

Storybook Gardens

Proposed Concept:  
Forest City Eco Village

London Chapter | Council of Canadians | Environment and  
Climate Change Committee

<http://www.canadians.org/>



# Why an Eco-village?

March 26th 2008 - A vast hunk of floating ice has broken away from the Antarctic Peninsula, threatening the collapse of a much larger ice shelf behind it, in a development that has shocked climate scientists. Satellite images show that about 160 square miles of the Wilkins ice shelf has been lost since the end of February, leaving the ice interior now "hanging by a thread". The collapsing shelf suggests that climate change could be forcing change much more quickly than scientists had predicted. Six other ice shelves have already been lost entirely — the Prince Gustav Channel, Larsen Inlet, Larsen B, Wordie, Muller and Jones shelves.

Climate change is accelerating at an unprecedented rate. That being said – incredible green initiatives are happening across the global continent. The world has its first world's first zero-carbon, zero-waste city in Abu Dhab. We have wind farms, tidal wave energy, solar. We have progressive, innovative innovators turning their ideas / ideals even - into realities – changing the landscape of our world. We are redesigning the way we live. We are redesigning the way we think.

There is no reason why London should not be lead and foster such initiatives. The 'failure' of Storybook Gardens is actually an incredible opportunity that London can seize if she wishes to do so. We know that London is no longer truly a forest city. The suggested 30-40% tree canopy cover recommended by the urban forestry for all municipalities now floats around 12%. This is incredibly sad. It is humiliating for London. But this can be acknowledged openly and the citizens of London – adults and children alike can come together to tackle the re-greening of London – together. This is for all of us to resolve as a community. Thus the proposal we suggest is an eco-village – a model of the city London can evolve to. Not a city we may evolve to – but a city we will evolve to – if we wish to do so. And we will work toward this goal together – as a community.

The greening of a city is a profound act of social healing and justice because sustainability addresses whether people feel hope or despair, are secure or vulnerable, a wish to cooperate or to compete. Providing and analyzing the metrics for sustainability is critical to our species future. In the end there is only one earth. All cities must work together in this green journey. The eco village model is an opportunity to do just this. This is a rare opportunity for London to lead an innovative project in Canada. More importantly it would engage our community and inspire much needed change. It would instill hope in those who have perhaps given up on a green vision for London. We can actively participate, the responsible and ethical choice, or we can sit by the wayside while the world surpasses us in innovation. Our eco village will embrace the opportunity of sharing environmental awareness within our communities and schools empowering children to become global citizens that will change and shape the world we live in.

## Why Has The Outdated Status Quo Failed?

I do not know anyone who does not feel sadness and remorse reading the fate of 'Slippery the Seal' at Storybook gardens. Young or old – we all wish that Slippery had escaped forever embracing his freedom he was rightly entitled to. For our own selfish purposes – we took that freedom away – indicating our right to be 'entertained' for a few minutes was superior to his right to live his life in his own natural environment. What a sad thing to teach our children. Storybook Gardens is very, very outdated with its animal theme park. This cannot be understated. Speaking from a personal perspective, as a parent who once visited Storybook Gardens when my teenagers were toddlers – I can tell you that as the world evolved and as we evolved with it – going to Storybook to see many animals in poor living conditions on display for entertainment became something I could (we could) no longer partake in. I did not want my children seeing this as 'acceptable' behaviour in a civilized society. This type of modeling to children should be considered, dangerous in underlying ways. Our children will either feel complete sorrow, empathy and guilt seeing these animals in what we all recognize and know are miserable existences – or – much worse than this – they may feel nothing – entitlement having transformed into apathy.

“Animal liberation is not an alien concept to modern culture; rather it builds on the most progressive ethical and political values Westerners have devised in the last two hundred years - those of equality, democracy, and rights – as it carries them to their logical conclusion...The next great step in moral evolution is to abolish the last acceptable form of slavery that subjugates the vast majority of species on this planet to the violent whim of one. Moral advance today involves sending human supremacy to the same refuse bin that society earlier discarded much male supremacy and white supremacy. Animal liberation requires that people transcend the complacent boundaries of humanism in order to make a qualitative leap in ethical consideration, thereby moving the moral bar from reason and language to sentience and subjectivity.” For more on animal liberation please go to: <http://www.princeton.edu/~psinger/links.html> - The world is changing it's attitudes towards animals in every realm. This again – cannot be understated.

Our human destiny is inextricably linked to the actions of all other living things.

Respecting this principle is the fundamental challenge in changing the nature of our society.

# Conceptual Ideas:

- See Saws / playground equipment that produces/provides energy - Harnessing Energy with a seesaw: Inspired by a trip to the island of Wasimi, Kenya teaching and assisting in the building of a school Daniel came up with the idea to convert the positive energy and “play” of the students into a productive resource for the school.  
<http://www.coventry.ac.uk/latestnewsandevents/a/4352>
- Provide natural habitats (such as a variety of Bird Houses for native species) that sustain / promote population – with infrared cameras. The infrared cameras will share live, true life images in sharing eco-wind-powered and solar powered theatres with sound systems. <http://www.youtube.com/catmickey24> We would stress that Storybook does not participate nor engage in the captivity of wild animals. By providing bird houses, bat houses, owl houses, etc. we can encourage / promote population of species – while at the same time experience the intimate lives of birds with their families within their own habitat– without interfering with the birds / animals in any way. Live satellite web feeds (think national geographic) fed into flat screens with audio gives the true essence of an animal in its real environment. It removes the element of entitlement that we teach children and people when we keep animals captive only for a few minutes of ‘entertainment’. Live web feeds are a beautiful way to learn about animals without harming them or interfering with their lives. This is very important. They are also visually stunning and beautiful.

- A Sanctuary for domesticated animals could also be an adoption centre, thereby supporting the animal organizations within the city such as the humane society, etc.
- An eco village to showcase London's Finest: Speakers – We have world renowned speakers and authors within our own city. Examples (Gordon McBean – Climatologist | Rod Preece – Animal Ethics Author) Many are retired and embrace the opportunity to share their wealth of knowledge at events. We know that people embrace and appreciate such opportunities.
- Celebration of Culture and Diversity – Festivals and Events.
- Sustainability | Conservation – Promote, educate, model through interactive displays, education, games, visuals

- Arts – Bring exhibits such as:  
[http://www.chrisjordan.com/current\\_set2.php?id=7/](http://www.chrisjordan.com/current_set2.php?id=7/) pottery workshops, spoken word, etc.
- Stay Open LATE on Summer Nights – ambiance / torches / late night outdoor films / Keep the hybrid shuttle going until at least midnight.
- Re-introduce the boats / kayaks / have a strong native presence with artisans/ authentic hand made crafts and authentic hand made canoes and workshops, story tellers,
- Renewable Energy – Solar | Wind | Geothermal | Ocean Energy | Interactive Displays – Make the eco village a test site for renewable energy projects.

- Water – A global water crisis is upon us. We must instill respect for our water using interactive displays, education, documentaries, lectures, workshops, etc.
- Climate Change – interactive displays / lectures / resources / education on how we must combat climate change
- Outreach to ecoschools within and beyond the TVDSB – Note - We went from 3 ecoschools to 19 within the last two years in the TVDSB district alone.
- Individual citizenship / responsibility / Fair Trade / True Cost Economics
- Get rid of the current store – put in a Ten Thousand Villages store
- Rooftop gardens – bee hives  
<http://www.foodshare.net/garden14.htm> - Most cities around the world keep bees, whether it's legal or not. In Paris, there are hives on the roof of the opera house. In New York, high-rise bees produce honey for the Union Square Market. And in Vancouver, city councillors recently introduced a loophole to allow apiculturists to keep bees in the city.

- Recycling / Consumption – Educations / Resources / Documentaries
- Water – rain gardens / water harvesting / interactive displays / workshops / tadpoles - celebrations of live events / etc.
- Food – community gardening / solar cooking workshops / permaculture / SOL food philosophy / SOL food cafes (SOL food – Sustainable, Organic, Local where possible with an emphasis on Fair Trade.
- Zero waste modeling – London’s first zero waste village – let us learn how to become this within our village – let our city follow in the footsteps

- The Business model - Earth, Inc. is a non-profit that is for profit, but a new definition of what profit is. Corporations have demonstrated their ability to operate on a global scale more effectively than any other existing institution. Globalization has proven that corporate institutions can effectively bridge the gaps between nations even when political differences persist. Earth, Inc. uses the corporate model to create a much-needed inclusive global institution that considers all people and future generations equally. Like any corporation, Earth, Inc.'s objective is to maximize profit for its shareholders, but profit for this global institution is defined as every human's wellbeing, established by sustainable use and enhancement of Natural, Social, Human, and Built capital.  
<http://www.earthinc.org/earthinc.php?page=principles>
- A hybrid shuttle bus that shuttles between the downtown core and the park – day and night (Hamilton has just announced the largest purchase of hybrid busses in Canada)

- Admission – Emphasize a can of food as part of the admission to model sharing. The eco-village belongs to everyone – those who cannot afford it should be able to secure passes from our municipality. No one should be left out. Therefore modeling acceptance and equality.
- Individuals who bike, walk or use the shuttle receive discounts on admission
- Profits of eco village to be designated to a new environmental fund (similar to the one established in Toronto)  
<http://www.toronto.ca/taf/index.htm>
- Pond out front – fill the pond with fish, water lilies, frogs, turtles, etc. It is such a sad sight always empty. Why is it not teeming with life? A green landscaper would contribute this for free.

- Build straw bale offices from ngo's and non profits. The programs and much of the maintenance will be greatly provided by these 'tenants'. This makes our eco village a destination place. It keeps our village hustling with activity and ideas. Many non profits such as Jane Goodall's 'Roots and Shoots' youth program are not in London – simply because they cannot afford space. Let's bring them here. <http://www.janegoodall.ca/roots-shoots.php>
- Have water filtering bikes for those who wish to use them: <http://www.ecospace.cc/environment/water-filtering-bike-0108.htm>
- The eco village concept would rekindle Storybook as the destination for schools and summer camps alike.
- Overnight camping should be considered. Build straw bale camp lodges within Springbank /Storybook to accommodate overnight school trips.
- Celebrate the summer and winter solstice and the spring and fall equinox with pow-wows, smudging, outdoor night festivals, corn roasts, etc.
- We believe the ice rink should be left in tact & tied into the eco village.

Disrupt the status quo.

No corporate sponsorship.

No corporate Logos.

No greenwashing.

Keep it simple.

Keep it real.

# MISSION AND GOALS of the Eco Village

**PURPOSE:** Dedicated to synchronizing our relationship with our Earth, and recognizing the Oneness of all life, we will come together to create and to sustain beyond our lifetimes a learning community village, by gaining the skills, cultivating the attitudes and sharing with the public the resources for a holistic, regenerative culture. We will celebrate our diversity.

## UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE ECO VILLAGE:

We acknowledge and aspire to express in the way we live understandings that:

- 1) We believe in nourishing ourselves, others, and this planet through a simple, sustainable lifestyle, incorporating and celebrating love, work, play, free inquiry, learning, multi-cultural expression, and spiritual practices.
- 2) We honor the inherent value of all life and dignity and worth of all people, regardless of age, gender, race, sexual orientation, financial resources, or spiritual and political beliefs.
- 3) Our greatest challenge is to co-create with spirit a wise, just and sustainable culture in balance with the natural world, and to serve as a living example, manifesting spiritual ecology – a vision of a new reality.
- 4) Cooperation is the fundamental model for human endeavor. When a proper balance exists between the independence of the individual and the interdependence of the community, each enhances and compliments the other. While we choose to cooperate in community, caring for and supporting each other's well-being, we believe we should each take primary responsibility for our own actions and needs.
- 5) Conflicts and problems resolved through group cooperation and mutual creativity often transcend answers generated by any single person. This collective process can transform the very arena of conflict itself. We commit ourselves to transcend mere compromise and to reach for truly transformative solutions.
- 6) Decision making power is earned by active participation in the shared life of the community.

Promoting governance for sustainable and effective resource use:  
We support the Lisbon Principles for sustainable governance and resource management of common assets. Natural resource use should:

- 1) be fair and responsible;
- 2) have management of appropriate space and time scales;
- 3) include the precautionary principle, erring on the side of caution in the face of uncertainty;
- 4) apply adaptive management as conditions change and new information comes to light;
- 5) account for full environmental and social costs in market prices;
- 6) be inclusive of all stakeholders by providing opportunities for participation.

## GOALS:

- 1) Make conscious our connection to the Earth and our interdependence with the web of all life;
- 2) Facilitate the transition toward a life of elegant simplicity.
- 3) Nurture abundance in the world by enhancing living systems while reducing the consumption of resources.
- 4) Foster the lifelong learning and growth of every community member recognizing that each individual is both teacher and learner.
- 5) Preserve our land and the vital presence of wild nature throughout the community via proper stewardship, designation of undisturbed habitats and ecologically sound use of our resources.
- 6) Cultivate and sustain a living demonstration of our beliefs while fostering educational institutions that are agents of positive change.
- 7) Envision a sustainable, regenerative future, and develop the skills to manifest it.
- 8) Promote personal and planetary healing on all levels.
- 9) Connect with and serve the wider community, as we encourage a sense of inclusion, integration and spiritual and cultural diversity.
- 10) Stimulate the growth of our village by attracting members who are aligned with our purpose, understandings and goals.
- 11) Encourage the establishment of ecologically sound, member-owned businesses.
- 12) Support through action the intentional communities, Permaculture and bio-regional movements as we are able.

In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground.

A time when we have to shed our fear and give hope to each other. --- That time is now.

-Dr. Wangari Maathai, Kenya's "Green Militant" and winner of Nobel Peace Prize, 2004

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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