

VITAL CONVERSATION ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT AND OUR COMMUNITY REPORT

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Held on December 15, 2021.

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Vital Conversation

Vital Conversations are a community check-in conducted by community foundations across Canada to understand the vitality of our communities and identify trends in a range of areas critical to quality of life. Vital Conversations are coordinated nationally by Community Foundations of Canada. On December 15th, 2021, the Campbellford/Seymour Community Foundation convened a vital conversation in order to engage the community and better understand the current context, perspectives and opportunities related to the environment and community. Over thirty people attended the vital conversation events including a number of students from Campbellford District High School. The vital conversation event was made possible with funding from Leith Wheeler Investment Counsel Ltd.

Objectives of the Vital Conversation

The objectives for the vital conversation included:

1. Sharing information about the Campbellford/Seymour Community Foundation's environmental leadership.
2. Sharing information from Trent Hills Municipal staff about their environmental best practices and emerging opportunities.
3. Exploring environmental stewardship and sustainable community strengths in the community and ideas that may guide and shape the Community Foundation's Strategic Plan (2022).
4. Dialogue and sharing participants' thoughts with other community members and helping to co-create potential solutions and/or inspire calls to action together.

Municipal presentation highlights

Municipality of Trent Hills' staff Kira Mees, Community Development Officer and Kelly Stapley, Manager of Parks and Facilities, presented on details of their best practices for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, fossil fuels and energy consumption. This included the Corporate Energy Management Policy ([2019-2024](#)) which includes energy reduction targets that are being reviewed in 2022. Also, the Tree Canopy Policy ([POL-ADM-006](#)) was presented with its guidance for local vegetation selection, planting considerations and best practices for managing the current urban tree canopy and future development projects. A number of improvements were presented as well as environmental considerations for future purchases, such as learning from Northumberland County's experiences with adopting Hybrid/electric vehicles. The vital conversation slide presentation can be viewed here [Vital Conversation](#).

Campbellford/Seymour Community Foundation presentation highlights

Martha Murphy, the executive director of the community foundation, gave an overview of the environmental leadership and historical environmental granting over the past 20 years. There were 32 environmental grant projects totalling over \$374,000 and an additional \$250,000 in environmental granting from the Municipal Fund. The past and current activities of the community foundation's Environmental Committee were presented, including the committee's creation of the first community garden on Doxsee Avenue and donating to create an environmental fund in 2007. The environmental fund has grown enough to be able to provide annual mini grants of \$500 to registered charities for environmental activities. The community foundation environmental initiatives can be viewed here [environmental initiatives](#).

Vital Conversation Engagement Exercise

After the presentations, the participants were introduced to the core concepts and definitions for Environmental Stewardship, Sustainable Community and Capacity Building, adapted from the Campbellford/Seymour Community Foundations Environmental Action Plan of 2009.

Environmental Stewardship Definition¹ The protection or maintenance of biodiversity and unique ecosystem communities as well as the restoration of degraded ecosystems or threatened species. Environmental information, education and awareness are fundamental to protecting and maintaining healthy ecosystems.

Sustainable Community Definition² A balance between the negative and positive impacts of a viable local economy as well as respect for cultural, social and environmental diversity. Key areas of interest include integrated community sustainability planning, sustainable agriculture specifically the marketing of local foods and products, the maintenance and enhancement of recreational opportunities and energy efficiency.

Capacity Building Definition³ The enhancement of funds, resources and expertise to promote and support work to advance and support growth in environmental stewardship and sustainable communities.

Community Strengths

Participants were asked to identify the existing strengths of the community to support, protect and/or enhance environmental stewardship and sustainable community. The following are the participants' responses grouped into five categories: Our Context and Opportunities, The People, The Groups, The Habitat and Other responses.

Our Context and Opportunities

1. Beautiful natural areas, growing awareness, and caretaking.
2. Protected natural areas. Aspire to protect waterways for current residents and visitors.
3. Three compact towns that haven't sprawled yet! Not too much sprawl/development happening.
4. Enthusiasm for sustainable endeavors.
5. Community, awareness, volunteerism, mindfulness.
6. Green energy created by the Run of the river generating stations.
7. Less toxic chemical products used.
8. Our commitment to surviving which necessitates diversity.
9. Walkable, bikeable communities.

¹ 2009 CSCF Environmental Action Plan

² 2009 CSCF Environmental Action Plan

³ Adapted from the 2009 CSCF Environmental Action Plan

The People

1. Environmentally conscientious communities.
2. Large levels of volunteerism and strong volunteer base.
3. Engaged community members, volunteers, Our human resources.
4. The people here today.
5. People who care about protecting the environment.
6. New people moving into the area adding energy.
7. Professionals (a lot of retired) with expertise. Local knowledge and expertise.
8. Our good energy.
9. Residents highly value local environment.
10. Lots of people with diverse connections to the outdoors.
11. Municipal staff could be a resource – Forest management plan idea.

The Groups

1. Community foundation. The environmental fund.
2. Local conservation authorities.
3. Nature conservancy of Canada.
4. Farmer's market.
5. Leaderful organizations, strong community organizations.
6. The municipality seems to have some vision of environmental issues.
7. Active groups – such as Rotary, BIA, friends of Ferris, Incredible Edibles, Horticultural and trail town initiative – Park Trails.
8. Small community groups like community gardens, Group focused on appropriate development.
9. Group of engaged community members – all ages.

The Habitat

1. Many interesting natural features still intact.
2. Connection to farm community.
3. Green space, provincial park, conservation areas.
4. Geographically – Forests.
5. The rich natural heritage. Our current environment.
6. Urban tree canopies and natural spaces.
7. Water treatment plant – ensures and monitors safe water practices.
8. CDHS and school environment clubs.
9. Waterways – Trent.
10. We have beautiful nature, water, forests etc.
11. Planting the pollinator gardens (increase bee population) Pollinator gardens.
12. Planting trees to increase biodiversity. This clears the air and enhances the community.
13. Large plots of intact acreage/private property.
14. Our geographical location from neighboring cities.

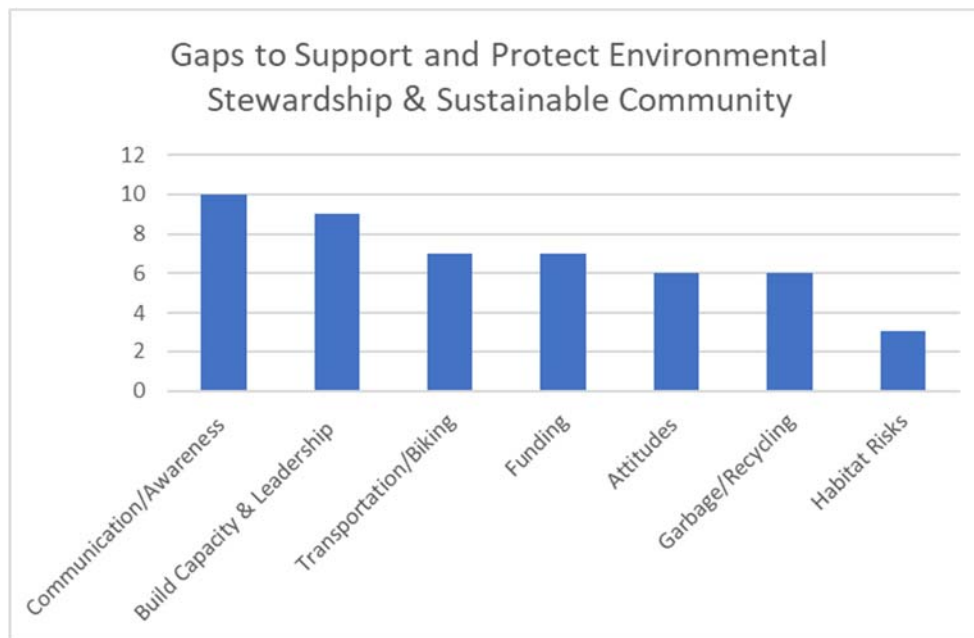
Other

1. Carpooling, monitor fuel usage.
2. Educate us on how we can contribute to sustainability.
3. Self-watering flowerpots.
4. Take an audit of our homes and businesses to see where we can improve.

Community Gaps

Next, the participants were asked to identify their understanding about the current gaps to support, protect and/or enhance environmental stewardship and sustainable communities. The number of responses were counted and grouped into seven categories: Communication/Awareness, Build Capacity & Leadership, Transportation/Biking, Funding, Attitudes, Garbage & Recycling and Habitat Risks. Some responses are included to illustrate the range of gaps identified.

Community Gaps Table 1



Communication/Awareness

- Lack of a general campaign in the whole community promoting better environmental stewardship.
- Awareness/education of what is needed here and what is being done elsewhere.
- Effective communication – messaging.
- Need re-education, Status Quo dominates.
- Awareness of citizens of the issues (i.e.: Communication).
- Lack of education on what we can to help the environment.

Capacity & Leadership

- A central hub/organization to promote and build capacity for sustainability in Trent Hills.
- Challenge to focus efforts and make impact.
- Grassroots organizing needed.
- Large vocal group to organize critical mass of people to push an idea.
- Community at large does not have time/money/energy to stop and think about how to change leadership and public education.
- Leadership which inspires and connects.

Transportation/Biking

- Need to focus on climate change (transportation that reduces green house gases).
- Lack of infrastructure to promote cycling instead of driving.
- No real public transit options.
- Car-centric environment.
- Lack of infrastructure to promote cycling instead of driving.

Funding

- Need for a registered charity to lead efforts.
- Funding, leadership for efforts with gap in environmental community groups.
- Taxes already too high so some need for a way to obtain funds from other government.
- Lack of funding or the ease of applying for funding.
- Financial determinants of larger projects.

Garbage/Recycling

- McDonalds, especially Tim Hortons, should pay for garbage cans for our village.
- Put out more garbage cans.
- Garbage tags should be part of our taxes and not extra – people are dumping.
- Lack of understanding towards what our area can recycle.
- Bylaws to enforce waste management systems.

Attitudes

- Agricultural community with traditional practices= not always sustainable agricultural practices.
- Old school thinking.
- Companies not following best practices because it costs more.
- Trying to change mindset and extra efforts and planning needed for change.
- Business interests non-local and local, that seek short term gains and fast profits rather than long-term goals.

Habitat Risks

- Trees/hedgerows disappearing.
- Too much corn/soy, not enough diverse crops.
- Use of pesticides.

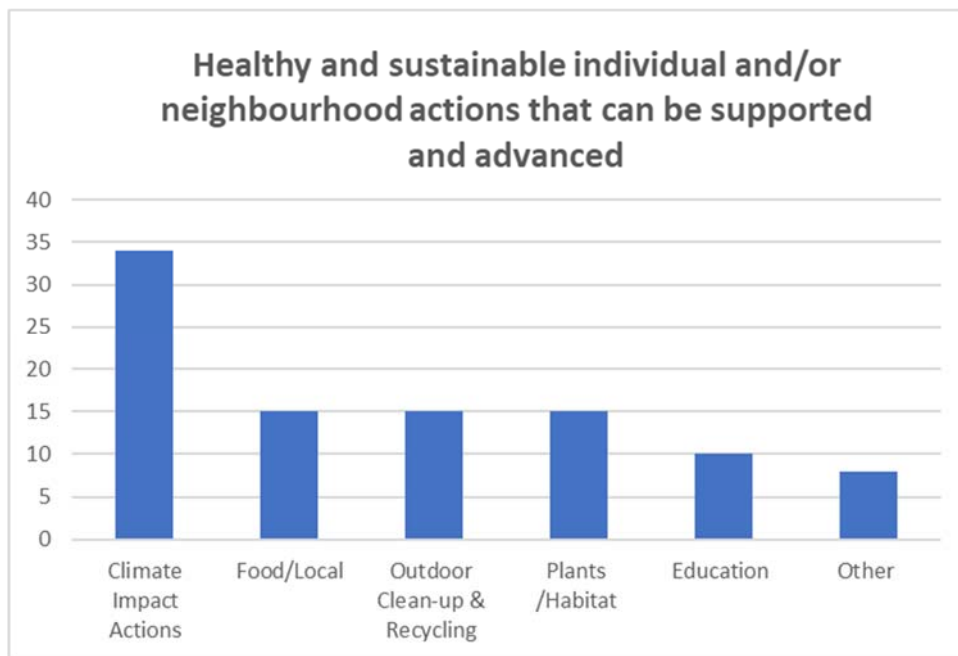
Other

- Green urinals.
- Public drinking water.
- Lack of volunteers.

Individual or Neighbourhood Actions

The participants were asked to identify the healthy and sustainable individual and/or neighbourhood actions that can be supported for advancing Environmental Stewardship and Sustainable Communities. The number of responses were counted and grouped into six categories: Climate Impact Actions, Food/Local, Outdoor Clean-up & Recycling, Plants /Habitat, Education and Other. Some responses are included to illustrate the range of individual and neighbourhood ideas shared.

Individual or Neighbourhood Actions Table 2



Climate Impact Actions

- Car pooling, Transit.
- Walking and cycling to school, Riding to work/school, Bike more and walk more.
- Promote active transportation, Walking, cycling, hiking, Make streets bike and pedestrian friendly.
- No idle of vehicles, MacDonaldis t-Horton's – idling.
- Electric furnace.
- Bike commuting; replacing car trips with bike trips, Bike racks, Bicycling.
- Electric cars/home charging-require charging ports for all new builds @municipal level and by developers, Buy a battery electric vehicle.
- Water bottle filling station, Water conservation, Water stations, Reduction of water use.
- Green roofs and solar power.
- More insulation.
- DE pave parking space, Porous pavement, Stormwater management.
- Use limited amounts of light energy (less light pollution) turning off lights.
- Be sure to turn off lights to reduce energy consumption.
- More outdoor activities.
- Use re-usable bags for shopping, Ban single use plastic's, Plastics reduction.
- Use eco-friendly replacements like reusable containers.

Plants /Habitat

- Native plants/gardens, Pollinator gardens, Planting perennial plants.
- Planting native trees, Planting and maintaining trees, Tree planting.
- Tree program on individual properties.
- Replace all downtown trees with fruits and nuts.
- Increase community garden plots.
- Weed existing tree planters.
- Gathering like minded people to promote slow and thoughtful development (housing and other building) in our area.
- Livestock barriers.
- More naturalized green spaces, Naturalizing yards. We need to get rid of lawns – incentives to do it are needed.
- Reduce use of salt in winter – alternatives.

Outdoor Clean-up & Recycle

- Recycling properly.
- Repair/recycle/re-reuse center.
- Fast food should supply and manage their garbage.
- Clean garbage from ditches in spring in town, on our roads and wooded areas.
- Sorting our recycling, Reduce garbage/recycling for rural areas (every 2-3 weeks).
- Storefront beautification.
- Graffiti removal.

- Circular/whole life cycle buying and recycling.
- Garbage clean up, Community clean up, picking up garbage, Do not litter programs.
- Buy less, buy only second-hand.
- More waste receptacles.
- Yard waste composting.

Food/Local

- Grow food, not lawns, Grow gardens, Grow more food and natural vegetation.
- More community food projects, Community greenhouse, Community gardens.
- Community food storage.
- Community seed bank.
- Community prep/preserving classes and gatherings, Community meals – food is one highlight of the environmental education.
- Food composting education.
- Local food gardens and backyard food gardens.
- Shop local, CSAs for produce/local farm shares.

Education and Awareness

- Education - At school we teach about recycling and promote garbage less lunch.
- Environmental education.
- Excursions to learn about our local environmental gems.
- Build personal awareness (e.g., Experiencing nature reserves or community gardens).
- Education – Get out the bike!
- Educational presentations or fieldtrips to water filtration/treatment plants to inform students where our water goes and how we can support this process.
- Strike a community foundation group to work with community on environmental education.
- Community engagement/volunteering, shared community events like Incredible Edibles.
- Volunteering for events or data collection for sustainability projects – citizen scientists.

Other

- Advocating/researching and exploring sustainable alternatives to rural sprawl.
- Advocacy - Keeping waterways clean.
- Clean energy education/festiva.l
- Encouraging community to take advantage of energy grants.
- Community recreation in public spaces.
- LGBTQ crosswalk.
- Fewer Indoor facilities for fitness and wellbeing.
- We could push for better trails, bike rentals and tours, contest to homeowner pollinator gardens, organized cleanup for April 22 in the rural areas, information on water and wastewater and stormwater and adaption to climate change.

Questions Burst Exercise

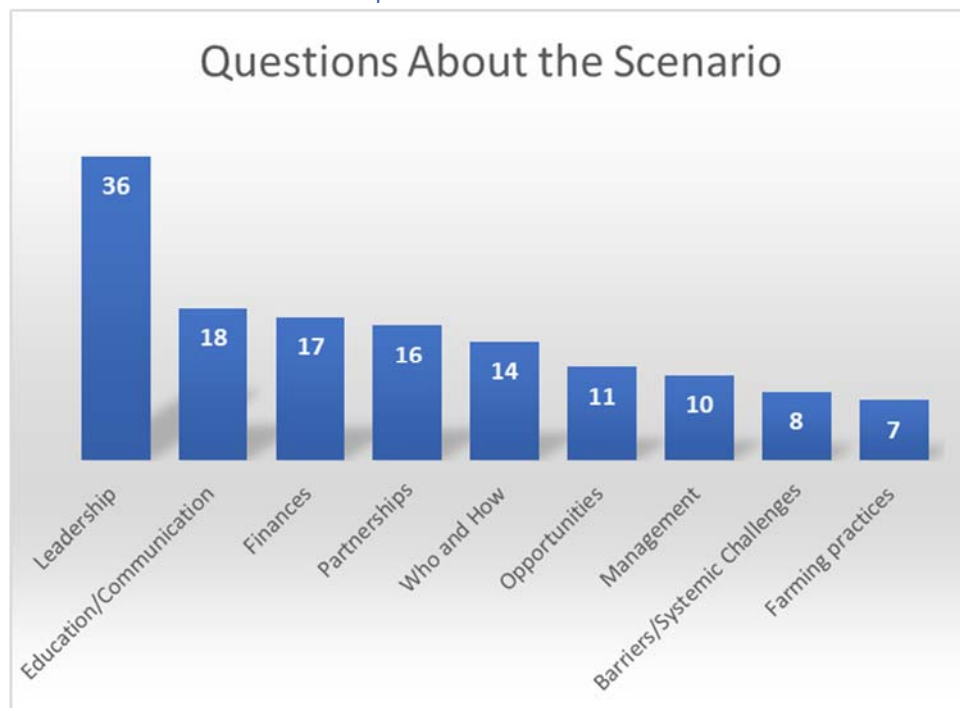
The vital conversation included a [Questions Burst](#) exercise to surface questions about the complex challenges of supporting and advancing environmental stewardship and sustainable communities. The purpose of the exercise was to explore the uncertain and changing environmental and community context in Campbellford/Seymour and how to make progress when the directions and next steps are unclear.

The participants moved into small groups to collectively generate questions about a future scenario. The following scenario was posed to the participants, and the questions were gathered and counted and grouped into categories. A number of the participant questions are included in each category to illustrate the range of questions generated by the participants about the scenario. [Questions Burst Scenario](#)

“YOU HAVE BEEN INVITED TO A NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MEETING TO SPEAK TO HOW THE TRENT HILLS AREA HAS BECOME SO WELL KNOWN FOR SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES AND ACTIVITIES THAT ADVANCE A GREEN COMMUNITY MOVEMENT.

THIS IS AN EXPLORATORY FIRST MEETING TO SHARE THE TRENT HILLS JOURNEY WITH THE COUNTY. WHAT QUESTIONS ARISE FOR YOU AS YOU APPROACH THIS MEETING?”

Participant Questions Table 3



Leadership

The highest category of questions was the area of leadership. Here are a range of questions related to understanding and advancing different kinds of leadership and collective action.

- Where did this leadership come from? Who are the leaders?
- What did the municipality do?
- How can Municipalities change building codes to accommodate smaller energy efficient houses?
- How do you get the public support these initiatives?
- Where do we embed policy to ensure sustainable development in our community values around natural and cultural heritage?
- How do you get up a proactive response, not a reactive response?
- How are we going to influence the future of development in our communities?
- What other actions could be taken to address food security?
- How do we Ban use of household pesticides?
- How does leadership reflect collaboration spent?
- How did we do this so fast and so simply?
- How did you get the community involved?
- How did you get volunteers?
- Did the community provide physical space in which to bring groups together?
- How do we create a forest?
- How do we facilitate the integration of people and nature?
- How did we convene everyone to do an audit of their operations – energy use etc.

Education, Communication and Awareness Building

The next highest category of questions related to education, communication and building awareness. Some of the questions are specifically about knowledge mobilization including:

- How are we communicating with the community?
- How did you get community buy in?
- What can we do to improve a source of information?
- How is our community communicating with other areas (regions) about ideas and projects?

Some questions in this category are about learning and awareness related to specific topics such as sustainability, community gardens, composting and waste management.

- Are the garbage/recycling trucks recycling properly?
- Are compost bins accessible to people who live in apartments?
- Who benefits from the community gardens?
- How did we encourage cultural diversity?
- How did we coordinate community education of how to be more sustainable?
- What more can we learn from the rest of the country?

Finances and Funding

Finances and funding were a frequent response category with questions related to the funding sources for environmental stewardship and community sustainability as well as understanding the impacts including costs and benefits.

- What were the costs? How much have we spent to date on our accomplishments?
- Is there funding? Sustainable budget?
- What is the economic impact of these initiatives?
- Did the municipality invest in these projects?
- How did we get funding? Where did the money come from? Where does Funding come from?
- Why doesn't garbage get billed in our taxes rather than use tags?
- What monies are for which groups?
- Procurement? How do you fund/sustainable suppliers?
- Did Parks Canada and the MNR and Conservation Authority provide funds for projects?
- Did the Federation of Canadian Municipalities give funding and support through TH Municipality? (for climate change and stormwater management)?

Partnership and Collaboration

Questions about partnerships and collaboration included understanding the partners that made the change happen and how the partnerships were built as well as suggesting possible partners at the national, regional and local levels.

- Who are the partners? What are the partnerships – are there any?
- How did you build partnerships/trust/engagement?
- Considered work with FCM, conservation?
- Authorities, woodlot association?
- Have you tapped into Greenup for ideas?
- How could all these various groups team up in some way and to have moral presence.
- How did you involve the groups that support development?
- Are youth involved? What is being done to include young people?
- What outreach is being done with Indigenous people? What is the relationship between Indigenous communities in the area and the groups involved?
- How did we encourage and support Arts and Heritage in our community?
- Did we partner with the agricultural sectors?
- How did we link with the Conservation Authorities, provincial governments?

How to Get Started and Who

There were questions about how the stewardship and community sustainability changes got started. Most the questions were about who started the work and how it became an active priority for people.

- What were the catalysts? What are first steps? How did we start? How did we do this?
- Were there many community groups to begin with?
- Were young people targeted specifically?
- Were elderly people targeted to get involved?
- What would be your 1st step if you were starting again from scratch?
- How has the average citizen changed their lifestyle? How does this group change lifestyles of people in the community? How did it become a community priority “part of daily life”?
- What were the quick wins to get people snagged?

Opportunities

The category of opportunities is quite broad. It includes questions about specific areas of opportunity related to incentives for behaviour change and influencing positive changes in conservation, waste reduction and processing.

- What opportunities should we expect to face?
- What part or % of people support our goals/cause?
- What's working well (to build on)?
- How do we encourage the trades to decrease waste?
- How do we get people connected to nature? How did we create appreciation in every member of the community for environmental initiative?
- What incentives are being provided to help businesses, households and others do the right things for the environment?
- How do we keep feedwater/aquifers free of algae?
- What is the future of the Seymour transfer station and hazardous waste?

Management

Questions related to measuring and monitoring the changes in environmental stewardship and community sustainability were grouped into the category of management including:

- How did you prioritize projects?
- How closely are these initiatives being monitored?
- How do we measure success? How do we keep track of these projects? Who keeps track of the projects? Tracking progress? What can we improve on?
- Where are the meetings held?
- How many people are reducing emissions by walking to work or school?
- Who's holding people accountable?

Barriers and Systemic Challenges

Questions about barriers and systemic challenges could have been grouped together with farming practices as they represent one specific type of systemic challenge to environmental stewardship. However, both sets of questions speak to opportunities for overcoming systemic challenges and as such are perhaps better examined separately. This category of questions includes community resistance and conflict, as well as questions related to addressing system level pressures.

- How can we maintain our sustainable vision in the face of corporate interests?
- How do we retain our natural and cultural heritage while sub-urban communities are looming on the horizon?
- How to make a pollutions citizen's arrest?
- Was there resistance from community members? Was there conflict within any and amongst the various community groups?
- Who decides where the Municipal garbage cans go and what they are used for?

Farming Practices

One unique and important area of questions relates to influencing, regulating and incentivising farming practices that not harmful to our shared environment.

- Who looks after farmer drainage, who is providing oversight? How did we regulate “O” pipe put in fields? Redirecting water?
- What incentives are there for farmers to sequester carbon?
- The elephant in the room is the farmers – How do we change Farming Practices? How did we get farmers to change their Farming Practices?
- How can we help farmers get out from under the thumb of Monsanto and other polluters and destroyers of the land and soil? How can farmers be encouraged to farm with less pesticides?

Next Steps

The Campbellford/Seymour Community Foundation convened a vital conversation in order to engage the community and better understand the current context, perspectives and opportunities related to the environment and community.

Next steps include direction internally, for the Campbellford/Seymour Community Foundation’s environmental stewards committee and board of directors, as well as externally, to the vital conversation participants/community members.

At the CSCF environmental stewards meeting held March 28, 2022, the following next steps were determined and have been added to the vital conversation report.

Environmental Stewards Next Steps:

1. That the CSCF Executive Director set up a zoom meeting with a representative at Peterborough Green Up to review our Vital Conversation findings and discuss ideas of how the CSCF could move forward. This meeting is expected to take place in April. The ED will forward the link to the environmental committee if anyone would like to join the meeting.
2. The environmental stewards to review the information discussed at the meeting with Peterborough Green-up and meet with the vital conversation participants to discuss next steps.
3. Following the meeting with the vital conversation participants, the environmental stewards consider recommendations to the CSCF Board for their strategic planning session.

Vital Conversation Participants Next Steps:

In order to build momentum with the participants in the vital conversation the CSCF will continue to engage everyone who participated.

1. The Executive Director through the Executive Assistant has sent out an invitation to all vital conversation participants to the Beyond Crisis Film to be held at the Aron Theatre April 21st.
2. The vital conversation report will be shared with the participants via email and will be posted on the CSCF website in April.
3. Following the consultations with Peterborough Green-up a face-to-face follow-up conversation will be initiated with the vital conversation participants.