its decision making must establish the following elements :

Vision and Principles

Appropriate Structures (stovepipes make it difficult so compensating arrangements are needed to permit "horizontal" decision making. Structural innovations may also be required.)

Appropriate Processes including

- decision tools for "integrated decisions"
- a "sustainability lens" to see the triple implications
- a "sustainability screen" to assess policy proposals
- "sustainability metrics" to measure the impacts/outcomes
- mechanisms to allow transparency/reporting and participation
- a Sustainability Management System complete with targets, incentives, monitoring and reporting

A Culture of Sustainability (within the organization and society)

- understanding, values, buy-in, "alignment"
- conscious efforts to change the mindset and culture through professional development, education and awareness initiatives, etc

Time

- to apply these principles, make good decisions
- planning for medium and long term, not just short term

Resources

- personnel
- financial

Champions

## Jim Hamilton

---

I agree that there should be a systematic approach as your model above indicates, but what is missing is a deliberate process to develop or nurture champions. That is not there outside of referring to a resource need; I would have thought that 'champion' development as you seem to be defining it would constitute a major part of your "Culture of Sustainability" if not the most critical part.

## John Purkis

---

I think there are three barriers.

1. Our collective federal, provincial and municipal strategies, as they relate to infrastructure, are out of sync and focus with each other. What are we creating? We need a common language and collective vision in order for sustainable infrastructure to be realized at an accelerated pace.

2. Lack of willingness/ability for people and groups of people to step up and think outside one's silo. As an example developers who build neighborhoods typically expect their development to connect to the local waste water collection system or to connect to the energy grid, thereby placing additional demands on municipal infrastructure and perpetuating an unsustainable method of development. In contrast some developers and municipal governments are thinking outside the box and building resilient and sustainable neighborhoods. One of my favourite examples is Dockside Green in the City of Victoria.

After the discussion have a look at the following (27 min) interview with Joe Van Bellingham on youtube: <http://youtube.com/watch?v=3jD7rATl39Y> or have a look at their web site and check out the Dockside green project in Victoria: <http://www.windmilldevelopments.com/>

3. Municipal fiscal imbalance.

Here is a quote from FCM's web site, which clearly indicated that money is an important factor in the sustainability equation for municipal government: Municipal governments today provide much more than the basic property services they were designed to provide. New municipal responsibilities include everything from immigrant settlement, affordable housing, preparing for pandemics, tough new environmental regulations, and, in some jurisdictions, childcare.

But municipal revenues haven't grown with these responsibilities. Of every tax dollar collected in Canada, 50 cents go to the federal government, and 42 cents go to provincial and territorial governments. What's left—eight cents—go to municipal governments. For municipal governments and their taxpayers, the result is a chronic financial squeeze that shows up in reduced infrastructure investments and a \$60-billion municipal infrastructure deficit, estimated to be growing by \$2 billion a year. This hurts our national competitiveness and quality of life.

Additional information on the fiscal imbalance may be found at the following link:  
<http://www.fcm.ca/english/fiscal/fiscal.html>

### **Ann Dale**

---

I do not mean to put my esteemed colleagues on the spot, but what the hell do we mean by integrated decision-making, incidentally my definition of sustainable community development is development that integrates ecological, social, and economic decision-making.

### **Ann Dale**

---

Not trying to dominate, but funny synergy, just received the attached list of references on integrated decision-making from a colleague, Sean Connelly, from the Centre for Sustainable Community Development at Simon Fraser University.

**File attachment** [decision-making refs.doc](#) (25 KB)

### **Robert Slater**

---

I wanted to comment on what are the winning conditions for infrastructure that contributes to sustainable development.

The first point is to put it in the positive and look for solutions rather than impediments. The second is to deploy all the policies that make sense and I've never seen one that didn't use sticks, carrots and sermons in a judicious mix. Third, you do need the resources be they financial, people, technical etc. Finally,

you absolutely must have leadership to set the vision and communicate it. Harmonious, mutually reinforcing leadership is required from all engaged parties.

### **Jim Hamilton**

---

Good afternoon Rob: I hear or see what you say or type. Do you not think that the balance is not too far over towards cooperation and that maybe some coercion is really required? As an example consider what the Republican governor of California has recently introduced re the use of energy etc. He may have done it for questionable reasons, but he had to do it.

### **Robert Slater**

---

I think you need all three--sticks, carrots and sermons. The type--marketplace, taxes, coercive--would vary according to the subject, the political theology prevalent and the behaviour of the target.

No matter which choice is made there is a necessity to monitor performance, provide feedback for continuous improvement to the practitioners and report to the public.

### **David Bell**

---

I promised earlier to say more about Question 3. I agree with Bob's point and would extend it. Most of the decision makers and key actors responsible for implementing sustainable infrastructure have had postsecondary academic training. Many of them are also professionals of some kind. Few of them received appropriate sustainability education and training in the course of the studies. "in-service" professional development and certification regimes have also been slow to respond to the 21st century imperative of making sustainability a core focus. But happily this is starting to change. Note for example the work the CSA is currently doing on the certification of professional engineers. Universities can both improve their "pre-service" education and (in cooperation with professional societies and certifying bodies) provide much better "in-service" education to professionals already in the field.

## **Lenore Newman**

---

The role of education is an interesting one. Our research team met with a representative from the Central Party School of China, and they found it very odd that our elected leaders do not have to be educated in areas related to their positions. I don't think elected leaders here in Canada will have to take a course in sustainable development any time soon, but it would certainly be useful.

## **Robert Slater**

---

One important role for Universities is to provide a safe haven for practitioners in the field. Many times the educational process occurs at the negotiating table which is probably the worst place. Who has ever heard a supremely confident negotiator say " I am sorry I haven't a clue what you mean" only to discover that half of the participants are in the same boat. Just imagine a university setting -- perhaps incorporating many of the features of SEA--which was aimed at supporting the needs of front line practitioners. one that would have a research and teaching program, fellowships that it could offer practitioners so that they could reflect on the substance of winning and losing conditions learned in their immediate workplace, and the opportunity to attend precisely designed learning programs which would allow them to do their job better.

## **Lenore Newman**

---

The current thread leads nicely into our second question.

Is there a mismatch between managing sustainable infrastructure needs and the separation of municipal, provincial and federal jurisdictions?

.

## **Ann Dale**

---

Further to Lenore's question, I think there is a terrible mismatch between our current political arrangements and sustainable infrastructure needs, as John also states in the points he made earlier. Modern day realities, and challenges and the evolving nature of human organizations in a dynamic, complex and increasingly interconnected human and ecological systems, can no longer be governed by the BNA of 1867. However, that is another reason I became so interested in government, watching the failure of Meach Lake, how do we ever transcend the power/and conflict issues of the vested interests to maintain the status quo. It will take leaders of great vision, and I challenge all party leaders to come up with new models of governance, let's bypass talking about the same old, the same old, what are the new models, let's get them out in the open, let's

discuss government organization not based on old problems of drawing water and hewing wood, but on modern day issues of climate change, waste minimization, energy security, water security, and one of our most pressing issues--biodiversity conservation--there is no second chance with extinction?

## **David Bell**

---

In principle of course you are right Ann. I don't think it's realistic to expect that existing government structures will be totally overhauled and transformed (along the lines you indicate) anytime soon. This would be part of a constitutional and organizational revolution the likes of which we have not seen in this country since Confederation.

I do believe that lesser changes that allow the existing machinery to function better and begin to take sustainability much more seriously is however achievable. The framework I have proposed is one possible template. But there are many initiatives that have already taken place at all levels of government in Canada; and so many underlying changes within all sectors of society and in public awareness and concern that we may be on the cusp of fairly profound transformation.

## **Ann Dale**

---

David, and colleagues, any ideas on how to engage the political levels of all three governments in the meaningful small steps that could be made in the interim?

## **David Bell**

---

It is happening to some extent. Stephane Dion has become an outspoken sustainability advocate/champion. This is the first time the federal political discourse has been infused with this language in any serious way. If he carries this into the election campaign I think we will have moved into a new era, at least as far as the political discourse is concerned.

I understand that some provincial leaders/parties are doing the same. And here in the GTA, a number of local politicians are doing the same thing.

In many respects the politicians are responding to the public. The catalyst for public interest in and response to this new discourse stems from national and global concerns about climate change, energy, water, and the links between environment and health.

**Lenore Newman**

---

It seems we have done a good job of outlining some barriers in this discussion, so let's look at our last question--what are the needed solutions to the problem of barriers to sustainable development?

I think we have begun to hint at these solutions.

**Jim Hamilton**

---

I think I have already made my pitch for more regulations so I will say no more.

In terms of infrastructural investments, most are made by municipalities or quasi-government institutions like hospitals, school boards universities etc. I sometimes wonder whether their decision processes might not be improved if long-term planning (of a 25 to 50 year nature) were not made a condition of any monies they receive. One municipality is doing this on their own hook, but relating the planning to "disaster contingencies" i.e. what do they have to do now to ensure good water for their community one hundred years from now.

**Ann Dale**

---

Water Security Act

Energy Security Act (in particular, eliminating trading barriers between provinces)

## **John Purkis**

---

I agree with Dr. Bell.

Michael Ignatieff, now deputy leader of the Liberal Party to explain this point. During one of his speeches he stated that:

"Any Liberal government I lead will implement Canada's first comprehensive National Sustainable Development Act. This Act would require all federal policy to comply with our environmental objectives and targets.... A National Sustainable Development Act will require that our efforts across departments be coordinated."

This new Act would go a long way to help address silo issues at the federal level, and would likely have a trickle down effect on the provinces.

In essence a few municipal governments have integrated this line of thinking already. Whistler created a filter through which council decisions are made. They created a common language that exists between council, staff, the private section and citizens. Their approach has proven quite successful.

## **Jim Hamilton**

---

I have to comment on this. First, the liberals are not in power. Second, it will be interesting to see how their story line changes once they are, and third, Read Brian Mulroney's speeches of years ago. He said all the right things, and quite consistently too.

## **Ann Dale**

---

I think it is irrelevant who is in power if we can get some concrete policies, tools and policy instruments in place that will provide some necessary direction and movement towards sustainable infrastructure, that can happen again, through champions, I would love to see a Business Council of Sustainable Development Champions created the leaders in the country, to influence other leaders about the benefits of integrated decision-making to the bottom line. Ask them to be the one-dollar a year people, there is nothing like peer group influence to catalyze change in a sector. Then, look at simply tying the throne speech to matrix management in the Federal Government?



## **Robert Slater**

---

I would look for action in the following areas.

1. documentation on the competitiveness and productivity benefits that come from infrastructure investments that contribute to SD. I would like to know how many jobs were created, how many new export potential technologies were used, 3 anecdotes per community, all wrapped up on a constituency, provincial and national basis and effectively communicated
  2. Establish a permanent, current best practices inventory
  3. Institute annual reporting on results significant to all governments
  4. Eliminate 1 regulatory impediment to progress once a week
  5. Award 'champions of infrastructure' awards
  6. Challenge the universities to be part of the solution
- That's enough for the moment.

## **John Purkis**

---

A certification program for professionals would be useful. But most people don't have the time or resources.

To address this issue The Natural Step Canada developed an on-line e-learning course that can be used at one's own pace. The uptake has been quite successful. Other courses like this would be useful.

## **Ann Dale**

---

I think the Federal Government has been quite innovative in tying the federal gas tax rebates to municipalities to their implement of an integrated community sustainability plan. For your information, our research team is just finalizing a template for what needs to be in such plans, from both a process and a concrete plan perspective.

## **Robert Slater**

---

I am suspicious of top down solutions in fields like this. Who could possibly disagree with SD, look at all the supporters of ' smart growth' except it happens in the exception rather than the norm.  
That is why I suggested a list of practical measures to get things going.

## **Lenore Newman**

---

In the case of smart growth existing planning regulations are often one of the key barriers—likely the case with sustainable development as well. Perhaps one needed action is to review laws and regulations that actually inhibit sustainable development.

### **Robert Slater**

---

I was thinking on much more local level--a couple of instances illustrate. municipal building codes frequently do not allow for innovative green energy technologies, progressive developers who want to integrate a set of green measures will be discouraged rather than encouraged by local decision makers. i am not arguing that you need to move it up to a provincial let alone a federal level but rather believe that the challenge is to help the local decision maker do a better job.

### **Lenore Newman**

---

At this point I would like to ask Marilyn if there are any questions from the audience for the panellists.

### **Marilyn Hamilton**

---

I have several questions -- I will put them into separate comment boxes so people can tackle them separately. First lots of comments/questions related to education: Here is the cluster from Chris Ling, Nola-kate Seymoar and Sean Connelly:

Do municipalities have sufficient guidance and support to provide them with the tools and knowledge that is available - and are municipalities engaged in the debate in general. How do we build capacity?

## **Ann Dale**

---

Welcome to our esteemed audience, unfortunately, our software is not sophisticated enough to remove the artificial expert separation currently in our platform. Key question of capacity, and several of the panel, and John has just reinforced certification programs for professionals, David has talked about leaders, and their training, I think effective governance is dependent upon an informed and engaged electorate, through dynamically connected networks, both place-based and virtual, of practitioners, decision-makers and community leaders, with the capacity to self-organize and dialogue around concrete questions and solutions. Networks that bridge the solitudes, silos and stovepipes that characterize this country, sorry, just had to bring that up:) Let's get on with it, connect people through their knowledge and expertise, across the country.

## **John Purkis**

---

Additional resources and a coordinate effort are required.

I spent the past year helping a small team at FCM build the foundation for Sustainable Municipal Capacity Building. There is a wealth of information, tools and resources available to municipal governments that have been developed in recent years. So in part yes they have tools eg. AUMA sustainability planning guide ( <http://msp.munilink.net/> ). Additional resources are needed to help people use the guide. So there is a gap in the financial resources available to do this.

I recently finished The Tipping Point by Malcom Gladwell. Extrapolating from this book I would also say that 'capacity' is built by providing the right information and resources to the right people.

## **David Bell**

---

There are a number of supports for municipalities including FCM, ICLEI, and Nola-Kate's org. The larger municipalities have more resources but some of the smaller ones (like Whistler which was mentioned earlier) are showing real leadership.

One focus that has energized some communities is around indicators for sustainability. There is now a Canadian Sustainable Indicators network which emerged from the International org that met in Toronto 4 years ago. A key catalyst was Maureen Hart ([sustainablemeasures.com](http://sustainablemeasures.com)).

I hope Infrastructure Canada will play a leadership role. NRTEE did some good work a few years ago. Mike Harcourt's task Force recently reported.

In short I think the supports are out there but they could be strengthened and what we really need is better cooperation and coordination b/n feds and provinces. Env Can took a paper on this to WSSD (in preparation for which I prepared one of the background papers) but was not allowed to release it. I think the Feds could do much more. I know that Minister Cannon is personally committed. Perhaps in an effort to rehabilitate their environmental image the Harper government will come up with something progressive.

### **Marilyn Hamilton**

---

Chris Ling asks:

When talking about sustainable development governance (as in today's discussion) there always seems to be a desire for more regulation. In what ways can regulations be introduced that don't become the barriers of the future as many well intentioned regulation seems to be in the end?

### **Jim Hamilton**

---

I doubt whether there is a simple answer to this question. Regulations like anything else need to be periodically reviewed. The dilemma is that something has to be done, but it seems that whatever you do, including nothing, will create in time a supporting interest group that will fight any further change.

### **Marilyn Hamilton**

---

A third question also from Chris Ling . What is the best scale for Governance of sustainable infrastructure? Are some municipalities too small to adequately create sustainable infrastructure without robust regional frameworks to work in, and to what extent do these frameworks exist successfully.

### **Jim Hamilton**

---

I would go even further in the question. There are several situations where regional frameworks are an absolute necessity such as the Fraser River Valley in British Columbia.

**Marilyn Hamilton**

---

Perhaps you mean the Fraser Basin Council? Yes, Nola-Kate brought that up as an excellent example.

**Jim Hamilton**

---

Yes, How was that for a mis-quote??? Heh, eastern Canadian

**Ann Dale**

---

This question very nicely addresses the s, s and s dilemma, if we took a systems approach, and each community saw itself as part of a larger system, that is dynamically connected to others, as part of a regional framework embedded or nested in a larger federal family, coupled with the principle of subsidiary, would go a long way to help.

At the same time, I noted in the e-audience, that my esteemed colleague, Nola-Kate Seymoar cut to the chase and stated the issue is really about power, who holds it and who is prepared to give some of it up? Until we face this fundamental question, and develop new models of governance based on strategic alliances and partnerships with civil society?

**Jim Hamilton**

---

I would have thought, as an economist, that a democracy is a strategic alliance and partnership with a civil society.

## **Marilyn Hamilton**

---

Sean suggests something similar:

Much of the focus of the panel's discussion has been on the role of government and the institutional capacity required of government for sustainability. But how can we build the social capacity for sustainability to generate the broad support for collective action / governance for sustainability? This really gets at the issue of power and the role of social capital.

## **Ann Dale**

---

The role of social capital is critical, Sean, and enlightened government policy can either destroy or enhance community social capital. A current example is in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, am attaching our case study, United We Can, a social enterprise employing over 33 homeless people and recovering waste from the waste stream that would otherwise be not recovered, and now the City of Vancouver is considering locking down the blue bins that the men and women use in the downtown urban back yards of condominium dwellers. The City could show leadership and implement enlightened policies working with the Binners Association, and enlarging their waste management system to include United We Can. This is truly an example of policy leadership that could integrate the social, the ecological and the economic. Sam Sullivan, the mayor of Vancouver, could demonstrate ordinary leadership at very little cost, bring the parties together to the table, City officials, Ken Lyotier, Head of United We Can, the GVRD and other stakeholders.

**[United We Can Final Revised Case Study.pdf](#)** (121.24 KB)

## **John Purkis**

---

I mentioned Whistler earlier.

In this example the municipality worked the private sector and citizen groups to create a sustainable community plan. They now have a common language that permeates municipal council, the private sector and the public. This makes it considerably easier for council to make decisions that are sustainable. Have a look at their plan and purchasing guide line at the following link:

Whistler's Sustainability Plan ([www.whistler2020.ca](http://www.whistler2020.ca))

Sustainable purchasing guide: <http://www.whistler.ca/content/view/162/226/>

## **Marilyn Hamilton**

---

Also Nola-Kate reminds us that "The Comprehensive Community Plans being advocated by INAC are pretty exciting. The Seventh Generation idea is one to emulate".

## **Ann Dale**

---

We have heard again and again the need for a longer-time frame, and what scale is appropriate, these are two critical questions we need to look at when considering governance. It is clear that 4-year electoral cycles do not contain any incentives for the longer-term, but this again, gets back to something David Bell said, we need leaders, and for me, a leader is someone who is not afraid to stick their head out above the crowd and declare their vision, their principles and beliefs clearly and succinctly, and that they are held with integrity throughout their term of office. Takes two things you can never teach someone, courage and integrity.

## **Jim Hamilton**

---

There is truth to this. Perhaps out of this dialogue we should be recommending the creation of some sort of independent Environmental Commission to comment on government and civil society's progress towards resolving environmental matters.

## **Lenore Newman**

---

At this point I would like to ask if anyone has any final thoughts, and I want to thank everyone for taking part and contributing to what has been a very interesting discussion

## **David Bell**

---

I wanted to post here the recent report of the "Toward Sustainability in York Region" Task Force for which I had the honour of serving as Chair/Facilitator.

I think it addresses a number of the issues that have been raised in this discussion, including some of the questions posed by the "audience".

### Jim Hamilton

---

None, but thanks for asking me to participate

Have a nice evening

Jim Hamilton

### Ann Dale

---

Good night, everyone, and thank you, panel and e-audience, for a great conversation.

### Marilyn Hamilton

---

Thank you e-panel and e-audience. I especially appreciated all the extra resources that were brought into the discussion today. There is a lot to cover after this e-dialogue is completed.

---

### Post-dialogue addendum from **Steven Huddart**

Some things that I would have wanted to contribute (and that may well have been articulated by other panelists):-

- a reminder that as well as individual 'champions' we need early institutional adopters who can demonstrate workable, sustainable models of operation and governance. Whistler has been a municipal poster child for some time and we know about Craik, Saskatchewan, but it would be very helpful to have some more instances of municipal leadership getting out in front of the issue. McConnell has made a grant to a group of municipalities in Quebec that are attempting to secure organic certification for agriculture and FSC status for forestry. We have also made a grant to



Natural Step Canada to further develop their capacity to support community sustainability and to pilot their approach with a medium sized city, a northern community and a rural area. Planet U by M<sup>1</sup>Gonigle and Stark sets out an intriguing challenge for universities to play this kind of role.

- good governance needs good information. As well as making the case for sustainability, as Natural Step does, we need better reporting tools that provide accurate and integrated information on a range of indicators that cover the social, economic and environmental dimensions of a successful and sustainable community. Canadian Index of Wellbeing, Canada's Vital Signs, United Way Canada's neighbourhood wellness index, GPI Atlantic, and so on, are all efforts in this direction. Tom Beckley (UNB), Bill Reimer (Concordia) and others have recently published a tool for assessing the social, economic, human and environmental capital at a community level. Statistics Canada's recent decision to begin testing 5000 Canadians a year for blood toxicity levels is an interesting example of this kind of 're-measuring'.

- governance for sustainability is largely about being able to make the right decisions in adapting to new circumstances. Like my neighbour whose response to climate change was to import a Hummer from Alberta so he'll be able to drive through two feet of water, using the old ways to respond to our new challenges is increasingly maladaptive. At another level of scale, the US<sup>1</sup> occupation of Iraq is a tragically misguided response to the perceived threat of global terrorism. Without wanting to sound flippant, Little Mosque on the Prairie is probably a more effective antidote to cultural misunderstanding and any threat to Canada posed by Al Qaeda. My point is that before we make massive investments in maintaining the status quo, or at least in addition to doing so, we need to expand our capacity for social innovation. Let me illustrate this with an example from my experience as a board chair at Langara College in Vancouver in the 90's. At the time, BC was going through one of its periodic busts in the resource sector, and the provincial government had imposed funding cuts on the colleges and universities. At the same time, a couple of us persuaded the Minister to simultaneously approve an innovation fund that institutions could use to make creative changes in policy and program delivery. At Langara, the President structured this fund as an internal competition, thus generating multiple ideas from faculty and staff. Several of Langara's outstanding innovations an annual salmon barbeque with the Musqueam reserve, a campus-wide environmental policy, and a multi-disciplinary course where students rafted down the navigable length of the Fraser River came about during this period of 'retrenchment'. They were not all related to the innovation fund, but they did benefit from an institutional culture of innovation which the fund helped to trigger.