

## **2<sup>nd</sup> National Smart Growth Canada Network Meeting**

Wednesday, February 4, 2004 / Chateau Laurier Hotel, Ottawa

*Apart from regional reports and keynote presentations, most participant comments are attributed anonymously.*

### **Introduction / Welcome:**

Cheeying Ho (Executive Director, Smart Growth BC) and Don Alexander (interim coordinator, Smart Growth Canada Network)

- Initial meeting in May 2003 in Vancouver was open to non-government organizations only, whereas today's meeting was opened up to include government agencies, foundations, etc.
- Consensus at May 2003 meeting was that we do need a network, but there was uncertainty about what shape it would take. We've set up a basic website (mostly in English at present but is linked to the Vivre en Ville website) and listserv. Where the network goes from here is unsure.
- Throne speech this week (Kyoto Protocol, etc.) means this could be good timing to get the network up and running.
- Funding for this meeting has been generously donated by Natural Resources Canada and Transport Canada.
- Purpose of today's meeting:
  - Help consolidate the network
  - Promote dialogue among NGOs, government, business and the academic community.

### **Updates from Panel of Regional Representatives**

#### **(A) QUÉBEC: Jérôme Vaillancourt, Vivre en Ville**

- Problem of translating "smart growth" into French.
- Progress on smart growth in Québec is currently difficult; merger of municipalities (large cities still working on urban planning, but there's blockage due to focus on merger/de-merger issue); new provincial government contributing to stagnation in municipal organizations, so with progress on smart growth slowing down the door is left open to sprawl.
- New provincial government has announced new highways; mixture of public and private-sector involvement; we're concerned about that leading to sprawl and destruction of agricultural land.
- In Montréal, development is happening everywhere, no longer focused on the transit corridor = not good.
- Province of Québec government is the only one in the world that says an autoroute *reduces* greenhouse gases!

- Positive move: Québec City has adopted a moratorium on big box stores; is better at holding out on opening up new roads; removal of GST will mean \$3 million would go for infrastructure renewal for the city and \$1 million for environmental innovation and sustainable development.
- Crisis in public transit; but in the province, we have a coalition working on improving the financing of public transit. There is a petition with thousands of names of people who want improvements in transit – to be presented to the federal government. This could be a national initiative.
- Interest in the national smart growth network: We need to define what we want to do with it, whether we want to use it for advocacy; we are not yet fully convinced, but there is, indeed, an interest in the network.
- Question re: agriculture reserves: There was a freeze on agricultural land conversions; the conditions were very strict. But the Commission is being retired. Requests can be made to remove lands from the freeze, especially in the Montréal area.
- Question re: transit: P3 (public-private partnerships): Seen in Québec as a big major solution for getting more transit.

**(B) PRAIRIES:            Randall McQuaker, Resource Conservation Manitoba**

- This report is focused mostly on Manitoba. SG is emerging as a concept in our region. No official SG organization in Manitoba. (*Note:* On May 18<sup>th</sup>, a meeting was held in Red Deer to explore the establishment of Smart Growth Alberta.)
- City of Winnipeg is developing an environmental strategy; we see SG mentioned in that document, yet there are plans for lots more roads; we see co-option of SG term (like “sustainable development”); SG seems not to be fully understood.
- In Winnipeg, the creative energy pushing sustainable communities is coming from ENGOS, not the city government (with the starring exception of the Mayor – articulate and visionary; the others on council not helpful); more \$ needed for ENGOS to do this kind of work.
- Provincial government sees SG as a public relations exercise.
- Lessons learned: Important that we share information (case studies, developing innovative solutions).
- “New deal for cities”: may need innovative mechanisms such as part of parking revenues allocated for ENGO work.
- City of Winnipeg staff person agreed with Randall’s assessment. Noted that Winnipeg is part of the Urban Transportation Showcase (federal government leadership). Trying to attack traffic congestion – one suggestion was to drop transit fares by 50% (to 90 cents from \$1.80) – it didn’t pass.
- If SG is going to work, we all need to get out into the political arena; use this network to do so. Let’s become a lean, mean fighting machine.

**(C) BRITISH COLUMBIA: Deborah Curran, Smart Growth BC /  
West Coast Environmental Law**

- State of SG in B.C. is very good – leadership from many sectors promoting SG. There is an excellent group of municipalities, both urban and rural, interested in SG – good political environment for SG. But small municipalities don't have the \$ to do the work they'd like to do.
- Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) – 5% of land base – can't be developed without processes outside municipal control. It has come under some attack over the past year, so SGBC, farmers and others are promoting the ALR as one of our primary mechanisms to curb sprawl. Seventy percent of the population lives on two percent of the B.C. land base = best agricultural land (Lower Mainland, Okanagan Valley).
- Green buildings – lots of activity, leadership from the business sector, architects, developers.
- “Smart Growth on the Grand” – a project with other agencies involving case studies; moving SG forward on a whole-community basis.
- Leadership from interesting places: the Urban Development Institute held a two-day symposium on sustainable communities for a business audience.
- The affordable housing discussion is not yet happening at high enough levels.
- Transit is still not leading land use.
- We find we need to continually define SG – it is not just a green subdivision in the middle of nowhere.
- Question re: how we work with municipalities on new land use designs: First one is District of Maple Ridge – we provided in-kind staff in planning and engineering. Municipality sees it as a service to them. Landscape architects at UBC bring environmental sustainability into the equation. Second community will be Squamish, third will be a joint rural/urban project in the Okanagan.

**(D) ATLANTIC CANADA: Shawn Henderson,  
Atlantic Genuine Progress Indicators**

- Major issue in St. Margaret's Bay (Shawna is also with the St. Margaret's Bay Stewardship Association) is water quality; we're on granite, yet on septic too. Large areas are being rapidly developed, coliform counts are going up because the cumulative impact of development is overwhelming the system. So there is a three-month moratorium on development, based on municipal concern about water supply and on-site disposal.
- Smart Growth Halifax exists, but it is basically an initiative to bring in economic growth virtually at all costs.
- Ron Jackson, City Councillor, Fredericton, N.B.: If there is anything in New Brunswick, it is dumb growth. The problem is systemic; has a lot to do with water quality, with the tax structure (re: funding infrastructure). We in N.B. have a lot to learn from what others are doing.
- Ausra Burns, Mount Allison University: Our urban agenda is one of continuous sprawl and urbanization. We have strong ENGOS; New Brunswick Environment Network.

**(E) ONTARIO: Mark Winfield,  
Pembina Institute for Appropriate Development**

- Because of new provincial government, it has been a period of great change in the last few months. Government has backed away from some promises due to budget deficit.
- Intense population growth pressures in the “Greater Golden Horseshoe” (Greater Toronto Area, the area around western end of Lake Ontario and beyond).
- Emergence of public and political concern about loss of green space and farmland, too much urban sprawl. Severe air quality problems, much due to transportation.
- Previous provincial government (1995-2003) had a smart growth initiative starting in 2001, but very little was translated into provincial policy or legislation, the one exception being legislation and a land use plan to protect the Oak Ridges Moraine. That government had massive highway expansion plans in south-central Ontario that have not been stopped by the new government.
- New government has promised plenty of smart initiatives – two cents from the provincial gas tax is to be delayed due to provincial deficit (*May 2004 update: it is in the just-released provincial budget; it is to be phased in*). Also: Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt, Planning Act amendments, one-year moratorium on most commercial water-taking, commitment to reform Development Charges Act, drinking water source protection. While the government has stumbled, the political will appears to be there.
- Creation of new Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal (MPIR) – marriage of Smart Growth Secretariat and the SuperBuild Corporation; in theory, it looks promising.
- Barriers: (a) the provincial deficit; the initiatives that don’t cost \$ are going ahead, others are on hold; (b) institutional inertia: Ministry of Transportation – in spite of government’s direction, MTO continues planning new highways as usual.
- Areas of concern: Willingness to move on widening the revenue base for municipalities; how to reform the Ontario Municipal Board (fundamental reform needed).
- Ontario Smart Growth Network founded in July 2003; 37 member organizations now. Still heavy on environment NGOs, but also some from housing and transportation sectors. New provincial government gives us window of opportunity. A loose network, to raise awareness; member groups to provide on-the-ground support. We have a steering committee that meets regularly.
- Brad Graham, Ontario SG Secretariat: SGS being at MPIR is good because we are linked to Municipal Affairs for land use planning, but have the ability to directly affect transportation planning. Significant movement – the key Ministers meet regularly.
- Question re: link between provincial deficit situation and lack of SG in Toronto area: Our new Toronto mayor "gets it." A greater threat is the situation in the "905 belt" (the area surrounding Toronto) – e.g. leapfrog development due to highway expansion north of the Oak Ridges Moraine (protected area north of Toronto) – Alliston, Barrie. Pembina concentrates on capital infrastructure spending issues.
- Comment: Uneven response across the country – B.C. vs. the rest of Canada; in B.C., business and development communities are getting on-side.

## **Role of the Network, Name & Principles, Organizational Structure and Membership Criteria** – Discussion led by Don Alexander and Randall McQuaker

- At May 2003 meeting (Vancouver), we came up with priorities: education and communications, capacity-building; facilitation and information-sharing; advocacy work; alliance-building.
- We did set up the website; three French names being considered, as yet undecided.
- Organizational structure: caucus versus coalition format – caucus entails less tightly structured principles, membership affects principles (whom you want to attract). Caucus (e.g. Ontario Environment Network) not focussed on overarching principles, but if a group of groups wants to take a position on an issue, fine. A coalition has the ability to take positions.
- Comment: If we want to affect actions, we need to get at policy. Issues re: charitable status and CCRA; raising funds depends so much on charitable status.
- Ont. SG Network (OSGN): We set up a "gate test" – if you agree with this set of principles (read them at [www.greenontario.org/smartgrowth](http://www.greenontario.org/smartgrowth)), your group can become a member. Has advantage of making clear what OSGN stands for and gives us some ability to act as a coalition. It's a coalition by virtue of the set of principles; gives us ability to do some advocacy (e.g. letters to the Premier and Ministers) without consulting all the groups.
- Comment: Need to defuse notion that this is only a group of wild-eyed environmentalists; be clear about SG terminology; coalition model means not losing or diluting the message.
- Cheeying Ho: SGBC decided to be its own organization, not a network. We wanted to move forward with our own agenda. Nation-wide, idea could be to link the English network with existing Québec network; preference for one network.
- US counterparts: Smart Growth America is a coalition; Growth Management Leadership Alliance consists of only NGOs, whereas Smart Growth Network is a US EPA initiative, including government agencies as well as NGOs.
- Comment: Need and key demand(s) must be identified. What do we want the federal government to hear?
- Comment: If SG Canada is needed, it would be on the policy side (e.g. infrastructure issues); would have to be a coalition of the willing. But other comment: Don't focus too much on policy, focus on what's happening on-the-ground, what will work, business cases.
- Don Alexander: Decisions we need to make today: Which organizations will commit to help shepherd this forward (since, e.g., we won't get agreement on principles and policies here today).
- Question: Are there any resources available, since we can't take it on within our existing resources, need significant seed money. Answer: No resources yet for administration of a national network.
- Comment: Federation of Canadian Municipalities' environmental people would be a good place to seek funding, sees SG Canada's direct aim as encouraging FCM to advocate our positions with the federal government – e.g., FCM's Partners for Climate Protection.

- Comment: SG Canada should be for education and information-sharing, advocacy, collaboration of projects of a national, trans-provincial nature.
- Comment: Purposes of network should be to learn from good examples elsewhere, connect people, advocate positions with federal government in a targetted fashion to encourage SG, to make federal policies consistent (e.g. on SG and on climate change). We are constrained because of the geography of the country. We need to advocate the *why* of SG. Air quality, transportation, farmland protection get funding, so our grant applications need to speak to the why.
- Don Alexander asked federal participants to address why they are interested in a SG Canada network. Response: Natural Resources Canada (unofficial response): We would probably support a SG organization, but not one that is only for advocacy; community development is complex (federal, provincial, municipal); it's a question of who "owns" what; likely the best way to go is to implement projects and promote the benefits of those projects (e.g., buildings, subdivisions). Environment Canada: Difficult for federal government to fund core work, instead fund projects.
- Comment: Does not make sense to have a national organization to implement local projects; that happens at regional/provincial level. Federal/national work has to relate to funding as well as a policy function and information-sharing.
- Comment: The cases are out there; the developers will be there when you give them the examples. Where there is the demand, developers will come to the table. One of the biggest obstacles is planners and engineers not understanding the new models. We continue to see bad decisions because we are not getting the message out, e.g. re: importance of public transit, which gets built with federal subsidies. Roads also get built with federal subsidies.
- Comment: We need an abundance of completed projects that could be put up on the website.
- Proposal: National SG awards program – praise for those doing a good job.
- Comments: We have an incredible opportunity now – a federal government engaged in the urban agenda. We should build on the National Round Table on Environment and Economy example.

### **Smart growth and energy planning initiatives**

Lunch Presentation by Don Chen, Executive Director, Smart Growth America,

- SG America founded in 2000, includes Natural Resources Defence Council (NRDC), land trusts, etc. Ten staff, still growing.
- We focus on federal policy, state and local policy, coalition-building.
- Smart Growth Network is funded by US EPA; is largely a network of practitioners, people in the business of implementing SG across the US.
- Growth Management Leadership Alliance: Executive Directors of SG organizations across the country.
- Definition of sprawl: low-density; large, single-use zones; street inaccessibility; lack of centres (e.g., downtowns).
- How sprawl contributes to climate change: sheer conversion of land; heat island effect; the transportation aspect = most of what we (SGA) do. Density is the most important determinant of reliance on cars.

- Jobs/housing balance: Where there is imbalance, vehicle-miles travelled (VMT) increases. Examine VMT in greenfield versus urban infill developments.
- Emphasis on civic participation.
- Recommendations for Smart Growth Canada: (a) streamline development process for smart growth (new ways of doing things typically have different/complex development approvals); (b) create green building standards that incorporate SG; (c) harness market demand for compact, walkable communities; (d) advance land preservation efforts; (e) provide transportation and housing options.
- Contact information: dchen@smartgrowthamerica.org, www.smartgrowthamerica.org, (202) 207-3355 (Washington, D.C.).
- Question re: SGA funding: foundation grants, some government grants for research, a few private donors.
- Don Chen recommends the NRDC book *Solving Sprawl* for case studies.
- Cheeying Ho: What we can learn from SGA is the networking – with labour, with housing groups, etc.

## **Role of the Federal Government in Advancing Community Energy Planning:**

Ken Church, Natural Resources Canada —discussion facilitated by Ray Tomalty  
(Note: *Participants had also received a copy of a report on these issues produced by the Network for NRCan.*)

- Federal government promotes R & D into various urban sustainability initiatives.
- Office of Energy Efficiency (within NRCan): Much of the R2000 program, advanced housing programs, etc. are done here.
- There has been a focus on technological hardware, but there is increasing emphasis on system design, on communities as a system (e.g. heating and cooling systems done as a package).
- Federal agencies represented here today include Environment Canada, Transport Canada, CMHC, Public Works Canada, NRCan.
- Issue: the barriers in science and technology fields (including policy and planning) in pursuing your goals.
- Issue (Ray Tomalty): What NRCan can do to help us overcome the barriers to implementing smart growth.
- Comment: Lifestyle shifts: would like to see focused social marketing on reduced consumption; need to shift from addressing only smart growth to making the link to health, obesity, etc.; bring in user groups to share ideas with them.
- Ray Tomalty: CMHC is interested in sustainable urban design.
- CMHC representative: We have done studies on sustainable neighbourhoods, e.g., the booklet *Your Next Move* on the CMHC website (www.cmhc.ca; go to sustainable communities part of site) helps people make choices on where to move.
- Comment: Federal government can put more funding into work at the local level.
- Location-efficient mortgages: CMHC could do these starting tomorrow.
- Ken Church: A caution – Government likes to fund studies, but would not want to actually fund the implementation of the studies' recommendations.

- Comment: Everyone wants us to do projects but they don't want us to exist (i.e., don't want to fund core functions)!
- Comment: re: barriers to energy efficiency, go to [www.energyaware.bc.ca](http://www.energyaware.bc.ca).
- Comment: Applauds NRCan for doing this work. Re: community energy planning – One of the barriers to getting developers to build green buildings is not getting the word out about long-term savings. The two percent additional cost of green buildings may be enough to set back the project.
- Question: Existing social housing is not energy-efficient; government ends up paying the energy costs, but retrofits are happening. Are there any statistics that consider all social housing in Canada and what their energy usage is versus that of a typical housing unit? Ken Church: No stats from his group, but the issue of low-cost housing is on the list for potential research projects. The *new* stock of social housing is quite energy-efficient.
- Comment: The business case for SG – We should challenge conventional developers to quantify the energy impact of their developments.
- Wrap-Up (Don Alexander):
  - How do we market to consumers the benefits of energy efficiency and what are the specific examples?
  - Need policy implementation case studies; need studies of cost-effectiveness of different demand management strategies.
  - Need stricter criteria for federal infrastructure spending.
  - How do we give public utilities incentives to conserve?
  - How do we begin to give people tax incentives for transit use and not for parking?
  - Community Energy Association found Kamloops, B.C. was the first city to have a Community Energy Plan, but it was never implemented.
  - Need more studies on full-cost benefits of implementing these technologies in the development sector; need incentives related to the extra up-front costs that developers have to pay for smarter developments.
  - Perhaps some of NRCan's technical research should be made available to the general public (at their reading level).
  - We need a smart community approach, not just smart housing or smart transportation.
  - There needs to be more field training for municipal officials.

## **Organizing the Smart Growth Canada Network**

Discussion led by Cheeying Ho, Smart Growth BC

### **(A) How We See Smart Growth Canada**

- (1) At the May 2003 meeting in Vancouver, information-sharing was what people wanted. At this meeting, it is evident that what people want is a coherent advocacy role at the federal level. Agreed.
- (2) In general, people agree that we should have a set of principles, and those who want to be part of the network need to agree with all of the principles. We can work with the principles of other groups such as SG America, the Ontario Smart Growth Network, and other groups to arrive at principles for Smart Growth Canada. (Randall

McQuaker summarized some of these in a discussion paper that was circulated to participants.)

- (3) The issues at the level of jurisdiction – municipal, provincial – have to be acted upon at that level. A national organization is for interacting with the federal government and for capacity-building in relation to local and regional groups. Agreed.

#### **(B) Membership in Smart Growth Canada**

- Cheeying Ho: We invited interested government representatives to be here today. If we are going to undertake advocacy at the federal level, then federal agencies will not want to be members. Cheeying asked Ken Church if NRCan would want to be part of a national network as just described. Ken: We could try it out and see how things emerge, but we would have to bow out when it comes to advocacy. Cheeying: Perhaps associate membership or supporting membership for federal agencies.
- Comment: Thinks the network needs to be for NGOs and the sympathetic business sector, not government, since we will be advocating positions with government. Having business at the table would be very powerful.
- Comment by Ray Tomalty: As a consultant, he would like to be able to join. He would like to see municipalities be allowed to join.
- AGREED: Smart Growth Canada should be a network of non-government organizations, with associate memberships for municipalities, consultants, etc.

#### **(C) Next Steps**

- A funding proposal will be written and shared with potential funders. The sense is that the Network is very fundable.
- Steering Committee: Requests for volunteers to sit on it – several people volunteered. Expected that it may involve about five hours per month for each committee member.

### **Smart Growth Canada NGO Roundtable: Reports on Current Research and Tools**

#### **(1) Dave Biggs, Georgia Basin QUEST**

- Quest is about making smart growth popular. QUEST was developed at the Sustainable Development Research Institute at UBC.
- See Dave Biggs's PowerPoint presentation showing the Lower Mainland of BC in 2000 versus 2040 under smart growth versus business-as-usual growth scenarios. (For more information, contact Dave [[daveb@envisiontools.com](mailto:daveb@envisiontools.com)].)

#### **(2) Deborah Curran, Smart Growth BC / West Coast Environmental Law**

- Smart Growth by-laws – see SG BC website ([www.smartgrowth.bc.ca](http://www.smartgrowth.bc.ca)).
- "A Case for Smart Growth" – see SG BC website.

### **(3) Ray Tomalty, Montréal**

- Involved in writing a report titled *Smart Growth in Canada* re: the impact that municipal smart growth policies are having on-the-ground. Funded by CMHC, it will be available in the fall of 2004.
- Residential intensification in Canada: This study is complete. It is a best practices survey (12 case studies) of Canadian municipalities – brownfield and greyfield re-development, secondary suites, waterfront development, etc. The factsheets about it are on the CMHC website.
- Greyfields in Ontario: Ray is working with Steven Peck of the CMHC Ontario office. Greyfields are very promising for intensification because they are not contaminated, are well-served by transit, and are close to residential neighbourhoods.

### **(4) Mark Winfield, Pembina Institute for Appropriate Development**

- Has completed two major studies in Ontario – one in February 2003 and the other in December 2003 – evaluating where Ontario stands versus where it should be in terms of smart growth, and identifying the barriers to SG implementation. Both are on their website at [www.pembina.org](http://www.pembina.org). Will do updates in Spring and Fall 2004.
- Greater Toronto Area highways mapping project with the Neptis Foundation and University of Toronto cartography staff.
- Three local implementation studies to be done by Pembina in Ontario – sites where claims of SG have been made – what is working and what is not.

### **(5) Jérôme Vaillancourt, Vivre en Ville**

- A project started about four years ago: To supply the best examples internationally of SG in both urban and rural settings. The toolkit is a 700-page book that assembles case studies from Europe, North American and South America. There are two videos – European and North American. To be presented to municipal officials, planners and citizens' groups. It will be useful for us to connect with SG Canada network and US groups.

### **(6) Don Alexander, Smart Growth BC**

- A B.C. Sprawl Report is in the works, that will examine smart growth, livability, cutting-edge sectors of the economy, "bohemian index," etc. (The report is complete and will be released very soon.) We previously examined three urban regions (and 26 municipalities) in B.C. and found that North Vancouver was the best in terms of indicators of SG.

### **(7) Other Groups/Municipalities/Agencies and Their Smart Growth Tools**

- **Town of Milton, Ontario:** Sustainable Development Guidelines are on their website.
- **City of Ottawa:** Growth Management Strategy – Ottawa 20/20.
- **Ontario Nature - Federation of Ontario Naturalists:** Smart Growth broadsheet – written for Grade 8 reading level, an insert in select newspapers in southern Ontario cities, re: what residents can ask their new MPPs and new city councillors (since provincial and municipal elections have just taken place) to do to promote smart growth. On-line at [www.ontarionature.org](http://www.ontarionature.org).
- **Whistler, B.C.:** First community in B.C. to adopt "The Natural Step." Intrawest, the largest employer in Whistler, has bought into it.

- **Federation of Canadian Municipalities:** Increased guidance for municipalities to look at sustainability from a holistic perspective. Awards program for sustainable communities.
- **Go for Green:** Active transportation – making communities more amenable to walking and bicycling. [www.goforgreen.org](http://www.goforgreen.org)
- **ICLEI:** [www.iclei.org](http://www.iclei.org). Now has a Canadian secretariat; could help SG Canada.
- **New Brunswick:** [www.resourceconservation.nb.ca](http://www.resourceconservation.nb.ca).
- **Genuine Progress Index Atlantic:** [www.gpiatlantic.org](http://www.gpiatlantic.org). Conducting research for NRCan also.
- **Canadian Home Builders Association:** Has produced two reports: (1) urban sustainability; (2) sprawl. On CHBA website ([www.chba.ca](http://www.chba.ca)).
- **Ontario Smart Growth Secretariat:** [www.smartgrowth.gov.on.ca](http://www.smartgrowth.gov.on.ca) – Links page has links to municipalities that are doing interesting work.
- **Neptis Foundation:** Nine issue papers, in collaboration with Ontario Smart Growth Secretariat. All material available free on CDs. [www.neptis.org](http://www.neptis.org).
- **Don Alexander:** Please forward to us specific tools for the Smart Growth Canada website.