

# Sustainable Communities Conference and Trade Show 2008 Moving Innovation Into Practice

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## Arctic Advocacy

“Climate change undermines our simpleminded notion that unrestrained commercial growth is best for the world.” This growth affects those who contribute least to the problem but have the most to lose. Sheila Watt-Cloutier brought this message to the opening session of the FCM Sustainable Communities Conference and Trade Show 2008 in Ottawa. Watt-Cloutier, an advocate for Arctic climate change and a Nobel Peace Prize nominee, spoke not only of Canada’s North,

but communities worldwide: as the Arctic ice sheet melts, she said, islands in other regions are sinking. Communities need to take action.

The Arctic acts as the climate stabilizer for the world, a sort of global cooling system. Now, actions taken in the rest of Canada and the United States are turning the North into a destabilizer. With diminishing snow and ice to reflect the sun’s rays back, the darker, exposed ground absorbs the heat.

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*Canadians want leadership at every level of government, said Lawrence Cannon, Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. FCM Vice-President Berry Urbanovic, Green Municipal Fund Chair Karen Leibovici, and Plasco Energy Group President and CEO Rod Bryden also welcomed participants to the Conference.*

## Key to Sustainability: Community Engagement



*Louise Poirier, Councillor, City of Gatineau, Mark Heyck, Deputy Mayor, City of Yellowknife, and Lucy van Oldenbarneveld, CBC Ottawa.*

Community engagement is essential for the success of sustainability initiatives, said panelists on the Mayors’ and Councillors’ Panel on Sustainability. Sustainability should

be an expression of the community’s vision for its future, said Kevin Edwards, Mayor of Three Hills, Alberta. To ensure communities make a long-term commitment to implementing more sustainable practices, it’s important to define “sustainability” in meaningful terms that reflect local values; to identify community groups and invite their input; to present a clear vision and consistent messaging; and to lay out practical steps that have real results.

The panelists highlighted strategies that have helped them build local support for sustainability. Sheila Fougère, a Halifax Regional Municipality Councillor, said a key aspect of successful community

engagement is being proactive and talking to community groups. She gave the example of the municipality’s harbour cleanup project. Although the project cost \$333 million, the municipality was able to come up with the funds by engaging the community. Asked what they wanted and what they were willing to bring to the table,

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FCM has been advised that the Hon. Stéphane Dion will make an important announcement during his address Friday at 08:30.



# Moving Innovation Into Practice



## Integrated policies make cities work: May



Canada needs cities and towns that work, and coherent, integrated policies are the key, said Green Party Leader Elizabeth May. Healthy, livable

cities are essential to the quality of life of the 80% of Canadians who call them home.

People have become accustomed to policies that are written for one problem at a time, May told participants Thursday. But when these policy silos fail to mesh with the “big picture goal” of economic growth, priorities like sustainable development tend to get forgotten.

In writing its Green Vision policy document, the Green Party was “continually mindful of what policies

work for more than one goal,” May said. For example, a carbon tax would allow governments to reduce income and payroll taxes, while encouraging people to reduce their carbon footprint.

At a more personal level, workplace daycare makes mass transit feasible for working families, thus reducing car dependence and giving parents more time with their kids.

May pointed to European Green parties that have successfully advanced sustainable policies in coalition governments. In Germany, the Greens demanded a sustainable renewable energy program as a condition for supporting the country’s involvement in NATO’s mission to Afghanistan—and 300,000 new renewable energy jobs were produced as a result.

## Arctic Advocacy

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Permafrost, the foundation of the North, is melting. Homes, schools, and roads are buckling.

A few years ago, scientists foresaw an ice-free seasonal sea by 2050. Then this was revised to 2040. Watt-Cloutier said that after last year’s stunning melt, the estimate is now the end of this decade. “We must act.”

Watt-Cloutier said by going back on its commitment to the Kyoto Protocol, the Canadian government chose to put the rights of commercial interests ahead of those of its own citizens. She said, “Our local communities must lead where Ottawa fails and falls behind.”

## Key to Sustainability: Community Engagement

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community members said they wanted a clean harbour and agreed to pay for the bulk of the project by means of a surcharge on the municipal water bill.

Richard Walton, Mayor of the District of North Vancouver, spoke of the need for a clear vision, and the panel emphasized the importance of unambiguous, consistent messaging. Louise Poirier, a City of Gatineau Councillor, commented on the role of the media in generating support for sustainability. She urged municipal leaders to spread their message beyond City Council and to repeat it frequently.

Concrete steps with tangible results can also help in securing greater local support for sustainability measures, the panelists said. Poirier mentioned Gatineau’s tree-planting project as one example of a very popular and simple, concrete action. Mark Heyck, Deputy Mayor of

Yellowknife, said it can be useful to talk about the “side benefits” of sustainable practices—such as the reduced impact on infrastructure and the financial benefits of energy efficiency. “Find ways to explain what sustainability means to your own community,” said Walton.



## IN THE HALLS

*What has changed in the last five years?*

Obviously, sustainability is a big thing. It was a pilot light, and now it’s a full-blown flame. I think municipalities still have to sell the idea of sustainability to their constituents. It’s not an easy sell because there is a cost involved, but it is getting easier. Canadians have to realize that while there is an upfront cost to these efforts, sustainability pays off down the line.

Environmental consultant, Ontario

There has been tremendous growth in awareness on behalf of the general public, and local governments have stepped up to the plate. It’s not perfect, but it’s better.

NGO, British Columbia

# Moving Innovation Into Practice



## Beyond Brochures: Fostering Sustainable Behaviour

Millions of dollars are spent on advertising, information-intensive programs, and workshops, but do little to change environmental behaviour. In this session, environmental psychologist, professor and author Dr. Doug McKenzie-Mohr addressed the issue of uncovering and overcoming barriers to behavioural change. He said most programs delivered today are information intensive, pushing information to people with the erroneous hope of changing their behaviour. In contrast, McKenzie-Mohr advocates a community-based social marketing approach.

McKenzie-Mohr described programs that spent \$50,000 on producing brochures but with little resulting change in environmental behaviour, such as reducing water use. He mentioned a US-wide program that cost gas and electric utilities \$300 per household but saw participation from only 50% of eligible homes. However, a program in Ontario, also costing \$300 per household, had a much higher success rate because the program was offered door to door, with insulation, showerheads and caulking installed by professionals that same day.

In one study McKenzie-Mohr cited, only eight of the 40 participants in a three-hour energy-efficiency workshop went home and installed the low-flow

showerheads they had been given. He said one behaviour model, the attitude-behaviour approach, assumes that by changing a person's attitude, one can also change behaviour. "Unfortunately, studies find that the correlation between attitude and behaviour is often zero." While changing attitudes is important, it is not sufficient to change behaviour.

McKenzie-Mohr's community-based social marketing approach includes selecting the target behaviour, uncovering barriers to and benefits of each behaviour, and developing, piloting, and implementing a strategy. In selecting a behaviour, McKenzie-Mohr suggested that if a one-time behaviour change has the same impact and is as likely to result from a repetitive behaviour change, efforts should focus on changing the repetitive behaviour for longer-term benefit. He has set up a website ([www.cbsm.com](http://www.cbsm.com)) to inform, connect, and support those involved in fostering sustainable behaviour.

## IN THE HALLS

Elected officials now realize that environmental initiatives not only make good political sense, but good business sense as well. For example, low-flush toilets are not only good for the environment, but also for the municipal bottom line, since they greatly reduce the stress on wastewater management infrastructure.

Municipal sector, Saskatchewan

We are now incorporating social, economic, environmental, and cultural aspects into community planning. There is a greater recognition at the senior level within municipalities that we have to look at our services through the sustainability lens, but we still have to work on getting political and senior level support. But with more politicians and celebrities championing the environment, it's really creating interest with constituents, which will, in turn, convince politicians and senior administrators to get on board.

Municipal sector, Ontario

## FCM CEO Brock Carlton: Message of the Day

"Things are changing in our society. People are willing to accept local tax increases; creativity in our communities is being mobilized; and local partnerships between community groups, local governments, and the private sector are unleashing resources, all in support of more environmentally sustainable practices. Conversations like those taking place today are critical for

sharing experiences and developing the sense that we're not alone in our local initiatives. As Sheila Watt-Cloutier stressed, we must shape public opinion and influence public policy so that Canadians and our governments—local, provincial, and national—reflect our values and take appropriate moral and tangible leadership, at home and abroad."



# Moving Innovation Into Practice



## Layton calls for “largest construction project” in history

With the experience and success stories that municipalities have already amassed regarding grassroots sustainability, all that is needed is a willing federal partner to speed the transition to a green economy, NDP Leader Jack Layton told participants Thursday afternoon.

But even the dollars that have been available to cities and communities may be in jeopardy, he said. Federal funding for affordable housing is due to expire in March 2009, and the one cent/litre gas tax allocation for public transit is about to run out.

He called on the government to renew its affordable housing fund in this year’s budget, and invited Opposition Leader Stéphane Dion “to join me in saying that the budget has to have that one cent [per litre] for transit. That’s something practical that can be done in the next two weeks.”

Layton, a former FCM president, said a retrofit program targeting 7% of the Canadian building stock per year would save energy and create jobs.

“That’s all the buildings in Canada in 15 years, all paid for out of the energy we didn’t have to buy and the pollution we didn’t have to produce,” he said.

“And think of the work that gets created. You don’t have to go to Fort McMurray to work in the energy boom.” Local green investment would also draw young Canadians into the building trades, create well-paid jobs for laid-off manufacturing workers, and give social housing “a shot of investment focused on energy efficiency.”

Combined with broader reliance on renewable sources, “that’s the 21st century energy economy,” he said. “It would be the largest construction

project in Canadian history, and it would happen at the grassroots.”



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## IN THE HALLS

As a municipal politician, I realize that constituents are way ahead of elected officials on action to be taken on the environment. They are ready and, properly guided, they are willing to take action. As an example, last year, a small community in Newfoundland adopted the David Suzuki Nature Challenge as a concrete way towards sustainability.

Municipal sector, Newfoundland

The level of interest and understanding on sustainable transportation and the need to support alternatives has increased in the last five years. I think that municipalities are learning from their constituents and responding, although there is still a long way to go.

NGO, Ottawa

## Trade Show Lunch



If you’re in the market for cutting-edge technology and innovative tools to help your municipality get and stay green, then drop by the Trade Show, located in the Ballroom. Exhibitors representing private sector, government, and non-governmental organizations from across Canada can show you how to put ideas to work in your community.

The Trade Show showcases a broad range of best practices, latest technologies, and other knowledge-sharing tools, focusing on the theme of the 2008 Conference, *Moving Innovation into Practice*. “A lot of people are making connections, and this Trade Show is a good way to network and create business opportunities,” said one exhibitor.

