THE WORLD URBAN FORUM 2006

Vancouver Working Group Discussion Paper

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Turning Ideas into Action

In preparation for the 2006 United Nations World Urban Forum (WUF), the Vancouver Working Group (VWG) was created as a partnership of public and private agencies and civil society. It was mandated to initiate a series of research inquiries resulting in the *Vancouver Working Group Discussion Papers for the World Urban Forum.* These papers were prepared by members of the VWG with relevant experience and well-developed resources. It is hoped that these papers will contribute to the development of a thematic framework for WUF 2006 by articulating the concept and content of urban sustainability.

WUF will focus on urbanization as an all-encompassing global phenomenon and attempt to recommend effective actions to achieve a sustainable process of global urban transformation by balancing social, economic, environmental and political goals: *Turning Ideas into Action.*

The Vancouver Working Group Discussion Papers for the World Urban Forum are open-ended segments of a conceptual whole. Each of them will strive towards sustainability thereby transforming urban life into a productive, inclusive and environmentally balanced range of activities. These segments taken together will characterize sustainable human settlements. Sustainable urbanization can only be achieved through a mosaic of sustainable components that will add up to more than the sum of their parts.

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These papers continue the international dialogue on human settlements that began with the first UN Human Settlements Conference in Vancouver in 1976. They provide an initial analysis of diverse aspects of the current urban situation and create a basis for an informed discussion and development of ideas and relevant issues leading up to WUF 2006.

The purpose of the Forum is to engage people worldwide in discussions about urban issues and to stimulate significant change across generations in the field of sustainable urban development. The United Nations has challenged Canada to develop a more interactive and participatory Forum. Consultation, dialogue and conclusions formed prior to and during the World Urban Forum will also contribute to Canada's urban agenda and will help to create a long-term legacy of knowledge and action around sustainability issues in Canada and the World.

The papers contributed to Canadian efforts in Barcelona at the 2004 WUF. Ministers and Canadian officials held informal consultations with domestic and international stakeholders while in Spain. The WUF 2006 Secretariat will take into consideration all input received from interested stakeholders to ensure that Canada meets the challenge from UN Habitat in making the WUF 2006 more interactive and participatory.

These papers have been developed with the financial support of Western Economic Diversification Canada. The views expressed herein are solely those of the authors of this paper and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Government of Canada.

Jane McRae, Ken Cameron, Johnny Carline, Hugh Kellas and the Division Managers of the GVRD who participated in two workshops to identify the practical applications of the cities^{PLUS} 100 year plan have shaped the insights presented in this paper; Tina Penney; Bob Paddon of TransLink; Bob Purdy and David Marshall of the Fraser Basin Council; Mike Harcourt, Ann Dale, Gene Nyberg, Luke Peloquin, Chad Day and Ken Calbick. The financial contribution of SaskEnergy and their interest in disseminating the lesson from cities^{PLUS} is very much appreciated.

FOREWORD

This paper is part of *Turning Ideas into Action,* a themed series created in preparation for the 2006 World Urban Forum. Together, this series forms a mosaic that sheds light on a common focus: the city. On a global scale, cities have become the dominant form of human settlement, socially, economically, environmentally and politically. The papers begin to examine how cities can continue to be dynamic and inclusive places in which to live and thrive. By illustrating explorations of the city with powerful stories of promising practices, the papers emphasize the assets from which cities draw their strength, and highlight dynamic participatory processes in action. Research for each paper draws on extensive experience in planning and managing cities. Selected lessons provide knowledge to achieve locally relevant solutions and supportive policies at the regional, national and global levels. They demonstrate the complexities of how cities evolve and transform, and challenge assumptions that are often taken for granted. Finally, the papers encourage the reader to view the world from different perspectives and discover successful and innovative solutions appropriate to their relevant conditions.

WUF 2006 will build on Canada's historic leadership in bringing the UN Conference on Human Settlements to Vancouver in 1976. It will also benefit from Canadian experience in improving human settlements at home and abroad. The 1976 UN meeting pioneered a participatory process of member nations and NGO's, and created a worldwide focus for human settlements issues through the establishment of the UN Centre for Human Settlements in Nairobi, now known as UN-HABITAT. WUF 2006 is part of an historic trajectory of UN Conferences and represents the 30th anniversary of HABITAT '76. These papers are intended to initiate an informed dialogue on the scope and scale of the evolving urban agenda through *Turning Ideas into Action* locally, regionally, nationally and across the world.

This paper is one of a series of discussion papers prepared in anticipation of the World Urban Forum 2006.

The papers in this series include:

The Capable City

The International Centre for Sustainable Cities

This paper examines non-traditional forms of governance with an emphasis on consensus that has emerged in a Canadian context and responds to three questions. Are there models of cooperation across jurisdictions that might provide lessons for city regions that do not require mergers? Are there models for management of global common goods – such as watersheds, that do not involve legislative powers? Are there models based on consensus and voluntary agreements across sectors that show promise for influencing decision making related to sustainability? Three Canadian cases are presented: the Greater Vancouver Regional District; the Fraser Basin Council; and the National Round Table on the Environment and Economy. The models are assessed using UN-HABITAT's criteria for good governance. The findings, along with pertinent literature and experience on governance and capacity building, yield observations and recommendations about their application to other cities.

The Ideal City

Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory, University of British Columbia

This paper explores the history and force of ideal city planning and the related literary and visual genres of Utopian -- and Dystopian -- speculation. The Ideal City represents a highly significant aspect of human thought and endeavour, usually conceived in response to actual problems as well as intended to effect substantive improvement in the daily social lives of individual citizens. Linked to a thematic knowledge resource intended to establish an interactive website, this paper reviews the main constituents of the Ideal City tradition, examines its impact on the design of urban settlement, including across Canada and in Vancouver, and indicates how such conceptual approaches to the building of a better civic environment and society can contribute to the creation of more sustainable, habitable and civilized cities in the 21st century.

The Learning City

Simon Fraser University

The learning city is a city that approaches sustainable development as an ongoing educational process. This paper focuses particularly on the role of universities and colleges in the learning city, examining the different dimensions of sustainability education and best practices from British Columbia, across Canada and internationally. Lessons from this are applied to envisioning a new Centre for the Learning City in Vancouver's new Great Northern Way Campus.

The Livable City

The International Centre for Sustainable Cities

This paper is a case study of the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) in Canada, the host region for the World Urban Forum 2006. Drawing on the literature on livable cities and the region's efforts to bring this concept into practice, the paper poses two central questions: What key factors affect the livability of a city and how does livability relate to sustainability? Livability is defined as "quality of life" as experienced by the residents within a city or region, and the paper concentrates on a case study of

planning for Greater Vancouver including the Livable Region Strategic Plan, the Sustainable Region Initiative, and the cities^{PLUS} 100-year vision for the GVRD. The paper provides lessons for other cities and regions, and concludes that for Greater Vancouver, livability, sustainability and resiliency are three intertwined elements that together will define the quality of life of current and future residents.

The Planning City

The Canadian Institute of Planners

This paper looks at sustainability as a dynamic, continuous process of sharing and exchanging knowledge and experiences, and of learning through action. It contributes to this learning process by reviewing key trends and challenges that confront those responsible for planning cities in Canada and overseas. Examples of urban planning innovations and experimentations are drawn from a sample of cities and taken from the perspective of the urban planner who is usually a central actor in efforts to articulate, plan for and implement urban sustainability. The paper concludes with key findings, and offers direction about processes, structures and methods that could enhance the effort to achieve urban sustainability.

The Resilient City

Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services, Government of British Columbia

This paper explores the resiliency of small Canadian communities dependent upon single resource industries by examining how they have coped with the economic and social pressures arising from the closure of their industries. It summarizes how they have managed their transition from communities existing to serve resource exploitation exclusively to communities based on a different, broader economy and suggests lessons from the Canadian experience that may be transferable to resource-based communities around the world.

The Secure City

Liu Institute for Global Issues, UBC

This paper focuses on three key issues: traditional pillars of urban security, threats and forces shaping cities in the 21st Century, and a research agenda to explore relationships between adaptive security, preventive security and human security. Action is called for to advance current concepts of capacity building, resilient design and adaptive planning. Integrated risk assessment that is responsive to community needs for prevention and precaution is recommended, and an enhanced role for individual responsibility and community participation to expand social capital is advocated. The Secure City sets a context for Canada's emerging national urban agenda and a policy framework for global strategies to improve human security in cities throughout the world.

The Youth Friendly City

The Environmental Youth Alliance

This paper explores what opportunities exist for the greater recognition of the rights and needs of children and youth in urban settings through a significantly enhanced role in urban governance and community building. By enabling children and youth to participate fully in their own development and environment, this paper demonstrates the potential among youth for building capacity, and for becoming insightful resources in developing strong and thriving local neighbourhoods and cities.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One of the significant challenges facing local authorities is their ability to work with others in their region to tackle issues related to sustainability. Water, air, transportation and pollution are among many issues that do not respect political boundaries. Competition between neighboring cities may lead to decisions that undermine their own environmental or social interests. Duplication of administrative services can prevent the most efficient use of resources. In response, provincial or state jurisdictions often force mergers of cities and the cities, towns and villages that are immediately adjacent to them. Whether these mergers have solved the problems or simply created new ones is a matter for continuing debate. In this paper we distinguish 'governance' from 'government' as involving a collaboration of the public, private, and civil society sectors. The paper is limited to the examination of non-traditional forms of governance with an emphasis on consensus that have emerged in a Canadian context and respond to three questions.

Are there models of cooperation across jurisdictions that might provide lessons for city regions that do not require mergers? Are there models for management of global common goods – such as watersheds, that do not involve legislative powers? Are there models based on consensus and voluntary agreements across sectors that show promise for influencing decision making related to sustainability?

In this paper, we begin examining these questions by focusing on three Canadian case examples: the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD); the Fraser Basin Council (FBC); and the National Round Table on the Environment and Economy (NRTEE). The models are assessed using UN HABITAT's criteria for good governance and also with respect to process attributes and lessons.

The findings, along with pertinent literature and experience on governance and capacity-building, yield observations and recommendations about their application to other cities. The three cases offer much that is instructive but attempts to adapt them to other circumstances and locations must be respectful of local traditions and contexts.

THE CAPABLE CITY

1. Introduction: The Context for the Capable City

Cities in all parts of the world face mounting challenges such as population shifts, water shortages, air pollution, inadequate or aging infrastructure, sprawl, the spread of informal settlements, and traffic congestion. They are also increasingly viewed as the best vehicles for achieving sustainability because they represent the public institutions closest to the people and the problems. As the United Nations' Centre for Human Settlements argues, cities are becoming the "test bed for the adequacy of political institutions, and the effectiveness of programs to combat social exclusion, protect and repair the environment, and promote human development."[1] Meeting these mounting challenges and negotiating the path to sustainability in the coming decades will require significant advances in urban governance.

One of the significant challenges facing local authorities is their ability to work with others in their region to tackle issues related to sustainability. Water, air, transportation and pollution are among many issues that do not respect political boundaries. Competition to attract new businesses and industries can lead neighboring jurisdictions to provide tax breaks or bid so low that they undermine one another and their own environmental or social interests. Duplication of administrative services can prevent the most efficient use of resources. These and other factors have led many provincial or state jurisdictions to force mergers of central cities and the cities, towns and villages that are immediately adjacent to them. Whether these mergers have solved the problems or simply created new ones is a matter for continuing debate.

Are there models of cooperation across jurisdictions that might provide lessons for city regions that do not require mergers? Are there models for management of global common goods – such as watersheds – that do not involve legislative powers? Are there models based on consensus and voluntary agreements across sectors that show promise for influencing decision making related to sustainability?

In this paper, we begin examining these questions by focusing on three Canadian case examples: the Greater Vancouver Regional District; the Fraser Basin Council; and the National Round Table on the Environment and Economy. In the words of Tom Carter, Urban Research Chair of the University of Winnipeg, "In developing models of regional and inter-stakeholder cooperation, which is so crucial in achieving urban sustainability, it is important to examine non-traditional forms of governance, or those that are different from traditional government institutions, community organizations and legislative frameworks. There is a considerable emphasis on consensus building in the case study models portrayed, as opposed to a more legislated or formal process of decision making. Moving forward on regional, local and even international issues associated with

sustainability will require a consensus building approach, particularly as more formal, traditional and legislated approaches in the past have often failed."

All three models grew organically in response to issues or ideas and later were formalized with legal status. Each has strengths and weaknesses. All three work by a variation on a consensus model. All three have lessons that are relevant to cities and regions facing tough issues and lacking legislative mechanisms to force coordination.

The cases and the models they embody are evaluated from the perspective of criteria articulated by the UN-HABITAT. These criteria include[i]:

- *Sustainability*
- *Subsidiarity*
- *Equity*
- *Efficiency*
- *Transparency and accountability*
- *Civic engagement and citizenship*
- *Security of individuals and their living environments*

The paper briefly examines a working definition of the capable city, then explores the three case studies and their strengths and weaknesses, and draws some conclusions from the lessons learned with special reference to their practical implications. The paper concludes by speculating about what kind of capacity building would be required by cities and regions that decide to try out the models in their own jurisdictions.

2. The Capable City in the Context of Sustainability and Governance

In the context of sustainability, a capable city is one that is able to meet the present and future needs of its citizens for social, economic, cultural and environmental well-being while not preventing others from meeting their needs. A capable city or region can meet the challenges and seize the opportunities posed by change in all its various forms. It is resilient in the face of shocks and threats.

Governance is distinguished from government by the fact that it involves harnessing the collaborative energies of all sectors of a community – traditional government institutions, the private sector, and civil society. Urban governance has been described by HABITAT as "the sum of many ways individual citizens and institutions, public and private, plan and manage the common affairs of the city. It is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and cooperative action can be taken. It includes formal institutions as well as informal arrangements and the social

[i] See Appendix A for elaboration

capital of citizens."[2] Whereas traditional government institutions can be likened to machines that are designed to do specific jobs, governance institutions are like complex organisms that can learn how to adapt to a rapidly changing and complex environment.[3]

Governance is often referred to as a cross cutting theme of sustainability – a fourth element that is essential to support the economic, social and ecological components of sustainable development.[4] To meet the challenges of sustainability, cities will require both better governance models and increased capacity to deliver services and meet citizens' needs using these models. Improved governance and capacity-building go hand in hand, because capacity-building liberates energies and resources hitherto unavailable. "Capacity development builds on and harnesses indigenous capacity. It is about promoting learning, boosting empowerment, creating enabling environments, integrating cultures, and orientating personal and societal behaviour."[5]

Cities can no longer face mounting challenges and diminishing resources by using a top-down authoritarian and/or exclusively service delivery model of administration. Nor can they tap their full potential as vehicles for sustainability in this way. By definition, sustainability requires buy-in and engagement by all major sectors of society. Moreover, the challenges of the coming decades will require that local governments broker a wider array of resources and energies to do what needs to be done.

To be effective, each organization or constituency within this broader governance matrix must possess the necessary financial resources, attitudes, knowledge, and skills to perform its role well. Non-profit groups, for instance, often need a minimum of financial and other resources to ensure that they can function and be effective partners and advocates. These resources may be provided by governments, foundations, members or donors. While acknowledging that the financial capacity of many NGOs and small private sector firms may need enhancing to encourage participation, their contribution is essential to developing sustainable solutions to urban issues. When involving poverty groups it is important not to equate lack of education or skills with lack of intelligence or diminished capacity to contribute valuable opinions about what will work and what will not. In many cases these agents are very sophisticated and have much to teach governments and other participants. Moreover, in many developing nations, it is the small entrepreneurs and NGOs that are providing much of the infrastructure and are thus the organizational foundation for community action.[6] A sustainable approach to governance must assess what each sector has to contribute as well as its capacity deficits.

3. Introduction to the Models – What They Represent and Why They Were Chosen

If sustainability is the goal, then governance is one of the essential means for getting there. This paper is limited to reviewing the role and functioning of the Greater Vancouver Regional District, the Fraser Basin Council, and the National Round Table on

the Environment and the Economy as examples of non-traditional consensus-based governance.

The first case – The Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) represents a model of a regional federation that grew out of a functional association. It involves 21 municipalities and one local electoral area of widely varying sizes and character in a relatively sensitive bio-region. Greater Vancouver is home to many First Nations and is one of the most ethnically diverse regions in North America.[7] Greater Vancouver is on the leading edge of regional planning for sustainability. It was awarded the Dubai Award for Best practices in the Built Environment for its Livable Region Strategic Plan, and the Grand Prize in the International Gas Union Competition for cities^{PLUS}, its 100 year plan for urban sustainability. It is regularly ranked among the most livable cities in the world.[8] The GVRD will be examined as a model of regional federation. An analysis of TransLink, the transportation associate of the GVRD is included in Appendix C because of its lessons about public participation in decision making.

The second model – The Fraser Basin Council, was chosen because of its unique role and purpose of protecting a watershed that encompasses 238,000 km^2, with many distinct regions and a range of social and economic conditions. Without any legislative powers to enforce its will, the FBC operates by consensus and influence. It has successfully done so for several years and has become a model of success in facilitating multi-sectoral partnerships to tackle sustainability issues. Its State of the Basin Reports and indicators are considered state-of-the-art. The Council will be examined as a model of a multi-stakeholder body created to steward common global goods and ensure the sustainability of a large bio-region.

The third model – The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy (NRTEE) – was created in order to influence decision-making processes of governments, and private and civil society sectors. It has evolved from a model based on direct participation by all three sectors to one performing an advisory function in relation to the federal government. Its credibility and influence have come from the objectivity and relevance of its research and the extent of its engagement processes. The NRTEE will be considered in the context of other round tables in Canada. Its experience may resonate with that of similar National Sustainability Councils that were set up around the time of the Earth Summit in 1992.

Special emphasis will be placed on how well the models assist key sectors to achieve consensus on moving forward on sustainability initiatives and build the capacity of each partner.

4. The Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD)

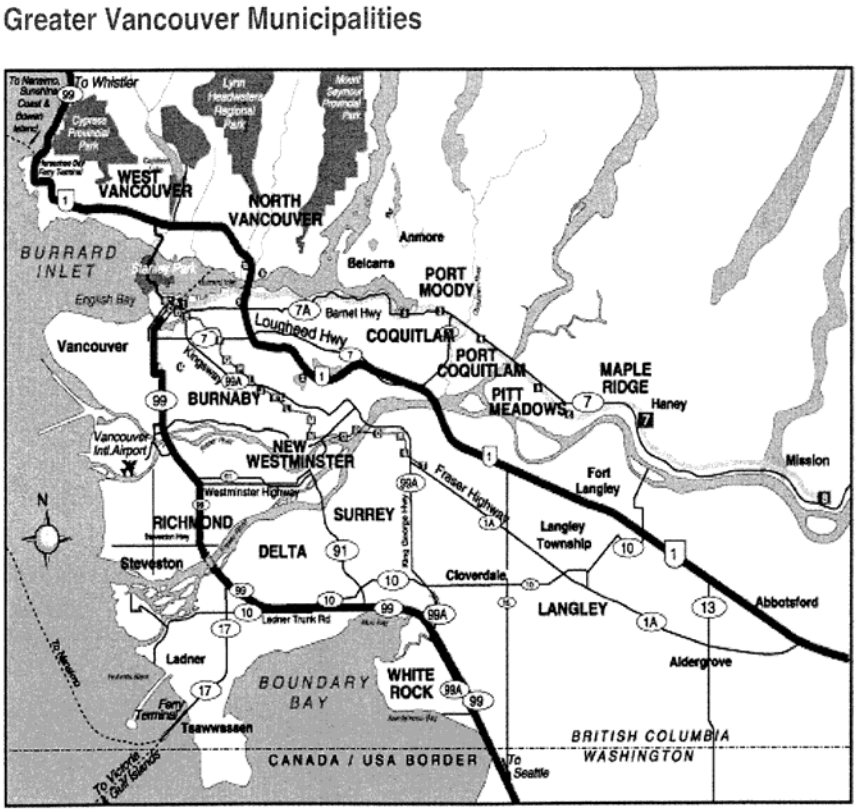

Figure 1: Greater Vancouver Municipalities *source*: Greater Vancouver Regional District

Introduction to the GVRD

The GVRD is located on the southwest coast of British Columbia, within the Lower Fraser Basin. It is bounded by the Coast Mountains in the north, the Fraser Valley Regional District in the east, the U.S. border to the south, and the Georgia Strait to the west. It comprises 21 municipalities and one electoral district. It is home to 2 million people and is expected to reach a population of 2.7 million by 2021 and 3 million by 2031. It is home to an urban aboriginal population that represents every First Nation in Canada as well as over 650,000 immigrants from around the world.[9]

The GVRD is a federation of municipalities. Under the Canadian Constitution, municipalities are 'creatures' of the provinces. The provinces set the rules under which they can be organized, the tasks they must carry out as extensions of the provinces, and the activities they are allowed to undertake. This also applies to regional bodies. The federal government provides aid to municipalities in various forms, but it has rarely had a

consistently coordinated urban program because of resistance from the provinces who see cities as their 'turf.'[10]

The GVRD is a regional district, a form of regional government unique to British Columbia. The regional district level of government was established by provincial legislation in 1965 in an effort to provide local government services to unincorporated areas, and to augment and create a legislative framework for cooperative general planning and for provision of common services to municipalities who wish to receive them.

The GVRD's history goes back long before regional government was established. In 1914 and 1926, respectively, the Greater Vancouver Sewerage and Drainage District (GVSDD) and the Greater Vancouver Water District (GVWD) were established, with each entity providing services for a number of municipalities because it made more fiscal and practical sense to develop such services on a collaborative basis.

A precursor of the GVRD's regional planning function was the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board (LMRPB) which was created by the Province in 1949. Encompassing a much larger area than the current GVRD, its board comprised a representative from each of its constituent municipalities. In 1966, it produced a mandatory official plan before being disbanded in the following year. However, many of the ideas contained therein lived on in the work of the GVRD, which was formed in 1967.[11]

Over time, the region's governance arrangements were consolidated. In 1972, staffing for the sewerage, water and parks authorities was transferred to the GVRD. Since that time, the GVRD Board has taken on a public housing and labour relations role, and has responsibility for control of air pollution within its boundaries.[12]

In 1983, facing an economic recession and desire for "less" government, the Province amended the Municipal Act and eliminated regional planning as a statutory function. Despite this, the GVRD managed to continue its regional planning efforts through consensus under the rubric of development services. In 1989, the Province allowed development services to be financed through the regional districts and, in 1995, the Municipal Act was again amended and powers for regional planning were established in a way that encourages collaboration between regional districts and municipalities. Under the 1995 legislation, regional districts in high growth regions were enabled to produce Regional Growth Strategies (RGSs), and individual municipalities were to produce context statements that showed how their own official community plans (OCPs) were consistent with the regional strategy.[13]

In addition to the regional planning thrust, regional districts have also proven their worth as a provider of services. In addition to providing the 'hard' services of regional parks, water and sewerage, the regions deliver local services such as animal control, recreation programs, libraries, and cemetery operations in unorganized areas.[14]

The rather organic evolution of the GVRD is significant. Based on earlier arrangements for cooperation over water and sewerage, it gradually embraced other functions where regional cooperation was more cost effective and logical. The provincial government eventually recognized the value of this structure and passed enabling legislation. With regard to issues of sustainability there is no question that the GVRD's most significant and innovative role was the creation of its regional strategic plans. It was the mandate for regional plans that allowed the GVRD to build into its work a case for sustainability.[15]

How Does the GVRD System Work?

The GVRD, like most other regional bodies throughout North America, is faced with many challenging issues such as rationalizing land use and transportation, safeguarding and improving air and water quality, dealing with waste management, health, parks and open space, and providing traditional hard services. These challenges are compounded by conflicting interests and differences in perspective amongst members.

At the time the regional districts were created, careful consideration was given to selecting the best model for governance. The focus was on cooperation among municipalities to achieve service delivery. Because this model relies on consensus or on majority rule – as opposed to subordination to a directly elected regional or metropolitan government – the powers of the GVRD to ensure implementation of coherent planning policy have been limited. At the same time, member municipalities clearly see the benefits of collective service delivery even when they have difficulty achieving agreement on certain issues.

Specifically, the governance structure of the GVRD comprises three legal districts:

1. Greater Vancouver Water District (GVWD)
2. Greater Vancouver Sewerage and Drainage District (GVS&DD)
3. Greater Vancouver Regional District

These districts work in partnership to provide services to the taxpayers through their constituent municipalities.

The GVRD is governed by a Board comprised of elected representatives from each municipality whose number of directors per municipality and number of votes per director are determined by population. Each director exercises one vote for every 20,000 residents, to a maximum of five votes. The board usually meets monthly. Several standing and advisory committees have been established to provide advice to the Board and serve as a link to wider stakeholder groups (see *Appendix B*: GVRD Organizational Chart). These committees include:

- Communities
- Corporate and Intergovernmental Relations

- Finance
- Housing
- Parks
- Planning and Environment
- Waste Management
- Water
- Labour Relations[16]

The transportation agency for the GVRD, TransLink, is also described and analyzed in Appendix C.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the GVRD Model for Achieving Sustainability of the Region

Applying UN HABITAT's governance criteria identifies some of the strengths and weaknesses of the GVRD model.

Sustainability – By virtue of *Creating Our Future* and the *Livable Region Strategic Plan*, the GVRD has moving toward sustainability for many years. Both incorporate the elegant vision statement:

> *"Greater Vancouver can become the first urban region in the world to combine in one place the things to which humanity aspires on a global basis: a place where human activities enhance rather than degrade the natural environment, where the quality of the built environment approaches that of the natural setting, where the diversity of origins and religions is a source of social strength rather than strife, where people control the destiny of their community; and where the basics of food, clothing, shelter, security, and useful activity are accessible to all."*[17]

Beginning in 2001, the organization decided to make sustainability the basis for the review of its Livable Region Strategic Plan (LRSP). This was motivated by the perception that social and economic issues had been receiving inadequate attention, and that even environmental issues had been attended to in a somewhat fragmented way. In its development of a framework for achieving sustainability, the region has focused on the three components of *meeting basic needs*, *enhancement of human capacity*, and *enhancement of social capacity*. It has also offered four guiding principles: equity, social inclusion and interaction, security, and adaptability.[18] As evidence of its commitment, the region has begun issuing annual sustainability reports based on the collection of indicator data on trends in the region and a triple bottom line framework.[19]

Although the LRSP focuses on many sustainability principles, the lack of an explicit mandate to consider social, environmental and economic matters in an integrated way for the whole region means that some activities can be sidetracked or viewed as 'less than

legitimate' by municipalities that see the province as responsible for social services and health, or want to compete economically with their neighbors rather than collaborating with them in a regional context to be successful in the global competitive environment.

Subsidiarity – In contrast with regional agencies in other jurisdictions – where metropolitan regions function as senior governments with planning control over municipalities – the GVRD system operates on a largely collaborative basis where municipalities have to work together for the common interest and negotiate their differences.

As Smith and Oberlander note, regional districts in BC are "confederal" and "exist only to do what municipalities agree they cannot do for themselves." As such, the B.C. system is "biased toward agreement."[20] They go on to note that, "[w]hile imperfect, consensual planning has resulted in considerable ability to achieve agreement on matters of specific policy in a range of regional district settings."[21] At the same time, it is not uncommon, as with the recent dispute over the Strategic Transportation Plan, for deep divisions to occur between the different municipalities, and for individual municipalities to put their own interests ahead of those of the region. Nonetheless, a strength of the system is that local leaders elected to regional positions of responsibility tend to develop a 'wider' view and become strong proponents of the regional interest.[22] Overall, the GVRD is a good example of subsidiarity.

Equity – As noted, equity has been articulated as one of the guiding principles of the Sustainable Region Initiative (SRI). Prior to that, a commitment to an "Equitable Region," where livability is shared across all communities, was a pillar of the LRSP.[23] The intent was and is that residents throughout the region would have a relative equality of a variety of services, including park space. The region has also attempted to address issues of housing through its housing corporation, and by developing a region-wide strategy on homelessness.[24] One significant area of weakness is the lack of full multi-cultural representation in the regional political leadership and administration to match the extraordinary ethnic diversity in the region. Most politicians and administrators are 'white,' and most continue to be male.

The organization itself is intended to function as a confederation of relative equals. Municipal representatives on the GVRD board have voting power based on the size of their respective populations. However, equity is often in the eye of the beholder, and in the process that led up to the adoption of the Livable Region Strategic Plan, there was much grumbling that some municipalities weren't getting their fair share of growth.[25]

Through the Livable Region Strategic Plan, the GVRD and member municipalities seek to build complete communities, where people can work, shop, learn and play within easy reach of home. These communities are designed to provide a complete range of choices in housing type, tenure and cost, with housing affordability as a key objective. Under the provisions of existing and previous federal and provincial social housing programs, the

GVRD's subsidiary, the Greater Vancouver Housing Corporation, develops, owns and manages about 3500 units of housing for people in target groups such as the working poor and the disabled.

Efficiency – The GVRD, and its allied structures, have accomplished significant efficiencies by only taking on those functions that municipalities could not readily perform for themselves. The GVRD, and its predecessors and subordinate agencies, evolved precisely because of the efficiencies involved in collaborating on service delivery, rather than having each municipality go it alone. Its livability goals also include a commitment to an "Efficient Region" that involves effective spending and intergovernmental cooperation, both between municipalities and with senior governments.[26]

Transparency and accountability – The GVRD's board meetings are open to the public, unless confidentiality is required under provincial legislation, and delegations are routinely heard. A wide array of information, statistics, and reports can be gleaned from its web site. It has also begun reporting on its performance vis-à-vis an array of sustainability indicators, and is committed to providing a flow of information to the public about its activities and performance.[27]

Ginnell and Smith have suggested that, as long the GVRD has primarily been about providing services efficiently – i.e., has had a largely administrative role – it has had sufficient accountability. However, they argue that with the close affiliation between the GVRD and the newly created TransLink, and with a combined annual budget approaching one billion dollars, the organization is beginning to become a more remote regional "government." Given this, in their view the continuing indirect election of the Board is becoming a democratic liability.[28]

Moreover, the top administrators at GVRD seem to have more clout than their municipal counterparts – indeed, they are perceived by some as holding as much power as the politicians. While they tend to be progressive and pro-sustainability, they are not accountable ultimately to the public by means of election. Ginnell and Smith have argued for the direct election of a regional board through regional wards or second ballots during municipal elections, and have also argued for a monitoring body, like an ombudsperson's office, to monitor and report to the public on the GVRD's performance.[29]

Civic engagement and citizenship – A variety of methods have been used to involve the public, including open houses, public forums, workshops, tours of its watersheds, opportunities for volunteer activity, and outreach to schools. Citizens and organizations are represented on its various advisory committees. A regular program about GVRD current events airs on a local cable station, and television series on regional issues have been shown on major networks in the past. Stakeholders are involved in the implementation of policies and regulations for everything from solid waste to the siting of utilities.

As part of its Sustainable Region Initiative (SRI), the GVRD has held four major forums on the ecological, social, and economic aspects of sustainability to gather input from a variety of stakeholders. These were organized in partnership with Smart Growth BC, United Way, and the Business Council of BC. Other partners in the SRI include the Fraser Basin Council (see below) and TransLink. The region has been seeking to cultivate leaders and champions both inside and outside the organization, and to ground the Initiative in an "urban regime" that extends beyond the GVRD administrative structure.[30]

Perhaps the high water marks of its efforts at public engagement occurred in the early 1970s when the GVRD's planners and politicians sought input from the public on how to define livability, and the implications this should have for regional planning, and in the late 1980s in the extensive consultations in the "Choosing Our Future" process.[31] Since then, public engagement has become more routine and predictable.

Security of individuals and their living environments – The role of the GVRD in addressing this point is indirect. Its seven goals for livability include "A Healthy and Safe Region" that encompasses air and water quality, good social services, and functional space patterns.[32] Security is also one of the sustainability principles it has embraced. The organization has made progress in curbing air pollution and maintaining the quality of its drinking water, thus protecting the security of the living environment. It also works to facilitate communication amongst municipalities for purposes of emergency preparedness, and it plays a role in the administration of the 9-1-1 emergency phone system.

In the course of the cities^{PLUS} one hundred year planning process, resilience emerged as one of the three key themes for the region's future, along with livability and sustainability.[33] The region has a Joint Emergency Liaison Committee but it is not perceived as effective. Given the importance of resilience and security to the future well being of cities, and the certainty of future crises, this is an area that requires further attention.[34]

The greatest strength of the GVRD is that it enables member municipalities to develop a common vision and act on it. Thus, even after the provincial government abolished regional districts' powers to engage in planning, the GVRD was able to carry on in this role on the strength of the common vision. Moreover, when the Agricultural Land Commission was formed in 1974, the vision of "Cities in a Sea of Green" was strong enough that municipalities proposed setting aside more agricultural land within their borders than would likely have occurred if they had been coerced.

Perhaps the nadir of regional cooperation was the process undertaken by the GVRD to negotiate new arrangements in transportation, governance and funding that resulted in the creation of the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority in 1998.

At the same time, the fact that the GVRD works by consensus or by majority rule, when consensus is not possible, means that it is often slow to adopt necessary or desirable forms of change, and it is difficult to get municipalities to move beyond their own self-interest to the larger regional interest.

While the GVRD represents a robust model of regional planning and service provision, its mandate does not include giving explicit attention to social or economic issues, and its attention to environmental matters is largely related to its management of common public goods and services. These deficiencies notwithstanding, its vision in relation to land use and transportation strategies has been a comprehensive one that is compatible with and encompasses sustainability. The award-winning Livable Regional Strategic Plan and the recent cities^{PLUS} 100 year plan have been cutting edge manifestations of sustainability thinking and action, and these were achieved through a participatory multi-stakeholder process that drew on the insights and energies of many sectors of society. Through the Sustainable Region Initiative it can now address the three 'legs' of sustainable development even more explicitly.

As it moves towards this more holistic approach, it is likely that the historic debate between those that would see the GVRD as a manager of utilities with appendages (housing, parks, etc) and those who see it as a political leadership body that also delivers utilities and services will re-emerge and sharpen. The leaders of the SRI hope that the SRI will enable GVRD politicians and administrators to rediscover a "uniting regionalism",[35] and to that end they are involving Board members and staff in workshops and national and international networking events to encourage further commitment to sustainability principles and practices.

5. THE FRASER BASIN COUNCIL

"The Fraser Basin is a place where social well-being is supported by a vibrant economy and sustained by a healthy environment."

Vision of the Fraser Basin Council

Introduction

The Fraser River Basin is the fifth largest river basin in Canada, encompassing an area of 238,000 km^2. It is 1325 kilometers in length, flowing through diverse terrain, starting in the Rocky Mountains, crossing though vast forested areas, plateaus, canyons, rolling uplands, wetland and estuaries, and finally discharging into the Strait of Georgia (see Figure 2).[36] It comprises the Greater Vancouver agglomeration and most of its hinterland.

The Basin is of great environmental, economic and social value. It boasts an extraordinary range of environments and spectacular natural beauty, and is the most

economically productive part of British Columbia. It is home to 2.7 million people, and activities in the Basin contribute 80% of the province's gross domestic product and 10% of Canada's gross national product.

The Basin's forests cover nearly three times the area of New Brunswick, and its farms, ranches and orchards comprise half of all British Columbia's agricultural lands. There are eight major producing mines, as well as some of the province's most spectacular natural beauty and recreational opportunities.[37]

Figure 2: The Fraser River Basin
(source: www.fraserbasin.ca)

During the 1980s, it became evident that exposure to industrial and agricultural pollutants, over-fishing and rapid urbanization were compromising the environmental health of the Basin.[38] As a result, challenges related to water management began to surface, including: water supply, pollution control, fisheries management, flood control, hydropower production, navigation and wetlands management.[39]

Although the situation seemed bleak at the time, environmental management agencies believed that the watershed could still recover if the proper steps were taken. By 1990, the Government of Canada had identified the Fraser River Basin as a major freshwater system requiring priority action. Federal, provincial and local governments were concerned about the future of the Basin, and in 1992 signed a formal agreement launching the *Fraser Basin Management Program*, in which the signatory parties committed to work together for five years as the Fraser Basin Management Board to develop a program to ensure the economic, environmental and social sustainability of the entire Fraser Basin.[40]

The major focus of the Board was the creation of a draft Basin Plan, which was circulated for public input. Using the input they received, the Board then developed the *Charter for Sustainability*, a strategic plan for achieving sustainability in the Fraser River Basin. Rather than being a legally binding document, the *Charter for Sustainability* was

designed as a guide to those interested in advancing the economic, environmental and social health of the Basin in an integrated and cooperative manner.

The *Fraser Basin Management Program* was an innovative and challenging experiment in managing for sustainability in a watershed. As its five-year mandate came to an end, the Board realized that its model of collaborative governance could be further enhanced. The Board suffered from a lack of transparent reporting mechanisms and independence from government, and failed to receive the funding necessary to satisfy its budgetary requirements. There was also a need to actually implement the *Charter for Sustainability*. As a good faith agreement to work toward the social, economic and environmental sustainability of the Fraser Basin, the *Charter* embodied a watershed-based approach to achieving sustainability, and outlined four strategic directions for activities: understanding sustainability; caring for ecosystems; strengthening communities; and improving decision making.[41]

The Board articulated the need for an organization that was independent of specific governments to oversee implementation of the *Charter.* It would draw on representatives from the four levels of government, as well as from various geographical and sectoral interest groups. It would be funded by federal, provincial and local governments, and other sources of funding, through not-for-profit status. In response, a new entity known as the Fraser Basin Council was legally established as a not-for-profit, charitable, non-government organization in June 1997.[42]

The Fraser Basin Council (FBC)

The Fraser Basin Council embodies an innovative governance model that brings together multiple sectors and interests in a collaborative, sustainability-centered context, in an effort to promote the common good. To ensure that a broad diversity of perspectives is heard with respect to any sustainability issue, the Council's Board of Directors consists of representatives of four orders of Canadian government (federal, provincial, local and First Nations), the private sector and civil society (see *Appendix B:* Fraser Basin Council Organizational Chart).[43]

This consensus-based governance model provides an effective means to overcome the limitations of the traditional hierarchy of multiple jurisdictions operating independently in a common bioregion and 'top-down', narrowly-focused approaches to governing.[44] The FBC model represents the first of its kind in Canada and has served as an example for other organizations in the Basin, throughout the province, nationally and internationally. Because the Council's model is highly adaptive and flexible, it can be applied to most any watershed. Occasionally, the Council is invited to present its model in different jurisdictions around the world, where new models for watershed management are being sought. To date, the Council has given presentations in Russia, the Philippines, and Brazil.[45]

The Council's 36-member Board of Directors collectively represents different economic, social, and environmental perspectives. Past and current Directors include environmental advocates, mayors and regional district directors, senior federal and provincial government officials, First Nations leaders, business executives and individual residents of the Basin – including entrepreneurs, homemakers, farmers, ranchers, doctors, lawyers and scientists. This multi-interest model provides a valuable mechanism for developing a shared understanding of widely differing perspectives and fostering collaboration in ways that support social, economic and environmental priorities. By establishing a forum in which senior members of major federal and provincial government agencies meet on a regular basis, it provides a venue for cross-jurisdictional collaboration on issues that demand such collaboration in order to be resolved. The inclusion of local government, First Nations and non-governmental members likewise creates expanded opportunities for each group.

Since its inception, the Council has directly facilitated the development of solutions to a wide range of sustainability issues both within and outside the Basin. While it will continue to provide this important service, it recently made a strategic decision to assist other organizations in implementing a similar approach to governance and issue resolution.[46]

The Council does not have a legislated mandate. Rather, its actions are guided by the consensus of its Board of Directors and the multi-interest groups convened by the Council to tackle specific issues. However, participants that do have legislated mandates often choose to help implement a given consensus through appropriate use of applicable regulatory tools.

Primarily, the Council conducts its business through the work of five standing committees: operations; staffing/ financial operations/ audit; constitution and council director recruitment; sustainability fund; and communications. Specific projects are overseen by five regional committees, and also by issue-specific task committees. These committees provide the structure upon which the Council operationalizes the *Charter*.[47]

Although the Fraser Basin cannot be defined as an urban region per se, the fact that the Fraser Basin Council is focused on resolving issues between an urban region and its hinterland makes it worthy of assessment in this study. There is value in applying the United Nation's Principles of Good Governance to the FBC as a means of assessing the model though a 'sustainability lens':

Sustainability – In line with the FBC's vision, governments, NGOs, and individuals work together to identify ways in which they can contribute to building vibrant communities, and developing strong and diverse economies, while maintaining the air, water, land and bio-diversity that make up the Basin's ecosystems. It is specifically mandated to promote the region's sustainability.

Subsidiarity – The Council conducts its business primarily though the work of groups that it convenes and committees that oversee specific projects and provide the structure by which the council operationalizes the *Charter*. It does not itself govern but works in between the various orders of government and First Nations, bringing them to the same table on common issues.

Equity – By ensuring equal representation and utilizing a multi-stakeholder model, the FBC ensures that all sectors and regions have equal opportunity to be involved in the Council's deliberations. It has been successful in engaging representatives of First Nations, minority and disadvantaged groups in active roles within the FBC and its programs, projects and policies. Twenty-four percent of the members are women.

Efficiency – The Council does not deliver programs or services. It provides research, facilitation and educational services in a general manner so as to influence policies or the attitudes and behavior of the public. Governments were made part of the Council's management structure in an effort to allow for greater influence on government policy and programs than is normally generated through traditional non-governmental organizations. The Council is designed to minimize duplication of effort and facilitate harmonization and collaboration among diverse Basin interests.

Transparency and accountability – In its early phase as the Fraser Basin Management Plan, the organization was not as open as it is today. Full Board meetings are now open to the general public, and participation and involvement are actively encouraged. Furthermore, the Council has developed a web site from which many pertinent documents are available to anyone with access to the Internet. The recently published *State of the Fraser Basin Report* enables residents to monitor the state of the basin in a number of different dimensions.[48] Moreover, the indicators themselves were developed through extensive public consultation.

Civic engagement and citizenship – A variety of methods are used to involve the public, such as open houses and public forums, public notices, mailings of plans to stakeholders, and public meetings with interested parties. Advancement of public awareness also occurs through educational brochures distributed mainly through local governments' planning and development departments, regional libraries and in response to public requests.

Security of individuals and their living environments – By attempting to arrest and reverse the deteriorating conditions within the basin and prevent flooding, the Council is working for the security of individuals and their living environments. However, it does not have a mandate for emergency preparedness nor other matters relevant to urban security. This is an area where further collaboration makes sense.

Strengths and Challenges

For any partnership to be effective, the organizations involved must have compatible motives for collaboration; in many cases, interest in collaboration may be commitment or capacity-driven, and any differences in expectations will result in failure. According to Watson, who did a review of the FBC in 2001, the potential for disagreement is particularly strong with organizations such as the FBC, in which a large number of stakeholders with diverse interests are involved.[49] At times, members have seen each other as having widely varying authority, seniority, legitimacy and resources.

Although different expectations and interpretations of sustainable development exist among members of the Council, there is an agreement that an approach based on cooperation and consensus offers the best prospects for progress and enduring solutions that have the widest possible buy-in. This agreement is made possible in part through broad support for the Council's inheritance: the vision, goals, principles and directions of its *Charter*. With the *Charter* serving as 'common ground' upon which discussions can be based, the FBC is able to avoid many of the challenges that are typically encountered during the formation of a partnership arrangement.[50]

One requirement for the successful operation of a partnership is that a fair balance of representation and power exists among the participants; otherwise, if imbalances in representation or power exist, the credibility and legitimacy of a sustainable development partnership will be seriously damaged. To ensure this balance, the FBC operates as an impartial facilitator to produce consensus among government and non-government interests regarding sustainable development.[51]

Finally, Watson notes that a partnership must be flexible in order to respond sensitively to different circumstances and needs.[52] This is particularly important for organizations such as the FBC that deal with very large geographical areas which include complex biophysical and socio-economic systems that are subject to fluctuation and change. Because the number of potential concerns identified at the regional level is so large and human and financial resources are limited, it was necessary for the FBC to develop a set of criteria to determine which issues should be addressed. Specifically, the FBC only offers facilitation or support when the three dimensions of sustainability are evident in the issue, when help is requested by at least two separate organizations, when the initiative is consistent with the *Charter for Sustainability*, and when no other organization is available to fulfill the FBC's unique role.

While compatible motives and sound procedures are important elements of a successful partnership, the actual impacts of the initiative are probably the most crucial indicators of performance. Without demonstrated impacts, the commitment of stakeholders in terms of political and financial support is unlikely to be maintained.[53]

Many of the important sustainability issues facing Fraser Basin residents, governments, community groups and businesses are Basin-wide – and even, province-wide – in scope. Issues include preparing for the next great Fraser River flood, controlling the spread of invasive plant species, managing the effects of climate change, strengthening rural communities, developing a sustainable fish and fisheries strategy, building constructive aboriginal and non-aboriginal relationships and measuring progress towards sustainability.

Other issues are of concern to specific regions of the Basin. Some of these regional issues include threats to property and navigation from waterborne debris in the Fraser Valley, maintaining a healthy estuary at the mouth of the River, developing a Sustainable Region Initiative in the GVRD, addressing deteriorating water quality in Shuswap Lake, developing a set of sustainability indicators for the City of Quesnel, and resolving conflicts over water flows on the Nechako River.[54]

In addition to addressing sub-Basin issues, the FBC has also worked to increase public awareness about sustainability issues throughout the Basin and motivate people to take action to make their part of the Basin more sustainable. In all of its programs and projects, the FBC considers the needs of the entire Basin rather than those of any single jurisdiction, interest, organization, or individual.

In carrying out initiatives, the Council has recognized the need to measure outputs and outcomes in relation to long-term goals. As a result, a set of 40 sustainability indicators has been designed to provide insight with respect to certain trends, and to identify areas where progress is being made or where more change is required. The variables encompass the usual indicators – such as water quality, education and income levels – in addition to providing innovative markers, such as forest composition, Internet access, and concentration of employment.[55]

Recently, the Council assessed the indicator trends for the Basin and its five regions. In its *State of the Fraser Basin Report*, the Council reported that indicators such as education, sustainable forest management, employment and unemployment, average household income, water quality, life expectancy and population growth management are "normal and healthy." At the same time, other indicators need more "attention and improvement," such as the need for core housing, amount of community engagement, concentration of smog and other air pollutants, proportion of low income families, and levels of energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.[56]

Uncertainty regarding funding arrangements is the greatest challenge facing the FBC. The private sector is an important potential source of additional funding, however, the FBC does not have a high external profile and has generally allowed the credit for successes to be given to other participating organizations. As a result, it may not be clear to private companies why their support is needed or how funding might generate returns for them. It has been suggested that the Directors representing sectoral interests in the

five regions should be invited to establish a caucus of business interests that would mirror the arrangements that already exist for the four orders of government. This would improve the prospects for private contributions and may ultimately lead to a more stable arrangement whereby funds are provided in equal measure by federal departments, provincial ministries, local governments and business organizations. [57]

Lessons Learned

The Council's emphasis on managing development in the Fraser Basin has consistently been "to create a place where social well-being is supported by a vibrant economy and sustained by a healthy environment," a vision that is entirely consistent with that of many watershed-based organizations.[58] The socio-political structure and overlapping jurisdictions of the water-related institutions in the Fraser Basin are not unlike others, and could provide insights into a non-governmental approach to watershed (and ecosystem) management.[59]

In evaluating the FBC's model, Watson concluded that multi-stakeholder partnerships have the potential to contribute to sustainable development at the river basin scale, provided that the following institutional requirements are satisfied:

1. **The partnership must have a clearly defined role which does not duplicate the functions of existing organizations** - The FBC performs a facilitation role rather than functioning as a fifth order of government that may threaten the authority or power of public officials.

2. **The organizations involved must be compatible. Since needs, interests and expectations are likely to differ, a common vision including goals and the means of reaching them should be developed** - The Charter provides strategic direction but is also used at an operational level to ensure that inititatives are consistent with sustainable development as prescribed by the FBC.

3. **Partnerships must provide equitable representation and power** - The fact that the FBC is a not-for-profit charity that is beyond direct government control is significant in this respect. Furthermore, the requirement for the FBC to operate by consensus ensures that powerful coalitions cannot out-vote minority interests.

4. **Sustainable development partnerships require adaptive capacity** - The FBC has a horizontal governance structure that provides discretion and flexibility at the regional level and also cohesion with the different orders of government.

5. **Outputs and outcomes must be demonstrated because partnerships are a means to an end rather than an end in themselves** - Current monitoring and reporting by the FBC indicated that a broad range of outputs and the measurement of outcomes using sustainabillity indicators is possible.[60]

The Fraser Basin experience has demonstrated that establishing effective multi-stakeholder processes requires time and commitment, key interests should be involved at the earliest possible point, and multi-interest processes can effectively provide a forum for addressing the joint management of land and water for more sustainable watersheds.[61] Furthermore, the pursuit of sustainability is clearly an on-going task. As such, the Council's efforts should be cumulative; the Council must meet its ever-shifting targets by being infinitely adaptable to change. It is expected that the Council will continue to be called on to expand its work into provincial, national and international realms, partnering with existing organizations and adapting in the process.

6. The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy (NRTEE)

Introduction

While the *National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy* (NRTEE) in itself it is not a governance model focused on a local region like the GVRD and FBC, it has had an important influence on how the public and various stakeholders have been involved in urban sustainability-related decision-making processes in Canada. As a non-traditional consensus-based approach, it holds important lessons for cities and national governments wishing to pursue "participatory multi-sectoral" approaches to urban issues. This section will first present a brief history on how and why the NRTEE was created. Then, criteria drawn from Innes and Booher for evaluating consensus-building processes will be used to assess the NRTEE. This section will conclude with a brief discussion of the contributions the NRTEE has made to decision-making and governance for urban sustainability in Canada.

Canada has provided numerous examples of practices that increase sustainability. In 1986, in advance of a visit by the *U.N. Commission on Environment and Development* (or Brundtland Commission), the Canadian Council of Resource and Environment Ministers established a National Task Force on Environment and Economy. Its task was to address the matter of reconciling public conflicts between Canada's natural resource industries – primarily from the mining, forestry and petroleum sectors – and those groups and individuals interested in protecting the environment. The Task Force developed 40 recommendations to encourage industry and governments to incorporate both environmental and economic considerations into their decision-making. One of the recommendations was the establishment of Round Tables on the Environment and Economy (RTEE) at both the provincial and federal levels. Membership at the Round Tables would be drawn from government, large and small industry, environmental organizations, labour, academia, and aboriginal people. Round Tables were intended to provide a forum where senior decision-makers could meet to candidly discuss environment-economy issues and make recommendations directly to the Prime Minister

and Premiers of their respective jurisdictions and also report their conclusions to the public.

The Canadian Council of Resource and Environment Ministers endorsed the recommendation to create Round Tables and in October 1988, Prime Minister Mulroney announced the creation of a National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy (NRTEE) chaired by Dr. David Johnston, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of McGill University. At the same time, its first Executive Director and Director of Operations were appointed[ii], and a small planning committee was put into place to develop its institutional infrastructure and mode of operation. In March 1989, the Prime Minister announced the full NRTEE membership. By 1990 all of the provinces and territories had established Round Tables and hundreds of local and regional governments across Canada also established Round Tables.

> *Instead of following the more traditional institutional model of bringing together individuals or businesses that have common interests or goals, Round Tables are multipartite and reflect different backgrounds and experiences, different perspectives and insights, different values and beliefs. In a sense they are microcosms of society itself with membership that draw from the political level of governments, the corporate sector, academe and research institutes, the scientific community, and a variety of public interest and professional groups.*[62]
>
> Ann Dale, "Multistakeholder Processes: Panacea or Window Dressing,"

While in Canada, round tables have been convened by governments at all levels and other organizations, they differ from traditional forms of government decision-making in that a Round Table is non-hierarchical. They are multi-stakeholder forums where decisions often follow a consensus decision-making process.

Round Tables were not designed to have legislative authority or function as government decision-making bodies. Their principal role is to exert influence founded on their credibility, independence, and ability to foster an exchange of views amongst important sectors and levels of society.[63] "Through their members and their respective spheres of influence, they act as catalysts to forge new strategic partnerships, to stimulate the search for viable solutions, and to build a broad consensus on what must change, who should bear the costs, and how and when those costs should be borne."[64]

The original planning for the NRTEE was conducted by a small but highly influential group of individuals. Dr. Johnston led the organizing committee, which included Dave Buzelli, President and CEO of Dow Chemical; Roy Aitken, Vice-President of INCO; Pierre-Marc Johnson, former Premier of Quebec; Susan Holtz, an environmental activist and former head of the Canadian Ecology Action Centre; Judge Barry Stuart, a leader in aboriginal sentencing circles; Jim MacNeill, former Secretary General for the Brundtland

[ii] Dr. Dorothy Richardson and Ann Dale

Commission; Dr. Richardson, Executive Director and Ann Dale, Director of Operations.[65]

The Canadian Council for Ministers of the Environment recommended that the NRTEE membership should have a representative from each province and territory, and representatives from traditional sectors, such as the forestry association, mining association, and other such bodies. However, the planning committee decided to take a very different approach. They limited the membership to 25, and rather than selecting people on the basis of the groups, associations or industries they represented, they chose to identify key decision-makers who could influence important networks in government, business and civil society.[66]

The committee also looked at what linkages needed to be made for the Round Table to have the most impact. To this end, four broad categories for membership were identified: government, business, strategic public policy, and environmentalists. In addition, the committee took into account balancing regional sensitivities, gender, labour issues, First Nations, and the two official languages. This was an important departure from the normal appointment process at the national level where individuals were usually selected on the basis of their political affiliation, their national profile, their sectoral or regional status, and/ or affiliation with a particular industry.[67] The final membership included 4 senior cabinet Ministers and one Provincial Minister, CEOs and Vice Presidents of major corporations, academics, and representatives from First Nations, labour and community groups.

To further demarcate the NRTEE from traditional decision-making bodies, the planning committee agreed to leave the Round Table process as unstructured as possible in order to let the members determine their own agenda, their mode of operating and reach their own conclusions. This model would allow members to set their priorities and future course of action.[68]

During the first year of operations, the NRTEE meetings were restricted to members only. The reasoning for this, on the part of the original planners, was that with the full participation of four federal cabinet ministers (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Finance, Minister of Science and Technology Canada, and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources), meaningful results could only be achieved if the Round Table was a "dialogue of peers." Issues discussed had to meet the following criteria: be strategic rather than operational; be multipartite and cross-disciplinary; inter-jurisdictional or interdepartmental; longer-term; focused on means not ends; and of federal, national or international scope as these were the types of issues that would best address the scope of sustainable development.[69] From the beginning the recommendations made by the NRTEE were presented directly to the Prime Minister in a yearly meeting between the Chair and the Prime Minister. The use of consensus decision-making was important for developing the recommendations, but points of disagreement were also noted and communicated.

The essential difference between a consensus based decision-making process and other processes is that "these [other] processes are intended to advise decision makers providing them with a diversity of opinions and advice. In contrast, consensus processes are designed to find the common ground and a mutually acceptable decision that can be implemented or recommended for implementation."[70]

The Forest Round Table convened by the NRTEE between 1991 and 1994 is an example of a successful "sub-table". Representatives from 25 stakeholder groups developed, by consensus, a common vision and a set of principles for sustainable development of Canada's forests. These principles included action plans by the stakeholder groups on how these principles would be implemented, and were supplemented with recommendations to governments and other jurisdictions with regard to policies and actions for sustainable development.[71]

The Round Table originally was able to engage key Canadian decision-makers including four Federal Ministers. This however gradually changed when intense lobbying to open the meeting process succeeded. Ministers became increasingly more uncomfortable with this open dialogue.[72] Worried about confidentiality and a conflict of interest, at first Ministers elected not to attend and then, by 1994, they were intentionally left out of the process.[73] Having Ministers as members of a Round Table was deemed inconsistent with Canadian political tradition where the recommendations would ultimately come back to them. Ultimately this was considered to be a conflict of interest.[74]

In 1993, the NRTEE was legislated by Parliament. The act governing the Round Table states that the round table members are appointed by the Governor in Council (Prime Minister). Although there is no mention of to whom the NRTEE reports, it has continued to report to the Prime Minister. The legislation established the Round Table as a Departmental Corporation, making it an independent entity with legal security. With federal government ministers no longer at the Table, the Round Table has changed in form significantly since its inception.

The 1993 *NRTEE Act* states that the purpose of the Round Table is: "to play the role of catalyst in identifying, explaining and promoting, in all sectors of Canadian society and in all regions of Canada, principles and practices of sustainable development by:

> (*a*) undertaking research and gathering information and analyses on critical issues of sustainable development;
>
> (*b*) advising governments on ways of integrating environmental and economic considerations into their decision-making processes and on global issues of sustainable development;
>
> (*c*) advising those sectors and regions on ways of incorporating principles and practices of sustainable development into their activities;

(*d*) promoting the understanding and increasing public awareness of the cultural, social, economic and policy changes required to attain sustainable development; and

(*e*) facilitating and assisting cooperative efforts in Canada to overcome barriers to the attainment of sustainable development." [75]

According to the NRTEE web site, "The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy (NRTEE) is an independent advisory body that provides decision makers, opinion leaders and the Canadian public with advice and recommendations for promoting sustainable development."[76] Noting the early history, one can conclude that in its 16 year history, the NRTEE has slowly transformed itself from a "Round Table" to a more traditional government advisory body (see *Appendix B*: NRTEE Organizational Chart for the current structure of the Table).

This shift is important when one compares the fate of the National Round Table and the Provincial Tables, all of which have been abolished or marginalized[iii]. Three factors seemed to have led to the demise of the other tables: 1) they did not enjoy legislated status and thus served at the pleasure of the sitting government; 2) because they reported to the Premiers, they often were eliminated or put aside when a new government came to power; and 3) many were mandated to prepare a sustainable development strategy. When that was completed, they did not have other roles to play. For the NRTEE and for Canada, it was certainly better that it became a respected advisory board than ceasing to exist.

Evaluation of the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy

In assessing the NRTEE as a consensus building process we will apply criteria presented by Innes and Booher in "Consensus Building and Complex Adaptive Systems: A Framework for Evaluating Collaborative Planning",[77] noting how the process has changed over the past 16 years.

1. *Includes representatives of all relevant and significantly different interests.*

The initial Round Table members included very senior representatives from all sectors – government, business, strategic public policy and environment. This has changed. Government is no longer represented at the Table and members do not necessarily represent different sectors but are "educated laypersons in the field of sustainable development."[78] They are a highly respected group of Canadians from across the country.

2. *Is driven by a purpose and task that are real, practical, and shared by the group.*

[iii] One of the strongest Provincial Round Tables in Manitoba did have legal status and continues to exist but following a change of government it is now a mere shadow of its former self.

All of those interviewed who have been involved with the NRTEE, agreed that the Round Table has always fulfilled this criterion. With regard to urban issues for example, in the late 1990s the NRTEE undertook a review of the international opportunities for Canadian municipalities, firms and NGOs to provide services and technologies to meet the needs of developing country cities. The report was received by the Prime Minister and led to the creation of a highly successful program in Industry Canada called the Sustainable Cities Initiative. More recently the NRTEE has issued two important 'State of the Debate Reports', on brown field redevelopment and on urban environmental quality. The Government of Canada's New Deal for Cities was highly influenced by the NRTEE's work. According to the Acting CEO, the NRTEE provided a "safe space for discussion and debate."[iv] The report *Environmental Quality for Canadian Cities*[79] provides a set of comprehensive recommendations on what steps the government should take to improve urban sustainability. The government felt these recommendations were objective and representative and they have had an important influence on the government's current urban agenda.[80]

3. *Is self-organizing, allowing participants to decide on ground rules; objectives, tasks, working groups and discussion topics.*

This was an important issue when the Round Table was created. The NRTEE planning committee decided that the Round Table process should be as unstructured as possible in order to let the members determine their own agenda, their mode of operating and reach their own conclusions.[81] This is still the case.[82] In the current "modus operandi" the Round Table members develop the major questions that will engage the organization's attention. The executive committee is then responsible for striking task forces that include both Round Table members and outside experts to study specific issues. The task forces oversee detailed research that is used to produce reports on the issue at hand. These reports are then presented for approval by the Round Table as a whole.

4. *Engages participants, keeping them at the table, interested, and learning through in-depth discussion, drama, humour and informal interaction.*

The NRTEE has always been successful in engaging its participants. A specific example of a Round Table process sponsored by the NRTEE that vividly fulfilled these criteria is the Forest Round Table on Sustainable Development mentioned earlier. In the final report on the Forest Round Table, there is a section of testimonials from the Forest Round Table members about the process. Joe O'Neill from Miramichi Pulp and Paper stated:

> *The first meeting we had in the woods was in Hinton, Alberta. The discussion went along and led to a knock-down drag-out fight on herbicides- probably the best exchange of views on that subject I have ever seen. Everyone took off their gloves. Everyone took turns talking and listening. No one moved for an hour, right there in the woods just bearing down on the subject, but at the end of this*

[iv] Gene Nyberg, phone conversation, March 10, 2004

discussion you could see both sides budging just a little. I decided to stick with the group after that….I learned a lot. I changed my views on quite a few things. I've learned very much from a group I was scared of!

5. *Encourages challenges to the status quo and fosters creative thinking.*

Those interviewed agreed that NRTEE continues to challenge the status quo, although the ideas discussed are not "revolutionary" but "evolutionary." The changes being sought are ones that lead to sustainability in an incremental way and are within the "art of the possible."[83]

6. *Incorporates high-quality information of many types and assures agreement on the meaning.*

Issues are investigated using task forces which in themselves are multi-stakeholder. Consequently the task force members heavily scrutinize research and information and all reports go through a peer review process.[v] As the 2002-2003 Report on Planning and Priorities states in the introduction: "[w]orking with cutting edge research and case studies and through purpose-built task forces, the NRTEE strives to articulate the state of the debate on issues".[84]

7. *Seeks consensus only after discussions have fully explored the issues and interests, and significant effort has been made to find creative responses to differences*.

Since its inception, the NRTEE felt it was important to not only communicate areas of agreement on issues but to also publicize areas where there was no agreement and where consensus was not possible – "real differences in opinion stand." [85] Through its "State of the Debate" reports, the NRTEE identifies to the Prime Minister and the public barriers to progress on sustainable development and seeks practical recommendations to advance the debate.

The NRTEE has made important contributions to how progressive governance is understood and practiced in Canada. While the demand for increased public participation in governance and consequent initiatives began in the early 1970s as an 'offshoot' of the environmental movement, the NRTEE and other Round Tables in Canada were highly visible institutional responses to the challenge of sustainable development.[86] Public involvement in decision making is considered a key element of sustainable development. Gro Harlem Brundtland, in the foreword to *Our Common Future*, calls for "a common endeavor and for new norms of behavior at all levels and in the interests of all. The changes in attitudes, in social values, and in aspirations that the report urges will depend on vast campaigns of education, debate and public participation."[87]

More recently, at the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, the issue of governance for implementing sustainable development was a

[v] Nyberg

key issue. The principal official outcome of the WSSD was the multilaterally agreed upon a Plan of Implementation. The section on *Institutional Frameworks for Sustainable Development* deals exclusively with governance issues and places importance on increasing public involvement in decision-making. The introduction to the chapter states: "Measures taken to strengthen sustainable development institutional arrangement at all levels should be taken within the framework of Agenda 21 and should build on developments since UNCED and should lead to the achievement of, inter alia, the following objectives: (g) enhancing participation and effective involvement of civil society and other relevant stakeholders in the implementation of Agenda 21 as well as promoting transparency and broad public participation".

While Round Tables no longer exist at the provincial level and the NTREE has been transformed into an influential advisory body, the 'round table movement' still has an important influence on how public involvement is done by governments in Canada. Between 1992 and 1998 hundreds of round tables were created and the multi-stakeholder process continues to be used by municipalities to address specific issues.

More importantly, however, the NRTEE and other Round Tables have had a significant influence on the way public consultation has been embedded in governance in Canada. Currently, public consultation is incorporated in government procedure and used at the local, regional, provincial and federal level to assist with the development of public policy and to make recommendations on a variety of issues from sewage by-laws to climate change policy. The importance of public participation and its overall acceptance as a 'governance tool' is also reinforced in a recent paper commissioned for Health Canada called "Public Policy and Public Participation: Engaging Citizens and Community in the Development of Public Policy" (2003). In the introduction it is stated:

> *During the past decade the role of government has been steadily changing, with increasing emphasis being placed on setting overall direction through policy and planning, on engaging stakeholders and citizens, and sometimes on empowering stakeholders or partners to deliver programs and services.*

Public involvement in government decision-making has become an integral part of the government 'modus operandi' and will continue to be so whether or not the NRTEE exists. The NRTEE has more than symbolic value as it represents an organization, which, at the time of its creation, challenged the status quo on how decisions were made. It also continues to be a forum which demonstrates on a national level how complex issues related to sustainable development can be addressed "by bringing experts and interest groups from all parts of Canadian society," by using an approach which is "of innovative, interdisciplinary thinking and practical solutions."[vi] Most importantly however, as Paddon observes, the overall influence of the Round Table process has been that "[b]y adhering to the principle that everyone at the table has an equal voice in the discussion of

[vi] 2002-2003 Estimates, Report on Plans and Priorities

issues, round tables have shifted the historical relationship from hierarchy between governments and the business and environmental sectors to that of a network.[vii]

Finally, the NRTEE has had a very significant focus on urban issues in Canada, in particular, the measures and policies that determine quality of life in Canadian cities and that impact their ability to retain and enhance their competitive positions in the global economy. Its Urban Sustainability Program's findings included 11 high-priority recommendations for immediate implementation, falling under four mutually supportive themes: getting the federal house in order; supporting the use of urban transit; promoting sustainable infrastructure; and encouraging the efficient use of energy and land. The final State of the Debate report entitled, *Environmental Quality in Canadian Cities: The Federal Role*, was released in May 2003. In addition, the NRTEE has published several other reports, including: *Environmental and Sustainable Development Indicators for Canada* (2003); *Cleaning up the Past, Building the Future: A National Brownfield Redevelopment Strategy for Canada* (2003); and *Toward a Canadian Agenda for Ecological Fiscal Reform: First Steps* (2002).

7. Overall Reflections on the Models

Chan (2001)points out that the UN has been stressing the importance of both enablement and participation as being key to good governance. Senior governments have to give local and regional authorities sufficient power and resources to do a credible job, but then local and regional authorities have to work with the private sector and civil society organizations to democratize urban decision-making and to leverage additional resources.[88]

All three models represent good examples of senior government enablement, and all three models have a good track record of encouraging participation by both organizations and individuals. While far from perfect, the models suggest a standard of governance and process that other localities can learn from and adapt.

The Round Table, for its part, has been a catalyst for fostering more collaborative models of governance throughout Canada. It has also been a leading proponent of the federal government playing a strong role in enabling cities to face the challenges confronting them and to become strong catalysts for sustainability.[89]

8. Implications for Others

This paper is limited to examining three non-traditional Canadian cases. In order to facilitate further dialogue on their applicability elsewhere, we will attempt to identify their potential implications.

[vii] (ICSC Newsletter, p.6).

What are important considerations for other cities that might wish to adapt these models to their own situations?

Time Frame

All three models matured over a significant period of time. It is suggested that capacity building for these kinds of governance models requires time. This is in large part due to their emphasis on consensus and voluntary agreements that are based on trust. Trust is built up over a period of time through working together to solve problems. Municipalities considering applying these models (and donors who might help fund capacity building) should be aware that they will likely take longer than the term of office of the current politicians. In the experience of the International Centre for Sustainable Cities, results begin to show in the third and fourth year and by the fifth year further adaptation of the models and their legal status will likely need to be addressed.

Resources

All three models involved significant investment of resources. The GVRD's investment in regional planning, particularly the time devoted to integrating land use and transportation plans has involved a highly professional team of planners, as well as some outside consultants. The Fraser Basin Council drew upon a vast wealth of expertise that was accumulating in Environment Canada and elsewhere about multi-stakeholder processes. Its first years were spent in building its structure, relationships and staff resources to play a facilitative role in the watershed. The NRTEE had stable funding and was able to devote considerable time to consider its own structure and membership.

One of the advantages of the GVRD model is the efficiency that flows from not having to duplicate staff and services from one municipality to the next. Part of this, of course, is offset by the need to have regional staff. Many small municipalities and those in developing country cities do not have planning staff at all, or those that do serve many other functions, as well. Thus, cities or regions considering these models may wish to begin with a feasibility study to identify resource needs. The bottom line is that capacity cannot be improved without investment.

Engagement Process

The essence of governance versus government is the engagement of non-government actors in the process. The three models describe different approaches to engagement of a wide variety of actors in the process of governance. The GVRD involves 21 different local authorities and engages other stakeholders through various advisory boards, committees, programs and initiatives such as the partners group for the Sustainable Region Initiative. The Fraser Basin Council brings a wide range of stakeholders to the

same table and facilitates dialogue among many others in the watershed. The National Round Table combines research and engagement with a broad group through consultations and reports. The lessons from all three have relevance for other cities wishing to enlarge the involvement of other sectors in their governance.

Guiding Ideas

One of the reasons these three models have contributed so much to urban sustainable development is that each has incorporated a significant and well-articulated vision of sustainability. The GVRD has moved far beyond a functional association of neighboring towns and cities sharing physical infrastructure and utilities. Its Livable Region Strategic Plan voices a compelling vision for the region:

> *"Greater Vancouver can become the first urban region in the world to combine in one place the things to which humanity aspires on a global basis: a place where human activities enhance rather than degrade the natural environment, where the quality of the built environment approaches that of the natural setting, where the diversity of origins and religions is a source of social strength rather than strife, where people control the destiny of their community; and where the basics of food, clothing, shelter, security, and useful activity are accessible to all."*[90]

All three models focus on the integration of social, economic and environmental well being. The importance of seeing the city region or watershed as one system is essential to understanding and dealing with the complex interactions of decisions on the various parts of the system. The themes of livability, sustainability and resilience have emerged in the GVRD as it has moved to undertake a 100-year strategy for the region[viii]. This much longer time perspective has also pointed out the need for adaptive management. Thus it is suggested that others who might wish to apply these models spend considerable time in articulating their guiding ideas and the principles they value.[ix]

Methodology

Many believe that development activities, whether in Canada or in developing country cities, are most successful when they respond to a practical local or regional problem, such as solid waste or transportation and land use[x]. The GVRD started with water and wastewater; the FBC with environmental pollution. In the context of enabling the formation of cooperative relationships within a region or watershed, such a focus gives purpose to the effort. People do not come together just to be together, they come together to do something that they cannot accomplish alone. Often the identification of one demonstration project, if conceived of as a learning activity, allows the partners in the

[viii] See The Livable City and cities[PLUS]
[ix] Seymoar, Why SD has failed to live up to its promise.
[x] See www.icsc.ca for a description of the way the Centre approaches development.

agglomeration to build trust and to see the value of cooperation. It then leads to other shared activities. The demonstration project, however, must be designed to integrate all three aspects of sustainability and the ultimate overarching vision for the region needs to be articulated so that the activity is not just a 'one off project'. Provision must also be made at the beginning to identify how the demonstration will be scaled up if it is successful.

An exception to this problem-focused approach has emerged over the past two years. The GVRD participated in (and won) an international competition for a 100 year plan for a sustainable urban system design. Known as cities^{PLUS} , an acronym for Cities Planning for Long-term Urban Sustainability, the experience brought together over 500 people in charting the path for the region[xi]. While it was developed with the GVRD it was not developed by the GVRD. A consortium of four partners was involved, led by the Sheltair Group (a private sector consulting firm), the Liu Institute for Global Issues (an academic think tank), the International Centre for Sustainable Cities and the GVRD. The outcome was much more than an academic plan. The long-term focus allowed participants to think beyond the usual boundaries of departments, disciplines, territories and terms of office. It provided a neutral entry point to consider long-term trends and impacts that are usually not considered within the normal planning period. The ideas generated are having influence on the day to day decisions within the region. When one considers that we live with the results of decisions made 50 to 100 years ago regarding the layout and infrastructure of our cities and regions, it makes sense to use a very long-term lens when making similar decisions today. The GVRD, the Liu Institute and the International Centre for Sustainable Cities were sufficiently seized by the experience that they have joined with ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability - to establish a network of cities interested in sharing learning, expertise and tools of such long-term planning.[xii] This learning network is potentially a strong capacity building tool for cities wishing to use long-term planning as a neutral entry point for developing a cooperative regional structure.

Given a desire to build a cooperative structure such as the GVRD or FBC what key elements must be included from the perspective of capacity building?

9. Implications for Capacity Building

Capacity building involves a variety of elements usually including financial assistance, technical assistance, peer exchanges, and access to information and decision processes.

[xi] See cities^{PLUS}
[xii] For further information see www. icsc. PLUS 30 Network

Financial Assistance

As identified above, resources must be invested in order to build capacity for better urban governance, particularly at a regional or watershed scale. For developing country cities or those in transition, such funding may be available from the multi-lateral banks, donors and regional banks. Such banks usually provide loans for infrastructure. Increasingly, donor agencies are seeing the value of providing funds for planning and capacity building to accompany the bank loans. As the multi-laterals and donors almost always operate through the national governments, it may be a lengthy process for cities to obtain resources for their efforts. One strategy to speed the process is to develop proposals linking capacity building efforts for regional cooperation to infrastructure projects that are already approved.

In Canada, planning and capacity building activities are eligible for cost sharing under the Green Municipal Fund and the Federation of Municipalities' funding for demonstration projects.

Technical Assistance

Legal, financial and administrative advice is needed in building new institutional structures, especially those that are based on consensual processes. In addition, expertise on engagement processes and conflict resolution is essential. Teams of technical advisors from all three sectors are needed over a long period of time to be the most effective. The typical multi-lateral bank approach of providing technical assistance in less than one year periods is neither efficient nor effective in a capacity building project.

Peer Exchanges

Perhaps the most useful learning takes place between teams of peers. Because of the nature of the three models presented above, such teams need to be multi-sectoral. Rather than elected officials or public administrators meeting with their peers from other cities, adopting any of these models would require teams made up of officials, applied academics, NGOs or community based organizations and local businesses. Participating on a field visit to another city to examine their models has positive side benefits. The shared exposure and social learning that takes place increases the trust among the participants and helps build a team that can champion change in their home region.

Access to Information and Decision Making Processes (Equity)

One of the components of capacity building is increasing the equity among members of the cooperative group. Structurally the GVRD, FBC and NRTEE do this by their membership structure and their attempt to work as much as possible by consensus. Equity

begins with access to information. Any attempt at building a cooperative affiliation between cities and their neighbors or between different sectors requires ready access to the same information. Thus capacity building begins with improving this access. A highly imaginative and successful project to improve the access of groups in developing countries to the Internet was pioneered by the International Institute for Sustainable Development in Winnipeg, Canada.[xiii] It is a model that would work elsewhere.

Access to information, however, is not enough. Disparities in power between small villages, small businesses, minority group members, the poor, women, NGOs and community based organizations and large cities, elites, large organizations and big businesses exist in every region. Effective (professional) facilitation is needed to bridge these disparities and often help is needed to amplify the voices of the disadvantaged groups so that their opinions are heard and respected. This is a twofold process – assisting marginal voices to articulate their views and enhancing the capacity of existing institutions to hear their messages and respond appropriately.

10. Conclusion

No more can local governments tackle their problems alone; indeed, in many developing countries, they have *never* had the resources to adequately cope with the needs of their people or their environments. Increasingly, the role of government will be one of facilitating joint efforts by the public, private sectors, and NGO sectors, assisting with problem definition, and catalyzing action toward solutions.[91] The three models described in this paper are examples of different approaches to engaging a broader constituency in the dialogue around urban sustainability of regions and watersheds. We believe they are also applicable at a neighbourhood and community level.

In essence, a multiple actor system is replacing the former single-actor system dominated by governments.[92] In future, there will be multiple nodes of power and influence, and the challenge will be to enable them to work cooperatively.[93] The benefit of this is that social trust and cohesion ("social capital") will accumulate, which will in turn accomplish three objectives: keeping government more accountable and less corrupt; reducing sources of conflict; and empowering non-government actors.[94]

There are, of course, dangers. Andersen and van Kempen point out that partnerships between various actors are not the same as representative democracy, and shouldn't eliminate more traditional accountability mechanisms.[95] Partnerships amongst government officials, business leaders, and non-government leaders – as represented by the National Round Table – can be extraordinarily effective, but the danger is that ordinary citizens will be left out. On the other hand, one wants to avoid a situation where

[xiii] See www.iisd.ca. The project was originally called Spinning the Web and was supported by IDRC and CIDA.

so many groups are involved that ultimately no one has responsibility for the outcome, or where processes will prove to be interminable and problems remain unaddressed.[96] Processes need to have clear timelines, outcomes, and limits.[97]

In this paper we have attempted to tell the story of the Greater Vancouver Regional District, the Fraser Basin Council and the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy as examples of alternative approaches to governance in Canada, at the regional and watershed levels and as a structured attempt to influence decision making at the national level. Each model has strengths and weaknesses.

The GVRD shows how many different cities and towns can cooperate to undertake visionary regional planning, manage growth and deliver common services including transportation. While it does not have a formal mechanism or relationship with other sectors in its governance model, it has a long history of engaging other sectors and the public in planning processes.

The FBC provides an example of a highly influential multi-stakeholder process that has successfully incorporated the views of municipalities, First Nations and community residents throughout a very large and critical watershed.

The NRTEE is an example of an organization that made a transition from a high powered group including government Ministers, recommending policy and actions to the Prime Minister, to a highly respected independent voice providing research and advice to the Prime Minister and other decision makers, including government Ministers.

The paper concludes by identifying how others wishing to adapt such approaches to their own circumstances might do so and focuses on the implications for building their capacity to implement similar structures.

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[110] Air pollution has been on the decline. However, the GVRD estimates that common air contaminants will once again be on the rise as of 2005, smog-forming pollutants will stabilize, and greenhouse gases will climb steadily. Greater Vancouver Regional District, "GVRD's 2002 Sustainability Report" [online], available at www.gvrd.bc.ca/sustainability/SustainabilityReport02.htm.

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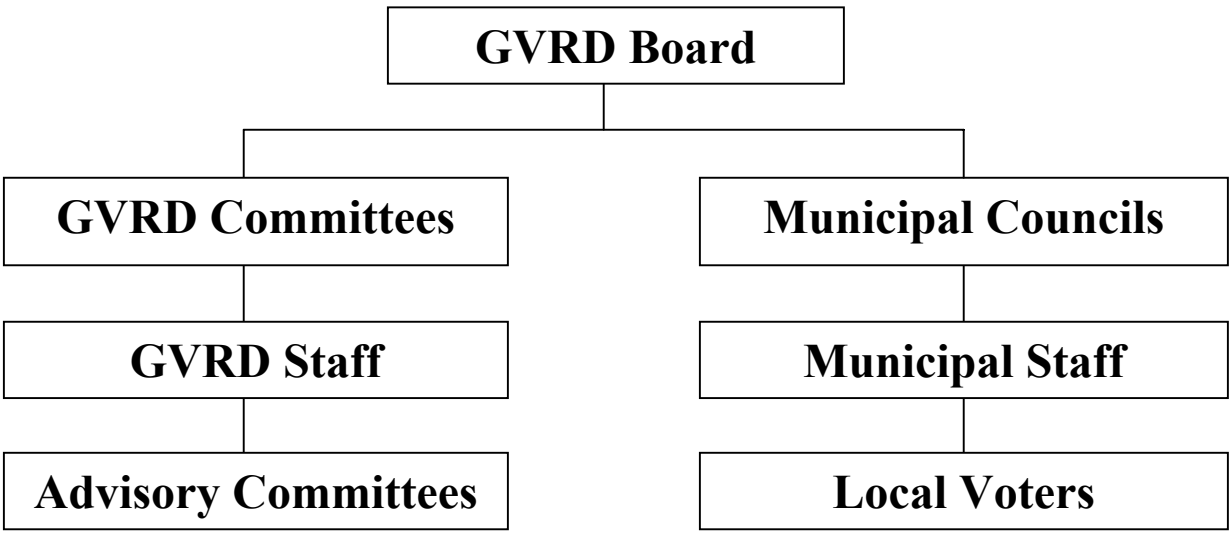
APPENDIX A

The criteria articulated by the UN HABITAT. These criteria include:

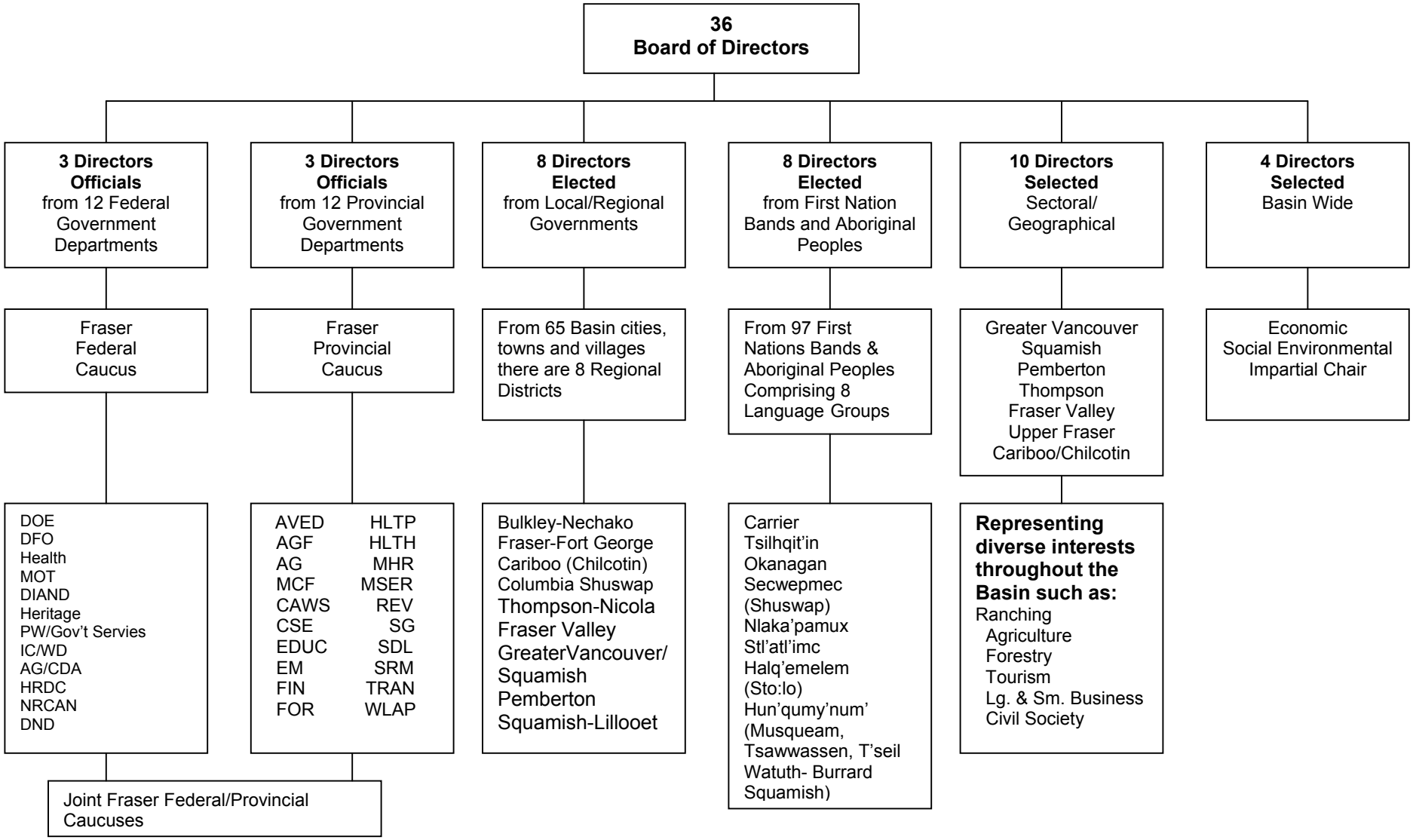
- *Sustainability*: balancing the social, economic, and ecological needs of future generations;
- *Subsidiarity*: assigning responsibility for service provision to the closest level consistent with efficient and cost-effective delivery of service;
- *Equity*: ensuring equitable access to basic needs, such as nutrition, education, employment and livelihood, health care, shelter, safe drinking water, sanitation, and also the equal right to have one's voice be heard and to influence decision making;
- *Efficiency*: the financially sound and cost-effective management of revenue sources and expenditures and the administration of the delivery of services in light of the comparative advantage that each of the three sectors (public, private, and civil society) can offer;
- *Transparency and accountability*: an absence of corruption, access to information by all citizens, the application of laws and public policies in a transparent and predictable manner, and high standards of personal and professional integrity on the part of elected and appointed officials;
- *Civic engagement and citizenship*: the empowerment of citizens – and particularly women, the poor, and marginalized – to take effective part in local and regional decision making; and
- *Security of individuals and their living environments*: ensuring the right to life, liberty, and security of person, including protection from crime, natural or other disasters, and from unfair eviction or loss of services.[98]

APPENDIX B - Organizational Charts

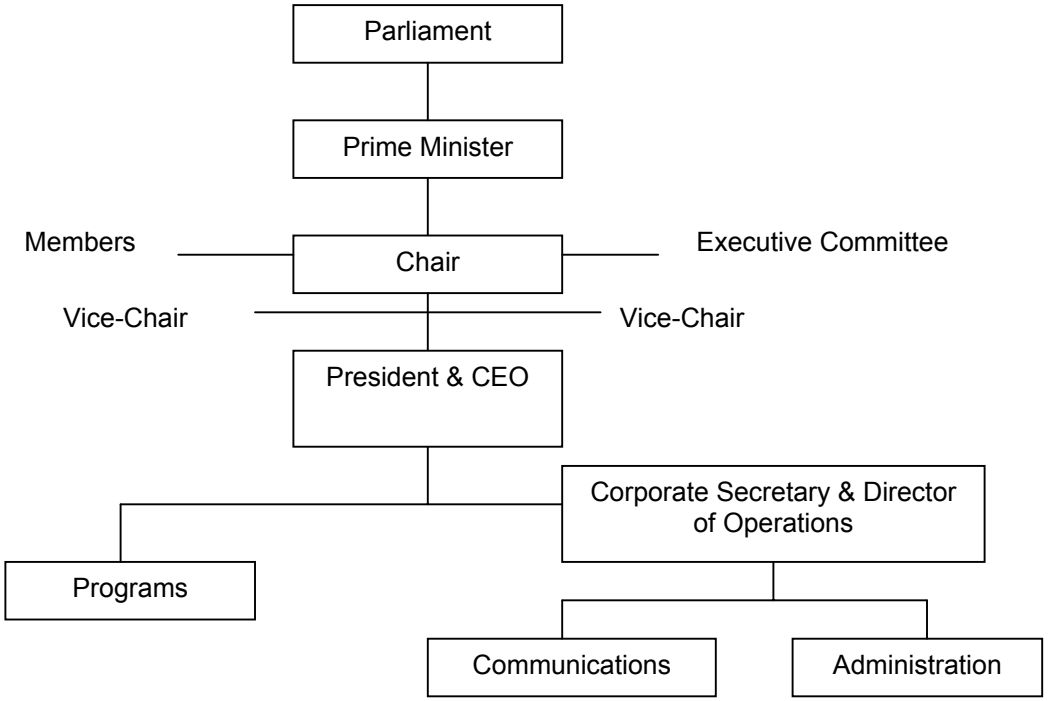
Organizational Structure of the GVRD



FRASER BASIN COUNCIL



NATIONAL ROUND TABLE ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE ECONOMY



APPENDIX C

THE GREATER VANCOUVER TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (TRANSLINK)

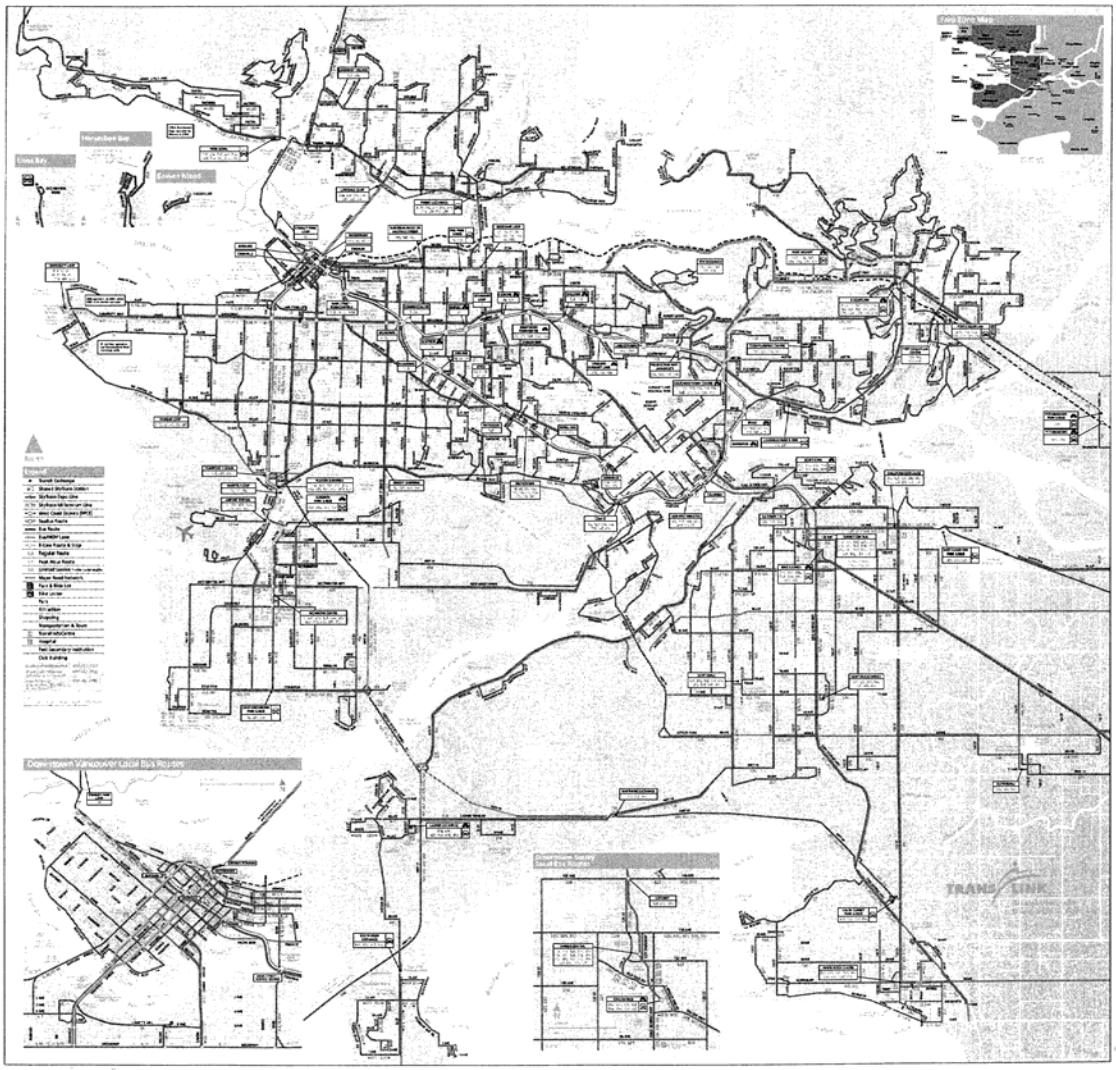


Figure 3: Transportation Infrastructure in the GVRD (regional roads, Skytrain lines, and bus routes) *Source*: TransLink

The Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority, better known as TransLink, is the transportation affiliate of the GVRD. It was created through the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Act (Bill 36) in 1998. Though one of its functions is to support the Livable Region Strategic Plan of the GVRD, it is a formally autonomous organization independent of both the province and the GVRD.[99]

In practice, its governing board shares significant common relationship with the GVRD board, since 12 of its 15 members are appointed by the GVRD and must be either local mayors and/ or members of the GVRD board.[100] Moreover, the GVRD must give its stamp of approval to its long-range transportation and funding plans. The remaining three board members are appointed by the province from members of the provincial legislature. However, these positions have remained unfilled for the past three years because of a conflict between the incoming provincial government and TransLink.[101]

Until TransLink's creation, the Greater Vancouver region was dependent on transportation investment decisions that were largely made in the provincial capital by BC Transit, the Province's transit organization and the provincial ministry of highways. Though represented on BC Transit's Board and a regional transit commission, regions and municipalities often felt left out of decisions affecting the integration of land use and transportation planning. In a bid to influence provincial decision making, the region produced *Transport 2021*, a document which continues to shape and reflect regional thinking on transportation issues.[102]

Bill 36, created TransLink with the authority to provide and manage through its subsidiary companies:

- public transit services: buses, SkyTrain (light rapid transit), the SeaBus (ferry) to North Vancouver, the West Coast Express commuter train from the north shore of the Fraser River, and HandyDART services for people with mobility problems;
- the Albion ferry linking Langley and Maple Ridge;
- the Air Care program that checks vehicles for excessive emissions;
- transportation demand management programs to encourage trip reduction and transportation alternatives; and
- to work in partnership with area municipalities to maintain, rehabilitate, and upgrade the major regional road network, but excluding local roads and provincial highways.[103]

TransLink was also provided with a variety of funding sources in addition to fares collected from its public transit services. These include property taxes, vehicle levies, parking taxes, and the fees collected from Air Care. The Province, in turn, has to give its nominal approval to taxes and levies or, in some cases, is the agent for collecting them. In 2000, shortly before a provincial election – after a bitter fight between urban and suburban councillors and mayors – a proposed vehicle levy was adopted by a narrow margin by TransLink board members. However, a skittish provincial government refused to collect the levy, thus setting back the cause of urban transportation for several years and precipitating a major funding crisis and a subsequent transit strike.[104]

Applying the UN HABITAT Governance Criteria to TransLink

Sustainability – TransLink is committed to achieving "a sustainable transportation network that meets the current and future needs of the region."[105] It aims to achieve cleaner air by insisting on standards for private motor vehicles. It is also committed to increasing ridership, expanding transit services and by organizing and encouraging demand management programs. At the same time, it has a responsibility to service the needs of cars and trucks through maintaining and expanding the existing road and bridge network. As different areas of the region have different modal splits, its transportation priorities reflect political pressures.

Subsidiarity – TransLink represents the devolution of power and revenue generating authority to the regional level. Local roads remain exclusively the responsibility of local municipalities. However, as was evident in the vehicle levy debacle, and in several subsequent decisions (to force a SkyTrain realignment and support a very expensive rapid transit line to the airport and Richmond prior to the 2010 Olympics), there is still the opportunity for senior governments to override regional priorities or influence decisions by offering very specific financial incentives when it becomes politically expedient to do so.

Equity – As with the GVRD board, municipal representatives on the board of TransLink have voting power based on the size of their respective populations. Equity is a thorny matter when it comes to budgeting issues. What is a fair disposition of resources between suburban residents who primarily drive and are heavily dependent on adequate road infrastructure, or – if they take transit – are difficult to service efficiently because of low densities, and the greater number of transit users who reside in Vancouver and the inner ring of suburbs? What mechanisms should be used to fund TransLink's financial priorities? How should these costs be divided? TransLink board members must reconcile regional interests with the wishes of local constituencies. The poor or other disadvantaged groups are not represented at the board table except in general terms by municipal councillors.

Efficiency – TransLink is a more efficient structure than the previous arrangement because it enables regional decision makers to make the necessary decisions in a timely fashion, and to make decisions that are congruent with other regional goals and policies. However, continuing senior government interference – in overriding decisions or prescribing how monies will be spent – continues to result in plans that do not use resources as efficiently as might otherwise be the case.

Transparency and accountability – The Board is appointed, not elected, but 12 of its 15 members are mayors or councillors from the region. As part of the legislation governing its creation, TransLink is required to consult with the public before imposing any new user fee or toll.[106] Its Board meetings are open to the general public, but portions may be held *in camera* if sensitive subjects are being discussed. Matters pertaining to bids are kept confidential for proprietary and competitive reasons. While most of the information on its web site relates to transit services, there is also information on the road network, transportation demand management and intelligent transportation systems. Its

commitment to actively seeking "the ideas of employees, partners, stakeholders and the public" and providing "clear and concise information in a timely manner" is supported by its attempts at engagement identified below.[107]

Civic engagement and citizenship – A variety of methods have been used to involve the public and stakeholders in transportation planning, particularly in relation to the recently developed and approved Strategic Transportation Plan. These have been very innovative.

The key elements have included:

- An Urban Transportation Forum, involving 80-100 people representing all major stakeholders in the region, to identify broad issues and guide the development of a draft plan.
- A Transportation Round Table, involving a smaller subset of people, who in facilitated sessions walked through the trade-offs and balances that needed to be achieved in a final plan. Their deliberations resulted in changes to the draft plan.
- An on-line web exercise called "Building Your Transportation Future," where citizens could use information on the planning options to craft their own proposed plans. Their only constraint was that they had to balance the books and not run a deficit. 12,000 people visited the site, and 4000 people took out user IDs to develop a plan. Of these, 500 plans were completed.
- Eight public meetings were held throughout the region. Although not particularly well attended, despite extensive advertising, priorities from the meetings were incorporated into the final plan. A flyer was also distributed in community newspapers, and public opinion polling was conducted throughout the year leading up to the plan's adoption to test acceptance of its key provisions.[108]

Security of individuals and their living environments – Safety is one of the values that TransLink espouses. TransLink will "plan and deliver a transportation system that promotes the health, safety and security of employees and the public."[109] TransLink has a responsibility for the security of passengers on its vehicles in terms of crime and mechanical safety. It maintains a force of transit police for monitoring SkyTrains and their stations. It also has responsibility for the safety of regional roads, and for regional air quality, to some degree, through administration of the Air Care program. Air Care, since its implementation a number of years ago resulted in significant improvements in air quality. However, the number of cars in the region is growing faster than the number of people, and TransLink has no control over the generally lax emissions standards allowed for SUVs and light trucks. This is resulting in the arrest and reversal of this progress.[110]

As noted above for the GVRD, attention to resilience and emergency preparedness of the region, with further efforts to coordinate on a regional scale, is needed.