

# Our Sustainable Future: Get Inspired, Get Informed, Get to Work!

The Institute of Southern Georgian Bay's summary of the 7-part online discussion series.

We believe that Southern Georgian Bay can meet today's needs of the planet, its people, and economic vitality...without compromising the needs of future generations.



## The purpose of the Institute is to:

- connect people and help build relationships across the region
- provide collective learning opportunities and knowledge-sharing about current issues and solutions taking place in other jurisdictions, and
- nurture collaborative initiatives.

Together, we can harness the power of people and place in Southern Georgian Bay to grow social, environmental, and economic prosperity and be the smartest, greenest, healthiest, and most caring region in the Ontario. The Institute provides a unique role in the region by offering a platform and network for accelerating action by convening residents and business, government, non-profit, and philanthropic leaders to learn and act together.

Co-created by a design team dedicated to offer a wide variety of information, insights and collaborative examples and models of opportunity, the series followed a story arc throughout the year with each session building and expanding on the previous presentation. The project introduced regional CAOs to each other, brought regional Mayors together publically for the first time, and presented guidance from sustainability experts and innovative solution leaders.

# The people and organizations that made it happen:

## Design Team

### Co-Chairs:

- **Andrew Palmer**, Project Manager, Greenland International Consulting Ltd
- **Julie Scarcella**, Sustainability Expert; Founder of EcoSpex Inc., B Corp cert in progress
- **Adam Thackeray**, digital transformation leader, organizational agility in small/medium enterprises
- **Catherine Daw**, Leadership Team Member, Collingwood Climate Action Team, executive coach/consultant to small/medium enterprises

### Additional members:

- **Marilyn Struthers**, long-time resident Grey & Bruce and facilitator and organizational development coach, emerging practices of the social sector
- **Liz Rykert**, system change facilitator living in The Blue Mountains

- **Brandon Houston**, CEO, Collingwood Foundry
- **Yvonne Hamlin**, lawyer and Councillor, Town of Collingwood
- **June Porter**, Chair, Joint Municipal Physician Recruitment and Retention Committee, Southern Georgian Bay
- **Jack Vanderkooy**, Collingwood Affordable Housing Task Force
- **Brian Denney**, Retired Engineer and former CEO, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
- **Jane Walker**, Collingwood Affordable Housing Task Force
- **Rosalyn Morrison**, Chair, Board of Directors, The Institute of Southern Georgian Bay
- **Victoria Evans**, postgraduate, Arts Administration & Cultural Management, Humber College, passionate about empowering local communities
- **Michelle Baker**, editor, copywriter, and communications facilitator for heart-led change-makers

## Lead Partners



## Supporting Partners



## Series Highlights

**Our Sustainable Future: Get Inspired, Get Informed and Get to Work!** was created in response to the outcomes from the **Mapping Our Road to Recovery** series and the inaugural **UN Habitat in Towns: Collingwood World Summit**. In the midst of the pandemic, the series showcased the opportunity to learn more about Canada's commitment to the **UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** and explore how we might create integrated, resilient and equitable transformations toward sustainability across Southern Georgian Bay.

Taking a regional and holistic approach, the series aimed to create awareness of, and generate discussion about, what makes a vibrant sustainable community, as well as encourage citizens to learn more about their community and "become the change they want to see".

Over 400 people from across the region participated in the 7-part series, with residents and business, government, nonprofit, and philanthropic leaders discussing the SDGs and in particular **SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, with a focus on making communities inclusive, age-friendly, safe, resilient, and sustainable.**

### SDG 11 includes these interconnected issues:

- affordable housing
- addressing environmental and transportation challenges
- nurturing cultural assets
- protecting natural assets
- providing universal access to green and public space
- practicing integrated planning and management, and
- supporting positive economic, social, and environmental links between urban and rural. This is especially important as our region is an area where rural and urban communities meet. The SDGs are to be achieved by 2030.

### Our objectives for this online discussion series included:

- responding to what residents were saying during the pandemic
- finding new ways to build capacity in the four major sectors
- listening to access to capital experts about how we can build the Next Economy
- connecting with communities in other jurisdictions that support long-term planning with proven results
- exploring collaborative models for linking innovative towns and districts
- learning about regulatory requirements
- aligning objectives and data measurement, and
- inspiring participants to take action!

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS





## Why is Sustainability planning important?

The global and local challenges currently facing our region highlight the need for an overarching sustainability-based approach to long-term planning. Traditional planning processes tend to focus on isolated pieces rather than on interconnected and dynamic systems, and are generally not able to solve complex problems in a proactive manner. To move beyond traditional planning, we must address social, economic, and environmental challenges by using an integrated and resilient approach. Sustainable development for communities is cleaner, has the potential to be more efficient, and is the most viable way forward for a thriving economy.

### This kind of planning:

- incorporates the future into present day decision-making (to 2030 and beyond)
- recognizes and manages trade-offs
- sets clear and measurable targets
- defines success
- adopts best practices, and
- incorporates local values into sustainability objectives.

Many communities are facing the same issues and people are talking about redesigning our economies to meet sustainable development goals. Now more than ever we need to work together to build our local economies for a resilient, sustainable, and equitable future.

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER

From the first presentation in February, 2021, with our keynote speaker **The Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario**, the series sought answers to questions like: What do our regional communities need to become more sustainable? What is a next economy, a green economy, a knowledge economy, an arts economy? What is the impact of innovation and entrepreneurs on building new economies? How do we know when we are successful? And what data should we be tracking over the next 10 years to measure success?

### The Lieutenant Governor's main insights:

"The SDGs do provide an effective blueprint for addressing our many challenges. They are as good a policy framework as any that we have, and that includes those longstanding systemic ones that we've only now seen in such sharp relief during a pandemic... if we are going to be resilient, it seems to me that it is essential to think and act holistically and systemically..."

Perhaps for the first time, we will come to realize that the distinction between the economic and the social sectors is somewhat an artificial construct. Because it's at the nexus of those two sectors that we really start to see the opportunity for significant and lasting change. Such an endeavour actually starts with people...

And that brings me to my third insight because I think this is the perfect opportunity for municipalities and local governments to take the lead. Despite the ways that we've all been separated by this pandemic, we are learning every day how

interconnected we really are. And as the Collingwood World Summit impressed upon us last September, we know that if we're going to recover and to develop resilience, we must act together for the good of all. The only future worth building is one that's sustainable."



## Key themes from the series

- 1** Our region represents a nexus between urban and rural communities, so how do municipalities plan together to mediate the effect of development on existing agricultural and natural green spaces.
- 2** The pace of growth as a stress on local infrastructure creates an intersection of issues, including pressures for variety in housing, impacts on traffic, need for public transportation, as well as local workforce development. This requires big picture and multi-sector consideration at all levels.
- 3** Sustainable efforts and opportunities identified within various secondary municipal plans need to be integrated into Official Plans and Strategic Policies and backed with financial budgets and innovative funding models.
- 4** Sustainable economies are values-based, support social enterprise, encourage social procurement and work collectively in partnerships.
- 5** Collaborative communities offer new ways to do things together, opportunities to co-design circular economies and lead to a paradigm shift toward sustainability.
- 6** The Next Economy is innovative, seeking creative solutions to “just get started” and use many green tech ideas leading to vibrant health & well-being models.
- 7** Civic desire for community involvement has increased the need for clear communications and public engagement in visioning and planning. Municipalities are now managing more outreach and responding to social media messaging engaging with all stakeholders in a variety of ways. Civic engagement and community outreach through online platforms and kitchen-table discussions is key to celebrating successes and collaborating on movement forward.
- 8** Collaboration amongst municipalities is beginning to explore efficiencies in common services. Further alignment could guide collective sustainability, stronger connections and continued mutual awareness and dialogue.

## Our communities are looking for action!

### Envisioning a Low Carbon Future:

- The time for action is NOW! Canada is already behind other developed nations, so we have a lot of work to do. This is our responsibility.
- Climate change issues are intersectional and require big picture thinking and simple local steps in partnerships, collaboration, resource sharing and participatory innovation.
- Return on investment in climate action is social as well as economic, with green branding, employee attraction through value alignment, and reduced operating costs and risk management.

### Inspiring Innovation:

- Be open to collaborate and explore partnerships for innovative models and regional economies of scale across sectors. Just do it.
- Be flexible in seeking solutions and be prepared to shift policies and procedures to allow for demonstrations and trials. Plan. Do. Act.
- Meet people where they are and give them plenty of opportunity to be involved, engaged, and informed. Advocate together.
- Nurture the new thinking required and build communities of innovation to act as catalysts for integrated planning and sustainable economic development.

### The elements of innovation include:

- Defining problems in a more robust way
- Engaging more than the “usual suspects”
- Acknowledging multi-dimensions and shifting variables affecting problems
- Taking experimental approaches
- Developing prototype concepts
- Testing ideas
- Investing in projects

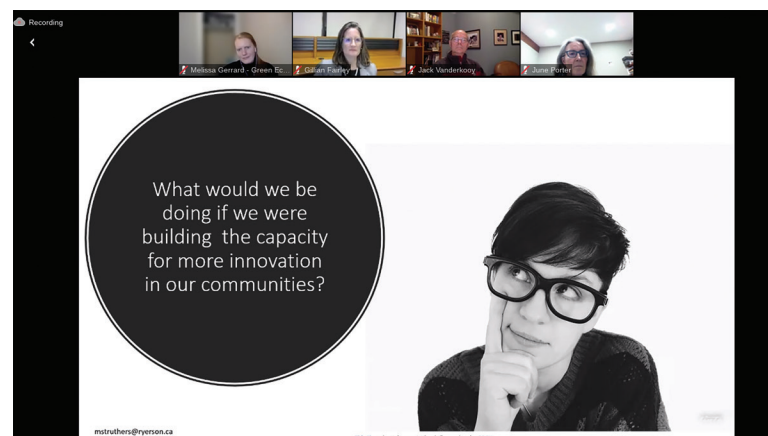
## Co-creating Affordable Housing:

- Affordable housing is a complex issue with multiple stakeholders, is affected by policy and impacts community wellbeing.
- New and innovative approaches are needed, including a shift in perspective by planners, decision-makers and change leaders.
- Solutions will require all voices to be heard and have a seat at the table.
- We need an “all hands-on deck” regional approach to tackle the lack of housing in broad segments of our population. Young people working in the service industry, professionals trying to buy their first home, and seniors needing rental accommodation cannot find an affordable place to live.
- Municipal leaders and staff, business owners, service providers, investors, developers, and residents from across the region need to be at the table, together. Lack of housing is not a special interest issue - it is affecting us all.
- Participate in the National Housing Lab hosted by Social Innovation Canada and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and explore how Social Finance can help with the housing crisis
- Showcase municipal levers to accelerate progress on affordable housing and explore a community investment fund to support the kind of housing we most urgently need
- Partner on the UN Habitat in Towns: Collingwood World Summit and continue to connect and showcase local people from across the region working on affordable housing and climate action
- Participate in The Blue Mountains Integrated Community Sustainability Planning
- Identify key community indicators to track progress.

## Key Outcomes and Next Steps

We heard loud and clear that the fragmented and siloed practices of the past will no longer serve us in today's world. It is evident, and accentuated with the pandemic, that change is constant and is happening at a frenetic pace. The Institute held a Strategy Session with many participants from the series in October 2021 to identify next steps, which included:

- Continue providing the unique regional platform for collaborative online discussions and explore potential for new integrated economies
- Map-out and showcase Social Enterprises in Southern Georgian Bay, and nurture more
- Explore the development of a Green Economy Hub/ Sustainable Southern Georgian Bay Hub
- Partner on the expansion of the Carbon Footprint Challenge across the region
- Support a regional forum for artists and arts organizations





# EVENT SPEAKERS

## PART 1: Why Build a Case for a Sustainable Future?

- Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, **Elizabeth Dowdeswell**
- Mayor of Collingwood, **Brian Saunderson**
- CAO, Collingwood, **Sonya Skinner**
- CAO, The Blue Mountains, **Shawn Everitt**

## PART 2: Chief Administration Officers - Pressing Issues, Alignment, and Innovative Solutions

- **Rob Armstrong**, CAO, Meaford
- **Shawn Everitt**, CAO, The Blue Mountains
- **Sonya Skinner**, CAO, Collingwood
- **George Vadeboncoeur**, CAO, Wasaga Beach

## PART 3: Building the Next Economy

- **Tonya Surman**, CEO and Founder, Centre for Social Innovation
- **Toby A. A. Heap**, CEO and Co-Founder, Corporate Knights

## PART 4: The Changing Role of Municipalities

- Mayor **Barb Clumpus**, Meaford
- Mayor **Paul McQueen**, Grey Highlands
- Deputy Mayor **Rob Potter**, The Blue Mountains
- Mayor **Brian Saunderson**, Collingwood
- Mayor **Nina Bifulchi**, Wasaga Beach

## PART 5: Envisioning a Low Carbon Future

- **Tova Davidson**, Executive Director, Sustainable Waterloo Region; Top 40 Under 40; and the recipient of the Mayor's Award of Excellence

## PART 6: The Impact of Innovation on Building Resilient, Sustainable Economies

- **Gillian Fairley**, General Manager, Community Futures South Georgian Bay
- **Tonya Kraan**, Co-founder and COO of SHCG
- **Linda Swanston**, Manager, Climate Change Initiatives, Grey County
- **Melissa Gerrard**, National Expansion Director, Green Economy Canada

## PART 7: Sustainable, Attainable, Affordable Housing – it affects us all!

- **Andrea Nemtin**, Executive Director, Social Innovation Canada
- **Marg Scheben-Edey**, Vice Chair, Collingwood Affordable Housing Task Force; and Chair, Regional Housing Committee, Simcoe County Alliance to End Homelessness
- **Robert Voigt**, Director, Development Services, Meaford
- **Shirley Keaveney**, Deputy Mayor, Meaford

