The Sustainable City, Myth or Possibility, as seen through the eyes of the citizens and the lens of wellbeing

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A Major Research Paper
submitted to the Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Environmental Studies
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August 26, 2024

ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the question of barriers and enablers to community-based climate action as seen through the eyes of residents in the community. The sample community is Stratford, Ontario. 32 persons in Stratford were interviewed in individual, private conversations and were asked to answer 10 questions. The responses of the participants revealed concerns analogous to those found in various wellbeing frameworks. To provide background for the feedback from community interviewees the paper explores the context of wellbeing, following its historical and theoretical roots to its applications today. The wellbeing story begins with a critique of GDP as a single metric to reflect the condition of society and argues for the application of a wellbeing lens as a tool to better tell us how society is doing overall, including environmental, ecological and social justice issues. The author provides a brief history of the evolution of the concept of wellbeing including the origins and application of hedonic and eudaimonic conceptions of wellbeing as related to sustainability. The position taken is that the eudaimonic aspect is more suited to addressing long term environmental and ecological concerns. Following on from the declaration of the 2015 Paris Climate Accord and the creation of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, the paper charts the development and application of wellbeing frameworks and concepts in cities, communities and countries around the world, including the Wellbeing Economy Alliance founded in 2018. Wellbeing practices in communities in Canada are surveyed and Canada's wellbeing framework created in 2021, *Measuring What Matters: Toward a Quality of Life Strategy for Canad*a, is introduced. With a focus on wellbeing in cities, the governance structures and challenges in tackling climate action at the municipal level are examined. The application of wellbeing metrics is suggested to give municipalities a picture of how their society and their environs are doing overall, beyond emissions reporting and the silo of GDP-driven economic reporting. Transition practices for cities provide references and tools for the application of wellbeing metrics. The embedded and particular relationship which cities have to Indigenous Peoples is presented with examples from cities in Canada in the light of Indigenous knowledges and practices in the care of people and planet. Cities are reminded of their obligations under the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the requirements for care of lands and waters and cultural traditions under UNDRIP. Methods and summary data are presented in section 3, followed by findings from the 10 questions. The responses are analysed applying wellbeing metrics.

FOREWORD

As a member of the Energy and Environment Advisory Committee for the City of Stratford for several years, I was awakened to the sense that individuals are often overwhelmed by the enormity of the challenge that mitigating climate change represents and the required actions on the global, national and regional level. Part of the battle against feeling overwhelmed and the sense of numbness it engenders is to act, to see one's efforts come to fruition, even at a small scale. Can the act of doing work against a sense of hopelessness about climate change and empower us to feel like we can be part of the solution?

I had the opportunity to observe individual action and results with students and their teacher in the eco group at the local high school, Stratford District Secondary School. They have an impressive to do and accomplishment list. They have recently launched a community garden and they raised funds to buy and run a biodigester on the school property for food waste, run an annual plant and seed sale to raise money for their initiatives, appeared before the city council to demand the declaration of a climate emergency, regularly organize Fridays for Climate Action marches, put forward a slate of climate action questions to politicians running in the last civic election (something that had been left off the list on most candidate platforms), participate in community meetings and initiatives around climate mitigation and more. Through their ongoing actions and leadership on climate issues they are an inspiration to others in the community. Observing these young people made me want to dig deeper into the factors which motivate climate mitigation efforts, practicing sustainability and care for community and planet.

These experiences and a talk given by EUC Professor Eric Miller to the community in 2021 lead me to the M.E.S. program. The work in ecological economics provided an understanding of economic concepts and various approaches to addressing environmental issues, in particular the limits to growth and the impact of limitless growth on people and ecosystems. Research papers provided an opportunity to explore transitioning to an ecological economy, including municipalities, as well as looking at various aspects of wellbeing. Related work in ecological footprint metrics provided tools for analysing, coding and extracting data and its applications to cities and other levels of government. Through classroom discussion and research papers in *Theories of International Development* my eyes were opened to the colonizing effect of so-called international development and the struggles of communities toward a state of wellbeing informed by their own cultural values. The pursuit of the study of degrowth was the inevitable outcome of

searching for paths toward wellbeing. Each of these courses revealed the importance of community engagement and actions in fighting the dogma of unfettered growth under orthodox economic policies. *Environmental Law* provided an understanding of the legal and regulatory frameworks in which these areas are situated in Canada. This course also introduced me to the history of the legal battles which Indigenous Peoples have faced, and continue to face, and, more generally, to the enormity of the challenges faced in fighting climate change and social injustice.

Throughout the course work and related research, I remained fascinated with ground up action and how individuals are impacted at the local level and how they can contribute to impact on a larger scale. Ground up, grass roots action has been a life-long pursuit, beginning with accompanying my mother who knocked on doors during political campaigns or fundraising or raising awareness for varied social causes. During my working life in the performing arts and filmmaking my colleagues and I worked with each project to seek out and develop audience interest at the community level, learning to not rely solely on spending dollars on traditional advertising methods. With this paper, I wanted to add to the written research by listening to the voices in my community speaking to the issues. This led to the heart of this research paper which is semi-structured interviews with a diverse representation of individuals in Stratford and to revealing the findings as a sample with the hope that these could be applied where I live and beyond.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section			Page
TABLES			vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS			vii
1.	INTRODUCTION		1
2.	LITERATURE REVIEW		
2.1	Wellbeing of the planet and moving beyond GDP		5
2.2	Wellbeing old and the new		8
2.3	Beyond GDP: tackling climate change and "official" institutional thinking		11
2.4	Beyond GDP: the "theoretical" picture		15
2.5	Beyond GDP: the Canadian picture		20
2.6	Cities and wellbeing		
	2.6.1 City governance and challenges in Canada		23
	2.6.2 Wellbeing transitions in cities		27
	2.6.3 Municipalities, wellbeing and Indigenous Peoples		30
2.7	Wellbeing and moving forward		35
3.	METHODS AND DATA		
	3.1	Methods	36
	3.2	Data	38
4.	FINDINGS: Excerpts from 10 interview questions		
	4.1	The climate crisis and priorities	39
	4.2	Barriers to change	43
	4.3	Enablers of change	45
	4.4	Challenges for Stratford	47
	4.5	Information sources and the city's role	49
	4.6	What does sustainability mean?	51
	4.7	The sustainable city	53
	4.8	The role of cities in climate action	55
	4.9	Other issues	57
	4.10	Hope	60
5.	ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION		63
6.	CONCLUSION		67
APPENDICES			
	Interview Questions		70
	Interview Participants Summary		71
	Potential Participants Invitation Letter		72
BIBLIOGRAPHY			73

TABLES

	Title	Page
Figure 1	The 17 Sustainable Development Goals	14
Figure 2	Canada's Toward a Quality of Life Framework	21
Figure 3	Toward a Quality of Life Environment Lens	22
Figure 4	The Orders of Government in Canada	25
Figure 5	Approaching Wellbeing Transitions	27
Figure 6	The Doughnut of Sustainability	28

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper was first inspired by working as a volunteer with many of the citizens of Stratford who are dedicated to making a difference in the path toward saving our planet and raising awareness about climate change concerns and information. I wanted to learn more about what individuals had to say about climate change and paths for the future and what information I could find to support those efforts. It was my hope that this information might also be reflective of other communities.

My deepest thanks go to the 32 citizens of Stratford who gave generously of their time and thoughts and engaged in addressing the questions which are put forward in this paper. Their responses guided me to frame this paper in the context of a wellbeing approach, i.e., a wellbeing economy which pursues ecological wellbeing for people and planet instead of framing the "health" of society in terms of material growth.

My whole-hearted appreciation is due to the gifted educators, professors, Eric Miller, Ilan Kapoor, Lina Brand-Correa and Dayna Scott, who guided, informed, inspired and awakened me to worlds I had little knowledge of before the privilege of being part of the EUC program at York. Gratitude is also due to the Faculty of Environmental Studies for their generosity and the resources provided for this masters' program.

An especially deep thank you is due to Lina Brand-Correa who has so graciously and generously been my advisor and supervisor. She also took us on an extensive exploration of degrowth in theory, in practice and in various contexts. The study of degrowth and the application of its principles underpin the explorations in this thesis. Thank you to Kelly Gingrich and Elaine Howarth, compatriots in the degrowth journey, for their friendship, their scholarship, their constancy and support and for their invaluable feedback. Thank you to Tom Campbell for the support and for endless hours of listening and discussion. And to the joyous moments of surprise and serendipity that have nourished this journey.

(*Forest in the City*, Tom Campbell, oil on canvas, 1999, original painting, 10.5" x 90.5")

I would like to acknowledge that the land on which I am working is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, Neutral and Wendat peoples. Oral and archaeological records indicate that the Haudenosaunee, or Longhouse Peoples, have been occupants of southwestern Ontario for over 13,000 years. This territory was subject to the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum signed between Indigenous nations in 1701 and was also subject to the Upper Canada Treaties (including the Huron Tract Treaty of 1827) to share the protection of the lands and waters with settlers in the later 18th and early 19th centuries.

I honour the longstanding relationships that Indigenous Nations have to this land as the original caretakers and as its contemporary stewards. The Dish or, as it is sometimes called, the Bowl, represented what is now southern Ontario, from the Great Lakes to Quebec and from Lake Simcoe to the United States. This treaty acknowledged the shared responsibility of ensuring the Dish would never be empty, which included taking care of the land and the animals who inhabited it. Spoons were brought to the treaty table, not weapons, as a representation of keeping the peace. One of the core values within the idea of the Dish with One Spoon is that those who use the land should not abuse the land, individuals and groups should take only what they need from the land so that there will be a healthy, long-term, sustainable environment. I look to the wisdom of the Indigenous Peoples to assist us in the care and management of our earth, water and air for the future generations of all beings in and on our planet.

I wish to express support for the continued implementation of the Calls to Action in the recommendations of the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the implementation of the articles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the laws of our country - in our municipalities, our provinces and territories. These are important steps toward healing and justice. Environmental and social justice are closely entwined.

This paper is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Alice Fay Erickson (1911-2009), who first taught me about social justice, about how to live with enough and to love this precious and beautiful planet.

1. INTRODUCTION: The Stratford Context

Municipalities are key players in climate action as they are where we reside, where we experience and witness the impacts of climate change and where we see the effects of mitigation efforts in our day to day lives. And, in smaller urban centres, such as Stratford, Ontario, where I live, decision-makers can be more attuned to what's happening as they are in closer proximity to residents than in larger centres (Araos, 2016). There has been a growing recognition since the mid-1990's that cities can play an important role in addressing impacts that come about as a result of climate change. (Palermo, 2020).

Stratford offers a tapestry for research which is relevant locally, but which I hope will provide reflections applicable to other communities. Through the tale of one city, through the voices of its residents I hope to reveal just how a path toward effective and just climate action might evolve and how such evolution could ignite further change.

What creates change in a community – what are the enablers and barriers? What leads to and what prevents sustainable practice in a community? What does sustainability mean to community members? What role can cities play in addressing the impacts of climate change?

Stratford is a rural urban centre, a 2-hour drive west of Toronto. A Victorian city sitting in a larger area known as Perth County, it was incorporated 1854 and became a city in 1885. It was founded on the traditional territory of diverse Indigenous peoples who are believed to have occupied the lands for at least 5,000 years prior to the Canada Company signing the Huron Tract Treaty for 1,000,000 acres in 1827 (Stratford Public Library, n.d.; Stratford Perth Archives, 2003).

The city is surrounded by rich agricultural lands which provide a tangible connection to the realities of food production and to the constant loss of farmlands to the pressures of urban sprawl. It is recognized internationally for its arts endeavours, namely the 70-year-old Stratford Festival (stratfordfestival.ca) and Stratford Summer Music (stratfordsummermusic.ca) and it is home to many well-known artists.

Tourism plays a central role in the economics of the city, but also significant are a number of industrial and other business enterprises (stratford.ca). It is becoming an increasingly diverse community and is home to the Multicultural Association of Perth Huron (maph.ca) as well as the University of Waterloo Stratford School of Interaction Design and Business (uwaterloo.ca/stratford-school-of-interaction-design-and-business). The city yellow pages (yellowpages.ca) list some dozen churches of a variety of faiths. There is an Indigenous Talking

Circle which meets in warmer months beside a Medicine Wheel Garden on the grounds of a community centre and the Indigenous-led, 13 Grandmother Moons, meets regularly at the local community food centre (thelocalcfc.org).

There are several climate action advocacy groups including Climate Momentum, Canadian Federation of University Women-Stratford, the Rotary Club, Get Concerned, Wise Cities, ReLeaf, The Tree Trust and others. In 2020, the City Council, in response to an eloquent and passionate presentation by two representatives of the high school eco club, declared a climate emergency. In 2022, the city appointed a climate change programs manager who, in 2023, released a corporate energy and emissions plan to the city staff and councillors (stratford.ca/en/live-here/climate-action).

The city sits on the banks of the River Avon, governed in part by the Upper Thames Conservation Authority (thamesriver.on.ca) and two important sites of environmental and ecosystem impact are visible and within city boundaries – the landfill site and the water treatment site. Stratford is home to the County Court House and has an active library.

Stratford is reported by Statistics Canada in the 2021 census data to have a population of 33,232, one of 235 cities in Canada with a population of 10,000 to 100,000. It is a single tier municipality, and is considered a “smaller urban centre” (Government of Canada, 2023).

The city is confronted by the challenges that municipalities across the country face such as limited opportunities to expand tax revenue sources, poverty, homelessness, transportation demands, lack of affordable housing, development encroachment on wild and agricultural lands, food insecurity, unemployment, under employment and more. Of course, it also joins other cities in confronting these demands at the same time as it is working on measures to meet the challenges of climate change and adaptation within its available resources while still in recovery from the effects of the global pandemic. Like other smaller urban centres, it is governed by an elected mayor and city councillors. The councillors serve on a part-time basis and are remunerated as such. These contexts as well as my personal connection to the city make Stratford a perfect case study.

In order to tell Stratford's story in the words of its residents, I conducted interviews to take a qualitative measure of the city’s climate portrait as it transitions toward sustainability. The timing of this research coincides with the recent appointment of the climate change programs manager and at the same time the city is engaged in the next iteration of its official plan, which

occurs every 5 years. As noted earlier, the first phase of the climate action plan, the corporate climate change plan has been released. This is being followed by a community action plan, expected to be released in the fall of 2024 or early in 2025.

Stratford has, as each city does, a unique make-up and as such the distinctions of place, demography, history, politics, culture and climate are important to framing and finding a suitable path to sustainability (Cohen, 2021). While the importance of our international, national and even regional pacts to find paths to net zero cannot be denied, such arrangements are at a level beyond the reach of most individuals, yet our individual actions are critical to the success of the aspirations which are set out (Mieg & Topfer, 2012) and there is a growing interest in the role that cities and local actions might play in the transitions to sustainability (Bulkeley, 2015).

In conducting background research and in the interviews themselves, I learned of the importance of education around climate change and what is being done to address it as well as the importance of opportunities for dialogue with residents (Zahran, 2008), and how uncertainty and confusion can lead to inaction or a feeling of powerlessness (Kahl & Campbell, 2018).

Stratford, like many other places, is a town that, as one participant said, "sits in the middle" meaning it is unaffected, at least not as tangibly as communities which have been hit so hard by the ravages of wild fires, flooding, temperature extremes and more.

Research exists on municipalities and the effect of having climate action plans and not having them and on the roles of politicians and policy makers (Robinson & Gore, 2015; Burch, 2010), yet, "we lack a systemic understanding of the individual conditions under which citizens join and are active in such initiatives (i.e., climate action). Climate change requires a huge transformation in personal behavior" (Mees, 2022, p.168). In entering into the conversations with participants I hoped to understand better the grounds and possibilities for such behavioural change at the local level and how this might percolate to higher levels.

The dissertation is structured as follows: 2: literature review, framing the research in the context of wellbeing; 3: the methods used in the research and the data which resulted; 4: excerpts from responses to the 10 interview questions; and 5: analysis and discussion of the responses which centered around care for the wellbeing of their community and the planet, care for future generations and particular care for those hit hardest by climate change as well as for education and collective, community responses to sustainability and climate action - all aspects of various frameworks for wellbeing and indeed underlying the principles of degrowth. These responses led

me to dig deeper into the history, principles and practices of wellbeing and how they might be applied at the municipal level.

(*A note about the word, wellbeing: in some writings, it is written as well-being with either capitalization or lower-case letters. I have chosen to use the spelling, wellbeing. Where it is spelled otherwise in quotes, I have used the spelling of the authors.)*

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Wellbeing of the planet and moving beyond GDP

The GDP (Gross Domestic Product) is doing this, the GDP is doing that, what is the inflation rate, the unemployment rate, what is the deficit, is the interest rate going up or down, the billionaire class is growing exponentially and wealth is increasingly being concentrated at the top, etc. - we hear reports on these issues on an almost daily basis in the media and our social media accounts as provided by our politicians, pundits from the business community, the big banks and more. However, what we don't hear with the same regularity is just how these issues harm or benefit the health and wellness of the people on the planet nor the health and wellness of the planet, its biodiversity, its animals, its ecosystems. Where is a reliable and regular report on the wellbeing of our planet and people - the "GWR" (the Gross Wellbeing Report)?

We do hear from leading climate experts, and we can sense it ourselves from the dramatic weather extremes we are experiencing with increasing frequency, that we are facing a climate disaster and the temperature of the planet is rising at an unprecedented rate. We hear from the healthcare community that the healthcare systems - certainly in the "global north" in at least Canada, the United States and the UK are overloaded, that they need fundamental fixes and that citizens are suffering and that the prospect for recovery of the systems is not an immediate one. It is often mentioned that the COVID-19 pandemic put in high relief the weaknesses of our health care systems and the need for reform. The reports on the economy are seen as central to our daily news, but how this crucially affects the state of the wellness of people and planet is not.

The pandemic is also referenced as a reason for the slow "recovery" of the economy and the issues in the healthcare system. What the pandemic also presented to us was an opportunity to bring the world together and we observed that rapid government reaction on a massive scale in the face of a global emergency is possible. Our interconnectedness with humanity was irrefutably evident. Although political points were sometimes attempted for scoring in finger-pointing at "the other" regarding certain notions around the origins of the disease or its spread, on a personal level our fears, losses, and uncertainties were shared. There were terrible stories of the mounting death toll (in the millions), the losses of loved ones who were dying in isolation, families who were unable to gather, babies who were born in isolation away from grandparents and family members and more. For many months, we were kept up to date on a daily basis of accounts at home and

around the world on the "wellbeing" of citizens with regard to COVID-19. We heard how citizens around the world were faring under the pandemic and what progress was being made and eventually we were able to share the stories of slowly stabilizing the onslaught on health.

Throughout the pandemic individuals stepped up to the call for care, volunteering at community clinics, ferrying those in need to get their shots, making protective masks at home and more. Most critically, governments responded in many cases with special programs for assistance during the pandemic, businesses shifted their practices so people could work from their homes, the provision of health care services received top priority and the provisioning of vaccinations around the world, although admittedly with the continuation of the inequities already built into the system at play, was put on the fastest of tracks. Of course, the planet's wellbeing did a little better - emissions dropped as we weren't spending so much and spending was more focussed on local businesses, we weren't travelling so much, in short, we weren't consuming so much. What lessons can we take from this to respond better to the climate and health crises to create wellness for people and planet?

One of the hopeful conclusions from recent research references behaviour during the pandemic as relevant to responses to climate change noting that individual behaviour can make a decisive difference, “as evidenced by mask-wearing, distancing, and hygiene during the COVID-19 pandemic.” (Meshes, 2022, p. 512). Indeed, global responses to the pandemic are often cited as providing hopeful signs of community behavioural change in reaction to a crisis and potentially a basis for long-term change (Carney, 2021). "The pandemic provided an object lesson in the art of the possible" (Jackson, 2021, p. 148).

Since coming out of the pandemic phase we have heard such phrases as *we will get back to normal*, we *will build back better*, *we will continue to grow*, and more. Still, we haven't heard from our leaders what we learned from the pandemic and how we can do better on the care front and just how we are going to accomplish, and measure, these objectives for so-called building of our economies while we meet the commitments made to bring the ever-increasing temperature of the planet to a stop at 1.5 degrees and our emissions to net zero by 2050. And, how will we balance our insatiable appetite for growth within the limits which our planet can absorb and replenish - just how we are going to allow provisioning for future generations when we have already taken so much? How will we identify and respond to the pervasive evidence of climate anxiety and mental illness? How will governments and policy-makers manage the paradox of speaking out of one

side of their mouths about the absolute priority of growth, sometimes couched in terms of "green" or "sustainable growth", which is still more growth, but polished with a cleaner sounding aspect and the other side which is speaking about the imperative of climate action which, if taken with the profound commitment required, calls for limiting growth?

GDP remains a universally accepted beacon to tell us all we need to know about how we are doing, yet there is, and has been for some time, abundant information about what it isn't telling us.

For example, the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) most recent 10-year report came out in 2016. It provided a picture of just how important it is to have measures beyond GDP to see how we are really doing as a society and to measure how our actions affect our environment. There is a pronounced disparity between what is reflected in GDP "growth" and wellbeing. In the 21-year period between 1994 to 2014, GDP grew by 38.07% while the CIW rose by only 9.9%. To the recession in 2008, GDP had grown by 29.9% and the CIW by 8.8%. Since the recession GDP grew by another 8.1% with wellbeing at 1.1% (Canadian Index of Wellbeing, n.d.). Will the next 10-year report in 2026 tell us somehow miraculously that wellbeing and GDP are in lock step? The trends indicate that wellbeing will continue its fall in the wake of rising GDP.

Even the International Monetary Fund noted several years ago "GDP is not a measure of the overall standard of living or well-being of a country...for example, increased output may come at the cost of environmental damage...Or it might involve the reduction of leisure time or the depletion of non-renewable resources. The quality of life may also depend on the distribution of GDP among the residents of a country, not just the overall level" (Callen, 2008).

Political scientist, Lorenzo Fioramonti, provides another view: "It is GDP that gives the authority, influence and wide-spread social acceptability to the growth model that is intoxicating the planet...it drives a suicidal race to the cliff...while undermining the very social and natural foundations that make life possible" (Fioramonti, 2017, p.7).

De-linking from GDP and providing for a more equitable distribution of assets requires radical re-thinking, re-figuring and re-imagining - decolonizing ourselves away from colonialist and traditional GDP-driven economic policies:

> "In the West, when we speak of the colonization of the imaginary we are dealing with a mental invasion in which we are the victims and the agents. It is largely self-colonization, a partly voluntary servitude. Hence the term, 'decolonization of the imaginary' marks a

> semantic shift...it is a change of software or paradigm, a veritable revolution of the imaginary "(Latouche, 2014. p. 119).

The pandemic showed us that a paradigm shift is possible on a global scale and in a timely manner when the crisis is immediate and life-threatening. Scientists tell us, and we are beginning to observe from the unrelenting extremes in weather patterns and their effects, that climate crisis is immediate, threatening AND long-term. We need to respond to it with the same alacrity at all levels we witnessed with the pandemic and with a shift in thinking beyond GDP toward better measures of wellbeing for people and planet.

2.2 Wellbeing old and new

The World Health Organization (WHO.2023) frames wellbeing for individuals and societies as a positive state:

> "Similar to health, it is a resource for daily life and is determined by social, economic and environmental conditions. Well-being encompasses quality of life and the ability of people and societies to contribute to the world with a sense of meaning and purpose. Focusing on well-being supports the tracking of equitable distribution of resources, overall thriving and sustainability. "

The pursuit of the notion of wellbeing dates back through millennia, and now constitutes a "hot topic" across many disciplines in the social sciences and in policy development as governments grapple with the onslaught of climate change and disasters and the pursuit of economic growth. Wellbeing is a multi-dimensional concept and its application varies from context to context with various frameworks and approaches being practised around the globe (Jarden&Roache, 2023).

In 14th century England the concept of wellbeing was equated with the idea of "welfare" and held the idea to "journey well" and be both happy and prosperous. Later it was allocated to the subjective value of goods to individuals and also to the notion of the "welfare state" referencing the provision of the state for certain needs. In the 20th century discussions on individual agency and participation and multi-layered views on poverty brought the discussion back to encompass both the idea of welfare and wellbeing and to notions based on the writings of Epicurus and Aristotle (Gough, 2015).

With the growth of concerns over the environment and the first Earth Day in 1970 and the first global conference on the environment in Stockholm in 1972, writings emerge to establish

better measures of the welfare of citizens, but the recessions in the 70's re-centred the focus on GDP and fueled the continued rise of market-oriented, neo-liberal economic ideas which place profit above care and permeate dominant economic thinking to this day. Marilyn Waring's 1988 book published by Harper Collins, *If Women Counted*, brought to light the importance of recognizing unpaid work and care in households and communities as well as nature. In 1989, the "Genuine Progress Indicator" (GPI), an index of sustainable economic welfare was created by ecological economist, Herman Daly and environmentalist, John Cobb (Hayden, 2022).

Often referred to as a foundational document in the discussion of sustainability and the impact of our actions on the environment is the 1987 UN report entitled "Our Common Future" (or the "Bruntland Report") issued by the World Commission on the Environment and Development (WCED) which stated:

> "Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (UN Secretary General, 1987, p.16).

Human wellbeing viewed through its psychological aspect looks at 3 levels: emotional wellbeing, psychological wellbeing and social wellbeing. The emotional state has been looked at in relation to "hedonistic" functioning while the psychological and social aspects more to "eudaimonic" functionings. Ecological wellbeing encompasses the state of the environment in which humans reside and is in a symbiotic relationship with human wellbeing. Hedonism might be thought of as a way of living in the present which values pleasure and reduces suffering. Pleasure might be obtained from the consumption of goods or foods or other means of satisfying the senses without necessarily regarding the future. Eudaimonic might be translated as "good spirit" and meaningful engagement in the lived world with an extended perspective (Francesconi, 2018). "The exclusive pursuit of one form of well-being, e.g., hedonistic, may compromise the well-being of others or the environment, which may negatively affect social and ecological well-being." (Grouzet&Lee, 2014, p. 1785).

The two strands of hedonic and the eudaimonic attribution can be seen in terms of different ends, i.e., hedonistic relates to the pursuit of agreeable feelings and the absence of disagreeable ones, maximizing pleasure and minimising pain, or the satisfaction of "desires" whether that is manifested in obtaining human "goods" such as friendship or in material goods. This can be related to epicurean pursuits as espoused by the 3rd century B.C. Greek philosopher, Epicurus. The

eudamonic view is linked to his contemporary, Aristotle, who valued "well-functioning" not for any ulterior reason. In assessing these two concepts of wellbeing, the eudaimonic understandings are seen more in relation to international development, political economy and sociology whereas hedonic understandings are more related to mainstream economics and psychology (Gilbert.2018, p. 21; Brand-Correa&Steinberger, 2017).

Feminist scholar, Charlotte Knowles, offers a picture of the self that

> "involves a recognition of its socially embedded nature and the way others can both inhibit and enhance what we can do, who we can be and how we can live our lives...The relational notion of the self is not simply the idea that others can affect us negatively; it is also the recognition that positive relations with others are necessary in order for us to live well" (Knowles, 2018, p. 70).

Knowles highlights 3 areas of wellbeing from a feminist perspective: the notion of survival; the idea of relationality - wellbeing as a social, collective pursuit and working together to resist oppression and domination, and self-respect and self-knowledge.

Feminist analyses include work on such issues as social reproduction, alternative and non-market valuation processes, local and community-based economies, quality of life, time, equity, citizenship, and democratic institution-building. Feminist interests in and expertise also value ecological services and note that policies which remove barriers to the flourishing of formerly unacknowledged and uncompensated activities such as unpaid work and caring services and processes help to make economies more sustainable (Perkins, 2007, p. 239-240).

Our western capitalist societies are driven to pursue wellbeing through valuing consumption and the accumulation of wealth. The word "addiction" is often used to describe our predilection for consumption and growing the economy. We are encouraged to buy our way out of the doldrums, i.e., the notion of "shopping therapy." I remember being astonished when in 2001 then President George W. Bush noted after the 9/11 attacks, the US was "open for business" and encouraged families to spend, e.g., go to Disneyland. Buying was encouraged as a patriotic act of recovery from an act of terrorism. The trauma that people suffered on that day still reverberates, but attention to wellbeing was seen through the eyes of getting back to business as usual. On the flip side, over 50 years earlier, people in the US and Canada and in other nations were encouraged to give up on luxury goods, to sacrifice for the war effort, to collaborate in working with others in their communities, to participate in rationing - to reduce consumption for the common good. We are faced with the need to do the same today.

The pursuit of consumption and satisfaction and indeed "addictions" might be classified as succumbing to the "oppression" noted by Knowles and labelled as hedonic, whereas practices for the common good, as eudaimonic. As reflected in the metric of GDP per capita, wellbeing in our capitalistic society is reflected by increased consumption, production and growth, rather than through metrics which look at the overall state of our society and our planet.

In order to address the social, economic and ecological challenges that are in front of us, we need to shift gears and move away from these notions. Increasingly we are responding to crises - to floods, forest fires, air pollution, fossil fuel spills and accidents and it is evident that there will be more. The records show us that as GDP has risen, so has the degradation of our planet, where we are consuming at a rate faster than the earth can regenerate. According to the statistics at the Global Footprint Network, we are living as if we had 1.7 planets and in the global north, we are consuming at rates that if everyone in the world followed suit, would require 4 or 5 earths (Global Footprint Network, 2023). "Over the past 40 years, human activity and the prioritization of economic growth over factors such as equality, education, health and social relationships has depleted Earth's natural resources faster than they can replenish" (Chrysopoulou, 2020, p.2).

Hedonic practice relates to the moment, avoiding accounting for the consequences of current behaviours on others or future generations, whereas an eudaimonic approach takes into account the effects in the broader societal context and toward the future. Hence, wellbeing through a eudaimonic lens is more suited to addressing issues around sustainability and climate actions (Brand-Correa&Steinberger, 2017).

Economist and political scientist, Ian Gough notes that future generations will have the same basic needs as present humans and thus asks that we consider that future beings, just as ancient beings did, will have needs for affiliation, cognitive and emotional expression, understanding and critical thought and will have needs for food, water, housing, a non-threatening environment, work, significant primary relationships, security in childhood, physical and economic security, education and health care. In other words, people will seek not just survival, but health, wellbeing and critical autonomy (Gough, 2015).

2.3 Beyond GDP: tackling climate change and "official" institutional thinking

Can we imagine measurements beyond GDP to assess human wellbeing and the impact on air, lands and waters of our economic activities and provisioning for the future? The pursuit of

the concept of a "wellbeing framework" offers a path that many scholars and several countries are putting into place, including Canada.

In 2009 the key message of the OECD Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Progress Report was to change the focus of statistics from measuring the size of economic production to measuring what shapes the wellbeing of people today and that of future generations. Wellbeing metrics used in a policy context were seen to offer governments the benefit of a broader picture on people's conditions, the diversity of their experiences and support for the alignment of outcomes across government departments (Stiglitz, 2018).

In terms of measuring the wellbeing of the planet, in 2015 a milestone was set for international cooperation on climate change with a forward-looking lens with the UN's Paris Agreement. It is a legally binding international treaty, adopted by 196 parties with a mandate to hold "the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels " (United Nations, 2015).

In addition to commitments to significantly limit anthropogenic greenhouse gas by 2030 and net-zero emissions between 2050 and 2100, the Paris Agreement obligates economically wealthy countries - the Global North - to provide financial support to less economically wealthy nations - the Global South - to enable adaptation to the impacts of climate change while in transition to alternative energy systems (United Nations, 2015).

A report issued by the UN in 2022 indicated that there is some progress toward the targets, but they are insufficient, "we are still nowhere near the scale and pace of emission reductions required to put us on track toward a 1.5 degrees celsius world...national governments need to strengthen their climate action plans now and implement them in the next eight years" (United Nations, 2022).

CBC news reported in December 2023 that Canada will not meet the goal of a 40 to 50 percent reduction below 2005 levels by 2030 but has revised the target to 2035. The report on emissions for 2022 is expected to show an increase before falling in 2023 (Thurton, 2023).

The latest news on the global front is that 2023 is officially the hottest year on record, with the global average temperature near or above the 1.5 degree limit. Some of the rise is attributable to El Niño, but predictions are that 2024 will be even hotter (Witze,2024).

Accompanying the temperature rise is a record-breaking rise in the levels of CO^2 at 4.7ppm

higher than the previous year with the latest reading being at 426ppm (whereas levels have been around 280ppm for most of the last 6,000 years). The concentrations of CO^2 come predominantly from power plants, cars, trucks and other high emitting sources (Milman, 2024). Pre-industrial levels are estimated at about 280 ppm and the safe target for decades was between 300 and 350 ppm. The higher the levels go the higher the level of consequences with 430ppm being seen as the tipping point into dangerous climate change.

While sequestration of CO^2 does occur in carbon sinks of oceans, forest and soils, it takes time for such absorption and with the spread of wildfires around the globe, forest capacity is shrinking (Moseman, 2021). Such levels are stark evidence of our need for a shift in our practices of consumption and production to stay within our planetary limits.

Needless to say, challenges on many fronts are on-going such as the scale of food waste, biodiversity loss and shrinking populations of wildlife, deforestation due to development, plastic pollution, melting ice caps, loss of farmland, food and water insecurity, textile waste, soil degradation, the impacts of mining extractions, and more (Robinson, 2014).

On the other hand, some light on the horizon was provided in 2023, as the world saw an increase in solar-powered energy and with other renewables constituting about 30% of overall electrical energy supply with fossil fuel generation expected to continue its fall, "think of the engineers reforming our grids, the architects, the social entrepreneurs, the regenerative farmers restoring our soil, the legal advocates and the millions of people everywhere who are advancing new systems of care, repair and regeneration " states Christiana Figueres, formerly head of the UN Climate Change Convention (Figueres, 2024).

In terms of meeting the wellbeing of people, in 2015, the UN made an important step toward bringing economic and societal goals together with climate action goals by establishing the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, n.d.) with a target of 2030 to achieve goals for sustainability, ending poverty, improvements in health care, education, equality, democratic and transparent institutions, addressing climate change and rising sea levels and global warming.

In all there are 17 overarching goals with 169 indicators, commonly referred to as the "SDGs" (see Figure 1, on page 14). Yearly progress reports are requested from member countries. The 2023 report indicates that progress has been hindered by the impacts of the climate crisis, the war in the Ukraine, and lingering effects of the pandemic and asks countries to "redouble" their efforts (UN, 2023).

There has been some criticism of the SDGs for the breadth of their scope and the lack of metrics for evaluating the inter-relationships between the goals and the potential for conflicting impacts of individual goals, particularly with regard to the impacts of the ecological footprint of the goals on biocapacity and biodiversity and the imbalance between the target goals of economic and "green" growth with planetary limits, climate change mitigation and social justice measures (Lamb&Steinberger,2017).

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals

1. No Poverty
2. Zero Hunger
3. Good Health and Wellbeing
4. Quality Education
5. Gender Equality
6. Clean Water and Sanitation
7. Affordable and Clean Energy
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth
9. Industry Innovation and Infrastructure
10. Reduced Inequalities
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities
12. Responsible Consumption and Production
13. Climate Action
14. Life Below Water
15. Life on Land
16. Peace and Justice
17. Partnerships for the Goals

Figure 1

(https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/)

The report of Canada's performance appears with that of other countries and is made available to the public. For example, in the 2023 report Canada scored overall 26th of the 166 countries reporting and achieved an overall index score of 78.5%. Canada has **achieved goals** in

no poverty and quality education; **challenges remain** in clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, industry, innovation and infrastructure, reduced inequalities and sustainable cities and communities; **significant challenges** remain in good health and wellbeing, gender equality, decent work and economic growth, life below water, peace, justice and strong institutions, with **major challenges** remaining in zero hunger, responsible consumption and production, climate action and life on land (https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/profiles/Canada).

It is noteworthy that in Canada, the areas related to this paper on wellbeing, such as responsible consumption, climate action and sustainable cities are each indicated as challenged/under-achieving. Wellbeing frameworks would help to provide foundations for work in these areas.

2.4 Beyond GDP: the "theoretical" picture

There are many approaches to wellbeing frameworks and policies around the world. Although they are not as yet widely applied, their implementation is growing. They are worth analysing and present valuable alternatives to the *business as usual*, growth-oriented approach.

In 2022, Lorenzo Fioramonti and Robert Costanza, among other leading ecological economists called for another "framework" to create a shift in our thinking and our approach to looking at how well we are doing in a comprehensive manner. They stated:

> "if we want to exert radical policy transformation within the next few years, then we need a new paradigm that is able to warm the hearts and minds of citizens, entrepreneurs, professionals, scholars and intellectuals and rapidly penetrate policy with a view to turning theory into practice, not only in the most advanced economies but also in those parts of the world affected by endemic poverty and underdevelopment"
>
> (Fioramonti, 2022)

They proposed a wellbeing framework comprised of four areas with twelve lenses:

1. PERSONAL
   - 1a. Work-life balance
   - 1b. Psycho-Physical Health
   - 1c. Empowerment
2. ECONOMIC
   - 2a. Customization
   - 2b. Localized Production
   - 2c. Prosumer Approach (consumers engaged in design and production)
   - 2d. Total Cost and Benefit Accounting

3.	SOCIAL	3a. Cohesion
		3b. Equality
		3c. Community Engagement
4.	NATURAL	4a. Healthy Ecosystem Functions
		4b. Urban-Rural-Wild Balance

These elements share some properties with the SDGs but add emphasis on personal empowerment and localized activities as well as community engagement, aspects shared with wellbeing and degrowth approaches and which are also reflected in several of the comments made by the participants in the community research for this paper.

Furthering the work of measuring and effecting improvement in wellbeing, in 2018 the Wellbeing Economy Alliance (WEAll) was created as an alliance of individuals, organisations and governments at all levels working toward wellbeing economies that "deliver" human and ecological wellbeing. There are currently over 400 organizations and "thousands of individuals" who have joined their mission. A wellbeing economy looks beyond GDP to shared wellbeing and requires system change.

> "A good economy is when the rules and incentives are designed to ensure everyone has enough to live in comfort, safety, and happiness. When people feel secure in their basic comforts and can use their creative energies to support the flourishing of all life on this planet." The mission is to "change the debate and build momentum for economic transformation so that economies around the world deliver shared wellbeing for people and planet by 2040" (Wellbeing Economy Alliance, n.d.)

WEAll puts forward **five pillars of wellbeing** with **four lenses** of **pre-distribution, purpose, prevention, people-powered: 1. fairness, 2. participation, 3. nature, 4. dignity, 5. purpose**.

It is intended that a wellbeing economic system accounts for all costs and benefits associated with any form of human activity, not only in the market but throughout society. It promotes the contributions of natural, social and human capital to collective wellbeing. Indeed, human capital is seen as important, not only through formal work, but also through volunteer work. Through the lens of the WE framework the goal is to reveal inefficiencies and losses which are generated by wasteful production, which, in GDP reporting, would be measured as productive as there is no differentiation for the waste which is produced.

Wellbeing values participatory, ground up and local action and brings into the metrics activities that may be marginalized in traditional economic valuations such as small business and new technology companies, households and cooperatives and their impact on local development, social connectivity and caring activities, empowerment, and sustainable production and consumption.

As part of the Wellbeing Economy Alliance, WEGo, a G7-like forum, was formed as a collaboration of national and regional governments to work together on building wellbeing economies. Currently WEGo involves the governments of New Zealand, Scotland, Finland, Iceland, and Wales, with "Canada actively participating" (WEAll, n.d.). The facilitator for the Alliance in Canada is the David Suzuki Foundation (WEAllCan, 2023).

The WEGo members have created different approaches adapted to the realities of their specific socio-economic and political circumstances. Some examples of work to date follow.

In 2020, New Zealand launched a wellbeing budget which provided a framework for policies created in a range of fields including investment, education, urban development and healthcare. Five priority areas were targeted for improvement: 1. Mental Health, 2. Child Wellbeing, 3. Support of Indigenous Peoples Aspirations, 4. Building a Productive Nation through Innovation, social and economic opportunities and, 5. Transitioning to a sustainable and low-emissions economy. A wellbeing report is issued at least once every four years. The first report, Te Tai Waiora: Wellbeing in Aorearoa New Zealand, was released in November 2022 (Government of New Zealand, n.d).

Scotland adopted a National Performance Framework with 81 indicators including children, economics, human rights and the environment with the goal of a "successful, inclusive, productive and happy country" with an overall lens of the "equality evidence finder" (Gaspard, 2020).

The Government of Finland has created an Economy of Wellbeing Action Plan for the years 2023-2025. The wellbeing decision making approach is centred on "examining the links between various components of wellbeing and the economy to help achieve a better balance between the economic, social and ecological dimensions of sustainability" (Government of Finland, n.d.).

In 2019 the Government of Iceland introduced a framework of 39 wellbeing indicators to balance financial, social and environmental metrics. The development of the framework followed

2 years of public countrywide consultation. There are six wellbeing priorities including mental health, secure housing, better work-life balance, zero carbon emissions, innovation growth and better communication with the public which form part of a five-year strategic plan. Statistics Iceland gathers, monitors, analyses and disseminates the data derived from the indicators and assesses this data in relation to the work on the measurements for the SDGs. (Wellbeing Economy Alliance, n.d.).

The Government of Wales enacted the Well-being of Future Generations Act in 2015 to improve social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being. In June 2021, a Future Generations Commissioner, to be independent from government, was appointed to generate considerations under the Act (McLaren, 2023). The 7 well-being goals are: to make a Wales that is prosperous, resilient, healthier, more equal, has cohesive communities, with a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language and that is globally responsible. The framework consists of 46 indicators. The data is gathered by StatsWales with the most recent report issued for 2023 (Government of Wales, 2023).

The members of WEGo are in the early stages of implementing wellbeing metrics and it remains to be seen how recent changes of government leaders (each of them women) in the three countries of New Zealand, Scotland and Finland may affect the progress on wellbeing metrics and their implementation (Mason&Buchs, 2023).

A number of other countries around the world have mechanisms for integrating wellbeing metrics into policy-making, including: Australia with a Living Standards Framework developed in 2004; France which has 10 indicators to reflect economic, social and environmental wellbeing; Italy has 12 indicators for equitable and sustainable wellbeing; the Netherlands produces an annual "Monitor" of wellbeing; Sweden integrated measures of wellbeing into the budget starting in 2017; the UK has several different forms for wellbeing metrics, one being the What Works Centre for Wellbeing; and in 2017 the United Arab Emirates established a Happiness Policy Manual which proposed the use of happiness in policy-making. An often-referenced framework is that of *buen vivir* (living well, also known as *sumak kawsay* from its Indigenous roots) which was integrated into the constitution of Ecuador in 2008. In 2013, a Buen Vivir Secretariat was established and there is a national development plan which puts forth a national strategy for buen vivir every four years (Stiglitz, 2018). South Africa has "ubuntu" - a concept of living well in harmony with nature

and Bhutan has the Gross National Happiness Index to create policies and incentives to increase societal wellbeing and happiness (Radcliffe, 2012; Williford, 2018).

Indigenous declarations, such as buen vivir (sumak kawsay*)* are based on ancient understandings of human-nature relationships. Mino-Manaamodzawin (in Algonquin languages, Mino-Pimatisiwin) is an Anishinaabe philosophy of living well which is common to several Indigenous epistemologies and encompasses the importance of mutually respectful and beneficial relationships amongst all living things, including the four sacred elements of water, rock, wind and earth itself. The central idea is striving for balance. Current examples include the recognition in New Zealand of the Whanganui River as having personhood and, therefore, rights and Bolivia has enacted a law of the Rights of Mother Earth (McGregor, 2018; Landry, 2019).

Another concept of wellbeing is the notion of the "lagomist economy" which implies a better balance among built, human, social and natural assets toward sustainable human wellbeing based on sufficiency, fairness and sustainability - an economy where just enough is consumed and consumed. With similarities to principles espoused in the Dish with One Spoon covenant referenced in the Acknowledgements section of this paper, *Lagom* is a Swedish word which connotes "just the right amount" which derives from Viking tales of passing a horn filled with mead around the campfire with everyone taking their own portion in such a way that there was some left for the last person in the circle (Costanza, 2015).

The gathering and analyzing of data under these various metrics for wellbeing will take time and collaboration in collecting and sharing of information and, most importantly, personal and political will. To date, the overall impact of wellbeing metrics as reported has been modest, but there has been some "political use" of indicators to back-up policy decisions for such items as investment in public transit, water protection measures, and reduction of income inequality. If we are to move beyond the imperative of unlimited growth and its destructive impact on the planet the indicators will need to be brought into "the heart of decision making" (Hayden, 2022).

There is evidence of a growing number and variety of countries and communities around the world, including many in Canada, using the term wellbeing and utilizing some form of a wellbeing metric to accompany or (and, ideally) go beyond GDP.

I hope that this evidence points to the concept of wellbeing for people and planet being embraced ever more widely to aid us in measuring, monitoring and altering our values, habits and

practices and enabling us in the pursuit of the significant changes required to achieve our common goals for 2030-2050 and beyond.

2.5 Beyond GDP: the Canadian picture

WEAllCan works in collaboration with the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) which is a national database on wellbeing. It was conceived in 1999 after public consultations and was launched in 2011 as a non-governmental organization (Hayden, 2022) and is housed at the University of Waterloo in Waterloo, Ontario. The Index draws from 200 data sources and has eight "domains of life" which are: 1. Community Vitality, 2. Democratic Engagement, 3. Education, 4. Environment, 5. Healthy Populations, 6. Leisure and Culture , 7. Living Standards, and 8. Time Use.

Each of these domains has 8 indicators to provide a "comprehensive portrait of quality of life in Canada." Public reports are issued on a regular basis to national and provincial governments. The base year for reporting is 1994. Three reports on national wellbeing have been issued with the latest report in 2016, covering the 10 years from 1994 to 2014. The next annual report will be issued in 2025 (Canadian Index of Wellbeing, n.d.).

In March of 2024, the David Suzuki Foundation released a report entitled *Mapping the Wellbeing Economies Landscape in Canada.* The goal is to support a transition in the Canadian economy toward a wellbeing economy. Descriptions of wellbeing and tools as well as links to outside resources are provided. A map is provided of some 500 different groups, individuals and projects across Canada who share values centred around WEAll's pillars of wellbeing: dignity, fairness, nature, participation and purpose. The hope is to "create a healthy self-governing network" (Campbell, 2024).

The federal government's own plan for a wellbeing economy is described in the 2021 report released by the Department of Finance, *Measuring What Matters: Toward a Quality of Life Strategy for Canada* (TQLSC) (Government of Canada, 2021).

As with other wellbeing frameworks, TQLSC acknowledges the shortcomings of GDP and other traditional economic indicators in that they don't recognize uncompensated economic activities such as caregiving and in-home production and they fail to consider natural assets or environmental harms.

TQLSC puts forward the case for the establishment of quality of life/wellbeing metrics. This report posits an economy which offers prosperity, a high standard of living, inclusive growth and sustainable development. These new metrics are to be added as a complement to GDP.

The findings from public opinion research conducted in 2020 provided consensus on the importance of both equity and environmental and fiscal sustainability. Distributional issues and sustainability are to be treated as cross-cutting lenses for evaluating performance on all of the domains and indicators. This information is added to wide ranging research including academic reports and studies, well-being experts in Canada such as from the University of Waterloo and the Wellbeing Economy Alliance as well studies from countries and regions in WEGo.

The architecture of the framework is a dashboard rather than a composite index and includes 84 indicators under the 5 areas as noted in the figure below:

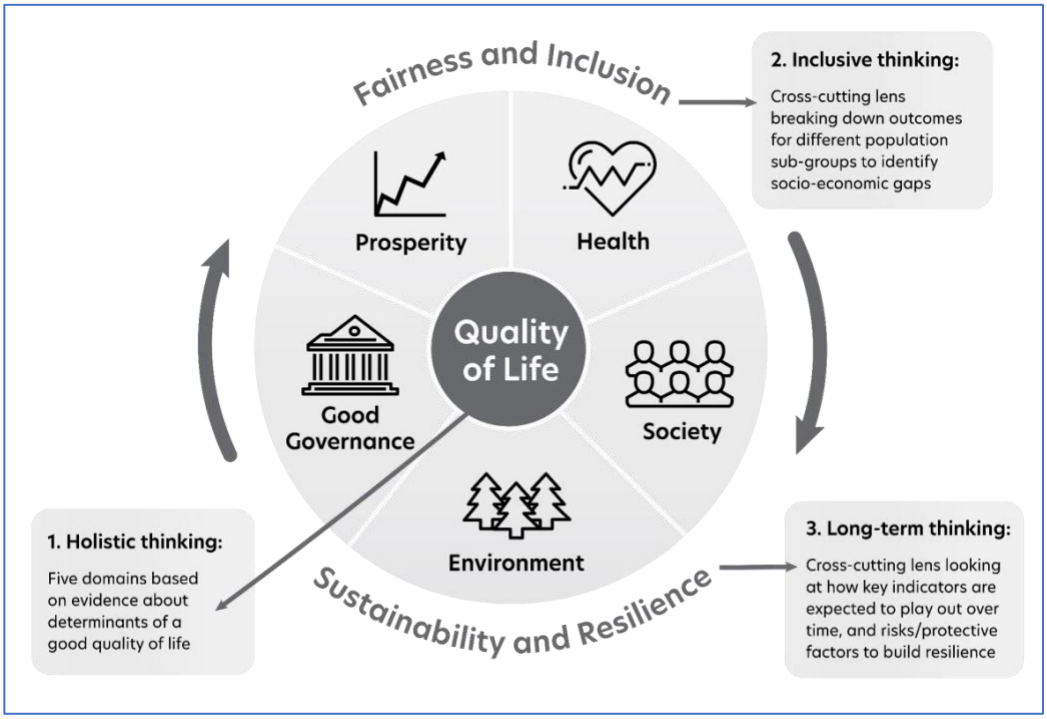


Figure 2 **Canada's Toward a Quality of Life Framework** *(Government of Canada, 2021)*

Statistics Canada is designated to assemble and report the metrics and to develop a *Census of the Environment*. The framework is set to link to the government's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Some features of the TQLSC framework are still under development, such as the *Sustainability and Resilience* lens as well as the area of the *Environment*, included in Figure 3 on the next page.

In March of 2022 Statistics Canada launched the first version of the *Quality of Life Hub* which includes the quality of life indicators and definitions and resources for users (Government of Canada, 2024).

The framework has been applied in 3 budgets to date, but it has been limited in its application to areas such as tax-free savings for home-buyers, inflation relief e.g., the grocery rebate. In budget 2022, a commitment to early child development, learning and childcare was made (McLaren, 2023). The 2023 budget included a statement and impacts report on gender, equality, diversity and the quality of life (Government of Canada, 2023[2]) which included the following statement: "Greater outcomes emerge when people come together regardless of race, lineage, religion or gender."

Towards a Quality of Life, Environment Lens

Environment and People	**Ecological Integrity and Environmental Stewardship**
1. Air Quality	7. Greenhouse gas emissions
2. Clean Drinking Water	8. Conservation areas
3. Natural Disasters and Emergences	9. Canadian Species Index
4. Satisfaction with Local Environment	10. Water Quality in Canadian Rivers
	11. Natural capital
5. Walkability	12. Waste management
6. Access to public transit	13. Coastal and Marine Protection

Figure 3 (*Government of Canada, 2021)*

The central challenge of Canada's carbon footprint and GHG emissions is not mentioned in TQLSC, except to note that historically Canada has had weak performance in greenhouse gas emissions (echoed by the report mentioned earlier in this paper on Canada's performance on the SDGs) and to state that decision making needs to ensure that today's decisions are mindful of future generations.

The overarching points of *fairness and inclusion*, *sustainability and resilience* combined with *holistic* and *long-term thinking* with regard to quality of life for society and the environment are positive indicators of de-linking societal wellbeing from GDP. As the metrics are put into

practice, they will render information which undoubtedly reveals that limitless growth, which has traditionally been seen as such a positive indicator of wellbeing, is contested. In the words of one critique of the report, "it admirably sets an auspicious tone for building a robust and meaningful wellbeing agenda for Canada" (Barrington-Leigh, 2021).

2.6 Cities and Wellbeing

2.6.1 City governance and challenges in Canada

Municipalities are not directly governed by the constitution. Their powers are derived from the province. The provinces are empowered by the constitution to delegate some of their own jurisdiction to municipalities which most provinces have done through some form of a municipal government act. Most critically, for use of lands and waters and the related environmental and ecological issues, municipalities make land-use decisions through such tools as by-laws for zoning, development approvals, transportation, waste disposal, water management and more (Doelle, 2023, p. 286-287).

Municipalities are not allowed to run budget deficits, budgets must be balanced each year, although they are permitted to borrow funds for long-term infrastructure projects. Municipalities raise their operating funds from property taxes, provincial transfer payments and user fees for such items as parking, permits, transportation usage and business licenses. In smaller towns, like Stratford, city councillor positions are part-time and staffing levels are functional but not deep. The harassment of local politicians follows recent patterns observed at the other levels of government and, as with the other levels, it is becoming increasingly challenging to attract new candidates.

In the Province of Ontario recent decisions make evident some of the challenges which municipalities face in asserting authority and in supporting the decision making of locally elected councils. As one of the respondents in the interviews stated: ″Municipalities in Canada and Ontario are in a kind of a straightjacket to begin with in that they don't have any constitutional power. They're forced to focus on whatever the priorities are of the provincial government.″

For example, in 2023, the conservative government extended "strong mayor" powers beyond Ottawa and Toronto to 26 other municipalities. The law allows mayors to override city council decisions. Premier Ford is quoted as saying that "everything we've done, whether it be vetoing certain bylaws that don't meet our provincial priorities, it's all around ensuring that those

mayors have the tools to ensure that they meet their obligations" (Benzie, 2023).

In the spring of 2024, the government of Ontario enacted Bill 185 called the *Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024* with the stated purpose of "reducing red tape and removing costly burdens in order to make government work better" to address the housing supply crisis (Government of Ontario, 2024). The bill gives the province broad powers in areas traditionally within municipal jurisdiction such as eliminating third-party appeal rights on official plan and bylaw amendments, removal of barriers for additional residential units, removal of mandatory pre-consultation process on planning applications, and permission to admit additional residential units in agricultural areas. In the words of a councillor in the Perth County area, "the implications of increased lot creation in agricultural areas could lead to significant agricultural land loss" and will affect local farming practices (Luczka, 2024).

In 2022, a spokesperson for the Ontario Federation of Agriculture made a cautionary statement noting that farmland is a finite resource and that there is unsustainable pressure on farmland which at the time was being lost at a rate 319 acres of farmland per day (the equivalent of losing 9 family farms each week), up from 175 which had been reported in the 2016 Census, "the availability of prime agricultural land is fundamental to Ontario's future, a country's ability to feed its own population is an important pillar of a well-functioning and sustainable society" (Brooks, 2022).

Further complicating relationships in Ontario is the issue of provincial zoning where ministerial zoning orders (MZO's) allow ministers under a planning act to alter municipal zoning and by-laws.

With the support of citizens and local organizations when there is a disagreement with the province, municipalities do often fight back. An example is a case reported in 2021 in the town of Pickering. After widespread community and Indigenous lead opposition, a developer withdrew a previously approved permit which had been issued under "duress" by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority based on an MZO. The development would have paved over significant wetlands in the area. The Ontario government revoked the MZO and a lawsuit initiated by the community to file a stay motion was discontinued. In the words of lawyer, Laura Bowman, "this is an example of what can be achieved when the public comes together to hold their government accountable" (Ecojustice, 2021).

The mayor of Burlington recently called upon the federal and provincial governments to

review the long-term fiscal relationship with municipalities, stating that the current framework is 15 years old and "antiquated" and that the effects of the pandemic, inflation, and the housing crisis have put increased pressures on municipalities who provide for essential services and infrastructure. She notes that raising municipal taxes is not adequate to address such issues - "the federal government has all the funding, the province has all the powers and municipalities have all the problems" (Meed Ward, 2024).

Municipalities in Canada do join forces to advocate and to provide resources for citizens, organizations and with government levels through such member organizations as the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (amo.on.ca) with 444 members and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (fcm.ca) with 2000 members.

Figure 4 on the following page provides a breakdown of the responsibilities of the three orders of government in Canada. Areas of responsibility which are central to care and wellbeing come under municipalities such as child care, fire and ambulance services, waste, utilities, libraries, parks, transit, public health, social services and social housing.

The Orders of Government in Canada		
Federal Government	**Provincial Government**	**Municipal Government**
The Federal Government has the power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of Canada, except for subjects where the provinces are given exclusive powers. What is not mentioned as belonging to provincial governments under the Constitution Act, 1867, comes under the power of the federal government.	The Provincial governments ar responsible for issues that are explicitly given to them in the Constitution Act, 1867. Through the provincial legislature, the provincial government has the power to enact or amend laws and programs related to areas below:	The powers of municipal governments are determined by the provincial government. Municipal governments in Ontario are responsible for providing many of the services within their local boundaries which citizens rely on on a daily basis, such as:
Citizenship	Administration of Justice	Airports
Criminal Law	Education	Ambulance
Copyright	Hospitals	Animal Control and By-law Enforcement
Employment Insurance	Natural Resources and Environment	Arts and Culture
Foreign Policy	Property and Civil Rights in Ontario	Child Care
Indigenous Peoples	Social Services	Economic Development
Money and Banking		Fire Services
National Defence		Garbage Collection and Recycling
Regulation of Trade and Commerce		Electric Utilities
The Post Office		Library Services
The Census		Long Term Care and Senior Housing
		Maintenance of Local Road Network
		Parks and Recreation
		Public Transit
		Developments and Enhancing Existing Neighbourhoods
		Police Services
		Property Assessment
		Provincial Offences Administration
		Public Health
		Side Walks
		Snow Removal
		Social Services
		Social Housing
		Storm Sewers
		Tax Collection
		Water and Sewage
(Source: Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO). https://www.amo.on.ca/about-us/municipal-101)		

Figure 4

2.6.2 Wellbeing transitions in cities

Despite the limitations which municipalities face, they and their residents are central players in fighting climate change and to maintaining wellbeing. More than half of the world's population live in urban areas (Abdallah, 2023) and, in Canada it's an even higher percentage at 80% of the population living in cities and towns (Canadian Cities, n.d.).

Cities absorb much of the world's energy and through transportation, buildings and residences are responsible for around 70 per cent of global energy related greenhouse gas emissions. Cities are also directly impacted by the effects of extremes in climate change through flooding, wildfires, damage to infrastructure and concomitant impacts on health (Milhahn, 2019).

Cities are critical to making a sustainable transition toward limiting emissions and addressing impacts on biodiversity and ecological concerns (Webb,2023). A wellbeing framework can provide cities with an approach which allows for planning and measuring their efforts toward sustainability and climate mitigation.

Wellbeing frameworks have in common with ecological economics and degrowth practices three priority areas of: wellbeing, sustainability and fairness. Many approaches to wellbeing are in practice in various places around the world and each has their own context.

Saamah Abdallah and colleagues offer some considerations for the process in cities in a recent article (Abdallah, 2023). The starting place for a wellbeing framework is typically a **participatory process** involving citizens representing the diversity of the community imagining what an economy driven by wellbeing for people and planet might look like with a long-term lens. As noted earlier, there are several wellbeing approaches from which to draw.

Central to wellbeing is **collaboration** and examining how resources might be pooled and prioritized. Community groups often have special expertise to bring to the discussion which cross many areas - e.g., health care, agriculture and food, heritage, culture, energy, social justice, climate change, education, poverty, homelessness, newcomers and more.

Wellbeing takes a **cross-silo approach**. Critical to discussions is to reflect not only shared visions but also conflicts of interests - the wellbeing for one demographic group may have negative effects on another group. Obviously, business representatives as well as government departments and institutions are essential to the process to provide **multi-stakeholder engagement**.

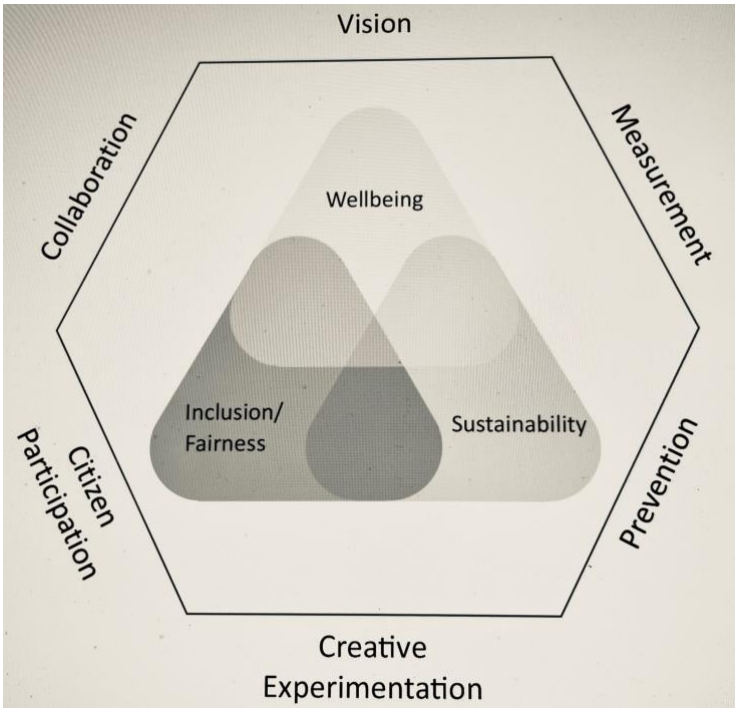
Participation in a process for enabling change is intended to **create a sense of ownership and shared accountability and trust**. Some communities have actively participated in budget

discussions.

An over-arching principle is a **long-term lens**, meant to live through short-term periods of election cycles and various official appointments. The idea is to create a framework that is **grounded in community and evolves with the community**. The process encourages the use of personal stories, images and narratives as well as continuous learning and innovation in an environment that is safe and open.

Figure 5, below, offers a visual representation of the described process:

Approaching Wellbeing Transitions



(Abdallah, 2023, pg.198)

Figure 5

Following the 2023 annual conference of the WHO European Healthy Cities Network, the WHO noted that "cities are torchbearers for innovative, local solutions and initiatives...mobility, air quality and access to green and recreational spaces are some of the central building blocks for wellbeing" (Bhanu, 2023). Recommendations were adopted as *12 Action Points for Thriving Societies* to address 4 areas of wellbeing: planetary, human, economic and social.

Another approach to wellbeing is the *Doughnut* of *Sustainability* conceived by economist, Kate Raworth, a representation of a *thriving, but not growing* life on the planet with the outer edge

of the doughnut presenting the planetary boundaries and inside that circle is the *environmental ceiling* bounding the section of the *safe and just space for humanity* and inside that ring is the social foundation of our lives on the planet (Raworth, 2013 and 2017). The visual representation of the doughnut is below:

"We need societies in which humanity can thrive and blossom, not one that will grow forever. This radical change leads us to become agnostic about growth, and to build a society that can function financially, politically and socially in a world where we learn to evolve without growth."

Kate Raworth

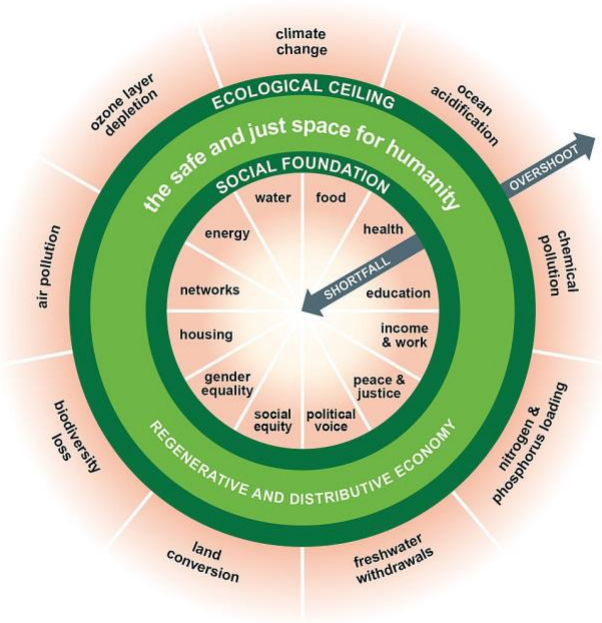


Figure 6 **The Doughnut of Sustainability** *(kateraworth.com)*

Kate Raworth and her colleagues recently formed the Doughnut Economics Action Lab (doughnuteconomics.org) which provides tools and resources for communities and organizations to design procedures and approaches for the use of the doughnut. The Lab is currently working with 70 governments and cities around the world, including Nanaimo in British Columbia.

Nanaimo, with a population of around 100,000 located on the east coast of Vancouver Island, has deployed doughnut economy principles tailored to the city in the creation of their most recent community plan. The city council decisions are made though this wellbeing lens and staff have been directed to integrate it into decision-making as well as budget development and reporting. The plan is based on the principles of integration (coherence) and adaptability (resilience) with inter-connected goals which include greenhouse gas emissions reduction, healthy

watersheds, urban tree canopies, affordable housing, walkability (and active and public transportation. The city has noted challenges such as placing essential environmental limits on development in the face of housing shortages. Recently the province of BC changed its building code to limit greenhouse gas emissions from new construction. Accordingly, in Nanaimo as of July 1, 2024, new homes will not be permitted to have natural gas as a primary heat source (Houston, 2024). The City's webpage, nanaimo.ca, displays *Green Initiatives* as the first button on the home page and under *Economic Development* states "Built on the principles of Donut (*sic*) Economics, the *City Plan-Nanaimo-Reimagined* is a roadmap for building a thriving, sustainable and equitable community now and into the future."

In 2022, the City of Vancouver Economic Commission developed *A Beyond GDP Framework* which has 36 indicators toward building an economy that is just, zero-carbon, and thrives within planetary boundaries and supports healthy and prosperous communities. The 5 foundational values are: equitable, sustainable, purposeful, prosperous, civic and the 5 lenses to be applied to the metrics are: just, multigenerational, sustainable and regenerative, antifragile, and economic reconciliation. In developing the framework the Commission notes that the research "intersects a growing *Beyond GDP* movement seen at the international, national and local levels". The framework is in its first phase and is expected to evolve as it is implemented and there is feedback from citizens (Vancouver Economic Commission, 2022).

Another recent initiative with cities in developing wellbeing frameworks is a "diverse and contextual" pilot project which the Wellbeing Economy Alliance (WEAll) launched in 2021-22 with 4 cities: Pomona, California; Toronto, Ontario; Porirua, Aotaaroe New Zealand and Perth, Scotland. The conclusions noted that such transformational work takes time, that it must be relationship-based, should embrace emergence and is most effective when strength based rather than problem based. Each of the cities is continuing to work on embedding wellbeing economy design into their current and future planning (Hough-Stewart&Janoo, 2024).

2.6.3 Municipalities, wellbeing and Indigenous Peoples

Municipalities have an inherently embedded relationship with Indigenous Peoples, whether or not such relationships are formally recognized in existing laws, regulations and jurisprudence.

Municipalities are most often located on lands that were important Indigenous spaces for trading, transportation and living. Indigenous peoples are not “from outside of cities” as we

customarily may have viewed them, but have been inhabiting these lands for thousands of years. Their practices and traditional laws continue to apply in these spaces and it is important for municipalities to consider and include Indigenous knowledges and practices in their policies (Anderson & Flynn, 2021; Heritz 2021).

Several interview participants mentioned that we can look to and learn about wellbeing from Indigenous Peoples who took care of the air, the land, the waters and the animals - mother earth - for millennia before settlers arrived in so-called North and South America, referred to as "Turtle Island" by many Indigenous Peoples.

In thinking about the wellbeing of future generations, often referenced is the ancient Haudenosaunee philosophy of thinking about our actions and their impact for seven generations to come and of the seven generations before (Haley, 2021). Seven generations is a time frame that we can conceptualize, about 200 years forward and back, i.e., approximately back to the time of the great-grandparents of our grandparents and forward to the time of our children's great grandchildren. Can we imagine the world we would like for our grandchildren and their children's children? Without thinking ahead about future generations and just continuing our habits of consumption, production, emissions, growth and greed we would leave them a world bereft of much we treasure today in our lands, waters, wildlife, food provisioning and breathable air.

Traditionally for Indigenous Peoples, land is not defined as “property” to be owned, bought, sold, exploited and treated as a commodity. The relationship with land is encompassing and holistic. Land provides food and provisioning, but it is also recognized as a place of culture and language, social systems, relationships with the human and more than human, spirituality and includes the water and the air. The rights and obligations of Indigenous People to the “land” are inherent, related to living on and with the land and tied to social structures, political and legal systems. These are not the same as the “rights” described in various government edicts which have been issued over time (Hanson, 2009).

Long before settlers arrived on the land we call Canada, Indigenous Peoples (including Aboriginal Peoples, First Nations, Metis and Inuit) inhabited lands we commonly refer to as “municipalities”. Since the Royal Proclamation of October 7, 1763 (Indigenous Foundations, n.d.) settler relationships with Indigenous Peoples on these lands have been bound by agreements and various laws, regulations and treaties as well as decisions arising from court cases with the federal and provincial governments.

In addition to living in urban areas Indigenous communities live on reserves on or adjacent to municipal lands and, in many cases there are underlying treaty rights, many of which may be part of land claim negotiations.

Former Ontario Grand Chief, Rose-Anne Archibald, in an address to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario in 2018, noted that despite what has been taught, treaties are not a business transaction and that underlying rights will "last forever" and that Indigenous Peoples are not third-party stakeholders, but are rights holders and as such wish to enter into relationships with municipalities as neighbours, as "current and valuable partners" (Archibald, 2018).

Indigenous rights are enshrined in the Canadian constitution and command the honour of the crown. Court cases at the federal and provincial level have revealed the duty to consult and accommodate when actions may impinge on such rights. Recent developments such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC, 2015) and the Calls to Action in 2015 and the signing into law in Canada of the United Nations Declaration of the rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) in 2021 have shed light and on Indigenous laws, knowledges, rights and responsibilities and the urgency of reconciliation and provide guidance to Canadians at all levels and also offer a particular lens to the municipalities.

In accord with the Calls to Action in the TRC report, municipalities are called upon to act in at least 3 of the Calls: 43. to fully adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as the framework for reconciliation; 47. to repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous peoples and lands and to reform those laws, government policies, and litigation strategies that continue to rely on such concepts; 57. to provide education to public servants on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations (NCTR, n.d.).

Canada was not an initial signatory to the 2007 declaration of UNDRIP (United Nations, 2011), but did sign in 2016. In 2021 the government enacted Bill C-15 (Minister of Justice, 2021) to bring Canadian law into alignment with UNDRIP with the UNDRIP Act, known as UNDA. UNDA specifically lays out the responsibilities of Canada to Indigenous Peoples with particular reference to **inherent rights** and to **free, prior and informed consent**.

UNDRIP makes reference to municipalities in the preamble noting that UNDRIP provides

a “framework for reconciliation, healing and peace” and “minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of Indigenous Peoples” calling upon “federal, provincial, territorial and **municipal governments** to fully adopt and implement” UNDRIP. The document emphasizes the “urgent need to respect and promote the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples which derive from their political, economic and social structures and from their cultures, spiritual traditions, histories, philosophies and legal systems”.

Several UNDRIP articles have impact for municipalities, including**:** 8, providing for **redress** for acts which may dispossess Indigenous Peoples of their lands, territories or resources; 10, **prohibiting forcible removal** and requiring that relocation may not take place without **free, prior and informed consent**; 11, providing for **protection of cultural traditions**, customs, historical sites, ceremonies and more and for redress for related violations; 19 provides for **consultation and cooperation in good faith** in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent “before adopting and implementing any legislative or administrative measures that may affect them”. Article 19 specifically states that Indigenous Peoples “**have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired”.**

In 2022 the City of Stratford joined with other cities who have taken similar actions with the appointment of a Manager of Diversity, Equity and Indigenous Initiatives and in 2023, after consultation with Indigenous People in the area, adopted a land acknowledgement statement (Kenny, 2023). The City recognizes the TRC Calls to Action and states that they are directed at all levels of government and all Canadians and that "reconciliation is a lifelong process that requires the intention and action of all employees" and further that "staff will continue to work towards reconciliation through Indigenous-led learning opportunities and authentic relationship building". The land acknowledgement reads as follows:

> "The City acknowledges that Stratford is located on land that was shared between the Neutral (Attawandaron), Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. It is also important to acknowledge that municipal buildings are on territory governed by two treaties: The Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant of 1701, made between the Anishinaabe and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Huron Tract Treaty of 1827, an agreement made between eighteen Anishinaabek Chiefs and the Canada Company. Today this land is still home to many Indigenous Peoples from across Turtle Island, and we are grateful to have the opportunity to live, work, and play on this land" (Stratford.ca, n.d.)

Cities across Canada are taking action in response to the TRC and UNDRIP. The Calls to

Action in the TRC were endorsed by Toronto City Council in 2015. Additionally, the City adopted the principles of UNDRIP, particularly with regard to Article 11 and they created an Indigenous Affairs Office to oversee "place-based relationship building" The City of Vancouver has declared that the city is on unceded territory and in 2021 adopted UNDRIP and the TRC's Calls to Action and created the position of Aboriginal Relations Manager. The City of Edmonton established an Elders Circle in 2005 and endorsed UNDRIP and the TRC Calls to Action as well as taking several other measures toward reconciliation building urban-Indigenous dialogue. The City of Winnipeg dedicated a division to Indigenous relations and the mayor has an Indigenous advisory council and in 2017 created the Winnipeg Indigenous Accord which uses UNDRIP as the framework for reconciliation. The City of Halifax has developed a number of initiatives aimed at reconciliation and committed to the TRC Calls to Action in 2015 and is reviewing a context for UNDRIP and its applications to the city (Anderson & Flynn, 2021 and 2021[2], p.17-18)

In 2022, the city of Saskatoon, referencing article 43 of TRC Calls to Action, adopted UNDRIP while noting other cities are figuring out what it means. The Mayor, Charlie Clark, stated "We have a chance to really show that leadership, so that we can also help other municipalities". Saskatoon Tribal Council Chief, Mark Arcand, noted "UNDRIP will really set a foundation of making a difference in people's lives and understanding because, if we don't work together, we all fail" (Dayal, 2022).

In 2017 the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) established an Indigenous Relations Task Force to address among other issues advancing "municipal-Indigenous "relationship building" across Ontario (AMO, 2019) and today provides various resources, tools and guidance to municipalities regarding municipal governance and Indigenous relations stating, "Strengthening relations with Indigenous people is important to Ontario's municipal government which often works directly with Indigenous people living in their communities" (AMO, n.d.).

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities provides the *First Nation-Municipal Land Use Planning Tool* in an effort to provide guidance to municipalities in working together with Indigenous communities. The stated goal is to work together "to create a seamless and sustainable strategy for managing human use of the local landscape" and concludes that with discussions between First Nations and municipalities working on land use planning together and respecting each other's rights and the "collective responsibility to care for the land and future generations, the spirit of the duty to consult will be fulfilled, even if the legal duty does not apply" (Federation

of Canadian Municipalities, n.d.).

I agree with Indigenous scholar, Deborah McGregor, who points out there is hope in the movement toward acknowledgement and reconciliation, but cautions that it has taken more than five centuries to get here. She offers that to envision alternative futures we need to "create space for Indigenous Peoples to begin enacting a self-determined future so they will again be empowered to inspire visions of living well with each other and with Earth" (McGregor, 2018, p.9).

2.7 Wellbeing and moving forward

The state of our over-burdened planet is telling us in myriad ways that we need to move beyond limitless growth under short-term hedonic practices and GDP metrics. We need to move toward eudaimonic practices to embrace sustainability and the wellbeing of the planet and those who live on it, or much better, "with it", now and in the future.

Cities are at ground zero in coping with climate impact and have a critical role in developing and carving out new paths from the ground up in collaboration with the other orders of government and community and business leaders. Wellbeing frameworks in various manifestations and wellbeing practices from Indigenous knowledges provide anchors for leading the way to re-imagining our values from solely economic perspectives to the primacy of care for planetary health in all its aspects. The findings from the participants and the following sections of this paper are framed within the wellbeing context.

3. METHODS AND DATA

3.1 Methods

The findings which follow in Chapter 4 are drawn from qualitative, semi-structured interviews with residents of Stratford.

In preparing for this research, I was struck by Professor Perkin's recently released book, *Climate Justice and participatory research: Building climate-resilient commons* (Perkins, 2023). Although Perkins' work is primarily with marginalized communities in other parts of the world, the principles she embraces of approaching participatory research with human participants with care, with an appreciation of local knowledges and with an understanding of context are inspiring and underpinned the formation of questions and the approach to the meetings with participants.

Accordingly, in preparing the 10 interview questions, I tried to make them neutral and open enough to invite honest and open responses to fundamental questions about climate change, the climate crisis, sustainability and reflections on the environment of Stratford. I changed the order of questions from time to time in accord with the direction of the responses and the areas which respondents wished to focus on or perhaps had expertise in. I made it clear that the interviews and the names of the people being interviewed would be held in strictest confidence and the files would be securely stored and that quotes used in the report would be un-attributed. I believe that anonymity being secured was an important factor in allowing respondents to be free to answer as they wished.

The list of participants was created initially from personal contacts made through serving on the Energy and Environment Committee. 32 participants were interviewed from some 60 requests sent out by email or in person (a copy of the invitation email is included in the Appendix). The requests were sent out over the period from January through February 2024 and the interviews conducted over 10 weeks from late January to the first week in April. Of the 32 interviews, 18 were held in my home, 8 were held in participants' homes and 4 were held in their offices. One interview was conducted on zoom and another by phone. Each participant was asked the same set of questions (see questions in the Appendix). I started with a group of 5 persons I know well to test questions and how best to handle them as well as the order for them. With the exception of these 5 participants, I had little or no knowledge of participants' predilections toward climate change.

With each interview I asked for recommendations of other participants. The lists provided

were honed for balance and representation to the final list. The participants cover a range in socio-economic status, in occupations and are balanced in gender representation. A list of the participants is included in the Appendix.

A consent form containing information about the research and how the files would be handled was given to each participant and signed by each of us at the beginning of the interview.

Over eighteen and a half hours of interviews were recorded on the Iphone or zoom and were transcribed using the app, OtterAi. The original transcriptions were checked and revised in accord with the original recordings and these were saved and stored to a hard drive. The answers to the questions were then excerpted by question from each interviewee's transcript and organized with all the responses to each question assembled under that question. The completed excerpts were checked with the original transcripts for accuracy. Over 400 separate quotes were taken from the transcript excerpts and used in the data analysis.

In summation, the interview steps included:

- preparation of consent forms and questions for participants,
- creation of a contact list for sampling a cross section of participants which began with known contacts and then followed a snowballing approach wherein participants were asked to recommend others
- the interviews averaged 30 minutes although some ran as long as 90 minutes and the shortest was 20 minutes.

The issues raised in the interviews, outside of the 10 questions covered a range of subjects from social justice, ethics, equity, diversity, colonialization, racializing, regional disparities, reconciliation, regeneration, and sustainability.

In analyzing the responses from the participants, I was struck at how their responses aligned with principles of various wellbeing metrics - community care, local action, education, care for issues of social justice, importance of systems' change and political will, limits to growth and more.

To examine the responses in relation to a wellbeing framework seemed appropriate. Accordingly, I initially created a grid of lenses taken from one of the wellbeing frameworks, and after trying to fit the responses for 4 of the questions into a grid, it became clear that what was needed was to find a coding mechanism that came from the responses themselves, which is what you will see in the next section of the paper, Chapter 6.

The literature research phase of the report was conducted in April and May with the reference of setting the context of wellbeing through its background and history, the development of frameworks and their applications with a focus on Canadian applications, and the role of cities in climate mitigation and sustainability. The report was written in May and June for submission in July. It is the intent to circulate the paper to participants and to others who may request it in the fall of 2024.

3.2 Data Summary

- **Gender:** of the 32 participants, 16 identified as male and 16 as female
- **Age:** ages ranged from 16 to 82 years - (16 under 60 and 16 over 60)
- **Years in Stratford**: the average number of years lived in Stratford is 23 with the shortest period being two years and the longest being 72
- **Occupations**: the work of participants covered a wide range of professions including health, insurance, realty, house cleaning, accounting, manufacturing, trades, farming, education, academia, theatre, visual and musical arts, community organizing, city governance, environmental and ecological works, utilities, social services, journalism, marketing and communications as well as students in secondary school and university
- **Participation in Climate Action:** several participants were active in the workplace or in community organizations involved in climate action or working on environmental issues and 100% of the participants participated in both of Stratford's home recycling and green bin programs. Many respondents are gardeners and in most cases they are seeking to plant native plants and pollinators.

Note: I did not encounter any "climate deniers" in the interviews, although several participants mentioned colleagues, neighbours and family members who did not accept the climate crisis as either being "real" or as being caused by human actions and/or they felt that they or Canada couldn't do much about it anyway as we are a small population in relation to the rest of the world. Interviewees wondered too whether climate denial is a way of coping with the uncertainty and enormity of the issues. They mused on ways to hold conversations with individuals holding such opinions and sought guidance on how to approach the subject in a non-confrontational manner.

4. FINDINGS

Responses to the 10 questions follow in the next pages. Limitations of space preclude the inclusion of each of the hundreds of answers as much as I would like to provide space for each of the diverse considerations from each voice. Excerpts have been selected to provide as comprehensive picture as possible of the comments.

4.1. The climate crisis and priorities

To initiate the discussion of the barriers and enablers to climate change actions in Stratford, I began the interviews with overall questions about what climate change/climate crisis means and whether certain issues were more of a priority than others.

4.1.1 Climate crisis

I was surprised by the **level of awareness of climate change** and of the part which our own behaviours have played in bringing about the climate crisis. I was also surprised by the level of deep sadness, the **feelings of helplessness and the sense of isolation and distance from decision making** that can make real change.

The **enormity of the climate crisis** often overwhelmed participants as they endeavoured to find words to describe their feelings. They felt **a deep sense of urgency and powerlessness** in the face of what is perceived as a **lack of seriousness on the part of corporations and all the levels of government.** They described **serious psychological impacts** with words such as:

- bleak, horrible
- colossal mess
- out of control, unpredictability
- endemic, a runaway train
- fear
- panic
- despondency
- despair
- anxiety
- alarm
- terrifying, disturbing, frightening
- death for millions of people

There was a very present **concern for the future** and the **livability of the planet and for children, grandchildren and future generations:**

> *I think about what sort of effect the degradation of the environment that we're now calling the Anthropocene is having on the human psyche and how people basically feel powerless. Everybody wants to do the right thing. Everybody wants to be a part of making the earth a healthy place, making it a good place for the future, making sure that we're taking care of such a rich resource that is a miracle of the universe, the size of the one that we live in. Finding practical applications for citizenry or individuals in their lives, to affect change and feel empowered to be a part of the change is one of the biggest hurdles. It's that people are suffering post-traumatic stress, essentially, we're watching the world be destroyed and we're not even able to engage with it because it's such a big and such a horrible thing, because we rely on it for existence.*

The **extremes of weather this past winter provided palpable and undeniable evidence** of climate change.

There is a growing **acceptance of adaptation** as climate change is already being experienced.

Several participants felt the **enormity of global concerns** and the role that Canada is playing. Some expressed concern that **climate change has become a political issue, when it is a "human issue"** and there was concern about the **polarizing of opposing views** and the **dissonance between belief systems and reality**, while others noted the **importance of listening to the science**. At the same time, individuals expressed a wish to have an effect in their choices, but were often **torn by how to make the right choices**.

> *When you talk about climate change, you can't just talk about it as an isolated subject. I think about emissions, but it's all intertwined into everything. The complexity of it is a big thing, because if you take the bus you could be still emitting, but it's better than a car, and if you take a car, maybe you should carpool, but you can think about it too much. You can calculate and think about everything that impacts the climate in your day. It intertwines with intersectionality, with racial issues and gender identity issues, food inequality and access to healthcare - it is connected to really all the deep-rooted societal issues we have.*

Generational differences were noted as they relate to the reality of climate change in our day to day lives.

> *For Gen Z and the younger generations that have grown up always hearing about the climate crisis, it's like second nature to us. I feel like you could ask any teenager or young adult now about the climate crisis and they'd have at least some sort of realistic information to share with you...the younger crowd is moving forward with ideas of renewable energy and better waste management practices to decrease the effects of climate change.*

4.1.2. Priorities

The interconnectedness and the complexity of the issues made it difficult to select priorities. There was, however, an overall sense, or at least a hopeful sense, that **individuals are becoming more conscientious.**

Energy looms largest, in particular, emissions from fossil fuels and Canada's economic attachment to them. Fossil fuels are a polarizing and divisive issue used for political ends. Government needs to address infrastructure and investment at all levels to allow for reliance on renewables and electricity from them.

> *People can move to use of more renewables, electricity based on renewable sources, retrofitting their homes to reduce energy waste, using less gasoline in their cars, but it is still a drop in the budget compared to all the emissions that come from industry and from all the plastics that are manufactured - it's just a glut on our natural system.*

The lack of leadership from industry and government is a priority. One person who has been working on good environmental choices for almost 50 years, since the issue of pollution was raised in the 70's, expressed frustration in trying to hold on when there has been so little progress and so much damage over this period.

The pandemic provides an important example of what we and government can do in an emergency. If we can respond with such speed in a health crisis, why can't we respond when we are faced with the clear evidence of a global climate crisis?

The interconnectedness of humanity around the world and compassion for those who are hit hardest by the impacts of climate change. Concern about climate change migration and planning for it. The issues of social justice are exacerbated by climate change.

> *It is areas of environmental crises that impact the quality of life for people who are living in poverty. Imagine living with poverty, or suffering from hunger, living with disease and then watching your home get washed away or the lands you rely upon for food being ruined by drought. We are so focussed on solutions and priorities that matter to us that we forget that there's a whole section of the planet who is going to suffer first. So, they should be the priority. When we lift the lowest boat, all the boats get lifted. How do we manage the humanitarian crisis that is being created. When we don't know people in a country that's a distance from us where people are marginalized we can just let that slide. We think about issues locally, but they are probably not as acute as they are in other places.*

Biodiversity and our interconnectedness with and the reliance upon the "other than human".

The destruction of the rainforests of the Amazon affects us all, they are lungs of the earth. It's the preservation and restoration of endangered habitats. We are losing our natural spaces and the animals and insects and species that live within them. The fact that there are fewer elephants, or whales or bees is a sign of how bad things are for the planet, these animals affect our lives completely, but we have a disconnect.

Education is an overriding issue that came up around each question. Education brings understanding and empowerment.

We must eliminate ignorance about the issues. Education is always important because we are in an age of mis-information. We need to educate people and encourage them to make a change in their lives, even if it is uncomfortable. Prioritizing understanding is huge and understanding that climate change is huge and addressing it is urgent. We need to empower individuals to take action, to give them an understanding and then give them access to supports and access to ways they can learn how to take action...seeing that it becomes intertwined with people's livelihoods. For me the underlying focus is empowerment.

Compassion and consideration for future generations is critical.

I feel very, very deeply for all of the wonderful life, a complexity of life on this planet that is suffering and will continue to suffer as climate change, exacerbates. But I also care, of course, about humans, about the generations to come. And already we are seeing suffering emerging from climate, climate migration, and that will only increase. I guess, if you wanted to put a marker on that, compassion for other for living things and the fact that they're threatened and future generations.

4.2 Barriers to change

There is a pervasive sense of a **lack of trust in government** at each level as well as a concern for the **spread of mis-information** and false hope from certain elected officials. Criticism is leveled at the use of the idea of the **economy and saving jobs as an excuse for delaying actions.**

> *I don't see government at any level making significant changes to meet the 2030 and 2050 targets and in providing leadership to attain those goals. The other thing about governments is the hypocrisy. At the same time as saying to the home owners that we have to replace our fossil fuel burning appliances, and here's a little bit of money to help you with it, we're going to let the fossil fuel industry generate 40 megatonnes a year more than Canada is currently putting out by getting more oil out of the ground.*

With regard to change at the **municipal level**, **the straightjacket of the influence of provincial governments** is seen as a barrier when they have to focus on the priorities of the other two levels of government.

The **electoral cycle of 4 years** is seen as a barrier in that **politicians focus short-term thinking** on immediate economic concerns and being re-elected rather than addressing the long-term goal of mitigating climate disaster. It was often felt that the **public has more belief in climate change** than do the elected officials. Polarization, lack of imagination, lack of leadership, lack of urgency, inertia, and not listening to science were also pointed to as concerns in the political arena.

Access to reliable information and education are key to assist individuals in understanding their own roles in combatting climate change in an overwhelming sea of emissions created by business and industry and the continued growth driving profits. Everything is interconnected**, it's difficult to make decisions**, people don't understand, people need to experience the impacts directly. There is a lack of examples where effective change is happening.

> *And nobody has managed to instill in the public that that's what's happening by saying, if we don't get ourselves off carbon, then the damage that will be done to the planet will be so enormous that the price will go up by orders of magnitude greater than the price of carbon today. The damage is already enormous. I don't know how you get that information out - how do people get access to that information?*

Equity issues and the affordability of making changes that are more environmentally friendly are also seen as a barrier for people who can't afford to make choices which are more environmentally friendly nor do they have time to devote to changing patterns and for some just

making the right choice is not convenient. Also, there is some resentment when people feel they are being told what to do.

Protecting one's own interests and the **depth of belief in the profit motive** and greed that drives it were seen as holding change back as well as money being able to keep people insulated from the effects.

> *It's greed, it just people want more and more for themselves, and they just don't see that they can't see the forest for the trees, they can't see the disaster coming, because it's not affecting them. It's the business structures, the economic structures, that make money from fossil fuel extraction and from all of the other things that we're doing that are bad for the planet and people keep talking about humanity being responsible and that's not quite fair. We do live in a class-based world and it's definitely the dominant classes that are responsible. We are all part of this capitalistic society, it's not easy to make democratic change.*

Personal and psychological issues are also problematic. Fear can prevent change, people want to **hang on to what they know.** People are frazzled with work and just keeping their heads above water and don't have time, they can't think of anything beyond just getting by with the day to day.

> *Perhaps it is rigidity, hanging on to the ways we know. We have to feel the impact, and I think we're going to have to feel it hard, get smacked in the face with it, before we decide to change our behaviors. That's an unfortunate piece of being human. I think that we don't do things unless we have to, but we have to get people to buy in because by the time that happens, it's going to be too late.*

Finally, **we have lost our relationship with our environment.**

We don't appreciate it, not only the beauty that's around us, but the amazing ecosystem that we are a part of.

4.3 Enablers of Change

Most often cited were the **need for education**, for bringing more environmental education into our school systems, for **sharing of information**, for making information accessible and secondarily the belief was expressed in **engagemen**t and working with together with others, stressing **the importance of community**, including government.

A well-informed public enables change - education against disinformation.

There is a belief in **individual action** and the **power of ground-up action** combined with government action.

> *If you join a group and the actions with that group start to ripple out into other people's actions, then it's not just your footprint that's changing. Maybe you start to connect with organizations, you start to connect with businesses, you start to connect with other people and they start to make changes. We can't wait for government to make change, government processes are so incredibly slow, even though the weight should be on government. Yes, we need to push governments to change. And yes, we need to push organizations to change. But it needs to come from a place of knowing that there's also some responsibility on you to make change. It's everybody doing their part.*

People need to **see examples of actions workin**g - in the community of Stratford, the community fight against a massive glass plant factory with the potential for huge environmental and societal impacts was seen as an important success story as well as the province-wide community push back against the government's plan to develop in the greenbelt.

> *What enables change is strong communities. And we have a good community in Stratford that is environmentally conscious.*

We need to **change our habits and change the economy.**

> *Change is happening in two ways, one is that people are becoming aware, especially young people, I think there's a lot of climate anxiety among young people. So, they are changing the way they think about having things, having all of the stuff that they can buy, the production of which is bad for the climate. The other point is that the markets themselves are changing - the economics are changing. It's being proven that renewable energy is cheaper than fossil fuel-based energy to the point where even Texas, for example, gets about 30% of its energy and electrical grid from renewables. So, the energy you're serving the market is actually playing a role in reducing emissions.*

Leadership is needed at all levels of government, for example in order to ban certain items like plastics or the importation of items coming into the marketplace, there needs to be

leadership from federal and provincial levels. **Taxes need to be raised** at all levels to afford timely and significant measures.

At the municipal level change can happen with **by-law and zoning changes** to address the provision of **more climate responsible buildings and housing** that is dense and affordable and work on transportation and greening.

We need to **change our relationship to the land** for our own wellness and for wellness of all beings and there are **lessons to be learned from Indigenous Peoples**.

It's a matter of living with the earth, not on it.

One participant offered the notion that **perhaps we need to feel immediate threat to act.**

Finally, the idea of **the need for time to enable change** was stressed in that it might allow us to change our patterns of consumption.

> *We need time, to be present, to look at a painting, to contemplate or meditate on something - to enjoy the fact that you're existing and to take a look around you at what things look like, to be content with what you are, then you don't need very much. We consume too much in trying to find 'contentment'.*

4.4 Challenges for Stratford in combatting climate change

Stratford faces challenges similar to other municipalities.

> *We face the same challenges as everywhere else, we are small, a single-tier-municipality and we have a very limited amount of resources. The pressures are going up and all the other costs are going up. It means that our initiatives towards climate are getting put to the test. And, the problem isn't seen to be immediate, the urgency isn't there, although we are doing work on city corporate action, because it also makes economic sense in terms of operation costs. But, the majority of emissions in the city are not corporate, they are industrial and residential with transportation being the biggest.*

Stratford is in the same difficult **position as other municipalities vis a vis provincial government** in that it has to align many policies with the province and the province can override municipal decisions. Cities also face budgetary constraints in not being allowed to run an operating deficit. There are particular challenges when it comes to the provision of housing and urban sprawl and provincial housing directives. Municipalities need the other two levels of government to act on climate action. Being a rural small town puts Stratford and other similar towns in a **disadvantage in terms of access to public transportation** beyond city boundaries.

City governance tends to be conservative and is slow to change. Several participants referred to an "old boys' network" as having undue influence on municipal politics and also noted there has been little noticeable progress since the declaration of the climate emergency in 2020. A desire was expressed for **more leadership and forward thinking** on climate mitigation.

The city has a **tricky balancing act between the agricultural community, industry and tourism driven by the arts.**

> *Because the proportion that big agriculture contributes to the economy and the tax base of Perth County, they're the biggest voice. It takes a long time to get change. We think of Stratford as the theatre and light industry town, but you don't think of the huge impact of agriculture. The agricultural impact is greater than the theatre, the restaurant and accommodation industry and the manufacturing industry combined.*

Tourism is an activity that brings emissions with it - housing, food, transportation all add to the emissions of residents. A **lens is needed to examine and improve on the emissions impact of tourism.**

> *Our economic structure relies on people traveling and that's always going to cause emissions, whether we look at it that way or not. We could do something about transportation, we could improve rail, we could look at using electric buses for the tourists that are bused in and out, but we will not be able to reach net zero based on*

that. Can Stratford develop the idea of sustainable tourism - wouldn't that be attractive to visitors and create economic benefit?

Many participants expressed concern over the **loss of agricultural lands, trees, bush and topsoil** to housing as well invasive practices of industrial farming and consequent **loss of biodiversity.**

Several respondents felt that there was **insufficient communication from the city** about what they are doing about climate change, in fact, about what their actions are generally. They wanted a **more open line of communication** from the city.

Education on climate change and actions, what is happening, what the impacts are and more - people wanted more information and felt that the city can play a role.

It was noted that perhaps **Stratford is a somewhat privileged city**, largely white and middle-class, that hasn't been touched by the effects of the climate crisis, "**living in a bubble"**, as one respondent put it.

On the other hand, several participants did note that Stratford has made **some notable achievements to be built upon**, such as beautiful natural areas, that the city has installed dog waste stations for decreasing waste and creating zero emission gas, the water treatment plant, the composting bins, the support for natural gardens and pollinators and that following the loss of GO service to Toronto, the city moved to attract a bus service to encourage less car travel, the city's constant work on improving local transit services as well as initiatives to work on electrifying the fleet and, critically important, creating a permanent position for the climate change programs manager.

4.5. Information sources and the city's role

The responses to the question about sources for information were varied, with each person having their own particular approach. The sources covered a spectrum as each person sought a way through the myriad of choices, but noted that **finding a pathway is difficult.** Each participant spoke passionately about the importance of having information on climate change and finding ways to work through both the **proliferation of mis-information** and it sometimes being a problem of **too much information and conflicting information**. Generally, it was agreed that the **city could play an important role** in sharing information which it has access to and in educating residents.

Many, looked to **social media and online platforms** with fewer looking to **legacy media such as newspapers and broadcasters**, in particular the CBC and David Suzuki's *Nature of Things* were often mentioned as well as PBS. *The Narwhal* magazine was also mentioned several times. One respondent mentioned *The Weather Network* as the changes in weather tell us a lot about what is happening to our environment.

Several noted **international media and climate experts and scientists** as well as relying on **international, national and local climate action group**s, such as Climate Momentum.

Family and friends were also noted, parents hearing from children, children hearing from parents as well as hearing from **colleagues at work**.

The **city could distribute information** from policy documents and information it receives from other organizations and levels of government as well as up to date information on its own activities. It could curate, perhaps with the assistance of the library, information for dissemination to keep citizens more informed.

> *The city has a role in providing climate action information predominantly about what they are doing - we've done this, we've reduced our emissions by this, we've collected this amount of organic waste, we collected X tonnes of organic waste generating X amount of renewable natural gas - we are doing our part, come join in, pressure us to do more.*

The **city could also play a role in providing helpful information** on making individual choices on such issues as energy, like heat pumps and alternative sources.

People have increasingly limited access to information as **traditional media sources as newspapers and broadcasters are rapidly being eliminated.** It was noted that Stratford could

learn from other municipalities in the region that seem to have a much more open approach to sharing information and dialogue with city council and city staff.

> *To enable people to participate, to enable change, we need education and it has to start at the community level. It will start with me and my children, and with my children and their friends and then community leaders that have local power, the local opportunity to speak to their communities. Imagine if all the governments across Canada took climate change and embraced it as a serious environmental issue and did their part and every single community in Canada educated and shared and informed and held town meetings and answered people's questions and reached out to every element of our community so that they understand what's going on and how it's going to impact them?* ***Local governments play an important role.***

It was noted that with **limited staff** and only one communications person that it is a challenge for the city to play a role in providing more information, but the overriding opinion was that it is a critical role and that perhaps it is **a role that can be done in collaboration with community organizations** who are committed to working on addressing the climate crisis.

Several respondents noted the importance of paying attention to **nature and the land**.

> *Most of the information that I actively pursue about climate change has to do with its impact on wildlife. It's all in relation to birds, what bird species are disappearing, what bird species are increasing? How much or how little? Is this related to climate change? I also see climate change through the vegetables that I can grow that I couldn't grow 30 years ago, because it was too cold. The rain comes in very odd patterns now and we've had less snow than we used to get. We just think about information coming from the media when actually the land, the water and the animals can give you that story*

Listen to the young people, let's hear their voices,

> *The young people today have a much more in-depth knowledge of what the challenges are, and they respect that in a way that that I didn't and, and they will make suggestions.*

And, finally, one respondent noted, **that we each have personal responsibility for being informed.**

4.6 What does living sustainably mean?

Participants had many differing and considered opinions, which make for a thoughtful checklist:

- *limiting consumption - living with enough - buy only what I need*
- *producing the least emissions as possible, making as small a footprint as I can and as big a benefit to the planet as I can*
- *having the least effect on the planet*
- *giving back to the planet by planting things that are helpful for the earth*
- *reduce what I buy, not being major, crazy consumers*
- *eating locally and shopping locally, support local businesses*
- *thinking about the whole boat and how what I do affects the world*
- *reuse, recycle, donate - keep it out of landfill*
- *living within my means*
- *not caring that much about material things*
- *avoid driving - use public transit, walk, bike*
- *be happy in yourself so that you don't need too much stuff or space*
- *do with less, have to have a lifestyle where we use less*
- *rethink, make conscious choices*
- *focus on what's within your means of changing or controlling*
- *subscribe to the One Planet Principle - deal with our waste, eat a plant rich diet, avoid high carbs and meat such as beef, look at the clothing we wear for its sustainability, avoid plastics*
- *change the lens and help people with small steps and practical things that we can all do, small steps multiply, multiply, multiply*
- *borrow when you can instead of buying something new*

Several participants commented on the issue of **affordability and living sustainably** and **the contex**t in which people are living.

> *If we look at the bottom earners of this country, they spend 110% of their income which means they're perpetually growing debt. That is not sustainable. Before we could have any question about the average person being able to be sustainable for the climate, or be able to have net zero emissions, we need to talk about the affordability of it because we're talking about individuals not being able to afford to make another choice.*

Think about our **impact on the rest of the world**.

> *People in developing nations are just trying to make it. Unfortunately, they are the people that are the first wave affected by climate change. We have to take into account where we are.*

Others spoke about learning from nature and **dethroning ourselves**, **decentralizing the human being** and understanding the other than human beings and making decisions about

environmental health without considering just the human experience. We **need to take care of the land and care for biodiversity.**

Future generations thinking came up often, leaving a better environment for the future, stopping borrowing from tomorrow as the planet cannot sustain the level at which we are living now.

> *It means living in a way that you are able to enjoy your life, you can provide for yourself, if you have a family, you can provide for them, but in a way that you're not causing irreparable damage to the planet and to the ecological foundation that we all rely on and it doesn't harm future generations and the planet.*

The idea of **living away from a big city** came up sometimes as a positive as services and goods are closer, it's easier to walk and drive less day to day.

Finally, several noted that fundamentally we need to **change the mindset, decolonize our brains, and learn from previous generations**.

> *The problem is we live in this consumerism society where people spend more than they make, trying to make it look like they're doing better than they are. We need to know and not ignore these issues. Everything is profit driven. I really believe if you look into the co-operative sector which covers housing, insurance, financial services, it's called the triple bottom line - three things -people, planet, profit. Never exercise profit if it's going to affect the wellbeing of the planet or people.*

4.7 The sustainable city and can you imagine Stratford as a sustainable city?

The predominant answer was, "yes", we would like to see Stratford as a sustainable city and many felt that Stratford could be, and should be, **a leading city in this regard**, referencing that the city is well placed given its history as a leader in the arts and it has an interesting mix of creative, industrious and passionate people. It would make respondents proud to be living in such a place.

However, the recurring issue of the **lack of faith in city leadership** and the need to instill trust in the community was mentioned. We can **build on what we have - we've made some positive steps, but it takes political will and leadership.** Respondents felt that the city needs to inspire its residents to take climate action and not sit back. One youth respondent put it this way:

> *It's a big issue for me because I had a timeline in my head where Stratford was going to reach all these goals and become a sustainable city by a certain time, but we're not going to meet these goals. That's hard to kind of grapple with. We need more push from government and the municipality. It's so important that the municipality realizes that it's not just a conversation topic. It's less than six years from now when the city should have reached the first target. Instead of debating all the time, we need input, we need public feedback, but it's so important that we really kick into gear. If the municipality actually wants people to trust them and wants people to see a future for them, they need to start showing it because I don't think people can live off hope any longer.*

It was noted that Stratford is **still a car dominant city** and the use of herbicides in **farming practices** was mentioned as a health issue for all inhabitants. The issue of **by-laws (city) and building codes (province)** was mentioned as a roadblock to building affordable and sustainable housing, preventing urban sprawl and instead promoting use of cars.

> *We need **diverse and dense cities** and that also affects climate change and sustainability.*

Respondents had many suggestions to make Stratford more sustainable:

- *make it more walkable*
- *make it more bikeable, provide more bike lanes*
- *more green space, more trees*
- *reduce the speed limit*
- *enforce the idling by-law*
- *ban use of single-use plastic*
- *invest in renewable energy*
- *create district, neighbourhood energy*
- *community gardens*
- *encourage eating what is grown around us*

- *be especially mindful of our wonderful water, we have a very secure aquifer of ancient water, as it says in a Chinese proverb, 'when you drink the water, think of the spring'*
- *discourage lawns, encourage native plants, pollinators*
- *create an environmental tourist policy*
- *encourage community engagement*
- *encourage arts organizations to be leaders in sustainable practices*
- *provide rain barrels for every house*
- *levy developers to provide funds to replant 10 acres for each 100 acres of land used*
- *encourage an agricultural course with a component that would be the ecology of a farm to teach a holistic approach to agriculture*
- *create a by-law to protect topsoil*
- *electrify the city fleet*
- *create more reliable access points for rail, encourage high frequency rail*
- *create more charging stations for electric vehicles*

And, finally, this comment: **yes, but we need support from other levels of government,**

> *The city can control what it can control, but it also relies on the province and federal provincial and federal government in aid and their regulations. There are things that the provincial government could regulate that is not, for instance providing rent controls for housing. The city could run buildings, but the problem is funding and getting aid from the provincial and federal governments.*

4.8. The role of cities in climate action

The responses centred around the idea that **cities are essential in taking climate action as they deal with our day to day lives**, such as making decision in terms of the kinds of buildings being built, where development is happening, what natural resources are being protected, how waste is being handled, by-laws and more.

It is important to **build community from the ground up** and in a smaller municipality people know their municipal councillors as people, as neighbours, at a human level. And, cities are where most of the climate emissions come from. It was also noted that cities have stats on what they've done using and reducing emissions and can make them available and public to assist people in buying into taking action.

It was also noted that **cities are big emitters** and collectively can work together and also can put campaigns together to pressure provinces,

> *All cities should be embracing sustainability, understanding that we are in climate crisis, and that they have a pivotal role to play. If every city did it, just imagine what could happen and the cities could get together and work with the regional government and other levels of government.*

The limitations that cities face in **working with provincial governments** was reiterated and, in Ontario, cities are being allowed fewer and fewer ways of bringing in income and the province appears to be working against those who want to take significant action on climate change. Many communities are being told they have to expand, which turns into urban sprawl and municipal governments may feel uneasy about taking on the provincial government.

The power of **corporations and business were also seen as problematic** as for the most part the work is driven by growth, expansion and profit, the more immediate the profit, the better.

Each **level of government needs to work in concert with the others,** sharing responsibility and addressing issues at their level, e.g., the federal government has the ability to enact huge change because they have deep pockets or they can go into more debt, which can't be done on a municipal basis. Federal law can criminalize acts of deliberate pollution. They also have big budgets to be able to advertise, promote climate action. On a provincial basis, there is work to do in education through the curriculum to make environmental and ecological studies more central in studies. On a municipal basis, pesticide use can be regulated, and they're responsible for landfills, waste reduction, waste collection and zoning.

We can **look at leadership in other cities.**

> *For example, in Vancouver, you find a passive stamp on the side of a 20-storey high building - it's a normal thing there. And there is so much more walking and active transportation. Their normal is already so much more sustainable - it's just what people do. We can also look closer to home at Woodstock and Oxford County.*

Finally, the importance of cities **taking step by step and progressive changes** with its residents was noted:

> *There are things that they and we can do which may sound small, but small impacts make big change and also serve as a means of education.*

4.9 Other issues

The participants had issues which they wished to raise in addition to the questions (in some cases these do echo issues that came up in conversation), including:

VALUES

Changing our values

> *Our society, for any number of reasons, has led us to be very hubristick and somewhat arrogant.* ***Indigenous teachings and ways of knowing are much more aware of the web of interconnectedness****, the web of life that we all are part of. One phrase that has come from one of the books that we read at home, was the 'democracy of species' leading to an* ***understanding of the rights of all living things****. We don't have that as a general society. It's unfortunate that we don't.*
>
> *We have to* ***change our whole way of thinking our whole way of being****. And that's partly what makes me kind of hopeless, because I don't see that there's a possibility of people really changing that much. But I would hope that don't feel that they have to show themselves to be successful by buying things, but to just be content in their life, as you know, with just living just getting on.* ***It's a new paradigm*** *for people.*

Future generations thinking is essential

> *What will the next generations inherit and how will they manage?*

EDUCATION

Improve the education system

> *The education system in this province is not conducive to teaching the next generation what it is they have to do and have to look for in terms of a sustainable world. Teachers themselves are doing what they can but* ***the curriculum isn't necessarily designed to properly address the issue.***

More education and practical involvement in climate change action

> *There's got to be a way of making people like me, contribute more without making me feel like shit that I'm not doing enough. The* ***only thing is knowledge, but not knowledge that is so complicated that users just can't follow it****. I want someone to say, this is what you have to do. This is your responsibility. Okay, I can do that.*

How can we talk to people about the climate crisis and making change without preaching?

CIVIC POLICIES

City politics should reflect the community

> *It's weird that* ***the council doesn't seem to reflect the community, the council is more conservative****. Change the people who run for elected office - making it more possible for younger people to run, or perhaps people without vested interests.*

Lack of engagement, interest

It's the lack of interest, the lack of motivation, the lack of action - it is disheartening. ***If the city and its leaders take action, it would have a ripple effect***

How does the city maintain an equilibrium of people, use of land and resources - wellbeing

You can see that the reason why it would be beneficial to the city to have more people live here as more people means more property taxes and more. ***But at what point do you lose the value of living in a place like this? What is the balance?***

Change building policies

There needs to be ***more high density building and significant reduction of urban sprawl.*** *Rather than building massive subdivisions, put that money into apartments, affordable housing, a small rise apartment with a grocery store in the base of their building within walking distance to resources and services.*

Affordability

Affordability, we need to have affordable rental housing. ***The inequality is evident*** *- the haves and the have nots.*

Intersectionality is important

Part of making an intersectional approach to climate change a reality is not just framing it as an academic concept, but actually having conversations with and ***having a plan for a universal design in cities so that people aren't disadvantaged by ability -*** *for an actual* ***feminist approach to climate actio****n.*

Tourism

One of the big things that's going to be a struggle for Stratford when it comes to being closer to net zero is the fact that we're a tourist city. ***We need to reduce emissions as a city to counter the fact that we're creating emissions with the tourism industry.***

Community engagement is critical

The most important thing is to have good people involved, all kinds of people, lighting a spark. Even if we exceed the carbon emissions that the clock is counting down for, there are still things we can do that will mitigate climate change, like continuing to plant trees and continuing to switch away from non-renewable energy, continuing to develop sustainable building practices and sustainable business practices, the world isn't going to end when six years goes by. ***We're always going have to fight and make further change and to innovate****.*

THE ECOSYTEM

Improve farming practices to be more sustainable

Can we stop industrialized farming and mass raising animals for slaughter? We need to talk about environmental practices as they relate to agriculture. It comes back to ***agriculture as it relates to vanishing habitat for wildlife****. It is preventable with education and a change of values.*

Protect the water

Water is going to be a real problem in a lot of places. People are going to go hungry. ***What I would like to see is clean water everywhere.*** *Because if you have clean rivers and clean lakes, clean ponds and clean creeks, you know you're doing something right.*

MENTAL WELLBEING

Climate Anxiety, mental health

A big concern is climate anxiety. *I've been hearing more and more that people have completely lost hope.*

Get outside, engage with the earth for mental wellness

In terms of mental wellness, ***in terms of being a part of environmental, positive environmental practices,*** *I think it has a lot to offer. People can be outside, feeling safe, and be working in the earth to grow healthy food for themselves, which is amazing.*

4.10 Hope

Whether they have hope for achieving the targets to mitigate the climate crisis was the final question put to the participants. The answers were split more or less half and half between the participants who expressed that they had little or no hope and those that had hope that we would meet the targets for 2030 and 2050.

Those on the "no" side have accepted the notion of adaptation to the extremes in climate and the resulting impacts on the wellbeing of people and planet. They expressed deep disappointment in the evidence of climate action to date and in the ability of humanity to change their addiction to consumption.

On the other hand, those who expressed hope placed their faith in human beings and our ability to be empathetic, to be educated, to change and to innovate. The responses echo much of what has been said in responses to previous questions. The answers to the question of having and not having hope are both sobering and inspiring.

WITHOUT HOPE

- ***Lack of willpower*** *- people don't want to change and they don't see it is going to affect them too much. Promises are made but change actually does not happen, I've seen decades' worth of failed targets.*
- ***When people see things get bad enough, they'll take action, but it will be too late.***
- *We could change if we embrace a lot of the* ***First Nations culture****, but* ***I don't see that happening.***
- *We* ***are too addicted*** *to stuff, we continue to want and need too much, by* ***feeding that addiction****, we're hurting, we're killing our planet.*
- *Climate is becoming a* ***divisive issue, politically****.*
- ***Our brains haven't caught up to the crisis.***
- ***It's not a super priority with our current council.***
- ***Change isn't moving fast enough****, we're not going to salvage everything we need to. We're* ***going to have to adapt*** *to a different world. The planet will survive, it's just homo sapiens may not, certainly not in our present form.*
- ***The world is in too big a mess****. I look at the world, at the coming US election, the conservative opposition here and I don't see anyone who's going to take leadership. And there are wars all over the place - who's going to tell the Ukrainians to focus on recycling plastic at such a time?*
- ***There are no easy answers****, e.g., the federal government is saying we need electric cars and we'll be on our way, but just to make the batteries for* ***electric car****s, to dig for the minerals they have to destroy lands and boreal forests.*
- *The powers of* ***money and business are just so powerful*** *and they are even more powerful than when we were young. Nothing is going to stand in their way of greed and continuing to grow until some disaster happens to them.*

- *I think it's going to **require more crisis** and it's going to have to **affect the wallets of the wealthy** before we're going to move substantially on this.*
- ***It's just not realistic**. If you look at, even what more conservative climatologists are now saying, the window for climate action to meaningfully halt the heating of the global atmosphere was sometime in the 1960s. To hit a 30 to 50% reduction by 2030, in just six years, we're nowhere near that. We're at the very end of the runway right now. Whatever cataclysm is going to happen, is already is going to happen in my lifetime and I'm just going to accept that I have to sit and bear it.*

WITH HOPE

- ***Small climate organizations** are making differences*
- *It's **the only option**. You have to have some hope that we can do something that makes a measurable difference, or at least, make a society that's more livable for everybody. The only way to deal with trouble, no matter how deep it is, is to **start walking in the direction that you want to see** in the future.*
- ***I have a child, I'd like to see, a brighter future for her**, at least not leaving the world in a shambles and in a sense of futility, living in the virtual world.*
- *It's because of the degree to which it is **part of news now, it's not an isolated issue**.*
- *If we **can finally succeed in changing the social views on smoking**, then I'm hoping that we can **do the same thing about the climate**.*
- *I've got a lot of hope and a lot of faith that we as a species, as **humans, can come together** to combat this issue, not just for humanity, but for the planet itself.*
- ***I want to leave behind a world that, my grandchildren and future generations can enjoy**.*
- ***Humans are very capable of empathy** and even if it doesn't affect you, it does affect other people and you should care about that. And the things that we're doing are inadvertently, or indirectly, or directly, depending on how you look at it, affecting other nations and poorer and more vulnerable nations.*
- *There's a lot of **good things that people are doing** a lot of environmental initiatives that are taking off and have massive investments in them **from private companies, from individuals. There are people out there that care**. **It's the ripple effect**.*
- *What does give me hope are the **public events** that we attend, like the upcoming Earth Day event, where you see people who are keen and are looking for a way to help.*
- *Some of the **programs of the conservation authority are inspiring**, like the tree power pick up - people are excited to plant a tree because they feel like that's something they can do. **Plant a tree** - I can do that.*
- ***Hope gives you hope, I believe that humanity can solve the problems** that it's creating. We have the **ingenuity and the compassion and the kindness** within us to do so. As Voltaire said, in the last line of his 18th century novel, Candide 'Il faut cultiver notre jardin'. Candide goes out to find the best of all possible worlds and he finds it full of horrors, the most unimaginable ones. And at the end, he just says do what you can do and **cultivate your own garden**. I think of Candide when I think of hope because the world he saw was beyond hope and our world is looking pretty bad. So, you have to have that kind of hope. **It's a survival focus.***
- *What gives me optimism is **science**, all the tech stuff and **innovation and the human imagination - amazing.***

- ***I am naturally an optimist,*** *even though what I've witnessed recently has made me more of a pessimist, or a realist, perhaps. The reason is that a lot of residents in Stratford are kind of on board, but* ***the corporate world and the industrial world need to get on board****.*
- *My hope is* ***predicated on technology.*** *Human behavior needs to change as well. That's why I say* ***education is going to change things.*** *We just to these brilliant minds together to figure out bigger solutions.*
- *I feel like there's a little* ***bit of a groundswell****. With education, we can get everybody to feel, yes, let's do it. Connecting and* ***feeling like you can take action definitely is a way of giving people hope****. We need to focus on showing that real change is happening.*
- *Absolutely, I feel like there is hope because of* ***having conversations with people*** *that understand and are* ***educating and reaching out.***
- *You just have to have hope****. I see people who are engaged*** *and taking action.* ***More people are planting native plants*** *and they are in garden centers, so that people can see them and use them and provide the benefits to* ***pollinators*** *with them.*
- ***Humans are adaptable*** *and there are going to be more and more ways to use sustainable alternatives.*
- *Once the* ***technology becomes such that it becomes of financial benefit*** *to be producing solar panels or producing and selling wind turbines or geothermal, that might be the tipping point to get away from oil.*
- *There are* ***lots of great examples of people doing*** *things, people who are working to stop climate change and to find alternatives. There are different types of energy sources for making things like steel. When you look at the EU, you get the feeling that there's hope that things can change. In the Global South too - the fact that Brazil has a new president who's doing a fairly decent job and the minister of environment is doing everything she can to stop deforestation in the Amazon. In Africa, there are organizations that are trying to promote and support mosaic landscapes so that small scale farmers have help in in keeping lands fertile, not by using fertilizers, but by planting certain types of trees around them using crop rotation, doing things with nearby forested areas where they can get some income from it rather than chopping it down. Their governments maybe don't care,* ***but people on the ground do care****.* ***Smallholder farmers, Indigenous Peoples*** *are taking this on and are doing really great things.*
- *My biggest hope is in* ***the younger people out there*** *who want to* ***change the paradigm****.*
- ***Life gives me hope*** *and everything of beauty, the birds and my feeder line, the native plants that bloom in my garden, the goldenrod that is totally full of pollinators in the summer, young people and the hope they have and the energy they have, a beautiful piece of music, a lovely visit with a friend - those all contribute to the spirit of hope in me.*

5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The eloquence, care and thought that the participants gave to answering each question was remarkable as was the affection (not to preclude frustrations) they expressed for their community.

Just talking, speaking one's mind, giving voice to innermost thoughts, telling personal stories turned out to be unexpectedly important in the interview process. The interviews as scheduled were quite short, but each time they could have gone on longer. Although the subject matter itself is disturbing, participants often surprised themselves in their own revelations as they worked through their answers to the questions posed. In many cases they discovered that they did indeed have a vocabulary to discuss climate change and its impacts and they had deep, deep concerns. Giving voice to these thoughts seemed helpful to participants in framing their concerns. And, often, participants expressed relief in being able to speak openly and "get things off their chest" as well as a chance to examine the impact of their own practices. One of lessons learned, or reinforced, is that we don't spend enough time just talking. **The human need for storytelling, for sharing, for giving voice was resoundingly exposed.**

Common to each of the responses is the degree to which participants believe in and know about climate change and the climate crisis (if in some cases it is the extremes of weather that have finally made it clear) and the degree to which they **care for community and the planet**. Also striking is the expression of a deep **sense of urgency and of mental anxiety** and concerns for mental wellbeing.

The reflections on **barriers to climate change suit the descriptor of hedonic practices**, being patterns of consumption, gratifying immediate needs, profit-seeking and value systems based on growth-driven economic models without care for intersection or impacts on larger societal wellbeing. The reflections on **enabling actions to climate change mitigation fall into eudaimonic practices** such as seeing actions in the context of community and care, imagining impacts of behaviour on future generations as well as on those in other communities and the marginalized and impact on the other than human and the planet.

Over the course of the interviews, the concept of wellbeing for people and planet emerged spontaneously from what was said. The notion of a wellbeing framework was not specifically referenced by participants, but it came through as they addressed the questions and circled back to primary issues.

The areas of concern addressed could borrow from a number of different wellbeing frameworks. A close reference is that of the 8 domains of the **Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW)** described in Chapter 2 which include community vitality, democratic engagement, education, environment, healthy populations, leisure and culture, living standards, and time use. The issues of fairness, participation, nature, dignity and purpose of the **WEAll framework** also described in Chapter 2 are over-arching touchstones that came up in many interviews.

The CIW framework is used in the comments which follow as a reference for the reflections provided in the interviews:

5.1 Education: Although there is no priority order in the wellbeing lens, it is intended to provide a holistic picture, but education is the issue most often raised. The lack of education and knowledge about climate change is seen as a barrier to change and access to up to date and reliable information about climate change. CIW identifies education in relation to the quality of training and instruction for youth and through life-long learning. Education in the context of the interviews encompasses the provision and easy accessibility of information, the dispelling of mis-information, the creation of reliable sources of information, learning from examples of climate action, sharing and accessing up to date scientific information on climate change, supporting innovation and technological advances in climate mitigation, advancing the case for inclusion of ecological, environmental, sustainability courses in schools at all levels and specifically, the role of the city in sharing information it accesses in the previously noted areas, providing regular, up to date and transparent reporting on its own actions in climate mitigation and engaging with citizens in joint learning initiatives.

5.2 Community Engagement: this area as described by participants is closely aligned with CIW's **Community Vitality** indicator which relates to active and inclusive relationships among individual citizens, public and private organizations to foster wellbeing. Participants spoke frequently about empathy and compassion for those with less and sought fairness, justice and equity in the community and for other communities and the marginalized. As one participant noted, "we are all in the same boat". Participants sought engagement of the community in active climate mitigation education and efforts in concert with city council and staff and to include the business community as well as representatives of the arts and cultural communities, and the farming community - diverse, inclusive, collective, collaborative and on-going community

participation. More community engagement is definitely seen as an enabler and the lack of it as a barrier.

5.3 Democratic Engagement: CIW describes this indicator as "being involved in advancing democracy through political institutions, organizations and activities". This aligns with the concerns expressed by participants regarding the wish for more transparency from the city government, leadership from all levels of government and more information given to the public, more diversity and range in city council representation, openness from the city to citizen participation and to breaking old habits and practices and to working against polarization, politicians at all levels working on long-term goals - thinking beyond the limits of their term in office and embracing the participation of youth and Indigenous Peoples and more. Lack of such engagement and progress is a barrier and putting it into practice is an enabler.

5.4 Environment: Concerns in this area align with CIW guidelines of recognition of the earth, its biodiversity and ecological services as the source of our wellbeing and to the engagement with sustainable practices. Participants added to this by encouraging learning from nature and all its creatures as well to improving wellness by engagement with the land through planting and gardening as well as community gardens. To limit emissions and to support health and wellbeing of food providers and the land, participants voiced encouragement for buying locally. Transportation was targeted as a big emitter and universal support for a walkable and bikeable city with easy access to required services was expressed. And seeking alternative sources of energy to move away from fossil fuels for home heating and cooling was also stressed.

5.5 Healthy Populations: For CIW this takes into account physical, mental and social wellbeing as well as the provision of services such as health care. Mental wellbeing is an overarching issue as expressed in the worries, fears, anxieties, despair, feelings of helplessness pointed to in the interviews. The addiction to growth and consumption is not seen as contributing to long-term wellbeing and as requiring a "change in mindset", a "shift in the paradigm" toward healthier practices for people and planet. Climate anxiety is a major issue for youth, but it is pervasive at all ages. Education and engagement were seen as ways of alleviating some anxiety and as enabling change while fear was seen as a barrier.

5.6 Leisure and Culture: This indicator for CIW looks at how participating in `cultural activities contributes to our wellbeing. This is a central issue in Stratford, the arts are an economic driver for Stratford. The accessibility to such activities for all as well as the active participation of

the arts and cultural organizations in sustainable practices and "leading by example" were seen as important to encourage and examine. The emissions impact of such activities were also noted as having a negative impact on wellbeing.

5.7 Living Standards: This addresses distributional issues of income and wealth including measures of poverty, housing, income and food security. Participants in particular addressed affordability of sustainable practices, the lack of affordable housing, the increased demand on food banks as critical issues in Stratford (as well as in other cities).

5.8 Time Use: The lack of time, or not having enough time was often cited as a reason for not engaging more in climate actions or in more sustainable practices. For CIW this measure looks at how the use of time affects personal wellbeing, family and community wellbeing in the present and in the future. One participant noted how important it is to have time for reflection to consider what is important in our day to day lives, what makes for the "good life" unrelated to the acquisition of more and more goods.

Two additional indicators are added based on participant comments:

5.9 The Future, a lens to measure the impact of our actions on future generations - a key concern emanating from the interviews and an overarching lens with which to examine each indicator.

5.10 Indigenous Relations, a lens to track the city's progress in response to the TRC's Calls to Action and municipal actions under UNDRIP and UNDA as well as a lens to incorporate Indigenous teachings and practices and the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in actions toward climate mitigation. Participants often mentioned that we can learn about care for the planet and all its beings from the peoples who managed it for thousands of years.

Finally, with reference to all areas, we need to bear in mind the complexity of the issues we face in dealing with the climate crisis and their interconnectivity and impacts on one another, as well as to embrace and incorporate considerations of intersectionality (the interconnected and cumulative nature of discrimination, categorization and marginalization of individuals and groups by race, class, gender, physical ability and more).

6. CONCLUSION

The question posed in this paper is whether a sustainable city is a myth or a possibility looked at through the lens of its citizens. The literature review and the interviews reveal that addressing the climate crisis is imperative, that we need a paradigm shift and that acting sustainably and attaining sustainability for people and planet requires participation from citizens and each order of the government. Community engagement and ground up support is essential. The interview participants have expressed their willingness to act, to work in collaboration with one another, with organizations, with business, with government leaders - in other words to be part of a movement that is timely, transparent, informed, inclusive and effective.

The views of the interview participants with regard to the central issue of the climate crisis is in step with the most recent Leger opinion poll of 1500 Canadians over 18 which reported that with regard to their own wellbeing 90% rated a cleaner environment as important, 80% affordable housing and 88% access to nature and over half - 54% believed that the quality of life in Canada has declined over the last 40 years. Canadians value access to nature and equality and quality of life over a larger economy (Simac, 2023).

Participants acknowledge in wanting more encompassing climate action in Stratford that the city has limited staff and financial resources and is under the thumb of provincial jurisdiction. However, they offer that the city can call upon its citizens to participate and to work together with them. They are willing and able as this sampling attests. As actions in other communities reveal, citizens working together with their local government can create a powerful force.

Stratford is uniquely placed in reflecting on a small scale many aspects of our day to day lives across the planet. We are surrounded by farmland and witness our connection to food production, significant parts of our city are home to industrial activities, the liveliness of the arts are present year-round and especially in the summer, which is also when the lands come alive and we share in their bounty - these activities are interconnected and we have a unique opportunity to bring these sectors together.

It is a difficult and slow transition from our unquestioned reliance on GDP driven policies and metrics to measures of wellbeing, but our planet is telling us we need to change. A wellbeing framework, adapted to suit the particularities of Stratford provides a tool to measure the health of its inhabitants and of the ecosystems being impacted. A wellbeing approach would provide an

opportunity for a comprehensive portrait of life in the community and point to areas of vulnerability and progress and pathways for future steps. Such a framework could meaningfully complement the important work being done to address greenhouse gas emissions. In practice, it would provide a measure of how to balance goals for economic growth with the wellbeing of people and planet in a holistic picture.

Wellbeing and climate change action have a symbiotic relationship. Activities that enable climate change action such as community participation, sustainable practices, education, engagement with nature and more are supporters of wellbeing and focussing on wellbeing can lead to climate action. There is an argument to be made for recognizing wellbeing as the goal for climate change policies (Adger, 2022).

Stratford has many ways of gathering wellbeing information through social service agencies, schools, churches, community activist organizations, service groups, the public health agency, the hospitals, business associations, farming associations and more.

There are many resources as noted earlier in the report and one of them is next door in Waterloo. The Canadian Index of Wellbeing has engaged with many communities in the creation of wellbeing surveys, including with neighbouring Oxford County. They have created profiles of wellbeing for cities and regions such as a recent one for Rural Ontario - these reports and other community tools are available on their website at uwaterloo.ca/canadian-index-wellbeing/community-users.

The Wellbeing Economy Alliance offers a guide for cities to develop and communicate a wellbeing vision, to design a wellbeing strategy which includes all sectors in the community, assessing and selecting wellbeing economy polices, implementing wellbeing economy policies and evaluating such policies. The guide also includes case studies, available at their website, weall.org/designing-public-policy.

HealthyDesign.City (https://healthydesign.city) at the University of Toronto is an easily accessed and highly useable public source of city-specific information. It provides charts, maps graphs, and data in various interactive forms "with a specific focus on environmental equity".

There is a pluriverse of diverse, transformative, community-based activities in Stratford which would foster and support a wellbeing framework. These provide bases to build upon, e.g., a climate change programs manager with a climate action plan in progress, the declaration of climate emergency, active community organizations involved in climate change and climate

justice and social justice issues, the eco club at the high school, an actively engaged community library, several businesses which have adopted sustainable practices toward net zero, restaurants engaged in use of compostable and re-usable containers, stores around town with recycling bins to assist with items that cannot be picked up in regular recycling, restaurants and stores which support the buying of locally produced food and goods, the food bank and citizens who want to be more involved in having a say and impacting decision making toward a healthy and thriving city for all.

Divisions and polarizations have arisen in recent times in response to certain actions at the city level such as a finally rescinded proposal for a massive glass plant, the destruction of a treasured and historic hospital building and confrontations at city hall with citizens presenting before council. These and other issues point to the city needing to find alternative means for interacting with its citizenry. In short, the wellbeing of the community needs some attention. A wellbeing framework promotes engagement, community participation and more horizontal decision making.

Just as Stratford was reborn as a cultural centre in the 1950's when its role as a railway city was drastically curtailed, it could be reborn as a leading sustainable city. It could be a "republic of wellbeing" with emphasis on long-term thinking with human and ecosystem wellbeing and sustainability at the heart of its policies (Fioramonti, 2015).

I am hopeful that the research in this paper and the feedback from the interviews with citizens will provide resources to assist in convening community conversations and a coalition of active voices working in concert with the city to create a force for education, dialogue and forward-looking climate change action in Stratford. With a combination of education, collaboration, engagement and effective action, the sense of despair expressed by so many participants might be shifted to informed hope that the myth of sustainability can become reality.

APPENDICES

Interview questions:

General Questions

1. What comes to mind when climate change or climate crisis is mentioned? What are the most important issues for you related to climate change?
2. Change: Who or what prevents change?
3. Change: Who or what enables change?
4. Does Stratford face particular challenges in taking climate action?
5. Information: (a) When and from whom do you hear about climate change?
   (b) Are there questions you feel remain unanswered from the information you get that is publicly available?
   (c) Does the city have a role in providing climate action information?
6. Sustainability: What does living sustainably mean to you?
7. Sustainability and the city:
   (a) Can you imagine the City of Stratford as a sustainable city - living within its environmental limits - what might it look like?
   (b) What do you imagine your life would look like in it?
   (c) What role should the City be playing in taking climate action?
8. Do you think that cities in general have an important role?
9. Are there other issues or concerns that are important to you that we haven't discussed?
10. Hope: Do you have hope for achieving the worldwide targets (net zero by 2050, 30 to 50% reduction by 2030) to mitigate the climate crisis? What does or does not give you hope?

Individual Questions

1. How long have you lived in Stratford?

2. In what range is your age? (16-30) (31-45) (46-60) (Over 60) (prefer to not answer)

3. What is your occupation? (prefer to not answer).

4. Engagement: Are you engaged in climate action? At a personal level? Through an organization? At work? What kinds of activities are you or these groups engaged in?

6. Are there other individuals or groups that you would recommend be interviewed?

Would you like a copy of the finished report? Thank you. (March 2024)

THE SUSTAINABLE CITY, Interview Participants Summary							
No.	Date	M	F	16-60	60+	Years Resident	Occupation
1	26-Feb		1		1	7	Health Professional
2	28-Feb		1	1		25	Civic Governance
3	13-Feb	1			1	20	Actor
4	27-Jan	1			1	20	Artist
5	14-Mar		1	1		16	Communications
6	26-Jan		1		1	25	Teacher
7	12-Feb		1	1		50	House Cleaner
8	29-Feb		1		1	8	Professor
9	19-Mar	1		1		7	Tradesperson
10	01-Mar		1	1		30	Realtor
11	31-Jan		1		1	10	Journalist
12	12-Mar	1		1		25	Social Services
13	08-Feb		1	1		2	Theatre Professional
14	26-Feb	1			1	7	Film & TV Professional
15	15-Mar	1		1		59	Farmer
16	13-Feb		1		1	6	Film & TV Professional
17	18-Mar	1			1	39	Farmer
18	21-Mar	1		1		6	Film & TV Professional
19	27-Feb	1		1		35	Social Services Volunteer
20	07-Mar		1		1	50	Insurance Professional
21	14-Mar		1	1		33	Accountant
22	14-Mar	1		1		20	Sustainability Professional
23	26-Feb		1	1		16	University Student
24	07-Mar		1		1	13	Teacher
25	05-Mar	1			1	6	Historian
26	22-Feb		1	1		20	Waste Management
27	Feb-30	1			1	4	Union Representative
28	Mar-24	1			1	44	Medical Doctor
29	May-24	1		1		6	Social Services
30	10-Apr	1			1	50	Architect
31	07-Apr		1	1		16	High School Student
32	13-Apr	1			1	72	Civic Utilities Management
	Totals	16	16	16	16	747	
	% of total	50%	50%	50%	50%	23	Average number of years resident

Potential participants invitation email sent in January and February

Subject: Conversations with Stratford residents for research on climate change action

Dear _____,

In February and March, I am asking residents of Stratford to participate in conversations to share their views on the climate crisis and sustainability in our community. These conversations are a major part of the research for my masters' thesis in environmental studies at York University. I am hoping that you would be willing to meet with me as part of this research. The meetings take about 30 minutes.

May I schedule a conversation with you at a location of your choosing in the afternoon or evening sometime between February 23rd and March 22nd, 2024?

The working title of the research paper is *The Sustainable City, Myth or Possibility*? It is looking into the role of cities in climate mitigation, with Stratford being a sample community. Part of the research is inquiring into the barriers and enablers to sustainability as reflected in the views of residents.

The paper will be delivered in the fall of 2024 and will be made available to research participants and other interested parties. The conversations are being conducted on a confidential and anonymous basis and are subject to the protocols and guidance provided by York for such research. I will record and transcribe the sessions and store them in a confidential and secure manner.

The background to this research began with serving for 4 years on the Energy and Environment Advisory Committee for the City of Stratford and becoming interested in community climate action, mitigation and ecological issues. I enrolled in the masters' program to further pursue these interests.

I look forward to speaking with you and thank you for your consideration.

Kind regards,
Anna Stratton

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Endnote:

We are living in the Anthropocene, the era during which human actions have had a massive impact on our planet. Many artists around the world have provided works of art which reflect upon these actions, in modern and past times.

I would like to end with a quote from one of the most eloquent of these artists, St. Catharine's born photographer and filmmaker, Edward Burtynsky. His 2018 multi-disciplinary work, made in collaboration with filmmakers Jennifer Baichwal and Nicholas de Pencier, *The Anthropocene Project*, powerfully investigates human influence on the state, dynamic, and future of the earth. The images are haunting and stirringly beautiful and make an urgent plea for us to get to an ecologically-centered world:

> *We come from nature. There is an importance to having a certain reverence for what nature is because we are connected to it...If we destroy nature, we destroy ourselves.*
> (edwardburtynsky.com)