

# PARTNERING *for* SUSTAINABILITY

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## 2002 Conference Proceedings

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## Overview

The **Partnering for Sustainability Conference** was held from April 8th-9th, 2002 at the Sheraton Centre Hotel in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. It was co-presented by the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy (CIELAP) and the Strategy Institute.

## Purpose of Conference

The 2002 **Partnering for Sustainability Conference** is based on a report published by CIELAP in November 2001 entitled "[Sustainable Development in Canada: A New Federal Plan](#)". This document outlined a four-step sustainable development strategy for Canada, which includes, identifying sustainable development objectives, setting the goals and targets to meet the objectives, measuring/evaluating and testing for sustainability.

Through discussions between CIELAP, the [Strategy Institute](#), the [York Centre for Applied Sustainability](#) and the [Sustainable Enterprise Academy](#) (York University), the conference was born. The goals and objectives of the conference were:

- To learn more about successful partnerships of various kinds, focusing on the key ingredients for success



# PARTNERING *for* SUSTAINABILITY

## Conference Proceedings - Day One

### Welcome Message and Opening Remarks

- Anne Mitchell (CIELAP)
- Anthony Watanabe (Strategy Institute)
- David Bell (York Centre for Applied Sustainability)

### Day 1 Speakers

- *Keynote Speaker.* Karen Redman (Parliamentary Secretary to Hon. David Anderson)

### *Panel on Partnership*

- Lucien Bradet (Industry Canada)
- Jennifer Hooper (Dupont Canada)
- Paul Griss (New Directions Group)
- Elizabeth May (Sierra Club of Canada)

### *Other Sustainability Views*

- Michael Keating (Sustainability Reporting Program)



# PARTNERING *for* SUSTAINABILITY

## Conference Proceedings - Day Two

### Day 2 Speakers

#### *Keynote Speaker:*

- Elizabeth Dowdeswell (UNEP)
- Heather Creech (IISD)

#### *Measuring Up — Tracking Our Progress Towards Sustainability*

- David J. McGuinty (NRTEE)
- George Greene (Stratos Inc.)
- Dr. Ronald Colman (GPI Atlantic)

#### Luncheon Speaker

- Claude Andre Lachance (Dow Chemical)

#### *CASA - Lessons to Learn from a Western Success Story*

- Donna Tingley (CASA)

**Partnering for Sustainability: the Canadian Experience**  
**Paper for Submission to Industry Canada**

**Prepared by: Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and  
Policy (CIELAP)**

**May 14th, 2002**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Canada has defined sustainable development as:

“development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”<sup>1</sup>

Achieving sustainable development requires that social equity and environmental quality be integrated with economic development in all aspects of decision-making, at all scales, and across the three sectors of business, government, and civil society<sup>2</sup>. Realising these goals requires the use of new and innovative tools for achieving sustainability that enable decision-making that is participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive. Partnerships are being increasingly recognised as a one of these tools that can help achieve sustainable development.

Canada has developed a considerable number of partnerships that work towards the goals of sustainable development. A conference entitled *Partnering for Sustainability* was held in Toronto in April 2002<sup>3</sup>. It presented and discussed a number of these partnerships. By showcasing a wide array of successful collaborative projects involving government, industry and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the conference aimed to provide practical and tangible examples of partnerships, in order to facilitate dialogue and generate take-away solutions to lead the way to identifying and brokering partnerships for sustainable development.

Drawing on the conference case-studies, this paper outlines the conclusions that can be drawn from the Canadian experience about the value of partnership, the characteristics of successful partnerships, and the major challenges and risks facing partnerships for sustainability. On the basis of these conclusions, a checklist of important points to help guide the success of future partnering initiatives is presented.

While Canadian successes demonstrate that partnering for sustainability has potential, partnerships are not a panacea, and may not even be the appropriate mechanism to address a particular problem. However, they can be useful in resolving sustainability issues. Additionally, Canadian experience demonstrates that partnerships must be designed to supplement, not replace, regulation.

## **II. PARTNERING FOR SUSTAINABILITY**

### **A. What is Partnering for Sustainability?**

Partnerships for sustainability bring together two or more parties, often across sectors, to share resources in order to achieve a common goal that has social, environmental,

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<sup>1</sup> 1995 Amendments to the Auditor General Act

<sup>2</sup> CIELAP (2001), Sustainable Development in Canada: A New Federal Plan

<sup>3</sup> The Partnering for Sustainability conference, held April 8-9<sup>th</sup> 2002, was organized jointly by the Strategy Institute and the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy (CIELAP).

and economic benefits and which would have been more difficult to achieve had the partnership not been undertaken.

## **B. Types of Partnerships**

'Partnership' is an umbrella term for many initiatives with varying form and function. Indeed, many types of partnership are described in the case-studies. To better understand the range of partnerships that exist, it is useful to examine them in terms of key factors that shape them. A useful framework for categorising partnerships examines the degree of difference in partnership vision and the nature of the task to be undertaken<sup>4</sup>. The first affects the amount of effort required to build and maintain a relationship, and the second influences the kind of organisation required by the partnership.

Table 1: Dimensions of Partnering<sup>5</sup>

	<b>Low Partner Diversity</b>	<b>High Partner Diversity</b>
<b>Low Task Specificity</b>	<p>Vision: Agreement on general problems relevant to similar partners</p> <p>Organisations: Enabling of loose coordination among similar organisations</p> <p>Example: Ideological networks</p>	<p>Vision: Agreement on general problems to diverse partners</p> <p>Organisations: Enabling of loose coordination among diverse organisations</p> <p>Example: social movements, geographically based networks</p>
<b>High Task Specificity</b>	<p>Vision: Agreement on specific problems and actions needed by similar partners</p> <p>Organisation: Enabling task coordination and resource allocation among similar organisations</p> <p>Example: Alliances, joint ventures e.g. business partnerships</p>	<p>Vision: Agreement on specific problems and actions needed by diverse partners</p> <p>Organisation: Enabling task coordination and resource allocation among diverse organisations</p> <p>Example: Coalitions, multi-stakeholder partnerships</p>

## **C. Canadian Partnerships for Sustainability: Case Studies**

Six partnerships presented at the *Partnering for Sustainability* conference are used in this discussion to illustrate the value of partnership, elements of successful partnerships and the challenges and risks in partnering. An overview of these case-studies is provided here, outlining the partners involved, the goals of the partnership, the source of funding, the scope of the partnership, the structure of management, communication and accountability, the system for evaluating success, and the achievements of the

<sup>4</sup> Brown, L.D. (1991), Bridging Organizations and Sustainable Development, Human Relations. Vol. 44, No. 8: pp. 807-831

<sup>5</sup> Adapted from Brown, L.D., *ibid.*

partnerships<sup>6</sup>. More detailed information of the case studies is available in the proceedings from the *Partnering for Sustainability* conference<sup>7</sup>.

## 1. CIELAP and Fundacion Ambio

Partners: The Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy (CIELAP) is a Canadian based Environmental NGO (ENGO) with the mission “to provide leadership in the research and development of environmental law and policy that promotes the public interest and the principles of sustainability.”<sup>8</sup> Fundacion Ambio is a Costa Rican based ENGO committed to improving policy and its use for protection and justice around environmental issues.

Goals: To conduct research and make policy recommendations concerning environmental issues and to help individuals and community groups know what environmental laws and policies are in place and how to use these laws and processes to address environmental problems.

Scope: The partnership works to achieve its goals in the Americas in general, focusing its efforts in Central America, Canada, and Costa Rica.

Source of Funding: The majority comes from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in the form of international partnership grants.

Operation and Communication: The partnership is non-hierarchically structured and decisions are made by consensus. There is no explicit method set out for communication, but members have been satisfied so far that communications have proceeded openly. All projects undertaken so far by the partnership have been required to meet goals and expectations agreed to with CIDA in a binding contract. Therefore, the partnership has been accountable to CIDA. Additionally, both organizations are accountable to each other and are subject to their own internal accountability standards.

Evaluation: The partnership is subject to CIDA’s system of results based management. This system sets out large-scale objectives, and then executes projects to achieve those objectives. After projects are completed they are evaluated in terms of their own success, and in terms of their success in meeting the objectives.

### Achievements:

- Developed a draft regulation on municipal waste management for the Ministry of Health in Costa Rica
- Initiated a program to deal with plastic recycling in the Costa Rican banana industry
- Developed a model law for biotechnology regulation which is being considered by Codex Alimentarius and the Costa Rican government
- Conducted workshops and distributed information on free trade, organic agriculture, biodiversity, biotechnology, and more. Produced joint and independent publications concerning topics such as waste, recycling, biotechnology, and more.
- Won an international partnering award through CIDA

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<sup>6</sup> All information for the case studies comes from presentations made at the *Partnering for Sustainability* conference and relevant websites

<sup>7</sup> To be published online by CIELAP, June 2001. See CIELAP website: [www.cielap.org](http://www.cielap.org)

<sup>8</sup> CIELAP. About CIELAP. <http://www.cielap.org/infocent/about/mission.html>



## **2. City of Hamilton's Action 2020 as part of Vision 2020**

Partners: Hamilton is located in the southwestern area of the Province of Ontario, Canada, 80 km SW of Toronto. A City of almost 500,000 people, it has been Canada's manufacturing centre and it has faced considerable economic, social and environmental pressures.

Goals: In 1989 senior management at the Regional Municipality determined that sustainable development would provide a sound framework for developing policies and making budget decisions in Hamilton. As a result, Vision 2020 was developed. Vision 2020 articulates a vision of how the city of Hamilton would be in the year 2020 if all actions and decisions were based upon the principles of sustainable development. Action 2020 takes the image created by Vision 2020 and attempts to make it into a reality by obtaining input on the indicators currently used to evaluate the progress of Vision 2020. It does this by empowering citizens, specifically by supporting community groups, to share the responsibilities and tasks involved in implementing Vision 2020.

Funding: Action 2020 is funded and supported by the City of Hamilton

Operation and Communication: Operated by community organisations, Action 2020 has established Indicator Task Forces to evaluate indicator results in theme areas, develop an action plan to improve the trend in one theme area, and to commit to implementing the action plan over the next 12-24 months. The results are published in a report providing feedback to Council and Staff for municipal management decisions.

Achievements: Action 2020's process to obtain community input and action on the Indicator results is considered a success. Positive outcomes are that the City now has access to the community input for policy decision-making, and citizens are taking action and ownership for implementation, thus aiding the city's transit to sustainability..

## **3. Clean Air Strategic Alliance (CASA)**

Partners: Governmental Agencies and Bodies: Alberta Environment, Alberta Health and Wellness, Alberta Energy, Environment Canada, and Local Government

Business Associations or Bodies: Agricultural Producers, Alternate Energy, Petroleum Products, Chemical Manufacturers, Forestry, Consumers Transportation, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, Mining, Small Explorers and Producers Association of Canada (SEPAC), and Utilities

Non-Governmental Organizations: Health organizations such as Alberta Lung Association, Pollution organizations such as Pembina, and Toxics Watch Society, Wilderness organizations such as Sierra Club, and Prairie Acid Rain Coalition

Goals: To achieve a world in which the air is odourless, tasteless, looks clear and has no measurable short- or long-term adverse effects on people, animals or the environment. This is achieved through a stakeholder partnership that has been given shared responsibility by its members, including the Alberta Government, for strategic air quality planning, organizing, and coordinating resources, and evaluation of results in Alberta through a collaborative process.

Scope: CASA focuses its work in Alberta, but is not limited to this, and does contribute to achieving its vision beyond the province.

Source of Funding: Members provide funding in the form of cash and in kind contributions. 41% of funding comes from government, 31% from NGOs and 28% from industry.

Operation and Communication: CASA has a board of directors, committees, and project teams. All bodies have full representation from each sector (government, industry, and non-government organizations) and use a consensus-based process to make decisions and recommendations. CASA members are accountable to their project teams for contributing to the completion of projects, and project teams are accountable to the membership as a whole for achieving goals.

Decisions are made in four stages. The first screens and scopes, looking at a potential area for improvement, screening it, and clarifying the issues. The second sets priorities and delegates' tasks. The third designs, reviews and approves a plan of action. The fourth implements the plan, and evaluates and reviews the process.

Evaluation: Success is systematically evaluated at the completion of each step of a plan of action, looking at whether or not the plan was successfully implemented, and if it helped to achieve the overall goals of the organization.

Achievements: CASA has a number of projects that it is currently involved in: Acidifying Emissions Management Implementation, Animal Health, Climate Change, Flaring/Venting, Particulate matter and Ozone, Pollution Prevention/Continuous Improvement, Vehicle Emissions, Breathe Easy, Symposium on Air Quality and Health, and the CASA Data Warehouse. Due to the vast number of undertakings of CASA, only a few achievements will be mentioned. The partnership has achieved a 25% provincial reduction in gas flaring, produced many reports and publications, undertaken monitoring of air quality in Alberta, and implemented the ClimateWise program which has informed many citizens about climate change and how to reduce their impact.

#### **4. Clean Air Renewable Energy (CARE) Coalition**

Partners: The Coalition was established by Suncor Energy Inc, an integrated energy company, and The Pembina Institute, an Alberta-based Canadian environmental institute. Partners joined after the founders identified their desired policy changes and then tested proposed changes with prospective partners. Current partners include energy and utilities companies, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and ENGOs such as Pollution Probe, Friends of the Earth and Toronto Environmental Alliance.

Goals: To accelerate the development of Canada's renewable energy systems by using a coalition of diverse groups to develop proposals and lobby government to change policy.

Scope: The Coalition comprises organisations from across Canada and it targets its communications and lobbying campaign at the federal government.

Operation and Communication: As the membership formed, the partnership established a set of policy proposals to support the renewable energy industry. The CARE Coalition's work has then focused on developing a communications and lobbying campaign to engage politicians. Action has been taken on a number of fronts, including active dialogue at all levels of federal government and targeted presentations to key government bodies. In order for the communications strategy to be consistent and coordinated, regular communications briefings have been held among members.

Evaluation: CARE Coalition is measuring its success in terms of the policy changes implemented by government.

Achievements: The 2001 Federal Budget including fiscal mechanisms to encourage renewable energy supply. The CARE Coalition had asked for more but it sees this step as encouraging. It would now like to see governments focus on stimulating demand for renewable energy.

## **5. International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) Knowledge Networks**

Partners: The IISD collaborate with other organisations through strategic alliances and networks in attempts to engage decision-makers. It has partnered with expert institutions all over the world, including international agencies and national and international NGOs, to form knowledge networks on trade, climate change and sustainable development.

Goals: Formal knowledge networks are groups of experts working together on common concerns with the goal of strengthening capacities and developing solutions. The common objectives for the knowledge networks are to fill knowledge gaps that inhibit policy development, learn from members across sectors and regions about best practices, and generate recommendations for decision-makers that will fast track innovation for sustainability. The Sustainable Development network has the specific goal of changing policy and practice that will enable societies to live sustainably.

Scope: The IISD is based in Winnipeg in Canada but the partners are from all five continents.

Operation and Communication: The knowledge networks are operated by IISD on the premise that they play a crucial role in bridging the gap between research and action taken by decision-makers. In other words, the networks do not just enhance research to then transfer information to decision-makers. Rather, it is realised that networks must develop the skills to communicate results outside of the network and to engage decision-makers with researchers more directly. Communication is therefore based on building relationships rather than simply information transfer, ensuring that decision-makers are aware of critical sustainable development issues, are knowledgeable of possible solutions and are motivated to implement change.

## **6. Sustainable Toronto Project**

Partners: Sustainable Toronto is a consortium between two academic units: the Environmental Studies Program of Innis College, University of Toronto; and the York Centre for Applied Sustainability, York University. The project is also linked with City of Toronto; the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy (CIELAP); and Foodshare, as well as several other non-profit groups.

Goals: The primary goal is to foster the application of sustainability practices by joint efforts on the part of community and university partners.

Scope: Sustainable Toronto's research and action focuses on Toronto, Ontario, but there are aspects and implications that have a broader Canadian focus. There are currently no private sector partners but the next stage of the project intends to establish projects involving the business community.

**Funding:** Sustainable Toronto is a Community University Research Alliance (CURA) sponsored by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)

**Operation and Communication:** A series of research and action projects are collaboratively designed and carried out by Community Groups and Academic Advisors. Each project hires a Graduate Student and at least one undergraduate student to provide research assistance. The Academic Advisor at the host University assists the Graduate Student and the Community Group with their research project. Annual workshops are held to allow projects to exchange research findings and to foster links between projects and outreach to the greater community is accomplished through a wide range of seminars, presentations, publications, and a website.

**Achievements:** Sustainable Toronto currently comprises ten projects each project working towards its own set of goals and objectives and many are still in their early stages. It has been an achievement in itself to establish, and coordinate, so many projects with diverse partners and objectives around a central vision of sustainability. Two examples of Sustainable Toronto's projects demonstrate this diversity. Firstly, the NGO Foodshare is directing a project gathering seeds and information from gardeners coming from different ethno-cultural groups in Toronto. The information collected will be used to advocate for more agricultural space in the city, for better access to organic gardening inputs and to encourage food growing. Secondly, A partnership between Citizens' Environment Watch (CEW) and the York Centre for Applied Sustainability (YCAS) combines CEW's work in community-based environmental monitoring with the YCAS Map Reflections project in designing a web-based monitoring and assessment system. The collaborative project is producing an accessible, educative tool for students and citizens to use in housing, analyzing and sharing their environmental monitoring data.

### **III. LEARNING FROM THE CANADIAN PARTNERSHIP EXPERIENCE**

The following is a discussion of what can be learned from Canadian experiences of partnerships. It will look at the value of partnerships, the key elements of successful partnerships and the challenges and risks in forming partnerships. All conclusions are drawn from the case studies.

#### **A. The Value of Partnership**

Partnerships enable parties with diverse interests, concerns and expertise to collaborate. Such collaboration aids in achieving sustainable development because it requires that decisions be made considering environmental, social and economic concerns in a more holistic manner. The Canadian case-studies demonstrate the value of partnerships are in fostering such collaboration. Partnerships can foster:

##### **1. Building of understanding, trust and respect between traditional adversaries:**

These elements are the building blocks, which will allow parties to work with, rather than against, each other to broaden perspectives and recognise different needs and abilities. A partnership, by focusing on one specific concern to the exclusion of all others, creates a forum within which these qualities can be, and are being, fostered.

Partnerships therefore offer the potential to reduce conflict and minimise what is often unnecessary and uninformed confrontation.

**2. Concentration of relevant expertise:** With all key stakeholders and their relevant expertise at hand, there is considerable potential to better define problems, identify options, and address priorities. Moreover, concentrating cross-sectoral skills and resources in a partnership enables aspects of decision-making to be addressed in a more integrated, multidisciplinary and comprehensive way. This is the approach required to even start achieving the goals of sustainable development. Concentrating expertise is not only valuable for achieving common goals, but also mutually benefits partners by creating value for them and building their capacities. The dynamics of this process varies considerably across diverse partnerships. For example, the Sustainable Toronto project fosters mutual learning and horizontal collaboration between community organisations and the academic community, while the CARE Coalition enables industry to learn from non-governmental organisations, and vice-versa.

**3. Facilitation of shared decision-making:** Translating collaborative ideas into effective action requires that parties come to some level of agreement on decisions. In other words, decision-making really needs to be based on consensus, a difficult task given the diverse interests, concerns and priorities of different parties and the traditionally adversarial stances that they have taken towards one another. Experience in Canada is demonstrating how partnerships have been fertile ground for developing consensus-based decision-making. For example, CASA has placed a key emphasis on the value of consensus based decision-making for sustainable development, framing the approach as ‘a process in which all those who have a stake in the outcome aim to reach agreement on actions and outcomes that resolve or advance issues related to environmental, social and economic sustainability.

**4. Capture of a wide range of interests:** While successful partnerships are based on different partner working towards a common goal, each partner’s stance reflects its own interests meaning that issues or problems are articulated from a range of perspectives rather than just one. The result is that a broad base of political, institutional and individual support can be achieved, or at least striven for. The CARE Coalition has recognised that capturing a wide range of political interests is crucial if it is to gain widespread support for its renewable energy policy proposals. As a result, the Coalition has targeted politicians using ‘triple bottom line advocacy that appeals to economic, environmental and social interests’.

## **B. Key Elements of Successful Partnerships**

While partnerships are diverse in their form and function, there are key attributes common to partnerships that enjoy success. The Canadian case-studies presented here demonstrate these characteristics:

1. They are based on a clearly established vision mission and goal: Partners often enter into the partnership in order to gain different benefits for themselves. These different goals can get in the way of partners functioning effectively together and can lead to conflict. Partnering, therefore, requires that parties recognise, acknowledge and respect their differences, but then focus on common interests. A solid basis of ‘joint commitment’ is critical because it enables

parties with different priorities to work together on achieving a common goal. The way to create and maintain this focus is to establish a clear vision mission and goals, shared by the partners, and forming the foundation of the partnership.

The City of Hamilton's Vision 2020 has demonstrated that joint commitment between the public, the government and other stakeholders fosters resiliency which enables adaptability, a critical component of success. Integral to establishing a strong vision, mission and goals from the outset is strong leadership. The case-studies demonstrate there have been particular individuals, or group of individuals, who championed projects and goals with a sense of vision and with necessary enthusiasm and energy.

2. There is a clear benefit for each partner: Individual partners must have a motivation for committing time and resources to a partnership. As partnerships are voluntarily entered into, this motivation cannot be in the form of a punishment for not joining, but must be in the form of a clear benefit as a result of joining. This benefit can come in many forms, and will vary based upon the nature of the partnership and upon each individual partner. Benefits are often articulated in terms of potential direct financial gains. This may be via savings or new financial opportunity. The chance to improve compliance with regulation and to improve regulatory certainty is also an increasingly attractive potential benefit of partnerships for industry.

The potential to create joint value that is not just financial is being articulated by numerous partnerships, especially those that operate primarily outside the private sector. For example, the IISD Knowledge Networks enable 'experts' to acquire and strengthen skills for research, collaboration and engagement with decision-makers.

3. Each partner has something to contribute It is crucial that partners, no matter what their resource base, are equal in terms of being able to contribute and participate to the same degree in the partnership. It is not necessarily realistic to assume that partners are, or ever will be, equal in terms of power but it is also not necessary that they are equal to ensure the partnership is a success. What is important is to create circumstances that enable participants to recognise the resources each partner has available, to speak and listen to each other freely, and to challenge decisions that contradict their interests<sup>9</sup>. Roles and responsibilities most applicable and manageable for each of the partners can then be identified to enable the partnership to function in an equitable manner.
4. Adequate time and resources are committed to achieving the goals of the partnership: There are two aspects to this element of partnerships. The first is that it is necessary that there be some commitment of time and resources in order to establish partnerships and run them. These resources will vary greatly depending upon the goals of the partnership and may include financial resources, intellectual resources, political resources, etc. The second aspect to this element of partnerships is that all partners must commit to contributing some level of time and/or resources to the partnership. The level that is to be

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<sup>9</sup> Waddell, S. & Brown, L.D. (1997), Fostering Intersectoral Partnership: A Guide to Promoting Cooperation Among Government, Business, and Civil Society Actors, Institute for Development Research Reports, Vol. 13., No. 3. Institute for Development Research.

contributed by each partner must be agreed upon in order to insure that the goals of the partnership are achieved and that all partners are satisfied with each other's performance.

The partnership between Fundacion Ambio and CIELAP serves as an illustration. The organizations have received secure funding, and have maintained a productive partnership while that funding has been available. They have agreed, through their agreements with each other and with CIDA, which organization would carry out the requirements of the partnership, and have been satisfied with each other's effort. However, the partnership's primary funder, CIDA, has decided to stop the funding of joint projects for the partnership and is encouraging CIELAP to use its expertise to help establish similarly successful projects with other developing countries. This means that precluding new funding sources, the organizations will be forced to abandon their productive relationship. This demonstrates that without maintaining a secure resource base, partnerships cannot have continuing success.

5. Focus is maintained on the goal of the partnership: Due to the diverse agendas of different partners involved in many partnerships, it is important to maintain a "laser beam" focus on the goal of the partnership. It is possible for partners to cause the partnership to become unproductive by focusing on the differences between the partners or on issues not involved in the partnerships. Thus, it is necessary for partnerships to maintain focus.

For example, the CARE partnership is made up of NGOs, some of which often work in opposition to the businesses that are a part of the partnership. Clearly, the overall interests and motivations of the partners are very different. As mentioned above, the strength of the partnership, and the reason that it is able to accomplish so much is that the partners come from such different interest bases, and thus give the partnership political legitimacy and power. This, however, is also one of the partnership's greatest challenges. The partners are adversaries on many issues, and this could come in the way of their working effectively together. However, through maintaining a focus upon their goal of changing policy in the arena of renewable energy, and ignoring other issues, they have enabled the partnership to function and to achieve success. If this focus were not maintained, the partnership would be unable to achieve so much, if any, success.

6. The partnership works within a positive management structure: It has been indicated from the outset that partnerships vary considerably in their organizational form. However, there are three aspects which successful partnerships seem to build into their management structure. Canada's case-studies are no exception. Firstly, operational and decision-making guidelines exist. For example, CASA has developed a decision-making procedure which is consensus-based and has a systematic structure with five key steps: identify concerns and opportunities; set priorities; secure resources; develop action plans; evaluate results.

Secondly, participatory decision-making is employed. Without having some say in decision-making, partners can feel disenfranchised, frustrated, or that their concerns are not being addressed. As a result of such feelings partners may choose to leave the partnership or to reduce their contribution. Once again, CASA illustrates a partnership that takes into account the need for participatory decision-making, by making all decisions by consensus. This means that all

partners have a say in the creation of the decision, and that the final decision takes in to account the concerns of all involved.

Thirdly, there is a system of management that promotes the function of the partnership to continuously improve. Such a system plans what action to undertake, undertakes the action, checks whether or not the action was successful, and changes future plans and behaviours based upon the evaluation of the action.

The City of Hamilton's indicator project to chart the progress in working toward Vision 2020 is an example of such a system. The original project was established in 1994 but there are now citizen-centred Indicator Task Forces which evaluate indicator results in specific theme areas, and design and implement an Action Plan to improve the trend within these theme areas. A published report then provides feedback to Council and Staff for municipal management decisions. This project attempts to strengthen the 'joint commitment' to Vision 2020 by empowering the public to monitor and evaluate the partnership process in place.

7. There is transparency, accountability and credibility in the function of the partnership: Effective internal and external communications strategies are required to insure that the activities of a partnership are transparent and accountable to both to the broader public and the partners themselves. The Pembina Institute, a partner in CASA and the CARE Coalition, emphasises the importance of openness within a partnership process itself: key decisions must be made at the table and there must be no 'backroom' deals. Secrecy among partners will only serve to undermine trust and willingness to collaboration and the partnership will break down as a result.

Transparency and accountability to stakeholders outside the partnership are also critical to a partnership's success. Canada's Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development asserts that these characteristics need to be more carefully addressed, because not doing so will undermine the legitimacy and credibility of the partnership in the eyes of the general public<sup>10</sup>. It is not just the quantity of information provided about a partnership that is important, but also the quality. Communications must be consistent and co-ordinated with focused messages and targeted advocacy efforts. As a policy forum, the CARE Coalition especially has learnt that this form of effective communications strategy is critical to a partnership's success.

8. An appropriate system for evaluation has been established: In order to insure that partnerships are achieving what was intended it is important to have an appropriate system for evaluation. Such a system must have clear indicators of change by which to measure the success of the initiatives of the partnership. These indicators can be qualitative or quantitative, but must be measurable. When these indicators are met, they should not be looked at independently as success for the partnership, but should also be evaluated in terms of how they achieve the overall goals of the partnership.

For example, the city of Hamilton's Vision 2020 project has a mandate to make the city sustainable. It set out a number of indicators for what would constitute

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<sup>10</sup>The Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development. See Conference proceedings, *op cit*.



sustainability in the city, and then set shorter-term objectives for achieving that sustainability. It then undertook projects, which had their own indicators of success, in order to achieve the short-term objectives and, eventually, the long-term goals. The projects were evaluated by measurable indicators in terms of their own success. They were also evaluated in terms of how they were achieving the short-term objectives and overall sustainability for the city. It was found by conducting the evaluations that some of the projects, while successful in achieving their own goals, did not help the partnership to achieve its long term goals of sustainability. Had the system for evaluation not had measurable goals, the partnership would not have had a clear idea of the success of its projects individually, nor of its program overall. Similarly, had individual projects not been evaluated in terms of their success in achieving the overall goals of the partnership, non-productive projects might have continued, consuming resources without achieving sustainable development.

### **C. Key Challenges and Risks to Partnerships**

1. Establishing and Maintaining the Key Elements to Partnerships: There is a complex interplay between the eight elements discussed above. The absence or weakness of one element can prohibit the development or continuing presence of another element. Thus, the absence or weakness of any of the eight elements discussed above can cause partnerships to be ineffective and to fail. However, establishing and maintaining all of these elements is in no way an easy task. It requires awareness of what elements are essential to making the particular partnership work, as well as the presence of conditions which will foster the development of those essential elements. This creates a significant challenge to the development of partnerships.

To illustrate, if the members of the CARE partnership were unable to establish a clear vision of the mutual benefit that could result from their partnership, it would have been impossible to even begin to create the partnership. Given that they were able to do so, imagine that they failed to create a management system in which decisions were made involving participation by diverse members of the partnership. This would have potentially led to a decrease in trust, causing focus to be lost, and conflict to ensue, potentially resulting in a reduction of commitment of time or resources to the partnership, rendering the partnership much less effective.

2. Replication: Another challenge for partnerships is replicating their success in other settings, concerning different issues and with different organizations. While creating templates from successful partnerships, like those presented here, may possibly lead to some successes, it is very risky. Partnerships are very context specific. They depend upon many factors for success, including the partners themselves, and the individuals that lead or participate in partnerships. The structure and outcomes of all partnerships will be different based upon how different variables are manifest. Therefore, replicating the structure of one partnership might not produce successful results with different partners or in a different setting.

3. Regulatory Framework: Another challenge to developing partnerships is the regulatory framework within which they develop. This regulatory framework

includes local, regional, and national regulations as well as international agreements and laws. These regulatory frameworks can facilitate partnerships, as was illustrated by the CASA partnership, but they can also stand as impediments to partnerships. For example, trade agreements may prohibit the government from subsidizing a particular industry, that subsidy, however could provide a motivator and driver for a partnership. Canadian experience demonstrates that partnerships must be designed to supplement, not replace, regulation. There have been attempts to replace environmental regulation with partnerships between government and business. However, real progress towards sustainability rarely occurs in the absence of regulation. Rather, regulation acts as a spur to action.

4. Dependency: A risk involved in partnering is the development of dependency. Partnerships bring parties together to share resources, and eliminate need for repetition. As a result it is possible for members to become dependent upon the partnership or upon other partners, because they have reduced or eliminated their own resources, or ceased to develop necessary capacities within themselves.

#### **IV. LESSONS INTO ACTION: STAGES OF PARTNERING FOR SUSTAINABILITY**

Partnering is a process that evolves and progresses through a number of stages from creation, to operation, evaluation and finally termination, continuation and possible replication<sup>11</sup>. To ensure that the key elements for success and the potential challenges which a partnership can face are fully considered, it is important to identify the stage of the partnership process at which particular elements are critically important. To help facilitate this, Table 2 sets out the stages based on the Canadian experiences revealed at the *Partnering for Sustainability* Conference.

While this framework does cover many of the critical issues that must be considered, it is not intended to provide a comprehensive checklist for establishing a successful partnership. The Canadian case-studies have illustrated that there are common elements of success. However, they have also demonstrated that partnerships are diverse and how success (and its evaluation) is defined and ensured, must be considered in the context of a particular partnership.

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<sup>11</sup> These four stages of the partnership process are used by PWBLF/UNEP (1994)

Table 2: Stages of Partnership:

Stage	Critical Elements and Challenges to Consider
<p>A. Creation: <i>Adopt a 'laser-beam approach'</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify issue/problem/opportunity</li> <li>• Consider options to ascertain if the partnership approach is appropriate</li> <li>• Choose the right partners</li> <li>• Establish shared vision, mission, goals (common and individual)</li> <li>• Establish strategies for achieving common and mutual benefits. Recognising differences while focusing on common interests must be central to these strategies.</li> </ul>
<p>B. Operation: <i>Establish the process within a framework of committed time and resources, and within a regulatory context.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish organisational structure and address power relationships within it</li> <li>• Formulate decision-making guidelines</li> <li>• Establish conflict resolution techniques</li> <li>• Address time and resource commitments explicitly</li> </ul>
<p>C. Evaluation: <i>Focus on partnership process and product</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a system to evaluate progress towards achieving the partnership's goals, both common and individual</li> <li>• Evaluate the form and functioning of the partnership itself</li> </ul>
<p>D. Continuation, Termination and Replication <i>Build on lessons learnt</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate the desire and/or need for continuing or terminating based on progress towards goals, evaluation of the partnership's success in terms of process and product, and the potential for the partnership to evolve.</li> <li>• Replication must not be viewed as duplication: identify differences between different contexts and their implications for a partnership</li> </ul>

## V. CONCLUSION

Canada's partnership experience, as presented at the *Partnering for Sustainability* conference, provides evidence that partnering can be a vital tool for achieving sustainable development. The value of partnering is substantial, not only because it contributes towards sustainable development goals, but also because it can generate considerable mutual benefit for partners involved. The Canadian case-studies demonstrate that there are characteristics which are common to many successful partnerships.

However, it is also important to learn from Canada's partnership experience that key challenges can stand in the way of partnerships and these must be identified and addressed to ensure the greatest chance of success. Of all these challenges, perhaps the most difficult one to acknowledge is that partnering may not always be the appropriate strategy to achieve a particular goal.

While Canadian successes demonstrate that partnering for sustainability has potential, partnership is not a panacea. But there is only one way to establish what works and what does not: share experiences and learn from them. While success is contingent on a myriad of context specific factors, lessons can, and must, be learnt from previous partnership experiences. If partnering for sustainability is going to develop, initiatives such as Canada's Partnering for Sustainability Conference need to be facilitated to enable stakeholders from all sectors to come together and learn first-hand how successful partnerships can be identified and brokered.

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Further information on case-studies can be located via the following websites:

CIELAP & Fundacion Ambio: [www.cielap.org](http://www.cielap.org)

City of Hamilton's Action 2020 as part of Vision 2020: [www.hamilton2020.com](http://www.hamilton2020.com)

Clean Air Strategic Alliance (CASA): [www.casahome.org](http://www.casahome.org)

Clean Air Renewable Energy (CARE) Coalition: [www.pembina.org](http://www.pembina.org)

International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) Knowledge Networks: [www.iisd.ca](http://www.iisd.ca)

Sustainable Toronto Project: [www.sustainabletoronto.ca](http://www.sustainabletoronto.ca)

