

# Citizen Engagement and the Governance of Sustainable Communities

by

Diala Jawhary

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## **AUTHOR'S DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

## **Abstract**

This study develops an interdisciplinary exploratory approach for understanding concepts and tools for local participation that leads towards sustainability. The research goals include : identifying effective public participation criteria and sustainability criteria, identifying lessons that might be learned from Canadian communities that have used, and applied, public participation and sustainability initiatives, exploring how might these lessons be applied to a mid-sized community such as the City of Waterloo, and exploring how might citizen advisory committees be more effectively engaged to foster sustainability. The ultimate objective is to identify effective participation processes in order to foster sustainability using both secondary literature and a case study methodology. Findings were assessed in the analysis of lessons learned of communities located across Canada to be later refined and tested using the case study of the City of Waterloo, Ontario. The thesis contains an analysis of the conceptual literature and case study research to ascertain the factors that determine effective public participation processes towards sustainability and recommendations for citizen advisory groups that can be used by various local governance stakeholders in a Canadian context.

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## **Dedication**

To Houda, Dalida, Ghada, Dalia, Jad, Brad, Lana, and to my Soulmate Tarek.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Our socio-ecological system is facing serious changes that are easily recognized but not easily dealt with. A key question is how we can develop an effective local governance structure that “will help humans live in a decent and sustainable ways” and understand the dynamics of these system changes (Francis, 2010, p. 13). This research addresses this question by researching sustainability and public participation literature along with selected Canadian communities sustainability and public participation initiatives. It identifies criteria for meaningful public participation towards sustainability. A case study examining the City of Waterloo, Ontario helps illustrate how citizens in a mid-sized urban city perceive public engagement and sustainability. It also considers how citizen advisory groups can be more effectively engaged in sustainability initiatives.

Needless to say, in an optimal situation, participatory democracy allows for economic growth and social wellbeing. While participatory democracy alone, is insufficient to foster sustainability it is an essential component providing the political mechanism needed for the effective integration of social, ecological and economic components of sustainability Exploring the relationship between local democracy and sustainability is a key elements of this thesis and one of its major contributions. The ultimate objective of this thesis is to consider how to foster democracy through meaningful public participation in governance which has a significant positive relationship to sustainability and allows for incorporating sustainability aspects in governance.

### 1.1 Research Questions

This study is driven by the following questions:

- “What lessons might be learned from Canadian communities that have used and applied public participation and sustainability initiatives?”
- “How might these lessons be applied to a mid-sized community such as the City of Waterloo?”
- “How might citizen advisory committees be more effectively engaged to foster sustainability?”

These questions will be addressed through literature review that includes the examination of best practices in selected Canadian communities and a single case study supported by interviews and personal observations.

## **1.2 Thesis Rationale**

“We are still stumbling towards sustainability” (Gibson et al., 2005, p. 11).

There is no clear methodology in the literature about how to move towards sustainability especially for local communities. Because of our limited knowledge and, in some cases, total ignorance about what forces might affect our future, sustainable development has been claimed as a “process” that can be “reinforced but never attained” (Robinson, Francis, Legge, & Lerner, 1990, p. 41). Many sustainability tools, identified in the literature may theoretically make sense but are often difficult to apply in practice by local residents when they are considering what makes a project or a strategy sustainable or unsustainable. Providing such answers is important since community participation is essential for sustainability (Gibson et al., 2005). Active engagement of a wide cross-section of members of the general public allows us to “promote and sustain diversity”. This is important because it increases society’s resilience (Walker & Salt, 2006, p. 145). By studying Canadian community participation practices, particularly in Waterloo, this thesis offers recommendations that can be used by various stakeholders in local governance including citizen advisory committees; a civic participation approach used in Canada that is also examined in this study. Sustainability is about alternatives (Gibson, et al., 2005). Active community groups’ engagement allows for identification and careful comparative evaluation of these alternatives. Yet to engage successfully, citizen groups need empowerment. This is what this study is about; bridging the gap between theory and practice by examining lessons learned that will allow for meaningful citizen participation in local governance that fosters long-term sustainability.

## **1.3 Background on Public Participation and Sustainability**

Sustainable development evolved from a primarily biophysical perspective prior to the eighties into a concept approved by 171 governments at the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (Dryzek, 2005). Climate change and other emerging issues of the 21st century did not lead to a unanimous agreement on its definitions and boundaries despite the fact that sustainable development became a

priority (Dryzek, 2005). Currently there are more than 1,200 definitions (Dale, 2005); nevertheless, sustainable development is still ambiguous in practical terms. This makes it complicated for communities to adopt a sustainable approach in planning their future. It also makes it difficult for governments and corporations that are still struggling with efficiency and productivity to fully incorporate into their practices the impact of environmental degradation and its consequences on the economy and quality of life. Sustainability and bio-physical aspects are by and large qualitative in nature and therefore their inclusion in budgets and tangible profits is still complex and contested, which make it more difficult to analyze and grasp.

Civic participation is also not 'a free ride' for communities and governments that are looking to meaningful public participation as a means to counter current socio-biophysical challenges while ensuring civic commitment and adaptation to environmental change (Stewart & Sinclair, 2007). It is also not a recent phenomenon; it has roots dating back to Greek and Roman civilizations (World Civilizations Online, 2001). The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992, following the Brundtland report in 1987, was a major watershed in global recognition of the importance of community participation in "deliberation" and "decision-making". Nations are now encouraged to change their practices and institutions to "meet the needs of the future without comprising the needs of future generations" (World Commission on Environment & Development, 1987, p. 43). Citizen groups and the public and private sector must be involved in the initial steps of negotiations and in decision-making to achieve sustainability (Hirsch Hadorn, 2008). Public participation is still gaining momentum especially among governments whose jurisdictions and adversity of decisions are growing beyond their assimilative capacity due to globalization and other factors (Nozick, 1992). However, for several reasons, civic involvement is still not as it should be in Canada and is still an area of dissatisfaction (Hunsberger, Gibson, & Wismer, 2005). "In fact, public participation processes are still frequently criticized as dissatisfying by participants, costly, and time consuming, by proponents, and inefficient by governments (Shepard and Bowler, 1997; Hazel, 1999; Petts, 1999; Sinclair and Doelle, 2003)" as cited by (Stewart & Sinclair, 2007, p. 163). This is somewhat paradoxical, given the proliferation of non-government organizations (NGOs and other civil society organizations) (Runyan, 1999). This proliferation can be used to enhance subsidiarity, explained by McAllister (2004) as "authority and responsibility should be handed down to the smallest unit of government that can deal with the task more effectively" (p. 176).

Public participation can decrease citizen's cynicism towards governments and promote their understanding of public administration and concerns. Local governments can improve public trust of governmental decision making by good understanding and prompt responses to public needs thus promoting citizen satisfaction (Newman, Barnes, Sullivan, & Knops, 2004). On the other hand, civic dissatisfaction and disengagement has diverse effects on individuals and in many cases; it could be detrimental to communities (Dale, 2005). It can also have serious ecological effects (e.g. the environmental state of former Soviet Union) since decision-making is left in the hands of the affluent and the powerful minority of societies. Governments at national and local levels are recognizing the gap between citizens and elected politicians on one hand, and civil service on the others (Andersen & Burns, 1996) as cited by (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000). Governments and citizen concerns, along with the current challenges and issues facing communities serve as an emerging opportunity for meaningful participation that engages the whole community and is sustainable. Once the relevant information and necessary education is available, the opportunity for social mobilization is limitless especially with the currently available tools offered by new information and communications technologies (ICT) and social networking that is simplifying civic engagement and access to information (Tapscott, 2009).

Barriers to meaningful public participation along with best practices will be discussed in this study and are a very important reason for this research.

#### **1.4 Conceptual Framework**

The theoretical framework brings together separate but related fields of study: communicative action and discursive democracy (also referred to by academics as deliberative democracy) tied in with the Healthy Communities' concept, developed by public health analyst Trevor Hancock, and Dryzek's ecological democracy.

Public participation criteria towards sustainability are developed by studying Gibson's et al. (2005) sustainability assessment criteria, Habermas' theory of communicative action and Dryzek's ecological democracy using the discursive democracy model. The goal is to foster the healthy communities concept described by Hancock (2006).

According to public health analyst Trevor Hancock, community development requires, the development of its social, physical, economical and human capital which cannot take place without

ecologically sustainability (Hancock, 2006). The sustainability dimension, which is a core component of the organizational framework and this study, connects well with this Healthy Community concept. On the other hand, “a decentered approach to sustainability meshes well with discursive designs” (Dryzek, 2005, p. 233).

Democracy is a logical requirement for sustainability since citizens are expected to fulfill their duties while their rights and interests are protected. The Theory of Communicative Action developed by Habermas considers modern social relations based on rational processes. It is a good theoretical basis for this research since it emphasizes broadly inclusive public participation, another major component of the organizational framework and a focus of this study (Bolton, 2005; Fitzpatrick, 2005; Habermas, 1984, p. 86). According to Habermas, consensus should be reached through sharing information with the public while avoiding exercise of power, favoring experts and bureaucrats (Bolton, 2005). “The legitimacy of democracy depends not only on constitutional processes of enacting laws, but also on the discursive quality of the full processes of deliberation leading up to such a result” (White, 1995, p. 12; Bolton, 2005). Deliberative democracy (also referred to as discursive democracy) is based on the theory of communicative action and is promoted by various scholars: Benhabib (1982, 1996); Dryzek (1987, 1990a); Enslin, Pendlebury & Tjiattas (2001) as means to counteract criticism of the “role of rationality in governance” as cited by (Fitzpatrick, 2005). It promotes long-term dialogue among participants and emphasizes “sound argumentation, unlimited participation, equal participation, and communicative competence of participants” (Fitzpatrick, 2005, p. 13). Effective engagement is essential for environmental problems, and its conceptualization in the context of deliberative societal discourse is required for sustainability (Dietz, York, & Eugene, 2001); especially with the historical shift that started with the emergence of the concept of sustainable development and that noted importance of incorporating the social, ecological and economical context in all societal deliberations. Ecological democracy, which incorporates discursive democracy, is the common factor between sustainability and citizen engagement needs (Dryzek, 2005). It is the aspired “strengthened democracy” described in the healthy communities’ concept (Hancock, 2006).

To summarize, communicative action, particularly through the deliberative democracy model, is an important requirement for sustainability; it also provides a model for engagement advantageous for sustainable development (Dryzek, 2005; Fitzpatrick, 2005). Meaningful Public participation

(strengthening democracy and social cohesion) is also connected with the concept of healthy communities; a necessary requirement for sustainability and well-being (McAllister, 2004). It is also a goal for this study.

## **1.5 Overview of Methodology**

The research takes a qualitative approach to answer the questions outlined in Section 1.1. It is an exploratory investigation that aims to gather as many insights as possible (Neuman, 2003).

There are three reasons why a qualitative approach is used for this study. The first pertains to the nature of research questions. This study aims to answer “what” and “how” questions rather than “why” questions. It captures phenomena and context rather than relationships between variables to establish cause and effect (Creswell, 1998). The nature of research questions also requires that citizen advisory committees and other local governance stakeholders be studied in their natural settings i.e. primary data collection from the field. Qualitative research allows the researcher to report on her/his own perceptions, experiences and insights acquired from being in the field (Creswell, 1998).

The second reason for using a qualitative approach is the topic of the study. Effective citizen engagement to foster sustainability is a territory that is yet to be fully explored. As such a qualitative research approach yields a detailed view of the intertwined nature of influences and actors shaping public participation and sustainability.

Another reason for this approach relates to the concepts involved. Communicative action (a basic concept in this study) is part of a broader category of qualitative research known as critical social science (Fitzpatrick, 2005). This type of study depicts research as “a critical process of inquiry that goes beyond surface illusions to uncover the real structures in the material world in order to help people change conditions and build a better world for themselves” (Neuman, 2003, p. 76).

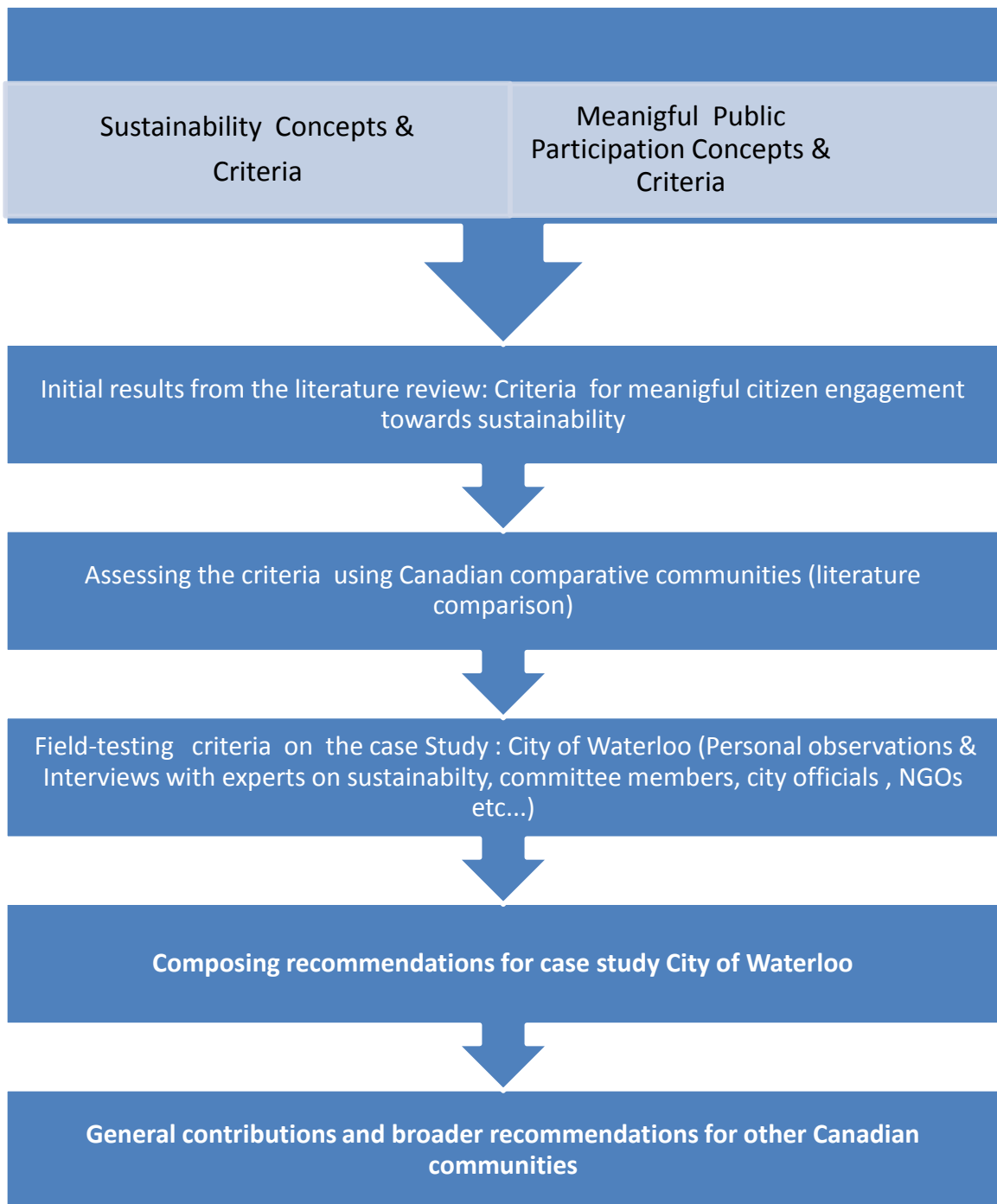
Research strategies selected consist of secondary data collection and a single case study research (Yin, 2003). The literature review focuses on sustainability literature, public participation literature and selected Canadian communities’ sustainability and public participation lessons learned available in the literature. It bridges the gap between theory and current practices through a case study of the City of Waterloo. The case study research includes the use of semi-structured interviews. Since committees’ behavior might be



different than what is articulated in the interviews, a participant observer approach is also employed. The researcher participated in citizens advisory committees as an observer and also played a role as a volunteer with the City of Waterloo as elaborated in later sections. These diverse approaches help in the triangulation of data and boost the validity of the study. It help in uncovering facts that may not be comprehended otherwise, aid in interpreting the data collected from interviews, and even assist in asking the right questions (Family Health International , 2005).

The Following organizational framework describes how the literature and research comes together to answer the research questions:

**Figure 1.1: Organizational Framework for the Thesis**



The secondary research (review of sustainability and public participation literature) along with lessons learned from selected Canadian case studies (discussed in Chapter 3) led to the development of criteria for effective participation towards sustainability. The purpose of examining these Canadian communities was to have a preliminary inspection ground for confirming literature based results. This step increased the robustness and accuracy of literature-based data that is tested via the primary data collection.

These criteria were field-tested at the City of Waterloo through semi-structured interviews with experts on sustainability and citizen engagement, advisory committee members, and other community members (using snowball technique), city officials, NGOs etc. The snowball technique is considered an acceptable form of social science sampling in small parts of society (Heckathorn, 2002)

Consequently, the refined developed criteria resulted in recommendations for the City of Waterloo and other similar Canadian cities and communities.

### **1.5.1 Data Collection & Analysis**

Yin (2003) and Creswell (1998) recommend using multiple data sources for case studies to validate data and to build an in-depth knowledge of the case. This study employs three forms of data collection:

- The literature review of theoretical, empirical and descriptive material used in thesis – sustainability and participation, the literature review of innovative Canadian cities practices to foster sustainability through public participation, in addition to government documents, websites of non-governmental organizations and other grey literature,
- Interviews to be discussed in Chapters 5& 6,
- Data collected through direct observations through the researcher role as participant observer discussed in Chapters 5&6,

Moreover, this researcher's professional experience in various middle-eastern countries as a coordinator and facilitator of local participatory processes in the area of community development and civil rights over a period of eight years served as an additional filter that helped with framing the research, collecting and analyzing the data.

Qualitative data collection for this research was completed in two phases. Phase one comprised data gathering using secondary information sources and participant observation. The second phase took place between April 2010 and August 2010. It comprised primary data collection through semi-structured interviews and participant observation.

The case study method was used for analysis and explanations as discussed in Chapters 4 and 6. The data collected was analyzed qualitatively and was used to build a descriptive set of quotes that were combined to support the findings.

#### 1.5.1.1 Literature Review

The ecological, social and political literature comprises the major sources of literature used for this thesis. Specific focus is on sustainability literature, sustainability criteria, and public participation. The literature review is used to devise criteria for active civic participation towards sustainability. The criteria will be tested for validation using the case study City of Waterloo. Books such as Gibson et al.'s (2005) *Sustainability Assessment Criteria and Processes* are used for determining the sustainability criteria. The City of Waterloo website along with government and non- governmental publications are the main source of information regarding the City of Waterloo.

Public participation and local governance literature is drawn from a range of theories and ideas. Examples include Habermas's theory of communicative action (1984), *Constructive Citizen Participation: A Resource Book* by Desmond Connor (1994), John Mcknight and John Kretzmann *Mapping Community Capacity* (1996) (Mcknight & Kretzmann, 1996), Carole Pateman's *Nature of Participatory Society Analysis* (1979, 2005), *Governing Ourselves? The Politics of Canadian Communities* by Mary Louise McAllister (2004), *The Politics of the Earth* by John Dryzek, and the Healthy Community Model developed by Trevor Hancock. Case study and qualitative methods literature is used for devising methods to analyze data, criteria, and procedures to examine the case study. An example is *Case Study Research Design and Methods* by Robert Yin (2003). Other relevant academic journals and books that are helpful in building up the analysis were also used.

## **1.6 Research Assumptions**

Public participation can be misleading. A community might be categorized as having an active community while in reality participation is confined to its elites. This research effort is directed at fostering widely inclusive, effective public participation, defined as a situation where all members of the communities are represented in some manner and are empowered to participate in local decision-making processes. This participation is an essential component of a healthy, sustainable community and is a core concept of sustainable development (World Commission on Environment & Development, 1987). Sustainability development concepts can also be wide-reaching (Dryzek, 2005). This study draws on Gibson's et al.'s (2005) sustainability concept and criteria that have been tested through "years of deliberation and experimentation" (Gibson et al., 2005, p.95).

The research assumptions are as follows.

- Adoption of sustainability concepts and criteria is favorable and beneficial to the community
- Sustainability concepts and criteria will help foster sustainable development and a healthy community
- Modified combined criteria (public participation and sustainability criteria) assessed in the case study can be adapted and applied in other Canadian communities
- Another assumption is that the case study approach is the most appropriate tool for this task.

## **1.7 Research Ethics Considerations**

In March 2010, this study was submitted for ethics review. There were few ethical concerns as participants were aware of the research motivations, there was no use of deception and participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. It was approved with minor changes in April 2010 by the University of Waterloo's Office of Research Ethics. Ethics clearance allowed for the proper wording and guidelines to be followed during the preparation of the interviews and participatory observation procedures. It also allowed for ensuring necessary actions are taken for this research reliability.

## 1.8 Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into six chapters, designed to address the research questions leading to the ultimate objective of how we can engage more of the public in sustainability initiatives. The initial chapter serves as the foundation of this research including methodology and conceptual framework.

**Chapter 2** covers the literature review that considers Canadian public participation and sustainability literature and concludes with a summary of meaningful public participation criteria that fosters sustainability.

**Chapter 3** employs the criteria developed in Chapter 2 and tests them by looking at innovative public participation and sustainability initiatives in various Canadian communities' to identify valuable approaches.

**Chapter 4** introduces the reader to the case study of the City of Waterloo and its practices with respect to public participation with a focus on sustainability.

**Chapter 5** includes personal observations and semi-structured interviews with experts and community members that are active in governance (city officials, neighborhood associations, NGOs and citizen advisory groups).

**Chapter 6** analyses and synthesizes the results from the case study and situates them in context with the literature review findings.

**Chapter 7** concludes the thesis with a summary of major findings along with recommendations for further research. Also found in Chapter 7 are the academic contributions on meaningful public participation that fosters sustainability.

## Chapter 2 Theoretical Overview: The Literature Review

This study aims to promote sustainability by recommending ways to enhance community empowerment through meaningful participation. This chapter defines sustainability, sustainability criteria, public participation, and the relations between these concepts. It concludes with criteria for meaningful public participation that fosters sustainability.

### 2.1 Sustainability

Sustainability has been defined extensively over the years (Dale, 2005). One definition is “the persistence over an apparently indefinite future of certain necessary and desired characteristics of the socio-political system and its natural environment” (Robinson, et al., 1990, p.39). This definition will be adopted for this study since it includes the element of uncertainty along with the traditional social, economic and ecological silos.

#### 2.1.1 Evolution of the Concept of Sustainability in Canada

Although sustainability can be traced to ancient civilizations and traditional cultures (Gibson, et al., 2005), it became a global concern after the World Commission on Environment and Development published *Our Common Future* report (commonly known as Brundtland report) in 1987 (Fricker, 2001). It was in this report that the famous term “Sustainable Development” was defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987, p.43). Canadian initiatives started in the 1970’s when the (former) “Science Council of Canada” initiated discussions about a “Conserver Society”. The academic information was provided by a team of people from the University of Montreal and McGill and therefore interest in that kind of research began to grow (Francis, 1992). The Canadian business world did not publicly embrace such endeavors until after the Brundtland report in 1987 (Francis, 1992). The Brundtland Commission visited Canada in 1986 and the Canadian Council of Environment Ministers initiated a Task Force to review the Brundtland recommendations (Francis, 1992). The Task Force recommended national and provincial Round Tables in September 1987 that combined politicians, industries, and a few environmental and other stakeholders, for means to link the environment with the economy (Francis, 1992).

“Sustainable Development” according to some observers, appealed to many in the private sector since it seemed to protect economic interests (Francis, 1992). One remarkable outcome, particularly relevant to this thesis’ local focus was The Royal Commission on the Toronto Waterfront established in 1988 and led by David Crombie (McAllister, 2004, p. 180). On the national legislative front, for example, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (Section 4) was one of the policy mechanisms that showed Canada’s commitment to sustainability (Hunsberger, Gibson, & Wismer, 2005). Another policy mechanism was Canada’s Federal Sustainable Development Act that became a law on June 26, 2008 (Sustainable Development Office Environment Canada, 2010). On March 2010 the federal government initiated public consultation for “The Federal Sustainable Development Strategy”. According to the Minister of the Environment Jim Prentice (March 2010), [it is] “... a major step forward for the Government of Canada by including environmental sustainability as an integral part of its decision-making processes” (Sustainable Development Office Environment Canada, 2010). Yet still considerable work is needed to integrate sustainability into all decision-making processes including social as well as biophysical considerations (Gibson et al., 2005).

The sustainable development paradigm for academics and local communities is still abstract. It is a multi-faceted critical thinking approach that comprises the whole complex system of social, economical and ecological well-being as an interconnected open and dynamic system. It also has to address economic growth and technological advancement while being environmentally sound and fair to the different social sectors in a community. The difficulty lies in integrating these concepts since they may be interpreted differently by various people based on different social perceptions, morals and values (Shields, Šolar, & Martin, 2002).

“Fundamental transformations” in the social, economic and governance structures are required to achieve sustainability. They require conversion in attitudes, behavior, cultures and practices (Dale, 2005; Blackstocka, Kellyb, & Horseyb, 2007). “Better governance is a prerequisite” and a “product” at the same time (Kemp, Parto, & Gibson, 2005, p. 18). Good governance implies that the society is steering itself rather than being steered by bureaucracy and political authorities (Dobson, 2009) and that it is being directed by the needs of the general public not solely private sector interests (Hawken, Lovins, & Lovins, 1999). Better governance implies more transparency in decision-making and more meaningful public participation. Meaningful public participation should embrace social, ecological and economical aspects



because they are interdependent. Civility also contributes to more social and ecological understanding which will lead to more responsible behavior and more pressure and motivation for changing behaviors (Gibson et al., 2005).

### 2.1.2 Sustainability Criteria

Tangible gains in sustainability implies integrating short and long term perspectives, human and biophysical considerations, local and scientific knowledge all within the framework of social equity, cultural integrity and empowered public participation (Gibson et al., 2005). The quest towards sustainable development or sustainability does not end in defining and understanding these concepts. These concepts need to be applied. The application process is through sustainability criteria. Sustainability is becoming an increasingly important tool for policy deliberations and governance (Shmelev & Rodríguez-Labajos, 2009). Although attempts to develop sustainability measures and targets were done at the macro-levels (countries such as Austria) and is a major concern for national governments, international organizations, NGOs and business loops (OECD, 2002, 2006, 2008; European Commission, 2001, 2005; Eurostat, 2004; UN, 2001a,b; New Economic Foundation, 2006) as cited by (Shmelev & Rodríguez-Labajos, 2009) little literature is provided on how it can be done at the micro- level yet there are various examples in practice.

Gibson et al. (2005) argues that there are 8 sustainability-based decision criteria that need to be pursued all at the same time in all kinds and levels of sustainability initiatives as outlined in Table Table 2.1:

Sustainability Requirements .

**Table 2.1: Sustainability Requirements**

<b>Sustainability requirements as decision criteria</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Socio-ecological system integrity	considering the well-being of the whole complex system of social, economical and ecological and its inter-relationships at all levels of decision-making
Livelihood sufficiency and opportunity	sufficiency and opportunity ensures that

	everyone has enough for a decent dignified life and everyone has the opportunity to improve his/her life standards without resulting in adverse effects, compromise others pursuits for a sustainable livelihood, and without comprising the sufficiency and opportunity for future generations
Intragenerational equity	reduce the gap between the rich and poor and does not discriminate between race, gender, religion, ethnicity and social status
Intergenerational equity	trade-offs are not at the expense of future generations
Resource maintenance and efficiency	ensuring sustainable livelihoods while reducing waste, overall material and energy demands and other stresses on socio-ecological systems
Socio-ecological civility and democratic governance	enhancing better governance and active community participation
Precaution and adaptation	being flexible, adaptive and cope with uncertainty
Immediate and long-term integration	all sustainability principles should be applied at once seeking mutually supportive benefits and multiple gains. Benefits in all areas must be pursued

SOURCE: ADAPTED FROM (GIBSON ET AL., 2005, PP.116-118)

In practice, there will be trade-offs. The trade-off rules according to Gibson et al. (2005, pp.139-140) are:

- maximum net gains (the cumulative computation should be net progress towards sustainability, achieving maximum positive gains while avoiding adverse effects);
- burden of argument on trade-off proponent ;
- avoidance of significant adverse effects (no trade-off is acceptable if it poses significant adverse effects on sustainability requirements unless when rejection means a more adverse effect);
- protection of the future (postponing the problem will not help and is not ethical (moral integrity) unless the alternative is displacement of a more serious adverse effect from the present to the future);
- explicit justification (transparent and clear justification of all trade-offs based on sustainability requirements, decision criteria, and trade-off rules should accompany all trade-offs. The process should be open and participative similar to any sustainability assessment process);
- open process (all stakeholders should be effectively involved. Though technical advice will definitely be needed, public participation and involvement remains fundamental to come up with the best trade-offs scenario that complies with sustainability principles and ethics).

Sustainability will require the change of governance, cultures, processes and tools as the role of governments shift from regulating the present to preserving the future. Social capital is needed for change since it enables community mobilization (Dale, 2005). Social capital is defined by Putnam (1993) as “features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Putnam R. D., 1993). It facilitates people’s access to power and resources “through which decision making and policy formulation occur.” (Dale, 2005; Grootaert, 1998). Research in Canada and Australia considers social capital as a necessary requirement for sustainability since it allows access to power and resources from within and outside the community (Dale, 2005) that may be difficult to utilize otherwise.

Governments need to decide on ways to enhance social capital since it fast forwards results (Dale, 2005). The local government can play a role in enhancing social capital by creating an environment through which local organizations can sustain, increase their scale of operation and access to human and economic resources (Adapted from Dale, 2005).

Public participation is essential for the whole process not only trade-offs evaluation since it contributes to building an understanding of the whole context (pressures, possibilities and preferences) in which the decisions of trade-offs as well as all other planning, approval and implementation decisions must be made (Gibson et al., 2005). Moreover, sustainability ethics that are ecological integrity, social justice (sufficiency, opportunity, equity, democracy and civility), and economic vitality (efficiency) (Gibson et al., 2005) should also be incorporated in sustainability decision-making to avoid conflict or injustice.

Gibson et al.'s (2005) general principles and criteria, trade-off rules, and intrinsic ethics can be a great help for communities pursuing sustainability. They might be able to develop their own process starting from these criteria and a collective sustainable vision. For these processes to work, it is important to address the following considerations:

- develop an understanding of the sustainability principles and tradeoffs
- having an agreed on process for “committees” formation and operations where the sustainability principles and trade-offs are used as a basic criteria for decision-making
- developing conflict resolution techniques, ways to overcome barriers and obstacles for effective and meaningful participation.

These considerations would be more than helpful in encouraging local communities to use the sustainability approach in any initiative they are tackling. It may help in removing the vagueness and the seemingly-complex nature of the sustainability approach as a barrier to attaining sustainability.

This thesis considers the role that Canadian citizen advisory committees can play in encouraging local policies that foster sustainability through the application of sustainability principles and effective public participatory processes. By laying out the boundaries and the framework of sustainability principles and tradeoffs rules as outlined by Gibson et al. (2005), this thesis considers sustainability ethics universal not “situated ethics” since we cannot trade- off equity, sufficiency, and ecological services. After all,

sustainability is an ethical precept rather than a science (Norton, 1992; Asheim et al., 2001) as cited by (Shields, Šolar, & Martin, 2002). The thesis also focuses on public participation, how to make it more effective, how to target marginalized groups and transcend multicultural barriers. Through effective public participation we ensure resilience, diversity, equity, and socio-ecological system integrity; all are sustainability essentials.

Laying the boundaries does not mean there will be a “one size fits all” or universal approach. “No one is in the position to dictate a set of global rules for sustainability decision-making” and one of the gravest mistakes of the modern era was the tendency to outline a “single, simple vision of enlighten, civilization and/or progress” which nullifies local diversities and options (Gibson et al., 2005, p. 90). Precaution and adaptation is among the eight principles of sustainability. Being humble and aware of the current limited knowledge, contextual differences, and conflict of interests is a must. Another requirement is learning from the past history of impositions and self-righteousness. It is not right or even ethical to impose certain views or ideas on a certain society. Local options and initiatives are needed but yet the current sustainability problems are too complex and urgent to be led by such initiatives alone. Poverty, oppression, desperation, and environmental degradation which are unethical and unsustainable cannot be ignored and intervention is needed for morality and sustainability purposes (Gibson et al., 2005). Therefore, suggesting but not imposing general rules, highlighting sensitivity and difference in particular circumstances, and treating it all as a working model where learning is from the process and adjustments are done accordingly. This does not fall under “telling people what to do” category and does not contradict sustainability requirements and ethics (Gibson et al., 2005). On the contrary it highlights an approach emerging from local circumstances while entailing sustainability principles. It also acts as an incentive for communities to act sustainably and provide early warning signs and feedbacks.

Uncertainty is a variable to be added to the equation. Humbleness and continuously remembering the current limitations are needed especially pertaining to ecological systems. The overview of sustainability in literature reveals huge uncertainty in the facts, great dispute on values and perceptions, in most situations urgent decisions need to be taken, and the stakes are high. A situation requiring post normal science according to Funtowicz and Ravetz (1991) (J. Ravetz, 1991; Viederman, 1995). Uncertainty means precaution but it does not mean passiveness. The best possible decision that protects the future has to be taken using available disciplines and knowledge. Values, ethics, culture, and history should be

incorporated in sustainability initiatives accompanied with the objectivity and impartiality of science (Viederman, 1995).

Finally, and as the literature suggests, “the nature of environmental problems requires a restructuring of social behaviors and decision-making” (Dryzek, 2005; Robinson, Francis, Legge, & Lerner, 1990, p. 42). “Human activities and behaviors including institutional arrangements and activities” need to be addressed for socio-political sustainability (Robinson, Francis, Legge, & Lerner, 1990, p. 42). A good approach is using deliberative democracy to be discussed in the next section.

## **2.2 Public Participation**

The sustainable development approach acknowledges the importance of public involvement in “locally relevant decision-making” as well as experts’ involvement (Hunsberger, Gibson, & Wismer, 2005, p. 5). Public participation is essential for sustainability. First, sustainable development is much larger than any government, organization, mandate or role. Secondly, such ambitious and long-term strategies and assessments cannot be reached without wide community buy-in and sense of ownership (Clarke & Erfan, 2007).

Beyond the contribution of public participation to sustainable development, public participation has significant contributions to the legitimacy of policy decisions, scientists partaking in society, and the community’s awareness and actions to environmental problems (Farrell, Van Deveer, & Jager, 2001). It allows for increased knowledge of the biophysical, social and economic aspects of a particular ecosystem or project, provide for additional resources, and enhance creativity and innovation. Effective citizen engagement results in community buy-in and ownership, knowledge of the society’s goals, attitudes, values, priorities, and managerial solutions to environmental problems that are more comprehensive, achievable and sustainable, i.e., more effective (Connor, 1994).

Public participation also puts into practice the principles of discursive democracy (Fitzpatrick, 2005). A form of democracy increasingly acknowledged by policy makers and academics (Newman, Barnes, Sullivan, & Knops, 2004) and argued by Pateman (1979) as the best form that suits the principles and values of “liberalism”. According to Pateman (1979), the liberal subject is “assumed to be rational, capable of independent judgment, evaluation, and reflexive action, and is an abstract individual”. He/she has the capacity of acting responsibly, evaluating their action and making rational choices of what to do.

Consequently, citizens cannot be shunned aside by “political obligations” and “obedience”, they should be valued and accredited by a sustainable participatory or “self-managing” democracy (Goatcher, 2005, p. 218; Pateman, 1979).

“Public deliberation is the process through which deliberative democracy occurs” (Delli Carpini, Cook, & Jacobs, 2004, p. 317). It has roots dating back to “city states of ancient Greece, the town hall meetings of colonial New England, and the salons and cafes of Paris” (O’Doherty & Davidson, 2010, p. 224; Delli Carpini, Cook, & Jacobs, 2004, pp. 315-316). It cascaded most recently to the internet forums and chat rooms (Delli Carpini, Cook, & Jacobs, 2004, pp. 315-316). It is a valuable framework in the context of recent trends in staging public consultation that has been designated by more than one democratic theory tradition as a cornerstone of participatory democracy and representative government (Barber 1984; Connolly 1983; Dahl 1989; Dewey 1954 [1927]; Fishkin 1992, 1995; Habermas 1996; Mansbridge 1983) as cited by (Delli Carpini, Cook, & Jacobs, 2004, p. 316); (O’Doherty & Davidson, 2010). According to Chambers (2003) deliberation can be defined as:

“ . . . deliberation is debate and discussion aimed at producing reasonable, well-informed opinions in which participants are willing to revise preferences in light of discussion, new information, and claims made by fellow participants. Although consensus need not be the ultimate aim of deliberation, and participants are expected to pursue their interests, an overarching interest in the legitimacy of outcomes (understood as justification to all affected)...” (Chambers, 2003, p. 309).

As discussed previously, meaningful public participation is connected with deliberative democracy that is an important model for sustainability. Meaningful public participation is also embedded in the healthy community concept, “which suggests that governments are conceptualizing community problems in a more systemic fashion” (McAllister, 2004, p. 188). The healthy community concept aims for the sustainability of communities (Hancock, 2006).

### **2.2.1 Evolution of Public Participation in Canada**

.... One of the major changes in western societies during recent years has been a dawning realization of the welfare state... we now know that the state is simply not able to satisfy all the

needs of its citizens... people will have to rely more upon themselves, their households and their communities to meet their economic and social needs... <sup>1</sup> (Nozick, 1992, p. 15).

Public participation is as ancient as democracy with many definitions and interpretations. According to Draper (1977) “innovative social processes” began to gain focus in Canada in the 1930s with the Antigonish Movement in Nova Scotia and the Farm Radio Forums. The Antigonish movement was a local community development movement that strove for a more just and equitable world. It is credited for the establishment of the credit union and for the asset based community development initiatives in developing countries. The farm radio program aired from 1939 till 1965 to join farmers across Canada for educational purposes. The program benefits extended past educational. It was able to join agricultural-based communities from all over Canada with diverse cultures and led to a local and national sense of community that was translated into political action and community development initiatives. It was able to build a generation of leaders that managed cooperatives, municipalities and various governmental structures (Draper, 1977) as cited by (Connor, 1994).

The post- World War II era brought strong commitment to representative democracy (Tester, 1992). The mid to late 1960s was characterized by rising social concern and activism (Tester, 1992). In Canada, public consultations began in the 1960s and 1970s (Jackson, 2001) and gained momentum in the 1970s and 1980s (Tester, 1992).

However, it was the 1990 that brought new civic participation demands and perspectives. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 endorsed civic participation as a core concept of sustainable development (Hirsch Hadorn, 2008) and drew on growing public concern regarding the human- nature relationship (Tester, 1992). Following this the public began demanding shared power in decision-making (Jackson, 2001). Economy and growth is no longer the only concern, and citizens’ rights versus rights of ownership began to be contested (Tester, 1992). The evolution of ICT technologies, web 2.0 and social networking also pose new demands that shapes the new generation of participation and citizenship. “Citizenship is being redefined as a

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<sup>1</sup> The 1986 Provincial Report of the Royal Commission on Employment and Unemployment in Newfoundland as cited by (Nozick, 1992, p. 15)



transnational global citizenship” (DeBardleben & Pammett, 2009, p. 402) and the new high-tech environment make it more feasible.

Despite all these developments widespread and meaningful civic involvement remains an elusive goal for many Canadian communities.

### **2.2.2 Exploring the Nature of Meaningful Citizen Participation**

As mentioned before, several studies pointed out the need for public participation to achieve sustainability. Robinson et al. (1990) discussed “functional decentralization” as means to achieve or at least head in the right path towards a sustainable society”. “Functional decentralization” was described as a “political process” where decision-making is placed at the level of the government closest to the situation and lives of the people involved (Robinson, Francis, Legge, & Lerner, 1990, p. 42). The government “closest to the situation and lives of the people” needs to engage local and private entities in the decision-making process.

Many public participation and policy analysts classified civic participation into categories or levels such as Arnstein (1969), Connor (1994), and Rowe & Frewer (2005). Arnstein (1969) considered the lack of power as the problem of meaningful citizen participation and measures the value of participation in terms of a ladder of citizen’s power. Davidoff (1965) also articulated the need for providing professional assistance to the disadvantaged groups and speaking “the community language” to increase the power of citizens. Planners and administrators may not be that aligned with the community and local knowledge but the community may also not be aligned with the political, economic factors, or the long-term community/resource considerations (Innes & Booher, 2004). Developing useful criteria that would foster meaningful participation requires an understanding of the barriers to effective citizen engagement.

In Canada, public participation in local governance can take place in a number of ways. People can vote for elected representatives or vote on a referendum. Citizens can run for office or directly communicate with a councilor. They can attend open houses, council meetings or make a petition to council. They can also volunteer their time on local boards, special purpose bodies, commissions or committees. Additionally, they can seek membership in business organizations, professional associations, community and neighborhood associations that liaise with the government (Adapted from McAllister,

2004, p. 46). Citizen advisory committees are a form of citizen engagement that will be discussed further in this thesis.

According to Mary Louise McAllister, barriers to participation in elected office and challenges to collaborative decision-making in Canada include the following (2004, p.60, 72, and 73):

- it is not easy for someone to participate in local council unless the individual has other means of support with flexible working hours
- getting elected still requires help from people well connected to the political process and ready with financial backing. As cities continue to grow or amalgamate, prospective candidates new to local politics face daunting odds as competition becomes stiffer
- marginalized citizens have little incentive to try to participate when they already have a low sense of efficacy and little extra time for civic affairs
- women and minority groups such as ethnic minorities and immigrants are still noticeably underrepresented which points out the need to continually developing policies encouraging their participation
- local governments, with its traditional preoccupations, will not hold much interest for those individuals who have different sets of concerns, particularly when it comes to issues that have not captured the local media's or broader public attention. This might service as a disincentive for those who do wish to participate. Once they find their concerns not high on the list of institutional priorities
- legal and constitutional constraints imposed by provincial governments
- roundtables and consensus-based processes are also among the challenges to be addressed in civic participation policies and approaches. Much of the literature suggests that roundtables or consensus-based public consultation, serve to make policy processes more accountable, transparent, and democratic. As yet, Canadian institutional and governing processes are ill-equipped to deal with competing public pressure on decision-making processes that are still formally governed by hierarchical, decisional, representative structures. Roundtables and

consensus-based processes will, and often do, flounder if they do not have effective administration or political support.

Finally, it should be noted that citizens have other ways to participate in governance such as through cultural, volunteer, or leisure oriented associations. Activism, social movements and the mass media are other avenues for influencing political agendas through alternative methods.

To overcome such barriers, many analysts and practitioners stress that meaningful participation is dependent on both a well-designed process as well as a good outcome. A committee process that may contribute to meaningful participation could be<sup>2</sup>:

***Identifying all stakeholders in the community.*** “Those who believe themselves to have an interest or stake, not those which [the agency] deems to have a stake, or would like to include” (Jackson, 2001, p. 140). Stakeholders can include neighborhood and other community associations, volunteer organizations, hospitals, schools, universities, municipality and other applicable governmental officials (for example fire department and police if they have a stake in what is going on, provincial etc.), relevant businesses, cooperatives and farmers’ associations if present, CBOs, NGOs, key community members with relevant technical expertise if present, representatives of citizen advisory committees and other community groups. Cultural and religious organizations can be also present. Marginalized groups in a community should be identified in this stage and specific plans to target them to be involved in the process should be developed (Amelia Clarke, personal communication, 2010). Mapping community assets might be a way to start this process since it provides clear description of community resources and stakeholders (Mcknight & Kretzmann, 1996).

***Stakeholder analysis and committee selection.*** An evident question is who gets to decide, why and how? Identified stakeholders should be analyzed based on their relevant relation to the issue at hand, level of knowledge of the issue and degree of commitment (Jackson, 2001). The exercise can be done by the municipality or an independent entity based on the situation, time and resources. Keeping organizational representation is an asset (as long as they are willing to participate) since they can be very resourceful and more accountable than individuals (Clarke & Erfan, 2007). Community technical expertise is also an asset

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<sup>2</sup> The findings from the literature are corroborated by this researcher’s personal experience as a facilitator mentioned earlier.

since it increases community trust in the results. Including marginalized community groups is also a must since the diversity of a committee and its inclusiveness are also assets.

Once the committee is selected the operation process begins. However, stakeholders need to be “continuously analyzed” and “strategically targeted”. They should stay informed and their feedback continuously sought (Jackson, 2001).

***Committee Operations.*** The selected committee operates at two levels (Jackson, 2001):

- a. Generating ideas and goals
- b. Seeking consensus

The generating ideas process should be a fully communicative process where everyone participates and provide feedback. Technical expertise or academics might be brought in at specific points of the process (Jackson, 2001). After ideas, options, goals and objectives are brainstormed. The committee needs to seek consensus on what ideas should be prioritized and in what order (Bridges-Josour Inc., 2006).

Consensus is defined as “a process in which all those who have a stake in the outcome aim to reach agreement on actions and outcomes that resolve or advance issues related to environment, economic and social sustainability” (Round Tables on the Environment and Economy in Canada, 1998, p. 1). Consensus can be a very strong tool in public participation for several reasons. It is “relationship-centered” rather than “outcome- centered” thus allowing for inputs and deliberative discussions rather than positions and opinions cling into by individuals. Interests should be negotiated rather than positions thus allowing for a stronger public input and a more successful process (Jackson, 2001). According to Jackson (2001) lessons learned from literature and research in British Columbia on public involvement processes shows that “the successful processes [ in Jackson’s study] were those which focused on the process of consensus, rather than on the agreement itself” (Jackson, 2001, p. 143).

Additionally, consensus is considered a very important tool in sustainability since the impact that sustainability has on the quality of life of current and future generations have prompted citizen’s demand for a meaningful participation in decision-making. Consensus assures that people affected are involved right from the beginning in identifying and agreeing on issues, sharing perspectives, prioritizing and making choices (Round Tables on the Environment and Economy in Canada, 1998). Moreover, consensus

allows for a system perspective thus supporting and building on interactions among stakeholders thus building social capital and networks (Margerum, 2008).

Consensus being highly favored does not mean it will always be attained. “Hard topics” that cannot be reached by consensus needs to be re-visited at a later stage by the committee and they can agree on another form of democratic methods for consent (Amelia Clarke, personal communication, April 2010). In fact, consensus guiding principles recommend assessing the issue first to decide whether a consensus process is needed or not since not all situations are appropriate for using the consensus process (Round Tables on the Environment and Economy in Canada, 1998).

The committee coming up with final decisions that are ready to be implemented does not mean that the process ended. The local government should continue to inform the public of changes, garner feedback, and develop an ongoing public involvement process (Jackson, 2001).

This process is supported by literature and has been tried in several communities. This does not mean that these approaches will work every time everywhere; there is no cookbook, or one size fits all, approach to sustainability or public participation. These are, however, some practical guidelines for local residents that they may find worthwhile and that can contribute to effective public participation criteria.

Another important factor to keep in mind for developing public participation criteria are the goals of public participation. The five “social goals” identified by Beierle in 1999 for public participation, for example, include: “incorporating public values into decisions, improving the substantive quality of decisions, resolving conflict among competing interests, building trust in institutions, educating and informing the public” (Beierle & Cayford, 2002, p. 6; Beierle, 1999).

Stewart & Sinclair (2007) pinpointed eight key elements with sub-components as essential elements of meaningful public participation. The study was based on literature review and interviews aiming to identify points of convergence in opinion among participant, proponent, and government sectors regarding what constitute appropriate principles and procedures for meaningful public participation. The eight key elements are: “integrity and accountability (with transparency, sincerity, clear process intentions as sub-components), influence, fair notice and time, inclusiveness and adequate representation (engaging interested and affected public as sub-component), fair and open dialogue (positive communication environment, capacity building interactive formats as sub-components), multiple and appropriate methods

(multiple techniques, staged process, appropriate techniques, consult on design as sub-components), adequate accessible information, and informed participation” (Stewart & Sinclair, 2007, p. 166). These elements were identified as interdependent. Participant funding, timing of participation, collaborative dialogue, and participant learning, were identified by some participants and in the literature as elements of meaningful public participation but lacked harmony among respondents (Stewart & Sinclair, 2007).

Therefore, criteria for effective public participation that targets barriers and public participation goals and takes into consideration successful processes and the literature review include:

- **Political will:** The willingness by local government/decision-makers to embrace collaborative shared-decision-making. Officials and elected representatives should consider the public as “partners” rather than “clients” and acknowledge their resources and capabilities. Willingness can be measured by the extent participation was able to influence decision-making and citizen versus state perceptions of the public engagement mechanisms in place (Newman, Barnes, Sullivan, & Knops, 2004). Financing the process, if possible, can also help facilitate the process, reveal determination and overcome financial barriers (Hunsberger, Gibson, & Wismer, 2005).
- **Early public involvement in decision process:** Citizen inclusion should take place early on in the process and not after policies are set and minimal changes can be made. Participation opportunities should be continuously created by the local government. No individual should feel that he/she can’t participate or that their feedback will not cause any difference (Connor, 1994).
- **Enhanced social inclusion and social capital:** Enhancing social inclusion and building social capital is another criterion (Hancock, 2006). Marginalized community groups should be identified and innovative approaches should be continuously used to get them involved. Marginalized groups represented in the committee will feel empowered and contribute more when the balance of power between them versus potential officials and other organizations’ interests is tipped by consensus (Jackson, 2001).
- **Consensus and collaborative approaches to decision-making when applicable:** Consensus is a very important requisite for having decisions that clearly reveal public values and input.

The committee may choose other means for agreement but overall values and goals should be reached by consensus. Trade-offs should not compromise social equity or be on the expense of marginalized groups (Gibson et al., 2005, pp.122-141). Discussions based on interests versus positions are also favorable (Jackson, 2001). Additionally, and as previously mentioned, collaborative and consensus- building processes need effective administration or political support to prevent faltering (McAllister, 2004, p. 72).

- **Democratic innovation & creativity:** Democratic innovation towards more participatory approaches, creativity in overcoming hurdles and limits imposed by legislations, policies and regulations (Dale, 2005; Gibson, Hassan, Holtz, Tansey, & Whitelaw, 2005).
- **Constant dialogue between citizens and the state:** Ongoing communication between the citizen and the state. Information should be always transmitted to the public and their feedback sought (Connor, 1994).
- **Incorporated community decisions and feedback in implementation:** Implemented decisions should represent committee decisions and be shaped by them (Newman, Barnes, Sullivan, & Knops, 2004).

### 2.3 Citizen Participation and Sustainability Criteria

The criteria that could be used to determine effective citizen engagement that fosters sustainability will be hereafter referred to as citizen participation and sustainability criteria. These criteria constitute a compilation of the above-mentioned public participation criteria informed by Gibson’s sustainability principles as shown in the table below.

**Table 2.2 : Citizen Participation and Sustainability Criteria**

Effective Citizen Participation Criteria	Resulting Citizen Participation and Sustainability Criteria
Political will	Political Will
Early public involvement in decision process	Early public involvement in decision process

Enhanced social inclusion and social capital	Enhanced social inclusion and social capital
Consensus and collaborative approaches to decision-making when applicable	Consensus and collaborative approaches to decision making is recommended but committees may choose other means for agreement. A valid citizen participation and sustainability criteria would be having an agreed on process.
Democratic innovation and creativity	Democratic innovation and creativity
Constant dialogue between citizens and the state	Constant dialogue between citizens and the state
Incorporated community decisions and feedback in implementation	Incorporated community decisions and feedback in implementation
Long term social, economic and ecological integration	Establishing sustainability criteria and trade-offs

- **Political will:** Willingness of the local government to include all community groups early on in the sustainability decision-making process in is also an essential for the success and sustainability of the decision.
- **Early public involvement in decision- processes:** As mentioned above, coming to the public with already designed plans and policies discourages effective participation or limits its scope, creativity and potential.
- **Enhanced social inclusion and social capital:** As previously indicated, networking provided through public participation offers the community an opportunity to build social capital, an essential requirement for healthy communities and sustainability (Hancock, 2006). Active and diverse networks created through enhanced social inclusion and social capital is critical in the meaningful public participation that fosters sustainability criteria because community issues are “multiscaled, constantly evolving and require deliberative transdisciplinary processes” (Newman & Dale, 2007, p. 81), thus, necessitating access to resources from inside and outside the community.



- **Having an agreed on process:** Regardless of whether the committee is an advisory committee or another form of a committee the committee needs to establish an agreed on process for operations, conflict resolution, and decision-making. This agreed on process with defined end goals helps in preventing hurdles, make people know what is expected from them and therefore encourages their participation. It also serves as a reference in all debates that may arise particularly those pertaining to conflict between individual and collective interests.
- **Democratic innovation and creativity:** Democratic innovation and creativity is also a requirement to overcome the challenges posed by sustainability.
- **Constant Dialogue between citizens and the state:** Establishing an ongoing communication process where information continues to flow back and forth to different community groups also displays political willingness and encourages citizen engagement.
- **Incorporating community decisions and feedback in implementation:** Citizens need to feel that their time was productive and their participation was effective and beneficial. Resulting decisions should explicitly reflect the community's feedback, as much as possible, and address their concerns.
- **Establishing sustainability criteria and trade-offs:** Sustainability criteria and trade-offs should be the basis for decision- making. As mentioned in section 2.1.2 sustainability criteria are socio-ecological system integrity, livelihood sufficiency and opportunity, intragenerational equity, intergenerational equity, resource maintenance and efficiency, socio-ecological civility and democratic governance, precaution and adaptation, immediate and long term integration. Trade-offs should not be at the expense of any of these criteria (Gibson et al., 2005).

For an effective public participation process a systems perspective is in order. This system should support and build on the interactions among public sector agencies, nonprofit organizations, business organizations, advocacy groups and foundations i.e. groups constituting our complex contemporary society (Margerum, 2008; Innes & Booher, 2004). The same holds true for decision-making pertaining to sustainability. The stakes are high and the challenges are complex. Therefore, a collaborative approach in decision-making, involving the public and all other stakeholders in a consensus building process to address problems (Margerum, 2008), can be the best strategy (Round Tables on the Environment and

Economy in Canada, 1998). Collaborative approaches are recommended in the environmental management literature and they serve to build social capital and networking (Margerum, 2008; Innes & Booher, 2004), a valuable asset to community sustainability (Gibson et al., 2005; Clarke & Erfan, 2007).

## **2.4 Summary of Key Criteria from the Literature Review**

In summary, public participation and sustainability literature review covered above allowed for highlighting sustainability criteria, ethics and tradeoffs, along with effective public participation criteria. Key sustainability criteria are: socio-ecological system integrity, livelihood sufficiency and opportunity; intragenerational equity, intergenerational equity, resource maintenance and efficiency, socio-ecological civility and democratic governance, precaution and adaptation, immediate and long term integration (Gibson et al., 2005). These criteria need to be integrated in all decision-making processes affecting our future including public deliberations and consultations. Key effective public participation criteria stemming from the literature review are: political will, early public involvement in decision- processes, enhanced social inclusion and social capital, consensus and collaborative approaches to decision-making when applicable, democratic innovation and creativity, constant dialogue between citizens and state, implementing decisions that incorporates community feedback and are shaped by them. Combining these criteria leads to participation criteria that foster sustainability. These criteria were identified as: having an agreed on process, establishing sustainability criteria and tradeoffs, political will, constant dialogue between citizens and state, early public involvement in decision- processes, enhanced social inclusion and social capital, incorporating community decisions and feedback in implementation, democratic innovation and creativity. These criteria are tested using selected Canadian communities' best practices in Chapter 3.

## Chapter 3 Canadian Communities Examined

Population, urban growth and sprawl, human and economic resources losses, community decline, ecological challenges are all complex dynamically interconnected problems that cannot be met by action at the community scale only. These challenges transcend local government boundaries and capabilities and have local and global causes. That is why “fundamental transformations” are needed in social, economic and governance structures. To achieve these transitions, we need to convert our attitudes and behavior, cultures and practices (Dale, 2005). There are several initiatives undertaken by different Canadian communities to overcome these sustainability challenges. Covering them all is beyond the scope of this study. The Canadian communities innovative practices discussed in this chapter are chosen using two criteria:

- 1- They possess a geographical area that is large enough to be a mid-large Canadian city for representation and comparative purposes. It should be noted that representation may not be generalized to small communities or large metropolitan areas.
- 2- They undertook an innovative approach - public participation and/or sustainability initiative.

This study recognizes that there are public participation and/or sustainability initiatives present in various jurisdictions. However, the focus is on municipal or local government initiatives. This does not mean that all Canadian local government initiatives are covered. The selection is based on having qualitative differences that will enrich best practices and lessons learned. Therefore, this chapter is divided into seven sections. Each section contains description of the initiative selected, why it was chosen and concludes with best practices/ lessons learned that are assessed against the citizen participation and sustainability criteria developed from the literature.

### 3.1.1 UNICITY Winnipeg

UNICITY is the first initiative in Canada to engage citizens in decision-making. Despite the fact that the initiative failed, in many ways, according to analysts, it is worth examining because of its historical value as the first Canadian public participation initiative and the substantial changes it brought to Winnipeg (McAllister, 2004).

In 1970, the elected Manitoba New Democratic Party (NDP) introduced a new unique approach to local governance for Winnipeg which contained half the province population. On January 1, 1972,

the government of Manitoba adopted the City of Winnipeg Act, under which the new “City of Winnipeg” (Unicity) was created (Sancton, 1997). It suggested “politicizing local government” through a participatory model in decision making that would actively engage citizens. Through this initiative, it would decentralize power by introducing twelve community committees of council and consolidating the twelve existing municipalities into one (Winnipeg). These 12 committees were to represent the citizen advisory groups and the districts (wards). It also suggested a parliamentary form of governance at the municipal level. Its goal was: “. . . to reduce citizen alienation through electoral distribution and political decentralization. . . . It was believed it will provide a forum of debate, help focus the discussion on the issues much more clearly, stimulate the development of alternative to proposed politics, and raise public awareness” (Brownstone & Plunkett, 1983, p. 174; McAllister, 2004).

According to some analysts, the reasons why Unicity did not achieve its overall goals despite considerable achievements included the following

- The committees were heavily politicized serving as a triple form of government. “The political trade-offs and wrangling diluted many of the innovative aspects of the initiative” (McAllister, 2004, p. 104). Having an arm length’s relationship with elected and non-elected city officials and an ability to speak out publicly about concerns without being ‘captured’ by the ‘political interests of the cities’ could have addressed this gap. Also focusing on development and sustainability issues might have alleviated the problems,
- They did not have the legal authority or resources, which undermined the public’s willingness to participate (McAllister, 2004). The political will of the province or the higher authority is needed for change to take momentum. Cooperation and coordination are also important. No one can do anything that complicated alone. Effective communication is also a requirement,
- A formal review of this initiative in 1976 concluded that the process suffered from numerous flaws including “lack of accountability, confusion over responsibilities, complicated processes, parochialism on the part of councilors representing their own

areas, and lack of city-wide coordinated decision-making” (McAllister, 2004, p. 105; Sancton, 1997).

As for the positive impact of Unicity, the initiative helped to unify municipal services and administration in the region and introduced a mechanism for formal civic participation (McAllister, 2004). It also promoted more equitable governance in Winnipeg. “Unlike some Canadian cities, and most American ones, Winnipeg simply does not have a wealthy suburban enclave with low taxes and high service levels” (Sancton, 1997; McAllister, 2004, p. 105).

**Lessons learned:** Although, the Winnipeg example may not be categorized as “successful”; it is a good example of efforts to include the public in decision-making for the long-term improvement. It offers some important lessons. For example, public participation efforts should focus on clear sustainability and development issues with clear objectives and goals. Implementation should reflect public recommendations and address their concerns to establish trust and encourage participations. Agreeing on the process before hand prevents confusion. These principles align with citizen participation and sustainability criteria mentioned in section 2.3 : having an agreed on process; establishing sustainability criteria and tradeoffs; incorporating community decisions and feedback in implementation.

### **3.1.2 Crombie Toronto Waterfront Commission**

Crombie Toronto Waterfront Commission, Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront-Regeneration is an example of an ecosystem approach in decision-making as opposed to the conventional planning process. What is unique about this commission is that it introduced new governance for sustainability process (McAllister, 2004). Toronto also has an Ecological Plan (2000-2025) that includes sustainability components.

The Crombie commission was established in 1988 by the Governor-in-Council, on the recommendation of the prime minister, to come up with recommendations on how to deal with the contaminated Toronto waterfront and related lands (Crombie, 1992). The environmental problem resulted from railways and expressways that cut off the city from its waterfront. At the beginning the geographic focus of the commission was the waterfront of the regional Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto including Toronto, Etobicoke and Scarborough municipalities. It then expanded to cover the

Greater Toronto Bio-region extending from Niagara escarpment on the west, the Oak Ridges Moraine on the north and east side and Lake Ontario’s shoreline (Crombie, 1992; McAllister, 2004). The commission, led by David Crombie, engaged in a large consultation process that included environmentalists, developers, traffic engineers, landscape architects, scientists, community activists, federal and provincial public servants and city officials (Crombie, 1992; McAllister, 2004).

**Lessons learned:** The Crombie commission introduced the idea of ecosystem planning in Canada (Gibson, Alexander, & Tomalty, 1997; McAllister, 2004). Additionally, one of its major recommendations was the concept of bioregionalism. Bioregionalism implies that “natural regions rather than artificially constructed political regions should be the organizing unit of human activities” (McAllister, 2004, p. 191; Crombie, 1992, p. 41).

Ecosystem planning principles suggested by Gibson et al. (1997) were based on several initiatives including the work of the Crombie commission (Gibson, Alexander, & Tomalty, 1997; McAllister, 2004). Gibson’s et al. developed in 2005 “sustainability requirements as decision criteria” (Gibson, Hassan, Holtz, Tansey, & Whitelaw, 2005, pp. 116-118) that are used in this thesis as recommended sustainability criteria and are part of the citizen participation and sustainability criteria (see Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1 Ecosystem Planning Principles with Citizen Participation & Sustainability Criteria**

<b>Ecosystem Planning Principles</b>	<b>Citizen Participation &amp; Sustainability Criteria</b>
base planning units on natural boundaries	socio-ecological system integrity
design with nature	socio-ecological system integrity
consider global and cumulative effects	socio-ecological system integrity, resource maintenance and efficiency, livelihood sufficiency & opportunity, intragenerational equity, intergenerational equity, immediate and long term integration
encourage interjurisdictional decision making	socio-ecological civility and democratic governance in addition to having an agreed on process for operations and decision-making
ensure consultation and facilitate cooperation and partnering	socio-ecological civility and democratic governance in addition to having an agreed on

	process for operations and decision-making
initiate long-term monitoring, feedback and adaption of plans	precaution & adaptation in addition to establishing an ongoing communication process
adopt an interdisciplinary approach to information	precaution & adaptation in addition to establishing an ongoing communication process
adopt a precautionary approach to information	precaution & adaptation in addition to establishing an ongoing communication process
adopt a precautionary but positive approach to development that aims not to avoid additional damage but also to reduce stresses, and enhance the integrity of eco-systems and communities.	precaution & adaptation, socio-ecological system integrity. additionally, having an agreed on process for operations and decision-making and establishing an ongoing communication process
ensure that land use planning integrates environmental, social and economic objectives	socio-ecological system integrity, livelihood sufficiency & opportunity, intragenerational equity, intergenerational equity. additionally, having an agreed on process for operations and decision-making and establishing an ongoing communication process
link ecosystem planning with other aspects of democratic change, social learning, community building, and environmental enlightenment	socio-ecological system integrity, livelihood sufficiency & opportunity, intragenerational equity, intergenerational equity, immediate and long-term integration. having an agreed on process for operations and decision-making, establishing an ongoing communication process, democratic innovation & creativity

Source: Adapted from (McAllister, 2004, p. 192; Gibson, Alexander, & Tomalty, 1997, pp. 30-35; Gibson, Hassan, Holtz, Tansey, & Whitelaw, 2005, pp. 116-118)

### 3.1.2.1 Toronto Environmental Plan (2000-2025)

In 1998, the Toronto City Council created the City of Toronto Environmental Task Force (the ETF) to develop a comprehensive environmental plan for the city, “in the belief that governments, in partnership with citizens and stakeholders, should set the agenda for protecting and enhancing the natural environment” (Toronto Environmental Task Force, 2000, p. VI). The task force included City

Councilors, City staff, representatives from environmental agencies, and citizens representing business, labor, environmental groups, school boards, universities and schools across Toronto. This consultation approach is worth noting because the ETF was able to produce a set of environmental principles to guide decision-making in addition to recommendations to improve the health of the natural environment (City of Toronto, 1998-2010).

According to the ETF, the process to developing an environmental plan, began with the ETF organizing workshops that were “attended by 100 participants” to identify priority issues to be addressed by ETF and “quick start actions to improve the health of the environment”. 34 of the more than 200 “quick starts” were forwarded to City Council and relevant City departments and many were approved. The ETF also conducted a Vision and Priority Setting workshop which resulted in “a sustainability goal, a vision for a sustainable future, and a set of environmental principles to guide decision-making”. As a result, they choose four areas to work on “that they believed will help to move the City towards sustainability”. These areas were transportation, energy use, economic development, education and awareness. These areas were chosen as a result of the workshops, based on what the council had asked ETF to work on, and based on ETF belief that they could play a considerable role in these areas. The work was done through 4 sustainability work groups, Sustainable Transportation, Sustainable Energy, Green Economy and Education and Awareness. “The Work Groups were charged with identifying gaps in the coverage of sustainability issues, developing objectives and targets, and identifying policies, strategies and actions to move towards environmental sustainability.....Their findings were included in the environmental plan” (Adapted from Toronto Environmental Task Force, 2000, p. VI).

Moreover, the ETF was also “to recommend a governance structure that would incorporate advanced environmental decision -making into the political and administrative structure of the City”. After 10 months of discussion they released “Towards Advanced Decision-Making in the City of Toronto” outlining “the Task Force’s ideas on sustainability and governance”. Over 200 people provided feedback on the document either in writing or at workshops and as a result the ETF produced ‘a recommended governance model’ which was adopted by Council in 1999” (Adapted from Toronto Environmental Task Force, 2000, p. VI).



It is also worth noting that the ETF had also an Indicator Work Group for “environmental and sustainability monitoring, evaluation and reporting” and had developed a newsletter to inform the public about the task force activities and progress. According to the ETF: “All sectors of the community - citizens, business, agencies and environmental organizations- were encouraged to take part in workshops, governance meetings, monthly ETF meetings, or in the Work Groups” (Adapted from Toronto Environmental Task Force, 2000, p. VIII).

**Lessons learned:** This consultative approach managed to draw from all sectors of the community (citizens, business, agencies, environmental organizations) and had a total of 1,300 participants through its different mechanisms. The ETF was able to develop a governance structure incorporating environmental decision-making into the political and administrative structure of the city which was adopted by Council in 1999 (City of Toronto, 1998-2010). The ETF had the requisite political will, it established environmental criteria, it involved the public early on in the process, and it aimed to incorporate community decisions and feedback in implementation.

On the other hand, the environmental criteria could have been optimized by evolving into sustainability criteria and tradeoffs. Moreover, the Environmental Plan Final Report and other related literature does not show special policies to attract the participation of marginalized and other silent groups. Researchers agree that it is difficult to come up with a “politically and statistically representative sample”. However, seeking diversity and means to minimize selection bias is possible (O’Doherty & Davidson, 2010) by identifying marginalized groups upfront and targeting them to participate as discussed in the following chapters. Finally, using the collaborative approach rather than the consultation approach employed may have resulted in a more robust plan.

### **3.1.3 Victoria British Columbia**

The City of Victoria used a participatory sustainability planning approach for its growth management strategy (Gibson et al., 2005).

The City of Victoria is the capital of British Columbia. It, along with 15 adjacent municipalities and electoral districts at the southern end of Vancouver Island (Canada’s west coast), had their own experience in participatory sustainability planning. In 1996, the Capital Regional District (regional authority of the municipalities in the area) decided to start a growth management strategy

development process to face the areas vulnerability to the growing pressures of urban growth and expansion (Gibson et al., 2005). “The initiative and direction came from municipal leaders, the district’s planning staff and perhaps most importantly the extraordinary number and variety of residents’ and citizens’ groups committed to preserving the area’s quality of life” (Gibson et al., 2005, p. 71). Although the Growth Strategies Statutes Amendment Act 1995 was incorporated into British Columbia Municipal Act in 1996, this particular initiative and process was local though facilitated by the provincial law (Gibson et al., 2005). The results were impressive; they were able to reach consensus for the strategy after a long enduring process (Gibson et al., 2005).

The local municipalities, public advisory committees, and the advisory board representing the other governments and agencies (federal, provincial, First Nations etc.) played a key role. Additionally, public opinion was sought throughout the process with respect to “concerns and objectives, strategic options, technical evaluations and drafts of the strategy” (Gibson et al., 2005, p. 72). According to Gibson , the municipalities stayed focused on their key objectives for the region: “urban containment and rural protection, green/blue space protection, more complete communities, balanced regional transportation, stronger regional economy, and improved housing affordability” (Gibson et al., 2005, p. 72). They also heard public reactions for the different scenarios and agreed that the regional business-as usual approach will not work anymore (Gibson et al.). To summarize, at the beginning stakeholders had a broad set of sustainability objectives. These objectives gradually were narrowed down into regional objectives, future preferences and strategy components. The specific objectives were the center of technical evaluations, public and political deliberations. Such approach for decision-making in complex matters is interesting and productive. It incorporates objective - driven initiative with the necessary elaborations and comparison of alternatives with open debates and consensus seeking conflict resolution (Gibson et al., 2005).

On the other hand, the process took seven years from 1996 to 2003 (Gibson et al., 2005). This example demonstrates the reality that the more inclusive the process the slower it goes. The priorities and actions of assessments of this kind are frequently based on incomplete analysis and imperfect information since effective processes are limited by time, resources and institutional capacities and constraints (Gibson et al., 2005). In general, sustainability assessments need to respect specific contexts, work according to what real resources and institutions can deliver, ensure fairness to

participants and stakeholders (Gibson et al., 2005). There will be trade-offs, but they must be made while avoiding significant adverse effects (Gibson et al., 2005).

**Lessons learned:** This example demonstrates two sustainability principles and their value. The importance of who makes the decision and how (socio-ecological civility and democratic governance), and the importance of coming up with tailored made approach rather than a universal process (adaptation). Also, it is important to remain focused on the objectives and to combine ecological issues with social issues (social equity and economic vitality) with the public process (Gibson, et al., 2005). One of the major problematic areas is the dilemma of time. One way to tackle this obstacle is by specifying time frames and following more efficient public participation techniques. Again alignment with citizen participation and sustainability criteria is in order.

#### **3.1.4 Halifax (2006-2031)**

Halifax Regional Municipality's (HRM) 25 years Regional Plan was adopted by Council in 2006. The goal of this Plan is to “achieve a shared vision of the future of HRM, a vision of healthy, vibrant and sustainable communities, without taking away from the character that makes HRM a distinct and attractive place to live” (Halifax Regional Municipality, 2010, p. 1). It included guidelines to foster physical development that will promote healthy, vibrant, and sustainable communities while addressing the needs and views of all residents and recognizing the diversity of citizens, community and geography. The engagement process was a consultation approach, mainly open houses, attended by hundreds of residents (Adapted from Halifax Regional Municipality, 2010).

In 2004, the Halifax Regional Municipality established a Sustainable Environment Management Office. The office serves as a “corporate lead for sustainability, environmental policy, strategy, reporting and performance monitoring”. It also coordinates internal and external education and awareness programs (Halifax Regional Municipality, 2010).

**Lessons learned:** Although Halifax does not have an articulated sustainable development strategy, sustainability guides its regional plan operations and community programs. What is interesting is that the regional plan, which started out as an environmental plan, guides all long- term policies to be established and implemented during the next 25 years (water quality, open space, affordable housing, public transit, capital district, economy etc.) and the direction is environmental (Halifax Regional

Municipality, 2010). This approach fits many of the sustainability criteria: its long term (25 years), environmentally oriented overriding policy document has been reached using a participatory process (Halifax Regional Municipality, 2010). Another criteria met is the recognition of the importance of diversity in the community and planning accordingly. On the other hand, employing a collaborative approach rather than a consultative approach might have made the process more robust.

### **3.1.5 Hamilton (1990-2020)**

The Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth created Hamilton-Wentworth's Vision 2020 as an attempt to move towards sustainable development (UNESCO, 1995-2010; Clarke A. , 2010). It was the first collaborative regional sustainable development strategy in Canada, i.e., the Canadian initiative with the longest opportunity for best practices and lessons learned (Clarke A. , 2010). The vision encompasses "a long term strategy for a vibrant, healthy, sustainable future shared by local government, citizens, business groups, and other organizations" (Clarke A. , 2010, p. 129; UNESCO, 1995-2010). The Regional Council developed in 1990 a Regional Chairman's Task Force on Sustainable Development that included representatives from different sectors. This taskforce functioned for two and a half years and over a 1000 people participated in its activities. One result was the *Vision 2020 - The Sustainable Region* which was adopted by council in 1992. The 30 year vision was how the citizens of Hamilton aspire to be in the year 2020. What is notable about this whole initiative was that there was a considerable change in its structure over time and the fact that implementation was only carried on by the government although some Task Force members tried to promote the vision "by osmosis" in their own organization and other organizations in their economic sector (Adapted from Clarke A., 2010; UNESCO, 1995-2010).

Vision 2020 was recognized nationally and internationally and has won many awards. It was identified as a Local Agenda 21 Model Community from 1993-1997 (one of 21 communities identified as an excellent case study in planning for sustainable development). Examples of awards include the Canadian Environmental Achievement Award from Environment Canada in 1994, Dubai International Award for Best Practices in 2000, United Nations – Local Initiatives Award for Governance in Sustainable Development in 2001, Honorable mention in FCM-CH2M Hill Sustainable Community Awards in 2003, and InfraGuide National Award of Excellence in 2005

from the National Guide to Sustainable Municipal Infrastructure (InfraGuide) (City of Hamilton, 2010; Clarke A. , 2010).

**Lessons learned:** The community visioning process initiated the process towards changes in the operation and purpose of the regional government. It created an overarching objective against which all decisions made by businesses, government, community groups, and individuals can be measured. The solid foundation was the visioning process that forms the base of the structural changes and changes in decision-making whether in the regional government or throughout the community. Above all, the community as a whole has been given the opportunity to be part of the decision-making process and consequently had the opportunity to influence the future of the community (UNESCO, 1995-2010). It is also a good example of the deliberative process as articulated by Glen Brunetti, a Hamilton city staff during personal communication on June 4, 2010. Best practices & lessons learned include (Adapted from UNESCO, 1995-2010):

- **Political will:** The clear commitment of some of the Regional Councilors and some of the members of the Region's Management Team, particularly the Chief Administrative Officer and the Regional Chairman had encouraged the involvement of many members of the community. This coincides with the political will criteria discussed in section 2.3 Citizen Participation .
- **Incorporating community decisions and feedback in implementation:** Political willingness also encompasses empowering the community by enabling its direct involvement in the decision-making process. The process should include components where the community is allowed to take direct responsibility for initiating and implementing projects (UNESCO, 1995-2010).
- **Having an agreed-on process:** Another criterion used by Hamilton that was also in alignment with Criteria of effective citizen engagement to foster sustainability, is having an agreed-on process with defined goals. The purpose of the vision was defined as a guide for the development of the Region's Official Plan and the Economic Strategy. It gave the project purpose and focus which helped participants and the community at large understands what the project is about and its final product.

- **Patience:** Although it is difficult for the “experts” not to take control of the process and direct it, patience was another factor that contributed to the success of the project. Members of the community need to scrutinize and develop their own solutions. They must be granted ample time to do so.
- **Flexibility:** Another factor that contributed to the success of this project is flexibility. Financial & Staffing resources must be built in a way that accommodates changes.
- **Enhanced social inclusion & social capital:** The Task Force had representatives from the environmental groups, industry, health organizations, neighborhood associations, social service providers, agriculture, and small businesses. Decisions were taken using the consensus approach which ensures that all views are considered and addressed prior to taking decisions and contribute to building partnerships.
- **Monitor Progress:** A mechanism was established for the community to be able to report its own progress and learn about the progress of others. They were involved in the annual review of the vision statement and any decision making process where priorities are set for implementing the vision statement. They also participate in the Indicators project and the Annual VISION 2020 Sustainable Community Day. This mechanism allows for maintaining the community’s support (UNESCO, 1995-2010).

In conclusion, Hamilton took a bold leap in trying to encompass ecological, social and economic aspects in its decision-making and acknowledging that decisions in one area can affect the progress in other area (City of Hamilton, 2010). It did not waste time waiting for ‘the City house’ to be “in order” before engaging community stakeholders (City of Hamilton, 2010). It did establish measurement mechanisms to measure progress in relation to goals of Vision 2020 and issued annual indicator reports. However, the frequency of these reports has decreased over the years. There was an annual report card released from 1996-2004 while the most recent was released in 2008 (City of Hamilton, 2010). The 2008 annual report was released in an attempt to revitalize Vision 2020 annual report cards but “yet a clear renewal process is still to be determined” and appropriate partners to the regional government are still to be found to move the region into the next phase (Clarke A. , 2010, p. 140). Perhaps another major lesson learned is the challenge of how to continue the sustainable path

and “keep the momentum going” after cities begin their quest towards sustainability (My Sustainable Canada, 2008, p. 58). Finally, the Hamilton example showed the importance of diverse representation, and adding flexibility, patience, and monitoring progress to Citizen Participation and Sustainability Criteria.

### **3.1.6 Montreal (2005-2009)**

Montreal’s First Strategic Plan for Sustainable Development or “Premier plan stratégique de développement durable de la collectivité montréalaise” is also a collaborative regional sustainable development strategy (Clarke A. , 2010). The five year plan was adopted by the Montreal executive committee in 2005 (City of Montreal, 2007). Although Montreal and Hamilton used the collaborative approach for their sustainable development strategy there is a major difference that is worth noting in this study. Montreal’s implementation is through partner organizations. On the other hand, Hamilton’s sustainable strategy was formulated through a multi-organizational Task Force but its implementation is led & overseen by local government not an ongoing Task Force. In fact, the Task Force had a mandate that was completed in 1993, after which the task force was dispersed (Adpated from Clarke A., 2010, p.130).

Montreal’s sustainable development strategy stemmed from Montreal’s summit held in 2002 where “many organizations interested in sustainable development in the city committed themselves to work in collaboration with the City by abiding by the Policy statement by the Montréal community regarding sustainable development and promised to carry out certain specific actions” (City of Montreal, 2007, p. 2). The City of Montreal partnered with two other lead organizations that were committed to promoting sustainable development in the region: The Conférence régionale des élus comprising elected officials from the City of Montreal representing different neighborhoods, provincial elected officials with their constituencies in Montreal, and other socio-economic organizations having a total of 146 members including businesses; and the Conseil régional de l’environnement de Montréal, “a network of non-profit organizations, institutions and companies with 130 member organizations” (Clarke A. , 2010, p. 366; Ville de Montréal, 2005). In 2003, three committees were created, the Partners Committee comprising broad representation of the civil society (organizations representing principle spheres of civil society), the City-Borough Committee which is

a local government committee made up of representatives of municipal services and boroughs, the Steering Committee encompassing 16 representatives from public, private and educational sectors and associations (Adapted from Clarke A., 2010; Ville de Montréal, 2005).

The Partners Committee and the City-Borough Committee's role were to provide input into the collaborative strategic plan, while the Steering Committee's role was to formulate the plan (Ville de Montréal, 2005; Clarke A. , 2010). The plan was adopted in 2005 and comprised two implementation phases: a start-up phase from 2005-2006 and a second- phase from 2007-2009. This strategy won the FCM (the Federation of Canadian Municipalities) - CH2M Hill Sustainable Community Award in Planning in 2006 (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2010; Clarke A. , 2010). The growing number of organizations in carrying out actions under Montreal's First Strategic Plan for Sustainable Development (City of Montreal, 2007, p. 2) is another phenomenon that illustrates the success of this process.

#### **Lessons learned:**

- **Political will:** Involving people right from the beginning is not an easy process but it ensures survival of the initiative, according to City of Montreal's Director of the Environment Chantal Gagnon. Having more than 70 organizations in partnerships with the City makes it difficult for the politicians to outweigh competing interests especially when the end results are unclear. Ms. Chantal Gagnon credits City Staff & Councilors for giving their full support to the initiative right from the beginning (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2010). Moreover, The City of Montreal took leadership in implementation. It engaged in implementation of the 24 actions decided upon by the strategy, coordinated ongoing work, and monitored actions taken. It also provided a budget for the initiative (Adapted from Clarke A. , 2010, p. 372). Willingness is a recurring criterion that keeps on showing up in all successful sustainability initiatives.
- **Early public involvement in decision-processes:** The City of Montreal aimed to engage wide range of community partners and asked them to submit in writing their commitment to the plan, was according to Ms. Gagnon, the way to ensure that the plan's objectives will be



- met (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2010). Involving the committee right from the start is another recurring criterion for effective citizen engagement that fosters sustainability.
- **Having an agreed- on process:** A communication plan was put in place from the beginning in 2005. The purpose was to “obtain and make widely known the commitment of the partners toward specific goals, to collect information about what was achieved, and to invite more organizations to engage” (Clarke A. , 2010, p. 382). The communication plan “highlighted achievements of the city and partners, encouraged individuals to adopt sustainable development practices, and encouraged networking between partners” (Adapted from Clarke A. , 2010, p. 383). It also provided orientation and clarification of the roles that each and everyone have to play as cited by (Clarke A. , 2010); (Ville de Montréal, 2005). Needless to say that having an agreed-on process is another recurring criterion for effective citizen engagement that fosters sustainability.
  - **Enhanced social inclusion & social capital:** Members of the public and private sector worked as partners although they come from different workplace cultures. On the other hand, although every partner expected to make compromises they still needed assurance that their concerns were being addressed. According to Ms. Gagnon, these challenges were faced with “focus on everyone’s concerns”, “showing a lot of open-mindedness” and “adopting a rhythm that suited everyone” (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2010). Moreover, the Montreal exercise did not only enhance social capital, it actually utilized it. Environmental groups involved in the plan were network leaders that were able to relay initiatives to their own networks and get other environmental organizations to join (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2010).
  - **Monitoring progress:** The plan had a commitment to update indicators and schedule regular liaison committee meetings. Additionally, there is annual meeting between partners and City representatives to discuss the plan’s progress, report on each partner’s commitment and propose adjustment (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2010).
  - **Constant dialogue between citizens and the state:** Constant dialogue and having a livable document that is constantly updated and adjusted is also a necessary criterion for citizen

engagement that fosters sustainability and is among the characteristics of this example (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2010). And of course challenges and barriers cannot be overcome without democratic innovation and creativity.

In conclusion, the Montreal example serves as a useful benchmark since it was successfully able to engage a wide range of community partners (over 100 partners and growing) right from the beginning. The uniqueness of this full partnership model is its ability to utilize social capital and build on it, having the willingness, patience and the vision to address all partners' concerns and innovatively finding a common rhythm that suited their different workplace culture. This example demonstrated further the validity of the Citizen Participation and sustainability criteria and the importance of adding monitoring progress to the criteria.

### **3.1.7 Vancouver (2003-2103)**

The regional government currently known as Metro Vancouver also has a collaborative regional sustainable development strategy known as “*A Sustainable Urban System: The Long-term Plan for Greater Vancouver*” and often referred to as cities<sup>PLUS</sup>; an acronym for cities Planning for Long-term Urban Sustainability. This initiative was initiated in January 2002 and completed in February 2003 (Clarke A. , 2010; cities PLUS, 2005). The public/private/civil initiative was created to enter an International competition on Sustainable Urban Systems Design which was sponsored by the International Gas Union. The competition was won by Greater Vancouver's cities<sup>PLUS</sup> in June 2003. cities<sup>PLUS</sup> is Canada's first 100- year plan for a sustainable metropolitan area incorporating environmental, social and economic priorities in a systems approach (cities PLUS, 2005). It is also unique in having an “informal implementation structure” (Clarke A. , 2010) that is worth discussing in this study.

The lead organizations were Sheltair Group, consulting firm that led the development of the 100-year plan (The Sheltair Group , 2009); Metro Vancouver; The Liu Institute for the Studies of Global Issues, (a think tank located at University of British Columbia); and The International Center for Sustainable Cities which is a development NGO based in Vancouver (Seymoar, 2009). An advisory board representing all community sectors was engaged along with other funding partners such as Wastech and BC Hydro. The partnership involved interactions between the lead organizations,

advisory boards and key funding organizations. There was no formalized organization or committee (Adapted from Clarke A. , 2010, p. 144). Engagement in the formulation process was through “formal consultation events and information gathering activities” (Clarke A. , 2010, p. 150). Additionally, there was no formalized implementation plan. “The intention was that individual organizations would act independently and at their own accord” upon the concepts in the collaborative sustainable development strategy (Clarke A. , 2010, p. 150).

### **Lessons learned:**

- **Constant dialogue between citizens and the state & enhanced social inclusion and social capital:** cities<sup>PLUS</sup> provided partners with the opportunity to network and share resources through the Sustainability Community Breakfasts. The success of these monthly breakfasts caused Metro Vancouver to resume them after cities<sup>PLUS</sup> as part of its Sustainable Region Initiative to bring together individuals and organizations interested in the sustainability of the region. To date, public, private, academic and non-profit sectors continue these informal meeting to “build networks and partnerships” and “increase awareness and understanding of the opportunities and challenges related to sustainability” (Metro Vancouver; Clarke A. , 2010). Another networking activity emerging from cities<sup>PLUS</sup> is +30 Network. The aim is “building an international network of cities willing to share their experiences, expertise and tools to foster very long-term planning for urban sustainability” (Seymoar, 2009, p. 10). Participating cities and communities share their experiences online and come together every 2 years “in conjunction with high profile events” (Seymoar, 2009, p. 11). The objective is to have a learning network of 30 cities that build the capacities of participating cities to design and implement long term strategies (Seymoar, 2009).
- **Early public involvement in decision-processes:** Public, private and civil organizations were involved right from the beginning of the process. The lead organizations represented these sectors and the advisory board included a broader representation of all community sectors (Clarke A. , 2010). The diversity of organizations involved was also an asset for the initiative (Clarke A. , 2010).

- **Political will & incorporating community decisions and feedback in implementation:** The decentralized process reflected the local government's political will in partnering for sustainability. However, this model, enabling partners to implement within their mandate, has its disadvantages. "It limits issues implemented and oversights of implementation efforts" (Clarke A. , 2010, p. 237). Which suggests the importance of having an agreed on process that clearly defines roles and expectations and the collaborative process structure, as highlighted in section 2.3 Citizen Participation .
- **Establishing sustainability criteria and tradeoffs:** The public/private partnership adopted a Systems Approach and Adaptive Management Framework to "inform the development of the Sustainable Region Initiative Framework for Regional Mandates" (citiesPLUS, 2005, p. 1).
- **Monitoring progress:** Although, there was no formal monitoring system in place (Clarke A. , 2010) proposed targets were developed within cities <sup>PLUS</sup> process along with targets developed for Metro Vancouver (My Sustainable Canada, 2008).
- **Democratic innovation and creativity:** "The 100-year time frame allowed for visioning and creativity. However, such a time frame is not ideal for facilitating implementation" (Clarke A. , 2010, p. 236).

Again, the validity of the Citizen Participation and sustainability criteria is demonstrated in this example along with the above mentioned additions: monitoring progress.

### 3.2 Summary of Lessons Learned and Conclusion

This chapter covered sustainability and citizen participation initiatives undertaken in Winnipeg, Toronto, Victoria, Halifax, Hamilton, Montreal, and Vancouver. Although other examples examined included Imagine Calgary and Edmonton Urban Sustainability Action Plan, only cases that showed qualitative differences were presented here. Best practices/lessons learned began in the seventies and eighties with UNICITY illustrating the importance of governance and including the public in decision-making for long term-improvement. While the Crombie Commission introduced ecosystem planning into governance. Initiatives continued and best practices/ lessons learned continued showing the

importance of incorporating Citizen Participation and sustainability criteria in governance initiatives and the need for adding: monitoring progress, flexibility & patience to the criteria as outlined in Table 3.2: Governance Initiatives Shaping Citizen Participation and Sustainability Criteria. These modified criteria draws on Gibson’s sustainability principles and make it more readily applicable and will be used again in the case study of the City of Waterloo discussed in Chapter 4 and 5, in order to develop recommendations for the City of Waterloo that enhance the community’s meaningful engagement and fosters sustainability in Chapters 5 & 6.

**Table 3.2: Governance Initiatives Shaping Citizen Participation and Sustainability Criteria**

<b>Citizen Participation and Sustainability Criteria</b>	<b>Initiatives Supporting the Criteria <sup>3</sup></b>	<b>Added Criteria</b>	<b>Initiatives Contributing to Adding to the Citizen Participation and Sustainability Criteria</b>
Political will	Toronto Environmental Plan (2000-2025) Hamilton-Wentworth’s Vision 2020 (1990-2020) Montreal First Strategic Plan for Sustainable development (2005-2009) Metro Vancouver Regional Sustainable Development Strategy (2003-2103)	Flexibility	Hamilton-Wentworth’s Vision 2020 (1990-2020)
Early public involvement in decision process	Toronto Environmental Plan (2000-2025) Montreal First Strategic Plan for Sustainable development (2005-2009)	Patience	Hamilton-Wentworth’s Vision 2020 (1990-2020)

<sup>3</sup> The initiative can be contributing to the criteria through the lessons learned.

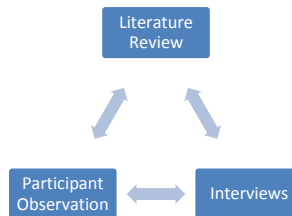
	Metro Vancouver Regional Sustainable Development Strategy (2003-2103)		
Enhanced social inclusion and social capital	Toronto Environmental Plan (2000-2025) Halifax Regional Plan (2006-2031) Hamilton-Wentworth's Vision 2020 (1990-2020) Montreal First Strategic Plan for Sustainable development (2005-2009)	Monitoring progress	Toronto Environmental Plan (2000-2025)  Hamilton-Wentworth's Vision 2020 (1990-2020)  Montreal First Strategic Plan for Sustainable development (2005-2009)  Metro Vancouver Regional Sustainable Development Strategy (2003-2103)
Having an agreed on process	UNICITY Winnipeg Hamilton-Wentworth's Vision 2020 (1990-2020) Montreal First Strategic Plan for Sustainable development (2005-2009)		
Democratic innovation and creativity	Metro Vancouver Regional Sustainable Development Strategy (2003-2103)		
Constant dialogue between citizens and the state	Montreal First Strategic Plan for Sustainable development (2005-2009)		

	Metro Vancouver Regional Sustainable Development Strategy (2003-2103)		
Incorporating community decisions and feedback in implementation	UNICITY Winnipeg  Toronto Environmental Plan  Hamilton-Wentworth's Vision 2020 (1990- 2020)  Metro Vancouver Regional Sustainable Development Strategy (2003-2103)		
Establishing sustainability criteria and trade-offs	UNICITY Winnipeg  Crombie Toronto Waterfront Commission  Toronto Environmental Plan  Victoria Growth Management Strategy  Halifax Regional Plan (2006-2031)  Metro Vancouver Regional Sustainable Development Strategy (2003-2103)		

## Chapter 4 Methodology - Case Study: City of Waterloo, Ontario

The City of Waterloo provided a plethora of opportunities to study civic engagement in a way that fosters sustainability. The author had the opportunity to make personal connections that resulted in more depth to the context of the case study. These personal observations and interactions supported interviews. Data analysis went hand in hand with data collection and narrative report writing (Eisenhardt, 1989). Interviews were transcribed and analyzed immediately and triangulated with participatory observation and the literature (See Figure 4.1). Interviewees' names were also kept anonymous with the exception of specific cases where participants agreed or requested to have their names associated with their quotes. Triangulation of data is based on the simple idea that “several observations of a datum, a single piece of data, are better than one, the phrase implies that three are desirable. Thus, triangulating data implies that although “each observation is prone to error, taking the three together will provide a more accurate observation” (Bechhofer & Paterson, 2000, p. 57). Triangulation allowed the researcher to use “different methods in different combinations” (Fontana & Frey, 2008) thus complementing interviews with participant observation and literature review findings.

**Figure 4.1: Triangulation of Data**



Thirty people were interviewed including experts, councilors, city staff, advisory committee members, neighborhood associations and NGOs active in Waterloo. It is difficult to relay the vast amount of insights and knowledge communicated to me by research participants in over 28 hours of interviews and over 170 pages of transcript. Therefore, in presenting the findings the author distilled and highlighted as believed were key perspectives on this study's topic based on the criteria identified in Chapters 2-3.

Moreover, the study employed inductive and deductive approaches to data analysis. In Chapter 5, the data collected was analyzed qualitatively and was used to build a descriptive set of quotes that were combined to support the findings. On the other hand, chapter six contained the qualitative



analysis of findings based on citizen participation and sustainability criteria, i.e., the deductive analysis.

This chapter sets the context of the case study by describing the study area: the City of Waterloo and its Waterloo Citizen's Environmental Advisory Committee (WCEAC), why it has been selected, and data collection techniques employed.

#### **4.1 Case Study Method**

A case study approach is used as one of the research methods for this exploratory investigation. A case study is the "study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (Stake, 1995, p. xi). The case study method can be quantitative, qualitative or combination of both and can involve the use of multiple sources of information (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003).

According to Yin (2003), case studies have strengths and weaknesses. Weaknesses are suitability for only few types of studies, risk of producing unreliable results, and the high demands put on researcher to avoid such risks. The researcher strategies to avoid these risks were triangulation of data and cross-examination (Yin, 2003) to be discussed below.

According to Yin (2003) the strengths of case studies pertain to the ability

- to include any combination of quantitative and qualitative evidence (multiple sources of evidence) (Yin, 2003, p. 83),
- to combine exploratory and explanatory purposes together (Yin, 2003, pp. 152-153),
- to capture phenomena (real-life event) and context (natural setting) (Yin, 2003, p. 72), and
- to highlight and explain causal relationships in complex contexts (Yin, 2003, p. 72).

Therefore, case studies allow investigators to explore real-life circumstances in their natural settings capturing both phenomenon and context (Yin, 2003; 2004). This is a very important strength in this study because of the intertwined nature of influences and actors shaping sustainability and public participation concepts. Finally, case studies allow researchers to answer the "how" questions about real life events using empirical tools such as field observations, interviews, literature review

etc. (Yin, 2004) . Consequently, one of the assumptions for this study, as highlighted in Section 1.5.1.1, is that the case study approach is the most appropriate tool for this task since it allows for analysis and explanations that cannot be garnered from survey and archival analysis. Moreover, the lack of control of the researcher over the events rules out experimental approaches.

## **4.2 Case Study Selection**

Case studies can be single or multiple cases (Yin, 2003). Yin (2003) stresses the importance of “generalizations” and recommends studying the largest possible number of case studies to allow for better development of assertions or “generalizations” about the case (Yin, 2003). On the other hand, Stake (2005) argues that focus should be on the case not the whole population of cases and that focusing on “generalizations” in a case will lead to overlooking features that are important for understanding the case itself (Stake, 1995). Based on this argument, a single case study is selected to allow for more in-depth knowledge that will lead for more learning opportunities (Stake, 1995). A deeper knowledge and understanding of the case allow for more richness and depth to the data acquired within the limited times and resources (Stake, 1995; Creswell, 1998).

### **4.2.1 Case Study Selection: Rationale for Selecting Waterloo**

Waterloo has many remarkable characteristics. It is one of several cities comprising Canada’s Technology Triangle (Bell, Jung, & Zacharilla, 2008). It is known for being the headquarters of large insurance corporations, two universities (University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University), giving the researcher access to sustainability and public participation experts), and for its technological economic base (McAllister, 2004) where it accounts for 10% of the Triangle’s labor force and 45% of its job growth (Bell, Jung, & Zacharilla, 2008). It is a good case study because of the abundance of data and interest in environment and sustainability (The City of Waterloo, 2010). In 2000, the city undertook a public participation project known as *Imagine! Waterloo*. “Prominent citizens led a city-wide public consultation to determine the best possible future for the city”. (Bell, Jung, & Zacharilla, 2008, p. 28). Consultation ranged from environmental issues, to transportation, culture and city communications (The City of Waterloo, 2001). This initiative placed Waterloo on the map and led to various achievements such as wining the “Intelligent Community of the Year” award in 2007 (Bell, Jung, & Zacharilla, 2008).

Moreover, the City of Waterloo promotes itself as an “environment first city”. This means that the city strives to include environmental considerations in all corporate activities (The City of Waterloo, 2010). Waterloo also has a collection of national and international awards for environment and sustainability which makes the city “nationally and internationally recognized for the high quality of life and commitment to sustainability” (The City of Waterloo, 2010). Awards include:

- The gold award (2003) and the silver award (2004), granted by the International Awards for Livable Communities,
- The Canadian Association of Municipal Administrator's Award for Environmental Excellence in 2004, which was an endorsement from Ontario’s Minister of Environment.
- The City Livability Award presented in 2006 for Waterloo's “10,000 Tree Project” by The Canadian Urban Institute at the annual Urban Leadership Awards in Toronto,
- The Community Sustainability Award presented by the International City/County Management Association in 2006.
- The Service to the Environment Award granted by the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects for the environmental strategy that was highlighted as “making a contribution that goes beyond normal levels of community action in preserving, protecting and improving the environment” in 2008.

Community pride in prioritizing environmental and sustainability concerns (as shown in the city’s website, initiatives and prizes won) makes Waterloo an important exploratory case study for promoting sustainability. Moreover, studying this community gave the researcher the opportunity to gain local access to participants, conduct more convenient participant observation activities, and the ability to interview some participants face to face

A common challenge of a single case study selection as a method of research is the question of how the findings based on one case can be representative of other cases (Stake, 1995). Generalizing the case study analysis and findings to other Canadian communities is possible since Waterloo, despite the above mentioned characteristics, is still a typical mid-sized Canadian city facing similar challenges and opportunities. On the other hand, its sustainability and environmental achievements

allows for a robust study and may provide ideas for best practices and incentives for other Canadian cities. However, as with any case study research, findings may not be universally representative.

#### **4.2.2 Citizen Advisory Committees**

Citizen advisory committee is one of the participatory approaches used throughout Canada by local governments to engage citizens (McAllister, 2004) and is the focus of the case study. Advisory committees advise council on matters related to specific topics as per their terms of references (The City of Waterloo , 2010). Studying citizen advisory committees as part of this case study research; particularly those that have promoting sustainability in their mandates is essential to coming up with criteria of effective public participation that fosters sustainability since these committees act as links between citizens and local governments while addressing sustainability matters at the same time.

#### **4.2.3 Semi- Structured Interviews**

The case study research included semi-structured interviews with Waterloo citizen advisory groups, NGOs, city officials, councilors, sustainability and public participation experts. These interviews were designed to analyze how local governments can work with the broader community for a broader democracy approach that fosters sustainable communities, and the role of non-governmental institutions in these communities (see Appendix A, Appendix B, Appendix C).

The semi-structured interviews were used to test the criteria, strengthen validity, and enhance this study's contribution to the literature. Interviews and participant observation provides valuable real-life perspectives that improves the validity of the literature-based conclusions (Creswell, 1998). According to Yin (2003) interviews are one of the most important sources for case studies. Although, "asking questions and getting answers is much harder task than it may seem at first" since "the spoken or written word always has a residue of ambiguity, no matter how we carefully we word the questions and how carefully we report or code the answers. Yet interviewing is still considered one of the most powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow humans" (Fontana & Frey, 2008, p. 118). Interviews help to describe and understand key informants experiences and view points as they are conveyed verbally (Creswell, 1998). The lack of a rigid interview questionnaire served to provide insights into the participant's thoughts and perceptions regarding sustainability and public

participation and allow for a more in-depth analysis of what is needed to achieve the goals of this study (Flick, 2002). Thus, the “active process” of semi-structured interviews lead to the creation of “contextually bound and mutually created story” that allows to use the results to “advocate social policies and ameliorate the current conditions of the interviewees” (Fontana & Frey, 2008, pp. 116-117). It is the best tool employed when trying to understand “the complex behavior of members of society without imposing any a priori categorization that may limit the field of inquiry” (Fontana & Frey, 2008, p. 129).

Interviews served two purposes. The first purpose was conveying public participation and sustainability viewpoints held by the community groups present in the City of Waterloo. The second purpose was assessing the current state of citizen advisory groups and how their role is perceived by different community groups.

The interviews were designed to seek out information that will help to answer the thesis questions. This implied identifying thesis information requirements and addressing these requirements through the application of appropriate interview questions and key informants.

The questions might be distilled into three thematic areas:

- Effective public participation & barriers to local civic engagement
- Sustainability & barriers to sustainability in local Governance
- Effective participation process based on sustainability and public participation criteria

The interview questions are described in Appendix D. In April 2010, the interview protocol design was submitted for ethics review and was approved by the University of Waterloo’s Office of Research Ethics with minor changes.

Key informants were divided into experts, local governance (councilors, city officials and advisory committee members) and NGOs. Purposive sampling was used rather than random sampling. Key informants were chosen to represent a diversity of views and realities from academia, NGOs, city and regional officials and citizen advisory groups (Table 4.1). The researcher sought to identify the most knowledgeable candidates while maintaining a balance of stakeholders and a variety of perspectives. Face –to-face interviews were conducted since they allow for greater likelihood to establish rapport

between interviewer and key-informant thus allowing for greater-in-depth response (Palys, 1997). They also allow for the opportunity to witness body language. The length of the interviews was around one hour. Subsequently, prior to closing the interview, the snow ball technique was used to identify additional potential candidates; each key informant was asked if there are individuals who he or she felt are crucial to this research.

Key informant categories, number of key informants and rationale are present in Table 4.1 Overview of Key Informants.

**Table 4.1 Overview of Key Informants**

<b>Key informant Category</b>	<b>Number of key-informants</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
Group # 1: Experts on Sustainability	3	sample of experts with significant studies and publications and/or contributions to sustainability
Group # 2: Local Governance	22	city and region officials, Councilors, Citizen Advisory Committee members , neighborhood associations
Group # 3: NGOs	5	community associations, not-for-profits and special interest groups
Total	30	

Similar to other forms of data collection interviews have their limitations in obtaining reliable and valid knowledge. First its high dependency on the subjects that are chosen to be interviewed makes it highly subjective and difficult to make inferences on the entire population. Second, interviewees might provide answers that they feel the interviewer is looking for (Kvale, 1996). The author has no intention of making inferences about the entire population; however, the study’s concluding recommendations and criteria can be inferred to other mid-sized Canadian communities with similar characteristics as the City of Waterloo. Triangulation of data with the literature review and participant

observation (discussed in the following section) is used to minimize subjectivity of data and allow for such inferences. Moreover, the interviewees did not provide information that was different than what they have articulated during personal communications.

The literature review and interviews, along with the author's previous experience in community development as a former facilitator and coordinator of local participatory projects, helped in concluding with recommendations and criteria that will guide decision-makers to how to apply the eight principles of sustainability and trade-offs while exercising precaution and ensuring meaningful participation from all community groups.

Participation in this research was voluntary. Potential participants were initially contacted via e-mail to convey the context of the research, background of the researcher, and the scope of participation. The request for interview letter was attached. If the candidate responded positively a date and place was set. Prior to commencing the interview, the consent form was signed by the participant including his/her permission to use a recording device. Letters of appreciation and the executive summary of the interview with potential quotes to be used in the thesis were distributed to all interviewees within two weeks of completing the interviews. All participants were invited to review and verify the executive summary and potential quotes. As agreed with participants their comments are kept confidential unless in specific cases were participants expressed their willingness to be identified while using their quotations and provided a written consent. Apart from these exceptions, in no circumstances are comments identified to the name of the key-informant as responses are only referred to by their key informant category.

#### **4.2.4 Researcher's Role through Participant Observation**

In case study research, it is recommended that the researcher use "multiple forms of data to build the in-depth case" (Creswell, 1998, p. 134). Yin (2003) refers to six forms of data collection for case studies among which is participant observation.

Participant observation is a qualitative method that helps the researcher "*learn the perspectives held by study populations*" (Family Health International, 2005, p. 13). It helps the researcher capture the diverse perspectives within a community and the relationships between them. Participant observation takes place in community settings in a location that is pertinent with the research

questions. What distinguishes the participant observation method is that the researcher gets the opportunity to approach the participants in their own environment and try to learn what life is for an ‘insider’ while remaining an ‘outsider’ (Family Health International , 2005, p. 13). It is also a strong check against what participants may report during interviews (Family Health International , 2005).

The author lived in Waterloo for one year and observed the Waterloo’s Citizen Environmental Advisory Committee (WCEAC). The author was able to participate in regular meetings, hearing concerns, ideas, discussions, along with proposals and advices on strategies, official plans, and other environmental related projects. The author also worked with the City of Waterloo as a volunteer researcher for the Westside Trails Community Engagement & Stewardship project. This opportunity led to meetings with additional community members, city officials and attend Transportation and Trails Advisory Committee (TTAC) meetings as part of the process to develop a community engagement strategy for the project. As a result, the author was able to develop descriptive and reflective notes, understand more circumstances and contexts of the case study, and understand and analyze more the information collected through the interviews.

#### **4.3 Description of the Case Study: City of Waterloo**

The City of Waterloo is located in Southern Ontario around one hour west of Toronto (104 Km). It is part of Waterloo Region comprising the cities of Cambridge, Kitchener, as well as the townships of North Dumfries, Wellesley, Wilmot and Woolwich (Region of Waterloo, 2010). Over 1,700 hectares of parkland and over 150 Km of trails spread throughout the city and along the Grand River characterizes the City of Waterloo as having all the amenities of the city while being surrounded by “green farmland and small town warmth” (The City of Waterloo, 2010). “Waterloo is recognized as one of Canada’s best places to live, work and visit due to its dynamic leading-edge, community that fosters innovation and creativity, while preserving heritage” (The City of Waterloo, 2010). It offers internationally recognized recreational, arts and cultural facilities while excelling in sporting facilities and outdoor enjoyment (The City of Waterloo, 2010). Additionally, The City of Waterloo prides itself for its “Environment First Policy”. The Community Vision Statement is (The City of Waterloo, 2007-2010, p. 4):



“In 2020, The City of Waterloo has enhanced its friendly feel, welcoming and accommodating a diversity of people. Waterloo is ... a caring community where people support each other; a green city with healthy green spaces, land, water and clean air; an economic leader with a strong diverse economy; a community of vibrant neighborhoods; a learning community with strong ties to its schools, universities, and college; an exciting city with abundant recreation, leisure, arts and cultural opportunities; and a city that is accessible to all. Waterloo is a better place to live, work and play than ever”.

The City of Waterloo also boasts a knowledge economy including internationally recognized firms such as Research in Motion (RIM), Open Text, DALSA, Google, IBM etc.; and institutions such as the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics, the Centre of International Governance Innovation, and the University of Waterloo Research and Technology Park (The City of Waterloo, 2010). In 2007, Waterloo was recognized as the World’s Top Intelligent Community (The City of Waterloo, 2010). It has received many environmental and sustainability awards that were described previously in this study.

#### **4.4 The Waterloo Citizens' Environmental Advisory Committee (WCEAC)**

The City of Waterloo has advisory committees on: Culture, Audit, Recreation & Leisure Services, Safe & Healthy Community, Transportation & Trails, Uptown Vision, Volunteer Services, Economic Development, Park, Ambassador Committee and the Environmental Advisory Committee (The City of Waterloo, 2010). The Waterloo Citizens' Environmental Advisory Committee (WCEAC) is a 12 member Advisory Committee that advises City Council on matters concerning the environment (WCEAC, 2008). The committee’s key goals are protecting and enhancing the environment in a manner consistent with the City’s of Waterloo “Environment First Policy”. The committee also serves as a catalyst “for local initiatives that promote environmental sustainability and conservation of resources” and aspires for “creating a sense of stewardship within the community towards open spaces, parks and woodlots” (WCEAC, 2008).

WCEAC also act as a link between citizens and local government to facilitate addressing environmental concerns and developing of projects that enhances the environment. They seek to build

relationships with environmental organizations and parties within the Region of Waterloo, promoting greenspace cleanups and environmental projects (WCEAC, 2008). Communications with city council are through the City of Waterloo's Environmental Coordinator and Council liaison. This communication allows the committee to be informed of local and regional environmental issues. Councilors that sit on the committee provide Council positions regarding issues and relay back committees' feedback and concerns to Council (personal communication and observations, February-July 2010, City of Waterloo, City Hall). WCEAC final output is recommendations on environmental issues to Council and/ or staff, as necessary (WCEAC, 2008).

Membership is limited to citizens of the City of Waterloo. According to research participants, the municipal council select members and most participants were unclear of the selection process. However, meetings are open to the general public and individuals from within the Regional Municipality of Waterloo (WCEAC, 2008). WCEAC also conducts Annual General Meetings to discuss environmental salient topics and to try to reach out to the public (The City of Waterloo , 2010); (personal communication and interviews with committee members, February-July 2010, City of Waterloo). WCEAC is included in this study because of my role as an observer with this committee and because of its sustainability role, which makes it a perfect example for exploring meaningful citizen engagement that fosters sustainability.

#### **4.5 Case Study Summary**

This chapter covered the case study and its data collection methods. The evidence collected employed three information collection techniques (secondary literature review, participant observation, and interviews) and was intended to represent the current conditions and trends at the City of Waterloo. The following chapter presents interviews and personal observation key-findings, analyze and compare them with the citizen participation and sustainability criteria.

## Chapter 5 Key-Findings & Observations

The criteria of effective citizen participation to foster sustainability developed in Chapter 2 and modified in Chapter 3 are now applied to an exploratory case study to investigate how the City of Waterloo compares to the developed criteria. Chapters 5 & 6 will answer the thesis questions 1) How might these lessons [lessons learned from the literature review] be applied to a mid-sized community such as the City of Waterloo? 2) How might citizen advisory committees be more effectively engaged to foster sustainability?

This chapter presents the thoughts and ideas of research participants about civic engagement in the City of Waterloo with respect to sustainability. Key findings from interviews and personal observations are presented in two parts. The first part covers general findings for the City of Waterloo. It is divided into 1) effective public participation and barriers to local civic engagement; 2) sustainability and barriers to sustainability in local governance. These findings clearly indicate some areas that could be strengthened in the opinions of the research participants. In other words, their perspectives provide insights on how the City of Waterloo can promote meaningful public participation in a way that fosters sustainability. As noted earlier, the approach was to use criteria developed from sustainability and participation literature and examples from across Canada.

The second part of the chapter presents specific findings that could be used when considering the role of citizen advisory committees such as WCEAC. These findings respond to the question about how citizen advisory groups could become more effectively engaged in fostering sustainability. The chapter concludes with recommendations pertaining to the findings.

### **5.1 City of Waterloo Findings – Promoting Meaningful Public Participation that Fosters Sustainability**

These case study findings have been grouped under the following headings 1) Effective public participation and barriers to local civic engagement; 2) Sustainability and barriers to sustainability in local governance. The interviews revealed some insights with respect to strengthening public participation in local governments. Suggestions ranged from sufficient funding and resources, to

broader inclusion of diverse groups of citizenry to improved outreach mechanisms. They are presented as follows.

### **5.1.1 Effective Public Participation and Barriers to Local Civic Engagement**

***Finding # 1 Perceived insufficiency in human and financial resources to undertake new initiatives:*** Lack of resources such as budget and time were consistently identified as barriers by various community groups.

“For any project or idea, it is always a question of ‘do we have the money and resources to do it?’ regardless of how great the initiative would be and the value it would add. Waterloo is a very budget-minded municipality”. (City of Waterloo official, Interview # 13)

As previously discussed, lack of resources are common barriers identified in the literature (Hunsberger, Gibson, & Wismer, 2005). One government official, from a nearby city with a similar culture and economic base, suggested overcoming such barriers by prioritizing and placing value to what really matters the most for the community.

“It is important to look for value in setting budgets. How can we improve the services we deliver while keeping a close eye on the value being delivered through the investment of public dollars”. (Personal communication, June 4, 2010)

It is worth noting that regulations and legislation were also identified as barriers but to a much lesser extent:

“One of the problems we face that people live in a local community but laws and policies are legislated by people that don’t live locally. Local policy doesn’t have many tools. There are no local policies to deal with local problems. Policies and regulations are far removed from their locality”. (City of Waterloo Official, Interview # 16)

***Finding # 2 Limited marginalized groups inclusion:*** Gibson’s et al. (2005) sustainability principles included intragenerational and intergenerational equity. Ensuring diversity and enhanced social inclusion and social capital are also among healthy communities requirements (Hancock, 2006). Marginalized groups in the City of Waterloo include residents who do not speak English fluently, people with low literacy level, low income, and foreign-trained professionals (Region of

Waterloo official, Interview # 19; Community association representative , Interview # 24). Youth, women and seniors were rarely identified as marginalized groups by research participants. The City of Waterloo has no special policies targeting the participation of marginalized groups.

Most research participants had difficulty in identifying marginalized groups in the community. Many participants did not know that low income families, referred to as ‘pockets’, exist in the City of Waterloo. They thought that Waterloo is an affluent highly educated society due to its unique characteristics where the majority of the population is either students or highly paid employees. However, low income families do exist in the City and, with due diligence, the researcher was able to identify neighborhoods with considerable concentration of low income families (personal communication with regional and city staff, NGOs, social workers & interviews); (Region of Waterloo, 2004; Hoy & Ikavalko, 2005). Unfortunately, most of these families are new immigrants and their participation in governance is usually confined to having to fulfill certain volunteer hours as part of paying their rent or other living expenses (Region of Waterloo official, Interview # 19; Community association representative, Interview # 24). Some participants observed that zoning policies undertaken by the city discouraged low income families from settling in the city and forcing their relocation to nearby cities. Land costs might also be a factor in having less low income families in Waterloo than other cities in the region such as Kitchener and Cambridge.

“Are we creating invisible barriers to participation by where we house people? Is council aware of the amount of people living in poverty in Waterloo even though if you google Waterloo it comes out as an affluent community?” (City of Waterloo official, Interview # 7)

“Marginalized groups in Waterloo are the poor. There is a whole area in Waterloo that are low income living in subsidized housing. Students are even stratified in public schools. There is no integration. As a citizen I never seen the Council take any initiative. I also haven’t seen any debate about the environmental green spaces”. (Community association representative, Interview # 23)

Some thought that low-income population are displaced by the students (City of Waterloo official, Interview # 1), while others thought that they are rendered invisible by the rich communities

surrounding them since areas are not divided based on income in Waterloo (City of Waterloo official, Interview # 7; Region of Waterloo official, Interview #14; Region of Waterloo official, Interview #19; Community association representative, Interview #24). It is worth noting that the quantity of Waterloo's subsidized housing units are notably lower than other nearby cities in the region such as Cambridge and Kitchener (Region of Waterloo, 2004). The author's inquiry about this phenomena revealed that land costs could have played a role, it is cheaper to buy land in Kitchener, for example, and thereby provide more housing and decrease homeless rate (Region of Waterloo official, Interview # 19).

Some participants considered that marginalized groups are marginalized by choice:

“Marginalized groups are those that marginalize themselves. Nobody is deliberately marginalized. For example students who don't bother themselves to know what happens in the municipality. They don't see themselves as citizens rather as temporary residents. With immigrants, women with children and elderly it is partially a transit issue. Some people are marginalized because of language, religion or culture. Some sub-communities don't seem to be willing to step up and participate. Groups tend to stay inside the “safe bubble” of their own group and do not participate in this entity called “Waterloo”. Probably because Waterloo does not exist as a living entity in the way that Montreal or older places do. Waterloo has a history and a heart, but if you ask school kids, they do not know any Waterloo stories. [Questions I wonder about] Does city hall have washrooms with facilities to change diapers? Is there French translation available? Babysitting or child care available? They [City Hall] don't have the capacity or budget to deal with these issues. Why? Because potholes in roads come before such amenities”. (Member of advisory committee, Interview # 4)

“Marginalized people are those that don't have access to efficient public transit. Every community has groups that are marginalized in some way that are living below the poverty line. In my opinion, everybody has the opportunity to be engaged. The library has thousands of people that go through those doors every day. Library cards are free and accessible to everyone seniors, people with children, immigrants. Sometimes I think people marginalize

themselves. Anybody has the opportunity to influence council, have their say, or be involved with a community”. (City of Waterloo Official, Interview # 2)

Enhancing social inclusion is an important consideration with respect to sustainability. It is worth noting that Guelph, a nearby city that share many similar characteristics with Waterloo, have set in place specific policies targeting marginalized groups and has been recognized for its work with foreign- trained professionals. (City of Guelph, 2009); (City of Guelph official, personal communication, June 4, 2010)

***Finding # 3 Limited relationship/links between the different governance structures, not-for-profits and other community groups:*** Most research participants also had difficulty in identifying not-for-profit organizations that are active in Waterloo. When the researcher inquired about this phenomenon many research participants attributed it to the fact that although most NGOs services cover Kitchener and Waterloo, most are based in Kitchener. One alternative explanation was that NGOs are still emerging in Waterloo.

“The role of an NGO is unique from that of government. An NGO can provide a third party perspective, can facilitate collaborative dialogue and can report on the progress of the community without bias. Why do I think they are still kind of emerging [in Waterloo]? Probably because we’re a smaller community, so the ecosystem of NGOs is similarly smaller. But this is changing as more and more collaborative organizations and initiatives are emerging to help our region show leadership in the area of sustainability”. (Mike Morrice, Sustainable Waterloo, personal communication, April 30, 2010)

“Because there are not any [NGOs]; they are in Kitchener. NGOs are an indicator of a healthy community, but in Waterloo we don’t want to build local housing or social homes. We mostly want to file our social problems to Kitchener. We don’t have a hospital. We don’t have a community health center or an emergency health center. We have a didley little library while Cambridge has three beautiful libraries each one of them is 10 times the library we have and Kitchener has a 6 story library. We have only the RIM Park and Rec center. Now just recently the YMCA is building with the library a new facility. We have a few community

centers that are linked to the region....Where are other cultures in decision-making? There is no diversity”. (Community association representative, Interview # 23)

“I am always struck how come they never approached us although we work in community engagement at the national level”. (Community association representative, Interview # 23)

Additionally, very few participants pointed out volunteerism in Waterloo although it is considered to be quite strong in comparison with other cities in Ontario (Hoy & Ikavalko, 2005).

***Finding # 4 Perceived limited outreach from the City to citizens:*** Many research participants noted that they are not aware of cities activities and public involvement endeavors in policy deliberations. For example, a considerable number of research participants did not know about public consultation activities undertaken by the City for developing the environmental strategy. Perhaps, other forms of media and policies need to be used for more effective information dissemination. For example, social media or recreation centers can be used as venues to reach out to a broader base.

“It is not a matter of access to the internet; it is a matter of how the messaging is put out. Newcomers to Canada or to the City, from other parts of the world, will definitely not know about it if residents don’t”. (Community association representative, Interview # 22)

“Community Culture & Recreation services (CCRS) - the recreation complex can be a venue for advertisement. It can be used to help the community to bridge (parents take their children to swimming lessons and there they can find information on how to engage with the city-recreation being a bridging opportunity)”. (City of Waterloo official, Interview # 13)

“When there is better dialogue with citizens more citizens will be willing to volunteer”. (Dana Fox & Steve Singer, City of Waterloo neighborhood association members, personal communication, July 8, 2010)

***Finding # 5 Limited use of information and communication technology (ICTs) to facilitate citizen participation:*** Although some participants identified some use of information technology by



the City of Waterloo such as using mass e-mails for some projects and the City is now found on Facebook, most thought that the City could do more to target youth and additional groups in the community. Some were cautious about the use of social media while others articulated that staff needs to learn how to use these tools first. Some participants suggested that the website needs to be improved to become more interactive and less static.

“The city do mail-outs (direct outreach) for area specific projects and provide opportunities for people to register online if they are interested and want to receive updates. There are no specific mail-outs for projects across the board and generally we will rely on advertisement (online & newspaper). I don't think there are mail-outs for official plan or environmental strategic plan probably only advertisement in the newspaper and on the city's website”. (City of Waterloo Official, Interview # 9)

“There is a role to play in new media for sure and municipalities have not done the best they could from 2000 till now but we need to be careful on how much feedback you allow to occur in certain media”. (City of Waterloo Official, Interview # 11)

“Municipalities are getting more in tune with new types of electronic media to reach different audiences. But we should not forget the seniors that still rely on traditional form of communications such as TV and newspapers and usually they are more excited with local issues because they are more in tune with local government issues. There are also people that have no access to the internet these also should be kept in mind”. (City of Waterloo official, Interview # 11)

“The City predictably prints reports which end up on shelves. Cities should put more and more reports online. Now the trick is how to get citizens to go online? The real civic square is the city website but nobody goes to it because it is not a forum. If I go in there and in 2 weeks nothing is changed I likely won't go again. It should be a viable fluid website with people to

chat with, not a dead website used as a book shelf. Kitchener has an IT department with 60 people. We are half the size of Kitchener here in Waterloo and have only 16 working in the IT department. This is the most vital place for the new demographic voter and yet the one department that can step up and do it to reach for these voters has only 16 staff and budget that matches that”. (Member of advisory committee, Interview # 4)

Using social media alone will not widen the participation base unless it is accompanied by improving the engagement process:

“We need to improve the process of how we are engaging, ask the right questions, and then find the appropriate media. Otherwise if we use the same process [just change the media into social media], we end up with the same people who often show up at public meetings”.

(Glenn Brunetti, City of Hamilton, personal communication, June 4, 2010)

***Finding # 6 Inconclusive results with respect to gauging the level of citizen engagement in governance:*** Opinions varied about the degree to which citizens were engaged in civics and governance. Some participants considered citizens in Waterloo as highly engaged while others didn't. The onus of disengagement was placed on the topics being deliberated, citizens for their lack of interest in local issues, or simply the fact that they are busy. Engagement policies, media or mode of dissemination were not pointed out as factors affecting disengagement. Two participants pointed out that they have higher participation in voting than other cities and high number of volunteers. It is worth noting that the city has recently developed a public involvement policy that has been briefly described in this study.

“People who want to be engaged are engaged. I tend to put the onus on an individual to be engaged and the onus on the municipality to make sure that the information is available...I don't think it is city's responsibility to make sure that citizens are engaged. It is the individual's responsibility to get engaged if they wish. The city's responsibility is to make sure people have access to information... A good question to ask citizens is when the last time was they went on the City's website. We are doing it via paper and via e-mail. The information is there but it is interesting to ask people if they are looking for information. Are

they interested enough to go to the website and find the information?” (City of Waterloo official, Interview # 11)

“It is hard to say whether Waterloo as a community is engaged. It is so issue specific and I don’t have much of a benchmark to go on. Sometimes you get tremendous interest (open houses are very well attended and we provided opportunities to people to submit comments by the internet. There are examples that were a very engaging process and really very good models) and other times you don’t get the same turnout even though the same process was employed and opportunities provided. We began to question the mechanisms to enable communications and how appropriate they are”. (City of Waterloo official, Interview # 9)

“From what I have seen yes [Waterlooans are effectively engaged]. There are a number of different committees dealing with all sorts of issues, transportation, trails, and environment. We don’t have problem filling positions (even though I haven’t check with other committees). It seems a lot of people wanting to serve on these committees. We are not missing out”. (Member of advisory committee, Interview # 5)

“I think that the City of Waterloo are very much engaged and highly politicized we find that from letters to the editors (we track that as well). Lots of people attend council meetings regarding issues. Relative to the norm, we have higher participation in voting, higher percentage. All of this shows that our community is engaged.... Passionate being about the community comes in numbers. In Waterloo, there are 10,000 people who regularly volunteer. [Another number is] how many people visit the City’s website and we can track what they are looking at in the website. Number of attendees in festivals or other functions, usually we are maxed out. We never have to seek candidates for the committees we always have surplus applications. People sign up for committees, events, and have their children sign up for athletics”. (City of Waterloo Official, Interview # 16)

“People will get engaged if they are interested in the topic and the City should invite people and sectors concerned to get informed opinions.... [On the other hand] I participated in an economic development forum recently. The land developers at the table dominated the conversation and decision-making, clearly looking out only for their own interests, even though there were people from different sectors at the table”. (Community association representative, Interview # 22)

It is worth noting that most public officials interviewed considered the nature of topics as the major determinant of public involvement. There were no mention of the media, mode of information dissemination, or demographics of citizens engaged, unless when instigated by the researcher.

“The public only provides feedback when it is an extraordinary salient topic the kind which is absolutely in their backyard. For example I don’t think 100 people provided feedback on environmental strategy I think about 50. I am not sure though. Reasons are people are busy. There is not a lot of space in people’s lives to engage”. (City of Waterloo official, Interview # 3)

“How do you engage people in a topic that they are not intrinsically interested in? Do we simply acknowledge that people have different areas of interest and target those specifically? Perhaps that is a more realistic approach rather than trying to target and capture everyone? There are multiple reasons for why people get disengaged - busy life, trust, angry, skeptical, etc.” (City of Waterloo official, Interview # 13)

Moreover, there was no mention whatsoever of the *Imagine!Waterloo* initiative.

***Finding # 7 Inconclusive results with respect to determining the level of effective public participation in public consultation & open houses:*** Citizen advisory groups are not the only form of civic engagement. There are other forms such as public consultation. Opinions varied about public consultation and its effectiveness as well. Some research participants questioned the effects of open houses and whether it really provides the true perspectives of the community or is it only the vocal

minority input not the true representation of the community. Some participants pointed out that local government need to be active in the community as well for citizens to reciprocate.

“Results coming from public consultation could be taken into consideration by council can’t think of an example where it has or hasn’t”. (City of Waterloo Official, Interview # 2)

“We do look at every comment [coming from open houses] and when possible try to accommodate. If we did not accommodate the comment there is an explanation why. The same hold true regarding advisory committees’ comments. Definitely feedback is important and can play a role in tweaking things and influence which option we recommend; I wouldn’t say it cause change in the direction”. (City of Waterloo official, Interview # 9)

“There are lots of questions about the effects of open houses and getting the true perspective on what the community’s feeling on an issue. Because typically the people that attend open houses could be the vocal minority and not the real representation of a community. The reality is that people are getting busier and there is so much thrown on them in terms of opportunities in engagement that they get very selective in choosing what to be involved in or not. Using focus group for feedback (from specific sectors in the community) was enormously valuable and those people that attended would not have attended an open house”. (City of Waterloo official, Interview #9)

“It is a two way engagement opportunity. We are talking about public participation in government activities but also local government (councilors) should be active in the community they are responsible for”. (City of Waterloo official, Interview # 7)

Many participants considered collaborative approaches as more appropriate approaches for complex issues such as sustainability but thought that traditional approaches such as citizen advisory groups and public consultation are needed for general public input and for their sense of continuity.

“Task Forces tend to be specific in their nature, narrow in their membership, topic specific (short term specific interest) and have less diversity in terms of its members. There is also no sense of continuity”. (City of Waterloo Official, Interview # 16)

“Don't look for a one size fits all process. At different stages of the planning process, you may find that different types of public involvement are more suitable, and different types of communities or resident's groups will be expecting different forms of involvement. They may just want information, or consultation, or they may want to be decision-making partners”. (John Lewis, personal communication, May 17, 2010)

### **5.1.2 Sustainability and Barriers to Sustainability in Local Governance**

*Finding # 8 Lack of knowledge in how to initiate process that will lead towards sustainability in the City:* Research participants agreed that sustainability is a complex concept that cannot be easily defined. Some research participants considered the complexity of sustainability as a barrier to citizen engagement in sustainability initiatives. The question of measuring sustainability was also raised.

“There are so many buzz definitions. Sustainable decision-making is a process in which you consider environment, economic and social factors. A process that considers different factors to arrive at an outcome that is long term and has long term liability. The question is how we measure sustainability, how we benchmark, and how we change our practices”. (City of Waterloo Official, Interview # 9)

“Sustainability is very broad. We can't restrict it to a couple of things. We can't just relate it to the environment. It should involve (as strategic plan in the city) transportation, economy etc. Any committee dealing with any of these areas need to look at it as well. It is harder to engage the public on those kinds of things. There is few people outside the committees who would want to be engaged in such an abstract concept as long as they know somebody is doing it. They expect the government to be looking at this for them. They have lots of issues

in their lives they are dealing with. Unless an issue affects them and directly impinge on them they won't worry about that". (Member of advisory committee, Interview # 5)

"[Sustainability is ] a community that balances the needs of each sector or group with the needs of the whole and that looks to innovate and identify what the next wave will be". (Anne Lavender, Leadership Waterloo Region, Personal communication, April 29, 2010)

It is worth noting that most research participants agreed that the complexity of sustainability requires that the public and private sector work together on design and implementation of sustainability initiatives.

"Sustainable Waterloo held an Education Forum in January with a focus on the implications of COP15 held in Copenhagen last year. Of the 120 people there, so were local politicians. The message from our panellists that attended COP15, as well as from attendees was clear: that global efforts to combat climate change will never be enough, and lately, that they haven't really been very effective. Localized public engagement is crucial to make progress on this issue. It is crucial for communities to take leadership on sustainability objectives and this is what we're hoping to help be a part of, with a collaborative mentality and a focus on organizations across Waterloo Region". (Mike Morrice, Sustainable Waterloo, personal communication, April 30, 2010)

"Engaging business in sustainability is a similar challenge to engaging the public. In our work, the way we have always discussed sustainability is by showing the business case for change & showing managers the benefits of a reduced environmental impact, be it with respect to minimizing risk or capitalizing on opportunities. This same strategy can be applied to individuals, so that we focus on direct benefits, not just about sacrificing but offering them something better". (Mike Morrice, Sustainable Waterloo, personal communication, April 30, 2010).

Adjacent communities also emphasized that sustainability is a too broad complex to be carried on solely by the government.

“Government cannot be the sole party to implement solutions to complex problems, citizens, NGOs and other stakeholders need to be involved. This is a critical shift for a community”.  
(Glenn Brunetti, City of Hamilton Service Delivery Manager, personal communication June 4, 2010)

## **5.2 Specific Findings with Respect to how Citizen Advisory Committees might be more Effectively Engaged in Local Governance**

In addition to general questions about effective citizen participation in local governance, participants were asked for their views about local advisory committees and their role in governance towards sustainability. The major environmental committee in Waterloo is the Waterloo Citizens Environmental Advisory Committee (WCEAC). The focus of this research was not exclusively about WCEAC, and the research participants were drawn from a wider pool than those who have had current or past experience of WCEAC. That said, attention has been devoted to WCEAC given that the thesis is concerned with questions of sustainability. The findings are summarized below. They highlight the value of clarity and specificity about the expected role of advisory committees and strengthening networks, and feedback about the value and impact of their recommendations in local decision-making processes.

***Finding # 1 Ambiguity in the role of advisory committees:*** All individuals interviewed noted that the role of advisory committees is to advise council on issues related to their mandate. However, some participants also believed that advisory committees could play more proactive role, reaching out for the community and suggesting initiatives to council. Time and budget constraints, along with the fact that committee members are volunteers, were identified as barriers. Committee members noted that their time is diverted towards researching what the city is trying to do, they get last minute requests and they are not involved early on in the process. The fact that community engagement is expensive was also mentioned as a barrier that hinders outreach. The need for experienced committee members was also highlighted as an important component of committee performance and its effectiveness. Moreover, the allocation of projects and the determination of which ones go to



advisory committees is not based on publicly available written criteria. Staff explained that although it is not a 'random process' it is not 'written down' which projects go to advisory committees and which don't. This lack of clearly communicated criteria can lead to projects 'slipping into cracks' making it difficult to providing feedback in a timely fashion.

"How much a committee is active often depends on the experience of the chair and the staff advisor. How much he/she knows the councilors and other committee members is directly related to productivity. He/she should know how to time the committee's requests and reports and how to engage committee members and help them work as a team". (Member of advisory committee, Interview # 4)

"Being able to reach out to the community is a challenge because people that sit on a committee are volunteering their time, and they are active on multiple volunteer initiatives. Time is of the essence here and we have so limited time to engage the public. Most of our time is diverted towards researching and thoroughly reviewing what the city is trying to do. Outreach is something put on the side. It is something we want to do but do not have the time and resources to do". (Member of advisory committee, Interview # 6)

"Community engagement is expensive it costs a lot of money the committee cannot afford it". (Member of advisory committee, Interview # 5)

"I would like the committee [advisory committee] to be more proactive [policy development and advocacy] but we can't really dedicate the time for it since we get a lot of last minute requests from the city". (Member of advisory committee, Interview # 6)

Research participants emphasized the fact that sometimes committee members don't have enough personnel or time to contemplate on issues before they comment. Some research participants suggested committee members' early involvement in processes and providing them with ample time to study issues suggested by city before providing advice.

“The role of an advisory committee is to advise council. Also these committees should be on top of relevant issues. They should take initiative and encourage council to adopt environmental decisions. Some of the advisory committees are under-challenged or under-personned [not enough personnel]. Sometimes reports from staff are coming too late for them to study and comment on. They are volunteers so we need to give them more time and more people or have sub-committees. Another idea might have a couple of volunteers working with staff right from the beginning”. (City of Waterloo Official, Interview # 2)

“I don’t want there to be barriers put up around [WCEAC] that would prevent them from contributing to or learning from a project. If timing is an issue, things can be adjusted and juggled. However, from time to time, a project might ‘slip through the cracks’ – it may not get flagged for WCEAC or it is brought to the committee too late. It would therefore be wonderful to have a documented process or protocol for what projects go to WCEAC and when. This process or protocol should be determined jointly among staff, WCEAC and Council so expectations are clear”. (City of Waterloo Official, Interview # 13)

As to which projects go to advisory committees and which do not, there was no agreed-on process.

“Though it is not random, staff use their discretion to determine whether there would be value added in having the committee involved with a project. More and more, I think Council is expecting projects that have an environmental component to go through WCEAC for reassurance that the committee is okay with it (check of approval)”. (City of Waterloo official, Interview # 13)

“Committee should receive an introduction of expectations and role: They have to understand their role. The organization doesn’t know their role or when to bring them in. Staff also needs to know and committee members need to know. I feel that it is nice to have the support of committee members but not a need”. (City of Waterloo official, Interview# 3)

“We definitely would feel our time more valued if we engaged early on”. (Member of advisory committee, Interview # 6)

***Finding # 2 The need for enhanced networking*** Networking was identified as an effective method to promote advisory committees’ role. Participants mentioned ‘meetings of chairs of advisory committees’ that used to take place in the past as an effective way to share expertise and hope that such meetings be resumed. Participants also suggested networking with environmental groups for WCEAC, including those present in University of Waterloo and Wilfred Laurier University.

“In the past, we orchestrated a meeting of chairs of advisory committees to know each other and find things in common. This cross referencing activity that was called chair summit was very productive and useful and we have recommended that it continues. Unfortunately, this activity was dropped. We are hoping with the new CAO to have such meetings/summit back”. (Member of advisory committee, Interview # 4)

“Maybe there are opportunities for environmental committees like WCEAC to connect with eco-groups at WLU and UW. There are likely corresponding clubs/groups at the universities for most of the City’s advisory committees. Connecting with those clubs/groups could open the lines of communication and bridge the gap between the universities and the “real world” and ultimately help with engagement”. (City of Waterloo official, Interview # 13)

**Finding # 3 Lack of knowledge about how to initiate a process that fosters sustainability:** According to most research participants, advisory committees bring to the table their own individual experiences, interest in the environment, and background, on which the City relies heavily. They receive an introductory package that includes their mandate, terms of reference, and other committee members’ names and addresses. They also receive some form of informal orientation and get on the job training through various presentations from city and regional staff and issues discussed (interviews and personal communication with advisory committee members). However, there is heavy reliance on their knowledge and expertise and they have no agreed-on sustainability criteria that can serve as a checklist or reference for making decisions that move them closer towards sustainability. Most of research participants agreed that a sustainability checklist, covering Gibson’s

(2005) sustainability criteria with a brief simple explanation for each, will be helpful. Some research participants raised the question of measuring to monitor progress.

“I do think that some sort of checklist that defines sustainability criteria and how to measure it in all decisions might be beneficial. I am not sure how can they do that measurement for all decisions. It has to be a simplified checklist though and all should be defined”. (City of Waterloo official, Interview # 9)

“It certainly helps to frame the decisions they [advisory committees] want to make since sustainability means something different to everyone. Breaking criteria down help to provide more guidance, it makes it clearer and gives parameter to what they are looking at and what they are hoping to achieve”. (City of Waterloo official, Interview # 13)

**Finding # 4 Limited social inclusion & diverse representation in advisory committees:** As discussed previously, marginalized groups in the City of Waterloo are who don't speak English, people with low literacy level, low income, and foreign-trained professionals (Regional official, Interview # 19; community association representative, interview # 24). The City of Waterloo has no special policies targeting the participation of marginalized groups. Students, low income population, new immigrants are under-represented in advisory committees.

“Even though Waterloo is the second city in Ontario with the highest concentration of multiculturalism we find that the multicultural communities live in silos so the “multicultural mosaic” is quiet “siloesd” and is not interconnected as it should be. Also, the demographics of our advisory committees do not truly represent the demographics of our community. 30% of our population is students. While our committees' demographics are usually over 50 males, with students, youth, minorities, and women being underrepresented”. (City of Waterloo Official, Interview # 16)

One of the suggestions the researcher inquired about was whether encouraging under-represented groups to participate in committees by including subsidies for transportation and babysitting services.

Some thought that announcing such services in the committee application ad is worth trying. Other participants were skeptical. One public official observed that the City of Waterloo because it is a prosperous city, receives a high number of volunteers with high educational qualifications that makes committee members' selection highly competitive.

“We don't get that type of applications [people who want to participate but can't due to financial constraints, absence of a babysitter etc.].... [I say] Bring the kids with you. Maybe they don't want to do that because they have pre-conceived ideas that they might get in the way. All committee have budget that they can spend on subsidizing children babysitting or transportation. It can be included in application. Perhaps it is a good idea to include it in the application [that committees subsidize transportation or child care] to encourage more categories of people to apply”. (City of Waterloo Official, Interview # 2)

“Advisory committees need to be mirror of the society. In our strategic plan we have an 'encourage diversity' component that we need to work on. We need to allow people in the committee even though they don't have the complete set of qualifications but have the diversity of background and understanding”. (City of Waterloo Official, Interview # 16)

**Finding # 5 Inconclusive results with respect to the effectiveness & influence of advisory committees:** As for effectiveness of advisory committees and how much council takes their recommendations and comments into consideration, there was also variation in opinion. Some emphasized that committees input is very valuable and that council is keen on receiving their input before making decisions. Others were not that confident and were not sure how much of committees' feedback is incorporated in decision-making or if it is only 'lip service'. Some wondered about it since they did not think there is a clear tracking mechanism.

“Sometimes you hear some critic that its staff who do the work for committees. That is not meaningful involvement or maybe it is right. I don't know if a project goes through if an advisory committee advises against it. I don't know to what esteem their ideas are held. Committees can be seen as make work for staff”. (City of Waterloo Official, Interview # 3)

“Usually when the advice of the committee is not taken, it is when the Council is trapped politically or financially and must make another decision. If councilors know and trust chairs and members of [a] committee, it is easier for them to trust that they make good decisions. If Council is unsure of the advice they are receiving, or need time to research on their own, they usually defer to staff before moving forward on recommendations. Another case when Council doesn’t take advice of advisory committees is because they will be looking at the big picture while [the] committee is concerned with their own tasks and issues as if there are blinders on but sometimes committee members see the big picture too. The bottom line is that we end up with better decisions because of the advisory committees, because they have time to drill into issues in a way that city and staff does not have the capacity to do”. (Member of advisory committee, Interview # 4)

“But we don’t get feedback on how effective we were and our contribution to the decision. I don’t know if council reads the minutes I think they rely on reports from staff. It is difficult to say how concerns are fed back to Council and how they use this feedback...Often times we are left wondering whether our feedback and suggestions are being taken into account by the city or it is just lip service”. (Member of advisory committee, Interview # 6)

“Often, the report of an advisory committee can change or alter City plans. Advisory committees do not work in isolation. Their best ideas are flowing into Culture and Recreation Department, Planning Department (for 2 examples) all the time. By the time a report comes to Council, everyone is often on the same page. If the members of the advisory committee know how to handle themselves at council meetings, – know how City Hall works, things can move forward. A well meaning committee that do not know how to make presentations can work against themselves. The decision is thanks but no thanks. The Council will take it under advisement and pass it to staff. This happens when communication does NOT flow back and forth as a committee works through their agenda”. (Member of advisory committee, Interview # 4)

“This group of citizens [citizen advisory committees] have direct impact on policy development and it goes on and on to every aspect of community life here. Every aspect of policy and development that the city is involved in we have an advisory committee to help us formulate positions & policies”. (City of Waterloo Official, Interview # 16)

The researcher inquired into who sets the agenda for committees, what happens to the minutes of meetings and if there is any track mechanisms for the extent council takes advisory committees recommendations into account. Opinions varied, although some thought that the agenda is set by committee members and the chair the majority thought that almost 90% of the agenda is set by the staff. The minutes are written by the staff and taken to Council. Very few pointed out a track mechanism which is flagging action items on the workplan/ agenda for follow-up.

“90% of the agenda is set by staff. They control what comes through. The staff screens what we see and that is how the agenda get filled out...We provide technical guidance and some concerns but I love to be more proactive and take leadership on certain issue but we are just not there yet”. (Member of advisory committee, Interview #6)

“We generally rely on staff to bring it to our attention [issues to be assessed by advisory committees]. Some staff is good in general and does good judgment calls. The staff liaisons also try to keep a look-out. But there is no established framework or requirement to what to bring to advisory committees. Sometimes staff get so far in their project or initiative get it to Council and Council ask about advisory committees’ feedback and so we take it back to them. It is not a requirement to bring issues to advisory committees but a framework will be of value”. (City of Waterloo Official, Interview # 9)

“I don’t know why staff writes minutes of meetings. Maybe the committees should take the minutes themselves and have ownership”. (City of Waterloo Official, Interview # 3)

***Finding # 6 Advisory committees are a valid model of citizen engagement but should not be the only form employed:*** Most research participants agreed that advisory committees have positive contributions to citizen engagement in governance. The majority also noted that it should not be the only form of citizen engagement and that meaningful public engagement requires more than advisory committees and should include representation of the different sectors of society.

“Advisory committees cannot be entirely the only form of community engagement. Because even though they are broad and cover range of opinions they represent 14 people. They don’t have the constituency since they are not elected but they do provide a wide range of opinions but it is still somewhat restrictive. There are other avenues for community engagement. There are environmental assessments and public meetings associated with it, information session. They are publicized in the chronicle and people attend them. I have been to one or 2 of them and there is fair number of people going there. That is how people get really engaged because they cover particular issues. Plans are laid out there people come to see them and talk with people who had developed them. I think they are good means to exchange information and usually information is going to the city staff who is actively involved in the project so there is good knowledge coming back and info is not filtered as it would be if it is going through a public relations staff first then to the concerned staff. These are good mechanisms. Publishing in the papers gets broad distribution”. (Member of advisory committee, Interview # 5)

“Benefit [of advisory committees] is that they provide an easy way for staff and Council to get feedback on different initiatives that the City is under taking without having an open house for example or looking for ways to engage the community to get feedback to Council. It is also an opportunity for citizens to become more involved in the municipal business and get more understanding of the municipal process. Unfortunately often they get bound down in matters and it is questionable whether their time is well spent. A better framework will be one that will allow them the freedom to be proactive (realizing them to be volunteers). This will make them take ownership, feel more engaged rather than stamping which makes enthusiasm go down”. (City of Waterloo Official, Interview # 9)



“The makeup of committees is specifically set out by Council so often times the individuals that sit on the committee are chosen based on their expertise (certain number of the general public) so I think by design these committees are not always geared towards providing an avenue for citizens to be engaged. Because there are only a limited number of people involved. They would be a good model if citizens would attend the meetings because they are open meetings anyone can sit on them. So my answer is yes & no. It is much like voting anyone can vote but only those who are engaged in municipal politics vote”. (City of Waterloo Official, Interview # 11)

“Advisory committees are important feedback mechanisms – like a focus group - but should not be the exclusive means of gathering feedback from the public. They can be an ongoing way (a focus group) to get input, feedback, perspectives and concerns of the public regarding certain issues but there should be additional ways of getting input”. (Glenn Brunetti, City of Hamilton, personal communication, June 4, 2010)

Most participants considered a partnership/collaborative approach that include all stakeholders in the community in addition to representatives from advisory committees to be a more comprehensive approach for complex issues such as sustainability.

“I think a partnership/collaborative process is more in order for complex issues cities are facing but there are other times when the issue only requires a simple consultation process”. (Glenn Brunetti, City of Hamilton, personal communication, June 4, 2010)

“I will differentiate [again] between corporate and community initiatives. With respect to the City as a corporation, the current model makes absolute sense: to have advisory groups from the citizens giving advice to Council. When the community at large is discussed, this is likely where more of a multi–sectoral, integrated approach would be more appropriate”. (Mike Morrice, Sustainable Waterloo, personal communication, April 30, 2010)

## 5.3 Recommendations Based on Key-Findings

As noted earlier, public documents produced by the City of Waterloo frequently refer to the importance of citizen engagement and sustainability. To that end, a number of such initiatives have been undertaken. Nevertheless, similar to many other Canadian mid-sized cities, there is a lot more that can be achieved to truly engage citizens in ways that fosters sustainability. The following are some suggestions that emerged from data analysis, including key findings from interviews with city officials and citizens. Unique initiatives from various cities across Canada also offer some ideas that might be adopted and adapted by the City of Waterloo.

### 5.3.1 Recommendations for the City of Waterloo: the Case Study

This chapter identified a number of factors that could be addressed in order to facilitate more effective citizen participation towards sustainability in the City of Waterloo. They include the need for sufficient resources, the inclusion of marginalized groups, ability for citizens and city officials to network and develop a relationship with NGOs and other groups, enhanced use of information and communication technology, strengthened communication between citizens, city and officials, and more use of collaborative approaches in the decision-making process. It is also important for the City to create and establish sustainability criteria and trade-offs thus highlighting the distinction between focusing only on the biophysical environment versus sustainability. These factors will be discussed in turn followed by some recommendations that will enhance citizen participation and sustainability in the city.

#### 5.3.1.1 Effective public participation and barriers to local civic engagement:

##### **Finding # 1 – Perceived insufficiency in human and financial resources to undertake new initiatives:**

Similar to other cities, resources such as budget and time were identified as major barriers to meaningful citizen engagement and sustainability in the City of Waterloo. One participant in this study that works in another mid-sized city in a southern Ontario community suggests that in order to overcome such constraints in their city, decision-makers focused on being selective, prioritizing and

strategizing use of resources. In so doing, the researcher discovered that they were able to achieve significant levels of citizen participation.

Gaining sufficient resources are key issues and have been since UNICITY Winnipeg initiative in the early 1970s which was ultimately undermined by lack of resources and institutional support (as mentioned in Chapter 3 Section 3.1.1). The degree to which a city expends resources on citizen engagement signals the seriousness with which the city treats the idea of public participation.

The provision of adequate resources, for example, also includes sufficient guidance about how those resources can be used to facilitate effective decision-making. When grants are allocated to advisory committees, for example, the mandates for spending these resources needs to be clearly specified and supported.

**Recommendation - Effective resources management:** Perceived insufficiency in human and financial resources can be overcome by being creative and innovative in resources allocation. City of Waterloo's 2010 guidelines on public involvement (described later) notes that the government is expected to listen and learn. If that is the case, then, it is incumbent upon the City and staff not just to listen but to find creative solutions. Rather than saying something won't work in Waterloo because of one factor or another, a receptive approach would be to engage with the public to find a creative way to make an idea work if it is deemed to be in the interests of the city. For instance, one of the lessons learned/best practices of Vancouver's cities<sup>plus</sup> initiative described in Chapter 3 is that the 100-year time frame allowed for visioning and creativity rather than picturing obstacles and barriers that hinders change. Effective resources management by employing democratic innovation and creativity, along with benchmarking to assess how similar communities with similar demographics and characteristics are dealing with resources constraints can be a major step in overcoming barriers.

The citizen participation and sustainability criterion that would address the resources gap and help strengthen the process is democratic innovation and creativity.

**Finding # 2 – Limited marginalized groups inclusion:** Marginalized groups are not easily identified in the community or specifically targeted for ensuring their inclusion in public consultation.

**Recommendation - Inclusion of marginalized groups:** For enhanced social inclusion and diverse representation marginalized and ‘invisible’ residents need to be identified by the City prior to public engagement processes. This is important because a government decision or policy will not be seen as legitimate nor effective if it does not respond to a significant minority in the population. Canadian cities, including Waterloo are increasingly diverse in composition with diverse needs, priorities and interests; the advisory committees, as other citizen engagement mechanisms, should represent that diversity. After identifying the groups that are not effectively represented in the committees, public consultations, or open houses, the next step would be to identify policies that would encourage these groups to participate. The City of Waterloo has no such policies, they treat everyone the same. From a majoritarian democratic point of view, this may work but, in effect, such policies lead to effective disenfranchisement. This is reflected in the lack of diversity in citizen advisory groups (discussed later). Enhancing social inclusion should be a goal since it is an important movement towards sustainability. Social inclusion promotes diversity, social capital, trust, intragenerational and intergenerational equity. It is worth noting that City of Guelph, a nearby city that share many similar characteristics with Waterloo, has set in place specific policies targeting marginalized groups by focusing at the neighborhood level and has been recognized for its work with foreign- trained professionals (City of Guelph, 2009); (Personal communications with Guelph official, June 4, 2010).

“As a City we are moving in the direction of directing our civic engagement at the neighborhood level. We have developed, through the engagement of our neighborhood groups, a framework to support the continued sustainable growth of self-defining neighborhood groups and to build their capacity to undertake the activities that are important to them. There is an organized neighborhood support coalition. We have completed an operational review. The recommendations will strengthen the role and autonomy of the Neighborhood Support Coalition. The second piece is that not all neighborhoods have organized groups. So the question is how might we encourage others neighborhoods to self-define and become organized so we can more effectively engage residents in all neighborhoods?” (Personal communications with Guelph official, June 4, 2010)

Members of neighborhood associations in the City of Waterloo also explained the importance of incorporating neighborhood associations in the citizen engagement process:

“Some people participate in citizen’s committees and some don’t and therefore skills and expertise/resources that can be used to the benefit of the community at large remain hidden. These resources can be identified and recruited through neighborhood associations which can work with the City cooperatively. This will save time, money and resources on the City and will avoid future potential problems and challenges when citizens react to set designs and plans. One of the setbacks is willingness to give up power”. (Dana Fox & Steve Singer, City of Waterloo neighborhood association members, personal communication, July 8, 2010)

One of the best practices/lessons of Hamilton-Wentworth’s vision described in Chapter 3 is that the task force had diverse representation including environmental groups, industry, health organizations, neighborhood associations, social services providers, agriculture and small businesses. Decisions were taken using the consensus approach to ensure all views are considered and addressed and effective networking and partnerships are being built.

Based on the above findings the citizen participation and sustainability criterion that could strengthen the participation process is enhanced social inclusion with a strong focus on diverse representation.

Finding # 3 Limited relationships/link between the different governance structures, not-for-profit organizations and other community groups: It is difficult to identify not-for-profit organizations/NGOs that are active in the City of Waterloo which raises the question of social cohesion. Social cohesion is “the strength of the community, the shared values and interest in one another” (Hoy & Ikavalko, 2005, p. 11).

**Recommendation - The need to foster relationships with not-for-profit organizations and other community associations:** The City of Waterloo could identify not-for-profit organizations such as other community groups working with youth, women, new immigrants, groups dealing with environmental or social causes such as poverty. This community mapping will help in identifying resources that can be used for effective policy development and implementation, build relationships that will lead to building trust and social capital. The Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth and the City of Montreal are both examples of cities that have undertaken such mapping to identify partners and stakeholders and utilize their resources as discussed in Chapter 3. As previously

discussed, Hamilton utilized these groups to ensure diverse representation and build partnerships while Montreal's environmental groups involved in the plan acted as 'network leaders' that were able to relay initiatives to their networks and get other environmental organizations to join.

Citizen participation and sustainability criteria that will improve the process are fostering mutual trust through enhanced social inclusion and social capital.

**Finding # 4 Perceived limited outreach from the City to citizens:** Information dissemination between the City and citizens could be strengthened.

**Recommendation- Strengthening dialogue between citizens and the state:** First and foremost all democratic governments should operate on a principle of openness, trust and collaboration with its citizens. After all the governing arm is a representative of the citizens. It is specified by the provincial legislation. Ontario's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act specifically dictates (Government of Ontario, 2008):

“(a) to provide a right of access to information under the control of institutions in accordance with the principles that,

(i) information should be available to the public,

(ii) necessary exemptions from the right of access should be limited and specific, and

(iii) decisions on the disclosure of government information should be reviewed independently of government; and

(b) to protect the privacy of individuals with respect to personal information about themselves held by institutions and to provide individuals with a right of access to that information. R.S.O. 1990, c. F.31, s. 1”.

Therefore, information should be open and public unless in specific circumstances. A cultural shift that promotes openness is needed in cities. Cities are to encourage lively debates, scrutinizing of their proposals, and encourages critical thinking about what sustainability does and should mean to the City. It is useful to have different ideas presented to the City to avoid having policies implemented that will not be effective or well-received by the citizens.

Moreover, research showed that there is a link between the open sense and sharing communication culture and sustainability:

“Cities that have made a commitment to trying to become more sustainable may not have populations that participate more in electoral activities, but they do seem to have populations that have a greater propensity to sign petitions, participate in demonstrations, belong to local reform groups, and be active in neighborhood associations. In the last analysis sustainable cities are participatory cities” (Portney & Berry, 2010, p. 133).

There are many ways to address the need for stronger communication linkages between a city and its citizens. The Rapid Transit community engagement process undertaken by the Region of Waterloo, offers one example of how to use social media and other ‘creative’ venues such as markets and events to reach out to a broader base. Another networking example is Metro Vancouver’s cities<sup>plus</sup> initiative where collaborating partners, and as described in Chapter 3, have the opportunity to network through the Sustainability Community Breakfasts. Another method is, as suggested by one of the City of Waterloo’s community group, organizing exploratory meetings with neighborhood associations.

“Neighborhood associations and citizens can do a better job in creating relationships with the City/creating links. The City can help by creating a citizens forum or organizing a cocktail party once a year where citizens get to know each other and create relationships without any set agenda. Neighborhood associations can get involved to make such activities successful”. (Dana Fox & Steve Singer, City of Waterloo neighborhood association members, personal communication, July 8, 2010)

The citizen participation and sustainability criterion that can improve the process is constant dialogue between citizens and the state.

**Finding # 5 Limited use of information and communication technology (ICTs) to facilitate citizen participation:** Meaningful citizen engagement requires creativity and initiative through the adoption of new and innovative tools and approaches. It is an ongoing learning process.

**Recommendation- Stronger use of information and communication technology (ICTs):** The City of Waterloo can benefit from increase in the use of ICT technologies and learning from other

cities' experiences and initiatives. The Region of Waterloo Rapid Transit public participation initiative described below is a good example of how social media and online tools can be employed to promote citizen engagement. The City of Kitchener has recently redesigned its website for "quick and easy access to online information" about the City and to make their website "more accessible and user friendly" (City of Kitchener, 2010). Another online networking example is Vancouver's +30 Network, highlighted in Chapter 3, where cities and communities from around the world share their experiences online and come together every two years. Enhancing the website to become more interactive and having the ability to assimilate public feedback could also enhance participation. However, improving the use of communication technology to facilitate participation would be irrelevant if it is not accompanied by an overall policy that fosters stronger public participation.

#### Region of Waterloo Rapid Transit Project

"If people won't come to us we go to them" (Region of Waterloo official, Interview # 15).

Rapid Transit was a four year long project and the region decided to embark on a different public participation strategy for this project referred to as "inclusive planning". Rather than having the public give feedback on already set designs and plans where room for modifications is minimal, the strategy was to include the public in every project phase from December 2004 till May 2009 ([www.region.waterloo.on.ca/rapidtransit](http://www.region.waterloo.on.ca/rapidtransit)). When the environmental assessment dictated one meeting the region decided to go above and beyond and conduct five meetings. They started with public surveys at the beginning of the process. The aim was to gauge what people know about transportation, opinions and attitude. 1,000 people from across the region randomly participated. The next step was workshops where people were asked things like where transit could take you. Moreover, the region decided to use new techniques to widen its audience such as social media's Facebook and twitter. They also had an online discussion forum that was logged on by people from around the world. The region also monitored other web Rapid transit discussions such as Facebook, blogs and tried to reach out by participating in these discussions. They also reached out for high school students and university students, did public displays and set up booths in festivals, multicultural festivals and food markets such as Cambridge River Festival and Kitchener market. It was a very labor intensive process but thousands were reached using this approach. The result was that the council approved the study in June 2009. Public meetings were very active. The outreach



triggered community interest which was evident with the number of delegations that came to Council and spoke in favor and against the project. “It was one of the busiest public meetings we ever had. The bottom line was that thousands of people participated in the overall process”. (Region of Waterloo official, Interview # 15)

- Democratic innovation & creativity: Using social media makes it possible to target a wider and a more diverse audience, particularly youth groups. Social media also provides a possibly cheaper, and faster opportunity to network and dialogue. However, traditional media such as newspapers should not be neglected since not all people use the internet, particularly the senior population, which is also a large and important group in the community.
- Early public involvement in the decision-processes: Once again early involvement delivered. The regional staff noted that their inclusion of the public early on resulted in more audience attending public meetings and more delegations to council than the expected norm.
- Political will: Nothing could be achieved without the political will for engagement. Willingness for having the community engaged in this project can be summarized in the words of one of the region’s staff: “*If people won’t come to us we go to them*”.

The citizen participation and sustainability criterion that promotes stronger use of information and communication technology and help improve the effective citizen engagement towards sustainability process is democratic innovation and creativity.

**Finding # 6 Inconclusive findings with respect to the level of citizen engagement in governance:** Flexibility and patience need to be exercised when it comes to citizen engagement. In Hamilton, for example, and as described in Chapter 3, financial and staffing resources were designed to accommodate changes and members of the community were provided with sufficient time to examine and develop their own solutions as opposed to relying on experts to make up for the lack of time or pushing community groups for an expedited report.

**Recommendation - Political commitment to fostering citizen engagement in governance:** There is no ideal formula for city engagement although there are a number of initiatives in similar cities that are well-worth exploring and adapting. However, for any of this to work it is necessary to

have fundamental buy-in and commitment by the key decision-maker. City officials need to decide on the best policy to trigger effective citizen engagement depending on the context. Patience means giving people ample time to participate by providing them with adequate advance notice, convenient timing and incorporating their input in decisions. Engagement policies need to be assessed based on the situation in order to ensure a broad base of participation that includes marginalized and ‘invisible’ groups. The public needs to be involved early in the process. In other words, and as an official from a neighboring municipality in southern Ontario pointed out, “we don’t expect people to come to us so we go to them.” (Personal communication, June 4, 2010)

The citizen participation and sustainability criteria that could improve the process are political will, constant dialogue between citizens and the state, early public involvement in the decision-processes, enhanced social inclusion, incorporating community decisions and feedback in implementation, democratic innovation and creativity, flexibility and patience, monitoring progress. Addressing these criteria could lead to fostering mutual trust and enhanced social capital.

**Finding 7 – Inconclusive findings with respect to the level of effective public participation in public consultation & open houses:** Different types of issues require different types of involvement and different types of communities expect different forms of involvement. In the City of Waterloo opinions varied about the level of citizen engagement in public consultation and open houses.

**Recommendation- Political will to fostering meaningful citizen engagement in public consultation & open houses:** Despite interesting and worthwhile initiatives such as the ones spearheaded with respect to Waterloo Park and the recently developed Public Involvement Guidelines (discussed in Section 6.1), there are still no written clear guidelines on how to engage the public effectively. In fact, this thesis takes the first step towards filling this gap. Policies to attract a broader diversity of residents to open houses and other public participation processes need to be developed. Again, it all boils down to developing policies that enhance inclusion of marginalized and silent groups. The traditional announcement method which is the use of the weekly newspaper (the Chronicle) should not be the only media used since youth and new Canadians (and many other citizens) might not read the Chronicle. There are other media available. If the city wishes to be inclusive, then it makes sense that it would use diverse communications methods to achieve this goal.

Approaches for information dissemination could be as diverse as the use of ICT technologies mentioned earlier, or more concrete approaches such as notices at the recreation center. The elected government is accountable to its citizenry so it is incumbent on the government to reach out to the citizen by a diversity of mechanisms. One other promising possibility, used by the City of Guelph, would be to target and reach out to neighborhood associations as a strategy in triggering public involvement. (City of Guelph official, personal communications, June 4, 2010)

The citizen participation and sustainability criteria that could help in improving the process are political will, constant dialogue between citizens and the state, early public involvement in the decision-processes, enhanced social inclusion, incorporating community decisions and feedback in implementation, democratic innovation and creativity, flexibility and patience, monitoring progress. Addressing these criteria will lead to fostering mutual trust and enhanced social capital.

#### 5.3.1.2 Sustainability & barriers to sustainability in local governance:

**Finding # 8 Lack of knowledge in how to initiate a process that will lead towards sustainability:** Findings showed uncertainty in how to foster sustainability among the different governance structures in the City of Waterloo.

**Recommendation- Fostering sustainability by establishing sustainability criteria and trade-offs and using collaborative approaches in the decision-making process:** The quest for sustainability is too broad and complex to be carried on solely by the government. This is one of the lessons learned from Hamilton –Wentworth Vision 2020, as identified by one city official in Hamilton (personal communication, June 4, 2010). The community’s sustainability vision needs to be developed by all community groups/stakeholders. It could be developed using the collaborative/partnership approach. Goals and objectives need to be established along with how and who to implement, and how to measure and monitor progress. Moreover, focusing only on the biophysical environment is a limited mission. It is more inclusive to focus on the overall health of the community by incorporating Gibson’s sustainability criteria discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. A cultural shift that encourages openness and critical thinking about what sustainability does and should mean in the City and engages the public effectively on ways to foster sustainability is a step that could move the City forward towards sustainability.

As noted in previous chapters, Waterloo has undertaken participatory initiatives such as Imagine Waterloo and an award winning environmental strategy that was refreshed in 2009 and encompasses the City's sustainability vision. For example, it recommends establishing an office of environmental sustainability (City of Waterloo Environmental Strategy 2009). There are, however, additional initiatives that could be taken. Vancouver, Hamilton, and Victoria came up with tailor-made sustainability visioning that combines the ecological and social issues with the public process. Another example, is Halifax twenty-five-year environmental plan that guides all long term policies to be established and implemented. Perhaps a future sustainability visioning can be designed by the City of Waterloo that builds on Imagine Waterloo and the environmental strategy. It can employ the collaborative approach thus creating partnerships and networks of stakeholders that can be involved in implementation, as was the case in the City of Montreal described in Chapter 3.

The citizen participation and sustainability criterion addressed above is establishing sustainability criteria and trade-offs and monitoring progress.

The eight findings and recommendations described above address 1) effective public participation and barriers to local civic engagement, and 2) sustainability and barriers to sustainability in local governance. The aim is promoting meaningful public participation that fosters sustainability in the City of Waterloo. The next section addresses advisory committees.

### **5.3.2 Recommendations for Citizen Advisory Committees**

One area of citizen engagement that can enhance meaningful public participation and sustainability is citizen advisory groups. This section addresses these committees and how can they operate in a more influential political manner to become more effectively engaged in fostering sustainability.

**Finding# 1 Ambiguity in the role of advisory committees:** The lack of clarity in the advisory process and role as described leads to the following recommendations:

- All advisory committees need to be broadly well-informed and educated about the City and its activities to be most effective. Given that these are volunteer groups, it is important that many members are well-versed in public participatory processes and city policies. Effective, agreed-on processes and terms of reference need to be designed with input by committee

members, and support from City council liaisons and staff. This process can cover outreach and pro-activities goals and objectives, how to overcome barriers and challenges, how to monitor and measure progress. The council then approves the plan so that its mandate and procedures are aligned with council mandate. Given that advisory committees can act as a premise for promoting the culture of openness and dialogue between the City and citizens, and the premier layer of the lively debate and critical analysis discussion, it is important to educate the committees to realize their role to serve as a critical sounding board.

- City staff could also be advised about what kind and scale of projects are to be submitted to advisory committees for consultation, when to do that, and how to involve the advisory committees early on in the process,
- Time barriers can be overcome by involving committees early on in the process and having a process that is clear to committee members, staff and Council. Other barriers and challenges can be overcome by the committee's democratic innovation and creativity.

In sum, the participatory processes would be more effective if there was a written agreed on engagement process, early public involvement in the decision-processes, a reasonable time-line for feedback and investment of time which requires commitment and patience on the part of City officials, monitor progress, democratic innovation and creativity. Of course, nothing can be achieved without political will to foster the influence and effectiveness of advisory committees. These are the citizen participation and sustainability criteria that could strengthen the participation and sustainability process.

**Finding # 2 The need for enhanced networking:** Networking is a good mean to build relationships that leads to building trust and enhancing social capital. "It facilitates coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. Social capital gives individuals the assets to participate in communities and, in turn, to acquire emotional wellness based on the connections" (Hoy & Ikavalko, 2005, p. 11).

**Recommendation- Enhancing networking:** Reviving meetings between chairs of advisory committees would be very helpful and easy to implement. Encouraging committee members to reach out to other associations such as environmental groups (in the case of WCEAC or other relevant

groups for other advisory committees) present in schools, colleges, universities or even independent entities can help advisory committees in their outreach activities, broaden their legitimacy as an advisory citizens' committee and provide them with more resources so that they can offer informed policy advice.

Citizen participation and sustainability criteria that can improve the process are enhanced social capital particularly fostering mutual trust.

**Finding # 3 Lack of knowledge about how to initiate a process that fosters sustainability:** Findings showed that advisory committees had notable uncertainty about how to foster sustainability. WCEAC as a local catalyst that promote environmental sustainability (WCEAC, 2008) requires criteria or guidelines from the City about how to foster sustainability. The same applies to all advisory committees with sustainability in their mandates and to other consultative committees that Waterloo may wish to form in the future. Most research participants agreed that having an established sustainability checklist that contains agreed-on criteria and trade-offs will guide participants to take decisions with sustainability in their mind. It also keeps thinking about sustainability 'overt and visible'.

**Recommendation - Fostering sustainability through establishing sustainability criteria and trade-offs:** Having a sustainability checklist, covering Gibson's (2005) sustainability principles with a brief simple explanation for each, will be helpful. This checklist can be developed and agreed –on by committee members, staff and Council liaisons. Goals and objectives need to be established along with how to measure and monitor progress.

Citizen participation and sustainability criteria to be addressed are establishing sustainability criteria and trade-offs and monitor progress.

**Finding# 4 Limited social inclusion and diverse representation in advisory committees:** As discussed previously, advisory committees do not represent the demographic makeup of the population.

**Recommendation- Enhancing social inclusion and diverse representation in advisory committees:** Special policies targeting the inclusion of marginalized and silent groups in advisory

committees would enhance social inclusion and diverse representation. Also, providing subsidies for babysitting and transportation for example might encourage under-represented community groups such as new immigrants, low income, youth and women to participate more in committees.

Citizen participation and sustainability criterion that could strengthen the process is enhanced social inclusion and diverse representation.

**Finding # 5 Inconclusive findings with respect to the effectiveness and influence of advisory committees:** Again, there were varying degree of confidence in the effectiveness and influence of advisory committees. One member even noted that he/she feels more empowered as a citizen than an advisory committee member (personal communication, July 27, 2010). Developing clear tracking mechanisms that illustrates the extent council takes advisory committees input into consideration is an important means of encouraging citizen participation.

**Recommendation – Political will in fostering meaningful citizen engagement in advisory committees:** Tracking mechanisms need to be developed so as committee members can track their input and follow-it up to ensure its incorporation in decision-making. This will foster mutual trust, encourage participation and creativity. How the agenda is set and who writes the minutes of meeting can be agreed on by committee members when developing the tracking mechanism.

Citizen participation and sustainability criteria to be addressed are incorporating community's decisions and feedback in implementation and enhanced social inclusion and social capital to foster mutual trust.

**Finding # 6 Validity of advisory committees' model as a form of citizen engagement:** Advisory committees are a valid model for citizen engagement but should not be the only form employed.

**Recommendation-Promoting the role of advisory committees in meaningful citizen engagement and sustainability:** Advisory committees could play a major role in meaningful public participation that fosters sustainability in the presence of political will and support. They could promote awareness and outreach in a way that supports civic engagement and sustainability initiatives. They could also play a primary role in citizen-City bilateral communications and provide rapid community feedback to the local government. This does not mean that they suffice for

meaningful public participation. Again, flexibility needs to be employed. There is no cook-book approach on how to promote citizen engagement, what will trigger community's interest, and what will result in a successful public participation and sustainability process. Some issues require full collaboration/partnerships, while others suffice with simple consultation and advisory committees' recommendations. Also there need to be constant two-way dialogue between citizens and the state to make sure that communities are aware of activities undertaken, they are aware of the municipality's standpoints, and that their feedback is received by the local government.

Citizen participation and sustainability criteria to be addressed to improve the process are flexibility and constant dialogue between citizens and the state.

#### **5.4 Summary of Findings from the Case Study**

The primary research undertaken as personal observer and through interviews revealed a number of key-findings. Findings were organized into two parts. Part one included findings related to the City of Waterloo the case study. Key-findings in part one were divided into effective public participation and barriers to local civic engagement, and sustainability and barriers to sustainability in local governance. These key-findings can be summarized into: perceived insufficiency in human and financial resources to undertake new initiatives; limited marginalized groups inclusion; limited relationships/links between the different governance structures, not- for- profits and other community groups; perceived limited outreach from the City to citizens; limited use of information and communication technology to facilitate citizen participation; inconclusive findings with respect to the level of citizen engagement in governance; inconclusive findings with respect to the level of effective public participation in public consultation and open houses; and lack of knowledge in how to initiate a process that will lead towards sustainability in the City.

In general, opinions varied about the level of citizen engagement in Waterloo. Key findings suggest that barriers to meaningful citizen engagement and sustainability in the City of Waterloo are resources such as time, budget and personnel. Another barrier that can contribute to improving citizen engagement and sustainability is marginalized groups' inclusion. Most research participants had difficulty in identifying marginalized groups in the community and the City of Waterloo has no specific policies targeting the participation of marginalized groups. The same applies to relationships



with not-for-profits and other community groups, the third finding, since most research participants had difficulty in identifying these associations let alone their activities and role. Perceived limited outreach from the City to citizens is another finding stemming from the fact that many research participants noted that they are not aware of the City's activities and public involvement endeavors in policy deliberations. The fifth finding is related to the use of information and communication technology. Most research participants agreed that the City could do more to strengthen the process and reach out more for the 'online audience' particularly youth. The eighth and final finding was related to sustainability and barriers to sustainability in local governance. Sustainability was identified as a complex concept and its complexity might be a barrier to citizen engagement in sustainability initiatives. These findings were used to develop recommendations on how the City of Waterloo can promote meaningful public participation that fosters sustainability thus helping in answering the research question: How might lessons learned from the literature review be applied to a mid-sized community such as the City of Waterloo?

The second part of Chapter 5 concerned citizen advisory committees' findings. Key findings included: ambiguity in the role of advisory committees; the need for enhanced networking; lack of knowledge about how to initiate a process that fosters sustainability; limited social inclusion and diverse representation in advisory committees. The findings were inconclusive with respect to the effectiveness and influence of advisory committees. In a nutshell, many research participants advocated a more proactive role for advisory committees than giving advice to council on issues related to their mandate. Networking was also identified by participants as an area to explore and as a mean that could foster advisory committees' roles. There are no guidelines or criteria on how to foster sustainability in advisory committees' decision-making which could also be a barrier in their playing a role in that area. Participants also agreed that advisory committees do not represent the demographics of the population and the process can be strengthened by enhanced social inclusion and diverse representation. Opinions varied regarding effectiveness and influence of advisory committees and validity of advisory committee model as a form of citizen engagement. Most research participants agreed that advisory committees could play an important role in citizen engagement but should not be the only form employed by the local government. These findings were used to develop recommendations about how advisory committees can operate in a more influential political manner

to become more effectively engaged in fostering sustainability thus helping in answering the research question: How might citizen advisory committees be more effectively engaged to foster sustainability?

## Chapter 6 Discussion & Recommendations

This chapter compares the citizen participation and sustainability criteria developed in Chapter 2 & 3 with current conditions and trends in the City of Waterloo. For ease of presentation of findings, the criteria are presented individually. The analysis identifies if and how the criteria are met, where they are not, and the degree to which they are integrated (as outlined in Table 6.1: Summary of Thesis Findings & Recommendations). This results in identifying opportunities to be pursued, challenges that needs to be addressed and overcome to move closer towards sustainability.

### 6.1 Literature Review Comparison with Field Work Observations

Analyzing key findings presented above based on the citizen participation and sustainability criteria developed in Chapters 2 and 3 shows:

- **Political will:** For citizens to become more effectively engaged particularly in complex issues such as sustainable development leadership on council is critical (Yates, 2010, p. 16). One member of a neighboring community group summarized their experience:

“One of the things we learned in reflecting back on our processes is the importance of the top down as well as bottom-up support. From the top - elected officials and senior leaders in the City and community endorsed the process which helped to create ownership that still exists. There was lots of ownership, lots of average citizens, NGOs and other stakeholders on the ground. The philosophy was that no one will be turned away and everyone should be part of the process so that they will proud of the results and feel ownership. This is hard and time consuming and require lots of resources – but it creates the best results”. (Glenn Brunetti, City of Hamilton, personal communication, June 4, 2010).

Opportunities to be pursued and challenges to be addressed: Political will is a pre-requirement for any public participation initiative success. It needs to be continuously a standard for meaningful public participation that fosters sustainability for the City of Waterloo and other cities.

- **Early public involvement in the decision process:** Most research participants articulated deficiency in this area. Citizen engagement processes employed still fall within information

and consultation category and had far from reached the partnership category. As previously mentioned, several research participants recommended early public involvement instead of having the public comment on already set plans and policies where there is little room for effective participation and creativity in input.

Opportunities to be pursued and challenges to be addressed: Early public involvement in the decision-processes needs to be a standard for meaningful public participation that fosters sustainability.

- **Enhanced social inclusion and social capital:** Another major area of deficiency articulated by research participants and noted through personal observations is social inclusion. Diversity is not reflected in advisory committees or even public consultation activities. Perhaps the City could devise policies to target marginalized groups and follow the policy best articulated by an adjacent community:

“We don’t expect people to come to us so we go to them. Our approach depends on the scale of consultation. In our community consultation around sustainability principles we identified people that are not normally reached in our normal outreach process and devised strategies to reach them” (City of Guelph, personal communication, June 4, 2010).

Networking was also an issue recommended by participants. Networking will help in building relationships that will lead to trust. Fostering mutual trust is an essential result of enhanced social inclusions and social capital which is citizen participation and sustainability criteria. According to Putnam (1993) “trust lubricates social life” (Putnam R. D., 1993).

“Creating a culture for people to get to know each other and network will lead to them knowing about issues and acting upon it and will lead to more citizen engagement”. “If citizens don’t know each other enough and don’t know how to organize then it is always about a political process and it shouldn’t be it should be about caring about where you’re living, caring about your habitat, caring about it and protecting it. It is about caring about that part of your community so you care about your whole community” (Community association representative, Interview # 23).

Opportunities to be pursued and challenges to be addressed: Enhanced social inclusion and social capital through networking, building relationships, and mutual trust, need to be a standard for meaningful public participation that fosters sustainability.

- **Having an agreed on process:** Waterloo’s City Council adopted public involvement guidelines on June 21, 2010 (The City of Waterloo, 2010). The purpose is to “help provide more consistent approaches and practical tools for staff to assist in ensuring front-end community input from all stakeholders into city initiatives” (The City of Waterloo, 2010, p. 1). The rationale as articulated by one member of a local community group:

“Each staff department have evolved their own way of dealing with the public based on needs of that department and what made sense to them. We want to set a consistent standard and that is why the job of public involvement committee is to create a policy and set of tools so that all departments will know exactly how and when they engage the public? And when they do they use the same tools so there is consistency and tidy up those variations. So in all departments whether citizens are asking questions or have business they are treated the same way and the public will be able to rely on that”. (Member of advisory committee, Interview # 4)

Opportunities to be pursued and challenges to be addressed: Having an agreed on process for public participation facilitates community engagement and allows for meaningful public participation that fosters sustainability. Therefore, a public involvement strategy is a step in the right direction. It is worth noting that the city relied on a Public Involvement Guidelines Committee that was formed as an ad hoc committee reporting to Council. The committee comprised of community and staff members with experience in citizen engagement and was supported, through partnerships with the University of Waterloo and the City of Waterloo (Sustainable Waterloo), by a professor from the University of Waterloo with experience in developing public engagement programs. (Adpated from The City of Waterloo, 2010, p. 138)

- **Democratic innovation and creativity:** There can never be enough democratic innovation and creativity. Although many participants were proud of Waterloo achievements such as

being selected the Intelligent Community in 2007 and the various awards received there was a unanimous agreement that there is always room for improvement.

Opportunities to be pursued and challenges to be addressed: Democratic innovation and creativity need to be a standard for meaningful public participation that fosters sustainability.

- **Constant dialogue between citizens and the state:** Interviews and personal observations showed that there are no communication barriers between the City and residents. There are many modes for citizens to voice their concerns to Council such as showing up in Council meetings, direct e-mails or phone calls, advisory committees, public consultation workshops etc. However, there is a missing link in information dissemination. For example, NGOs and other community groups tend to be not aware of the local government activities and public consultation endeavors. Adjacent community emphasized the importance of constant information flow and building relationships:

“The leadership bought into the process and allowed the planning team to do what they need to do to consult and deliberate with citizens and develop a vision. There was a clear outcome to create a vision that would be developed and owned by the community. One of the process challenges is the continual informing of citizens of the process. Because processes with heavy citizen involvement are time consuming, it was important to keep the community updated on the progress. Today we have access to electronic tools that make this process much easier – in the early nineties the City did not have such tools and relied on traditional communications such as newsletters, print advertisements and direct letters which are very expensive and not necessarily the most effective communications tools”. (Glenn Brunetti, City of Hamilton, personal communication, June 4, 2010).

“You need to develop relationship between people and organizations. Developing relationships will build trust and understanding, and lead to important sharing of information. Just start having conversations with people, find your common ground and develop trust and your relationship by working together”. (Official from a neighboring municipality in southern Ontario, personal communication, June 4, 2010)

Opportunities to be pursued and challenges to be addressed: Constant dialogue between citizens and the state should be a standard for meaningful public participation that fosters sustainability. In other words, the City needs to develop an open sense and share communication with the public.

- **Incorporating community decisions and feedback in implementation:** Opinions varied regarding the extent of community feedback that causes direction in City's plan. Councilors stressed the importance of community feedback and its effect on decision-processes while committee members did not have such an anonymous assertion. One recommendation might be coming up with a tracking mechanism that ensures that recommendations are taken in to account.

Opportunities to be pursued and challenges to be addressed: Incorporating community decisions and feedback in implementation need to be a standard for meaningful public participation that fosters sustainability.

- **Establishing sustainability criteria and trade-offs:** Waterloo prides itself as an “environment first” community and has an award winning environmental strategy (The City of Waterloo, 2010). Nevertheless, much can be done to strengthen the city's processes to foster sustainability. Establishing sustainability criteria or a quick checklist might eliminate ambiguity and serve as a constant reminder of sustainability issues. As one official from a neighboring municipality in Southern Ontario noted during personal communications on June 4, 2010:

“It [sustainability checklist] keeps the need to be thinking about sustainability overt and visible in any committee”.

Opportunities to be pursued and challenges to be addressed: establishing sustainability criteria and trade-offs could be a standard for all initiatives undertaken by the City. It could be a standard for meaningful public participation that fosters sustainability.

- **Monitoring progress:** Several research participants identified the lack of indicators and measurements and thought that is an essential component in moving forward particularly on issues related to sustainability.

Opportunities to be pursued and challenges to be addressed: Having an agreed-on process to monitor and measure progress need to be a standard for meaningful public participation that fosters sustainability.

- **Flexibility & patience:** Many research participants thought that some community engagement processes requires more time than given. There were several remarks given on time span given to comment on projects. Flexibility was not mentioned as a concern but it is worthwhile keeping it in the recommendations as a reminder that different initiatives may require different approaches and what works in one initiative and one community does not necessary means it will work with the other.

Opportunities to be pursued and challenges to be addressed: Patience and flexibility need to be a standard for meaningful public participation that fosters sustainability.



**Table 6.1: Summary of Thesis Findings & Recommendations**

<b>Citizen Participation &amp; Sustainability Criteria<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>Findings Matching the Criteria</b>	<b>Recommendations Based on Literature and Data Analysis</b>
<b>City of Waterloo Findings: Promoting meaningful public participation that fosters sustainability</b>		
a) Effective public participation and barriers to local civic engagement		
Political will	Finding # 6 Inconclusive results with respect to gauging the level of citizen engagement in governance	Political commitment to fostering citizen engagement in governance
Political will	Finding # 7 Inconclusive results with respect to determining the level of effective public participation in public consultation & open houses	Political will to fostering meaningful citizen engagement in public consultation & open houses
Early public involvement in the decision process	Finding # 6 Inconclusive results with respect to gauging the level of citizen engagement in governance	Political commitment to fostering citizen engagement in governance
Early public involvement in the decision process	Finding # 7 Inconclusive results with respect to determining the level of effective public participation in public consultation and open houses	Political will to fostering meaningful citizen engagement in public consultation
Enhanced social inclusion and social capital	Finding # 2 Limited marginalized groups inclusion	Inclusion of marginalized groups
Enhanced social inclusion and social capital	Finding # 3 Limited relationship/links between the different governance structures, not- for- profits & other community groups	The need to foster relationships with not-for-profit organizations and other community associations
Enhanced social inclusion and social capital	Finding # 6 Inconclusive results with respect to gauging the level of citizen engagement in governance	Political commitment to fostering citizen engagement in governance
Enhanced social inclusion and social capital	Finding # 7 Inconclusive results with respect to determining the level of effective public participation in public consultation and open houses	Political will to fostering meaningful citizen engagement in public consultation
Having an agreed on process	Finding # 6 Inconclusive results with respect to gauging the level of	Having an agreed on processes for citizen engagement initiatives may boost the level of

<sup>4</sup> Represents the criteria developed in Chapter 2 and modified in Chapter 3.

	citizen engagement in governance	citizen engagement in governance and demonstrate political commitment to fostering citizen engagement in governance thus elevating confidence and trust
Democratic innovation and creativity	Finding # 1 Perceived insufficiency in human and financial resources to undertake new initiatives	Effective resources management
Democratic innovation and creativity	Finding # 5 Limited use of information and communication technology (ICTs) to facilitate citizen participation	Stronger use of information and communication technology (ICTs) to facilitate citizen participation
Democratic innovation and creativity	Finding # 6 Inconclusive results with respect to gauging the level of citizen engagement in governance	Political commitment to fostering citizen engagement in governance
Democratic innovation and creativity	Finding # 7 Inconclusive results with respect to determining the level of effective public participation in public consultation & open houses	Political will to fostering meaningful citizen engagement in public consultation
Constant dialogue between citizens & the state	Finding # 4 Perceived limited outreach from the City to citizens	Strengthening dialogue between citizens and the state (developing culture of openness and sharing communication)
Constant dialogue between citizens and the state	Finding # 6 Inconclusive results with respect to gauging the level of citizen engagement in governance	Political commitment to fostering citizen engagement in governance
Constant dialogue between citizens and the state	Finding # 7 Inconclusive results with respect to determining the level of effective public participation in public consultation & open houses	Political will to fostering meaningful citizen engagement in public consultation & open houses
Incorporating community decisions and feedback in implementation	Finding # 6 Inconclusive results with respect to gauging the level of citizen engagement in governance	Political commitment to fostering citizen engagement in governance
Incorporating community decisions and feedback in implementation	Finding # 7 Inconclusive results with respect to determining the level of effective public participation in public consultation and open house	Political will to fostering meaningful citizen engagement in public consultation
Monitoring progress	Finding # 6 Inconclusive results with respect to gauging the level of citizen engagement in governance	Political commitment to fostering citizen engagement in governance

Monitoring progress	Finding # 7 Inconclusive results with respect to determining the level of effective public participation in public consultation and open houses	Political will to fostering meaningful citizen engagement in public consultation
Flexibility & patience	Finding # 6 Inconclusive results with respect to gauging the level of citizen engagement in governance	Political commitment to fostering citizen engagement in governance
Flexibility & patience	Finding # 7 Inconclusive results with respect to determining the level of effective public participation in public consultation & open houses	Political will to fostering meaningful citizen engagement in public consultation & open houses
<b>City of Waterloo Findings: Promoting meaningful public participation that fosters sustainability</b>		
b) Sustainability & barriers to sustainability in local governance		
Establishing sustainability criteria and trade-offs and monitoring progress	Finding # 8 Lack of knowledge in how to initiate process that will lead towards sustainability in the City	Fostering sustainability by establishing sustainability criteria and trade-offs and using collaborative approaches in the decision-making process
<b>Citizen Advisory Committees Findings: How can they operate in a more influential political manner to become more effectively engaged in fostering sustainability</b>		
Political will to foster the influence and effectiveness of advisory committees	Finding # 1 Ambiguity in the role of advisory committees	All advisory committees need to be broadly well-informed and educated about the City and its activities to be most effective. They also need to be educated to realize their role to serve as a critical sounding board. City staff could also be advised about what kind & scale of projects are to be submitted to advisory committees for consultation, when to do that, and how to involve the advisory committees early on in the process. Time barriers can be overcome by involving committees early on in the process
Early public involvement in the decision process		

Enhanced social inclusion and social capital	Finding # 2 The need for enhanced networking	Enhancing networking (advisory chairs meetings, networking with environmental groups/clubs, academic institutions)
Enhanced social inclusion and social capital	Finding # 4 Limited social inclusion & diverse representation in advisory committees	Enhancing social inclusion and diverse representation in advisory committees
Having an agreed on process	Finding # 1 Ambiguity in the role of advisory committees	Written agreed on engagement process, a reasonable time-line for feedback and investment of time which requires commitment and patience on the part of City officials
Democratic innovation and creativity	Finding # 1 Ambiguity in the role of advisory committees	Democratic innovation and creativity may help in overcoming several of the perceived obstacles and ambiguities, and enable the committees to play a more effective role in meaningful citizen engagement
Constant dialogue between citizens and the state.	Finding # 6 Advisory committees are a valid model of citizen engagement but should not be the only form employed	Promoting the role of advisory committees in meaningful citizen engagement and sustainability
Incorporating community's decisions and feedback in implementation and fostering mutual trust	Finding # 5 Inconclusive results with respect to the effectiveness & influence of advisory committees	The advisory committees could develop effective tracking mechanism of their feedbacks and recommendations to Council. This may enhance their effectiveness and influence. Political will is essential for fostering meaningful citizen engagement in advisory committees
Establishing sustainability criteria and trade-offs	Finding # 3 Lack of knowledge about how to initiate a process that fosters sustainability	Fostering sustainability through establishing sustainability criteria and trade-offs and monitoring progress
Monitor progress	Finding # 1 Ambiguity in the role of advisory committees  Finding # 5 Inconclusive results with respect to the effectiveness & influence of advisory committees	The advisory committees could set objectives and monitor progress This will help in clarifying their roles and enhance their effectiveness and influence

Flexibility & Patience	<p>Finding # 5 Inconclusive results with respect to the effectiveness &amp; influence of advisory committees</p> <p>Finding # 6 Advisory committees are a valid model of citizen engagement but should not be the only form employed</p>	Flexibility and patience can contribute to promoting the role of advisory committees in meaningful citizen engagement and sustainability
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**6.2 Summary of Analysis & Recommendations**

Key-findings analysis and synthesis of the results of the case study added context to the criteria developed from the literature review and lessons learned from other Canadian communities highlighted in previous chapters. In general, opinions varied about the level of citizen engagement in Waterloo. Some respondents thought that it was fairly high. Others thought that there were a number of barriers that hindered local civic engagement and effective public participation in the City of Waterloo. There were concerns about inadequate resources such as time, budget and personnel. It was suggested that those limitations can be overcome if the city took some time to prioritize issues, strategically deployed resources and being creative in how to cover the gaps such as by using the resources found in neighborhood associations.

Other research participants emphasized the need to include marginalized groups given their lack of integration in terms of civic engagement. This is a problem not confined to Waterloo but is one that requires attention, particularly given our increasingly diverse communities. This challenge can be partially addressed through policies that promote enhanced social inclusion and social capital. The City could also work more on building relationships with community associations, neighborhoods’ organizations and other special interests groups. Strengthening dialogue with citizens might also be addressed through a comprehensive use of information and communication technologies (ICTSs). Keeping in mind that there is no cookbook approach for citizen engagement; different audiences and projects require different forms of civic engagement.

The primary research confirmed the findings of the literature that sustainability is still an ambiguous concept. Having an established sustainability criteria or checklist to be used by various

community groups in their decision-making processes would help in removing ambiguity and fostering sustainability. Sustainability is the joint responsibility of local government and the different stakeholders in the community. In fact, Glenn Brunetti, a City of Hamilton official, identified the benefits of joint implementation by public and private sector as a major lesson learned from Hamilton- Wentworth's Vision 2020 (personal communication, June 4, 2010). Complex concepts such as sustainability require a collaborative approach and a broad-based consensus.

As for advisory committees, key-findings were divided into examining the role of advisory committees, networking, fostering sustainability, enhanced social inclusion and diverse representation, effectiveness and influence of advisory committees, and the validity of advisory committees' model as a form of citizen engagement. Citizen advisory committees could be more productive if they were given ample time to review policies and material and they were involved early on decision-making processes. Networking with other advisory groups in the City, across the region, or even with adjacent communities is a method that could enhance advisory committees' role and output. Advisory committees can foster sustainability more by establishing agreed-on sustainability criteria and trade-offs. The City can enhance social inclusion and diverse representation in committees by establishing policies that specifically target marginalized and silent groups. Advisory committees could become more motivated and play a much proactive role if their feedback is clearly incorporated in the City's decision-making and projects' implementation process since it strengthens citizen- state relationship and trust. Preparing the minutes of meetings and setting the agenda are issues to be discussed by advisory committees. Advisory committees bring positive attributes to citizen engagement and can play a major role in meaningful public participation, however, other forms of citizen engagement need to be also employed.

This chapter compared key-findings and observations with the previously developed citizen participation and sustainability criteria. It also served as an additional test for the developed criteria. This analysis served to identify points of strength in the current practices of the City of Waterloo that are valuable, as well as areas for improvement. Moreover, triangulating results from the literature, interviews and participant observation served as an additional filter in testing the validity and comprehensiveness of the developed citizen participation and sustainability criteria. The following

chapter, Chapter 7, concludes this thesis with a summary of major findings, academic contributions and recommendations for further research.

## Chapter 7 Conclusion

“I recommend that communities just [simply] start their public involvement and citizen engagement process because it builds the capacity to do a better job. Currently, we are benefiting from the relationships and the trust we built in the past”. (Official from a neighboring municipality in southern Ontario, personal communication, June 4, 2010)

The findings of this thesis were summarized and analyzed in Chapters Chapter 5 and Chapter 6. Recommendations were drawn based on these findings. This chapter revisits the research questions and considers the implications of further research in this area of study. Based on the findings and recommendations of the thesis, conclusions regarding the applied and theoretical contributions are developed. Overall, the thesis provides a solid understanding of opportunities for civic engagement that fosters sustainability and offers a good base of knowledge from which further opportunities for research can be built.

### 7.1 Research Questions Revisited

*What lessons might be learned about how Canadian communities have used and applied initiatives which foster sustainability and meaningful public participation?*

Selected Canadian innovative practices that fosters sustainability and meaningful public participation were examined in Chapter 3 to see what lessons might be learned about citizen participation and sustainability criteria that could be applied to communities such as the City of Waterloo. Initiatives that were included focused on qualitative differences that could offer some novel approaches and ideas. Examples were drawn from Winnipeg, Toronto, Victoria, Vancouver, Halifax, Hamilton, Montreal, and Vancouver. Lessons learned continued showing the importance of incorporating Citizen Participation and sustainability criteria in governance initiatives and the need for adding: monitoring progress, flexibility and patience to the criteria. Therefore, the lesson learned from Canadian communities that have used and applied initiatives which foster sustainability and meaningful public participation is that we need to consider the following criteria in any civic engagement initiative to foster meaningful public participation and sustainability: political will, early



public involvement in the decision-process, enhanced social inclusion and social capital, having an agreed on process, democratic innovation and creativity, constant dialogue between citizens and the state , incorporating community decisions and feedback in implementation, and establishing sustainability criteria and tradeoffs, monitoring progress, flexibility and patience.

*How might these lessons be applied to a mid-sized community such as the City of Waterloo?*

To answer this question, the criteria of effective citizen participation to foster sustainability developed in Chapter 2 and modified in Chapter 3 was applied to an exploratory case study –the City of Waterloo to investigate how the City of Waterloo compares to the developed criteria. Nearby communities with similar cultures and economic base such as Guelph and Hamilton were looked at along with examples from the Region of Waterloo, to make the comparison more robust and applied, and to evade the issue of generalization from larger cities . The comparison employed three data collection techniques: secondary literature review, participant observation and interviews which lead to the identifications of findings and recommendations based on these findings in Chapters 5 and 6. These recommendations can be beneficial to the City of Waterloo and other similar mid-sized communities in terms of what are good practices to keep and what could be improved. Therefore, citizen participation and sustainability criteria can be used for exploring and analyzing the state of meaningful citizen engagement and to what extent it fosters sustainability in Canadian communities.

*How might citizen advisory committees be more effectively engaged to foster sustainability?*

The case study findings and analysis covered advisory committees as well and how they can be more effectively engaged to foster sustainability. Findings showed that developing and applying citizen participation and sustainability criteria is the step in the right direction to foster meaningful public participation and sustainability.

## **7.2 Key Academic Contributions**

As mentioned earlier, fostering sustainability requires fostering democracy and public involvement. This work makes significant theoretical contributions as it as it draws on Gibson’s sustainability principles to develop more readily applicable public participation and sustainability criteria that enhance governance opportunities for meaningful citizen engagement that fosters sustainability.

Communities can incorporate aspects of sustainability in governance and foster democracy by endorsing citizen participation and sustainability criteria that involves political will, early public involvement in decision processes, enhanced social inclusion and social capital, having an agreed on process, democratic innovation and creativity, incorporated community decisions and feedback in implementation, establishing sustainability criteria and trade-offs, monitoring progress, flexibility and patience. As such, the thesis adds value to the broader theoretical debate of what and how we can generalize civic engagement theories, principles and criteria on one hand and the strength and limitations of applying sustainability principles that operate on an integrated systems approach on the other. As a result, the developed citizen participation and sustainability criteria can be used for broad meaningful civic engagement recommendations that foster sustainability. It also serves to distinguish between meaningful public participation that fosters sustainability and unsustainable practices thus acting as a guide for Canadian communities.

To summarize, this research confirms findings also noted in the secondary literature that suggests there is a significant positive relationship between traditional liberal democracy and sustainability (Dietz, York, & Eugene, 2001). Using this assumption, criteria was developed that could be adopted and adapted by local communities to foster meaningful public involvement, as determined by the concepts of deliberative democracy and ecological democracy, while incorporating sustainability in governance. The primary contribution of this study to academic literature is the development of readily applicable meaningful local public participation criteria that would foster sustainability

### **7.3 Key Practical Contributions**

Meaningful citizen engagement and sustainability are practical problem and thus they require practical suggestions. This study incorporates academic research with a real life context and a practical contribution to Canadian communities in general and to citizen advisory committees in particular. The applied contribution to Canadian communities is that it advances the understanding of what constitutes meaningful public participation that fosters sustainability. This is done by developing citizen participation and sustainability criteria relevant to local communities while using Gibson's sustainability principles. Second, these criteria are useful when applied to specific cases such as the City of Waterloo, as their application reveals how they compare, what can be improved

and what are good practices to keep thus opening opportunities for practitioners, stakeholders, to move towards sustainability and local communities to evaluate current practices. The same applies to citizen advisory communities since the criteria can act as a guideline and evaluation tool for them as well. The study also includes practical findings and recommendations that can be used by WCEAC, other environmental and consultative committees, and other citizen advisory groups as well.

#### **7.4 Research Boundaries**

It is important to establish clear boundaries especially when dealing with exploratory research involving humans. The boundaries of this study are geographical taking into account social and behavioral characteristics. Only mid-large Canadian communities with comprehensive public participation and sustainability endeavors were selected for study. The study recognizes that there are several public participation initiatives in various fields. There are also several sustainability initiatives, but the focus of this research is municipal initiatives. Other Canadian and international communities are excluded to narrow the research to a manageable size and keep the study focused on active citizen engagement criteria towards sustainability. This study also depended on the availability of participants, and the limited observations of the deliberations of one citizens' advisory committee. That said, the limitations were overcome by a set of interviews with diverse local participants and analysts.

There are limits to the depth and breadth of literature and data collection possible for such a study, despite the fact that the research methods are complementary and robust. This study is limited by the case study and experiences contained. It allows for cultural and climatic generalizations and may be applied across Canadian communities; however, it may not be universally representative. Another limitation might be unintentional bias by the researcher during the selection of interviewees, during the interviewing process and in data analysis.

#### **7.5 Suggestions for Further Research**

With exploratory research, the opportunities for further research are countless especially when tackling challenging topics such as meaningful public participation and sustainability. For example, regarding deliberative democracy practices, a foundation of this thesis public participation

conceptual framework, “how generalisable different features of positioning practices are across knowledge domains and topics of deliberation, across national or cultural boundaries, and how dependent on certain design features, such as presence or absence of experts in deliberation, group size, and duration of the event” (O’Doherty & Davidson, 2010, p. 242) remains to be explored. Other key areas of further research that have been identified during the process of researching and writing this thesis that are beyond the scope of this thesis are:

- Are the barriers to meaningful public participation and sustainability criteria adoption and implementation really much different between Canadian communities? How much they are universally representative? Are they different from those in the West, developing countries?
- Testing citizen participation and sustainability criteria on different citizen advisory groups across Canadian cities and how generalisable recommendations can be upon different features, attitudes and practices.
- The role of civil society and neighborhood associations in meaningful public participation and how can we measure success?
- How can sustainability principles provide the basis for planning in communities and how does it differ between developing and developed countries? Also studying the effects of implementation in developing countries and developed countries?
- How to build the capacity needed for effective sustainability and meaningful public participation adoption and implementation?
- How crucial meaningful public participation can be in overcoming the evident limitations of present practice? What is the appropriate form for an integrated approach to sustainability in a top-down system?

Such research projects will deepen the understanding of meaningful public participation and sustainability. It will enhance decision-making in communities that fosters sustainability and good governance as well as optimize results. Methods and perspectives may differ but the critical common

goal of sustainability and good governance presents the possibility for deeper collaboration and networking leading to unprecedented progress.

## **7.6 Concluding Remarks**

The underpinnings of public participation and sustainability literature are similar to what Funtowicz and Ravetz (1991) described in their discussion of post normal science. The "facts are uncertain, values in dispute, stakes high, and decisions urgent" and under these circumstances conventional or applied science cannot perform (J. Ravetz, 1991 ; Viederman, 1995). This study looked at the multidimensional nature of public participation, a sustainability essential ingredient that incorporates the disciplines of ecological democracy and healthy communities, while considering local culture, ethics and values. It also looked at barriers to effective participation and the means of overcoming these barriers and bridged the gaps between concepts and applications by providing means for local communities to understand sustainability concepts and applications while engaging effectively in governance. This approach helps to remove the vagueness and the complex nature of the literature which also serves as a barrier to attaining sustainability itself. After all, "while flexibility is valuable, fuzziness about expectations and obligations is fatal" (Gibson et al., 2005, p. 144). The study also falls under interdisciplinary analysis since it encompass academic research works from different disciplines to consider "real life" communities (involving and studying municipalities, NGOs, CBOs. and other key stakeholders at the local level ) to solve a "real-world problem": active engagement of communities to foster sustainability (Hirsch Hadorn, 2008 ; Klein, 2001). Afterall, sustainability and meaningful civic engagement are challenging concepts that need to be tackled with realistic approaches.

In closing, this study is important to researchers since it bridges the gap between previous civic participation literature and our current status quo. It looks at the barriers and how to overcome these barriers. In addition, it looks at how to actively engage citizens towards sustainability. Policy makers and governments can benefit in encouraging local participation through applying citizen participation and sustainability criteria thus adopting a sustainable approach to decision-making. Community groups, particularly citizen advisory committees will benefit since the criteria, findings and recommendations from this study provide them with guidelines that help them to assume a lead role

in fostering sustainability. This contribution is in addition to the benefits that effective citizen participation brings to the society as a whole in terms of equity, sense of belonging and prosperity.

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## Appendix A Interview Questions (Experts)

- 1- What community groups do you think should be involved in sustainability initiatives and planning? In the development of the community's sustainable strategy?
- 2- What comprises a good sustainable development strategy? What do you expect to find in a sustainable development strategy? In an environmental strategy? In public response to consultations? Why?
- 3- How can we engage more of the public in sustainability initiatives?
- 4- What do you think is the role of citizen advisory committees? What practices do you think is good to keep? What should be improved?
- 5- How might citizen advisory groups be more effectively engaged in development and implementation of sustainability initiatives?
- 6- Do you recommend the creation of a sustainable advisory committee in every community or do you think an environmental advisory committee can do the job? Why?
- 7- In your opinion, which city or town can be considered an example of how to approach sustainability? What do you think are the most important lessons learned about how Canadian communities have used and applied sustainability assessment tools?
- 8- Is there an initiative, here in Waterloo that you think is successful in terms of civic engagement? Sustainability? If yes what and why?
- 9- How do you think marginalized and silent groups needs and concerns can be covered? In Waterloo? Any recommendations or points of strength that you would like to highlight?
- 10- What kind of tools do you recommend for Waterloo and other similar mid-sized Canadian communities? Can this be generalized to other Canadian communities?
- 11- Can you think of any examples of how Canadian communities show their understanding of sustainability? Waterloo? If Yes, what kind of tools are available. If No, what do you recommend?
- 12- Do you think sustainability criteria are covered in decision- making at the community level? At any level?



- a- Socio-ecological system integrity
- b- Livelihood sufficiency and opportunity
- c- Intragenerational equity
- d- Intergenerational equity
- e- Resource maintenance and efficiency
- f- Socio-ecological civility and democratic governance
- g- Precaution and adaptation
- h- Immediate and long-term integration

13- Is a sustainability checklist covering the above mentioned sustainability assessment criteria and targeting communities beneficial?

14- Is there anything else that you would like to add or comment on? Also what would you suggest to make this study more robust? Who do you recommend to be interviewed for this study?

15- May I follow-up with you in case I had additional questions or clarifications?

## **Appendix B Interview Questions (Local Governance)**

- 1- What do you think of the Annual General Meetings for Waterloo Citizen Environmental Advisory Committee? Do you think there is a good public turn-out? How many usually show up? Do you know of any feedback from the public regarding these meetings? Do you think all citizen advisory groups should conduct such meetings?
- 2- What do you think is the role of a citizen advisory committee? Do you think advisory committees are living up to their mandates? If yes why and if no what do you recommend?
- 3- What criteria or characteristics will make you consider a particular community as effectively engaged?
- 4- How might citizen advisory groups be more effectively engaged in development and implementation of sustainability initiatives?
- 5- What do you think is the role and objectives of Waterloo Citizen Environmental Advisory Committee? Role of staff? Role of attending Councilors? Do you think they are living up to their mandates? If yes why and if no what do you recommend? (Any recommendations or points of strength that you would like to highlight? What do you think is good to keep? What do you think should be improved?)
- 6- How is the Agenda set for the advisory committee? (Is it a top down approach)
- 7- By the end of the day what does the advisory committee provide? Is the decision based on consensus?
- 8- What happens to the feedback provided by advisory committees? What happens to the minutes of meeting? How does staff operate in regard to recommendations?
- 9- How do you assess the extent of feedback provided by advisory committees that cause change in direction of city plans? Did it ever happen, how frequent?
- 10- How do you assess the extent of feedback provided by public consultation? Do you think the public provide adequate feedback? Does it cause change in direction of city plans? What do you think and recommend?

- 11- Is there an initiative, here in Waterloo that you think is successful in terms of civic engagement? If yes what and why?
- 12- How would you define the term sustainability or sustainable communities? Do you have a sustainable development strategy here in Waterloo? Is there a sustainability checklist of consideration to the committees or other decision-makers? What is the sequence to approach sustainability?
- 13- Is there an initiative, here in Waterloo that you think is successful in terms of sustainability?
- 14- How do you think marginalized and silent groups needs and concerns are covered here at Waterloo? Any recommendations or points of strength that you would like to highlight?
- 15- Do you think sustainability should concern environmental committee only, all advisory committees, or a separate sustainability advisory committee should be developed? What community groups do you think should be involved in sustainability initiatives? In the development of a sustainable development strategy?
- 16- In your opinion, which city or town can be considered an example of how to approach sustainability? What do you think are the most important lessons learned about how Canadian communities have used and applied sustainability tools?
- 17- What kind of tools do you recommend for Waterloo and other similar mid-sized Canadian communities? Can this be generalized to other Canadian communities?
- 18- Can you think of any examples of how Canadian communities show their understanding of sustainability? Waterloo? If Yes, what kind of tools are available. If No, what do you recommend?
- 19- Do you think any of the following criteria are covered in decision- making? If yes at what level?
- a- Sustainable Development
  - b- Healthy Communities
  - c- Socio-ecological system integrity

- d- Livelihood sufficiency and opportunity
- e- Intragenerational equity
- f- Intergenerational equity
- g- Resource maintenance and efficiency
- h- Socio-ecological civility and democratic governance
- i- Precaution and adaptation
- j- Immediate and long-term integration

20- Is a sustainable checklist targeting communities and including the above mentioned criteria beneficial?

21- Is there anything else that you would like to add or comment on? Are there any questions that I should be asking that I have missed? Who would you recommend be interviewed as part of this research?

22- May I follow-up with you in case I had additional questions or clarifications?

## Appendix C Interview Questions (NGOs)

- 1- What do you think of the Annual General Meetings for Waterloo Citizen Environmental Advisory Committee? Do you think there is a good public turn-out? How many usually show up? Do you know what the public think of these meetings? Do you think all citizen advisory groups should conduct such meetings?
- 2- What do you know about Waterloo Citizen Environmental Advisory Committee? What do you expect?
- 3- How do you assess the city's management of public engagements?
- 4- Recommendations/Suggestions? Points of strength?
- 5- Who decides who participates? Do you receive invitation to participate?
- 6- How would you define the term sustainability or sustainable communities?
- 7- What community groups do you think should be involved in sustainability initiatives and planning? In the development of the community's sustainable strategy?
- 8- What comprises a good sustainable development strategy?
- 9- What are the points of strength and weaknesses of the public engagement processes in Waterloo? Any Recommendations?
- 10- How can we engage more the public in sustainability initiatives?
- 11- How might citizen advisory groups be more effectively engaged in development and implementation of sustainability initiatives?
- 12- What do you think is the role of citizen advisory groups? Do you think advisory committees are living up to their mandates? If yes why and if no what do you recommend? What do you think is good to keep? What do you think should be improved?

- 13- Do the citizen advisory committees address all the concerns associated with sustainable or healthy communities? Where are the gaps?
- 14- How would you define the term sustainability or sustainable communities? Do you have a sustainable development strategy here in Waterloo? Is there a sustainability checklist of consideration to the committees or other decision-makers? What is the sequence to approach sustainability in Waterloo?
- 15- In your opinion, which city or town can be considered an example of how to approach sustainability planning? What do you think are the most important lessons learned about how Canadian communities have used and applied sustainability tools?
- 16- Is there an initiative, here in Waterloo that you think is successful in terms of civic engagement? Sustainability? If yes what and why?
- 17- What kind of tools do you recommend for Waterloo and other similar mid-sized Canadian communities? Can this be generalized to other Canadian communities?
- 18- How do you think marginalized and silent groups needs and concerns are covered here at Waterloo? Any recommendations or points of strength that you would like to highlight?
- 19- Can you think of any examples of how Canadian communities (all affected stakeholders) show their understanding of sustainability? Waterloo? If yes, what kind of tools are available. If No, what do you recommend?
- 20- Do you think any of the following criteria are covered in decision- making? If yes at what level?
- a- Sustainable Development
  - b- Healthy Communities
  - c- Socio-ecological system integrity
  - d- Livelihood sufficiency and opportunity
  - e- Intragenerational equity

- f- Intergenerational equity
- g- Resource maintenance and efficiency
- h- Socio-ecological civility and democratic governance
- i- Precaution and adaptation
- j- Immediate and long-term integration

21- Is a sustainability checklist targeting communities and including the above mentioned criteria beneficial?

22- Anything else you would like to add or comment on? What would you suggest to make this study more robust? Who do you recommend to be interviewed for this study?

23- May I follow-up with you in case I had additional questions or clarifications?

## Appendix D Thesis Information Requirements with Interview Questions and Key Informants

### Group 1: Experts 1

Thesis Information Requirements	Interview Questions	Research Question answered
<p>Effective public participation &amp; barriers to local civic engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think is the role of citizen advisory committees? What practices do you think is good to keep? What should be improved?</li> <li>• How do you think marginalized and silent groups needs and concerns can be covered? In Waterloo ? Any recommendations or points of strength that you would like to highlight?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•What lessons might be learned about how Canadian communities have used and applied initiatives which foster sustainability and meaningful public participation?</li> <li>•How might these lessons be applied to a mid-sized community such as the City of Waterloo?</li> <li>•How might citizen advisory committees be more effectively engaged to foster sustainability?</li> </ul>
<p>Sustainability &amp; barriers to sustainability in local Governance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What community groups do you think should be involved in sustainability initiatives and planning? In the development of the community’s sustainable strategy?</li> <li>• What comprises a good sustainable development strategy? What do you expect to find in a sustainable development strategy? In an environmental strategy? In public response to consultations? Why?</li> <li>• How can we engage more the public in sustainability initiatives?</li> <li>• Do you think sustainability is understood by Canadian communities? Do you think there are enough tools for using the sustainable development approach? If so, what kind of tools are available or recommended?</li> </ul>	<p>How might citizen advisory committees be more effectively engaged to foster sustainability?</p>



Sustainability & barriers to sustainability in local Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In your opinion, which city or town can be considered an example of how to approach sustainability assessments and sustainability planning? What do you think are the most important lessons learned about how Canadian communities have used and applied sustainability assessment tools?</li> <li>• Is there an initiative, here in Waterloo that you think is successful in terms of civic engagement? Sustainability? If yes what and why?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•What lessons might be learned about how Canadian communities have used and applied initiatives which foster sustainability and meaningful public participation?</li> <li>•How might these lessons be applied to a mid-sized community such as the City of Waterloo?</li> </ul>
Effective participation process based on sustainability and public participation criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How might citizen advisory groups be more effectively engaged in development and implementation of sustainability initiatives?</li> <li>• Do you recommend the creation of a sustainable advisory committee in every community or do you think an environmental advisory committee can do the job? Why?</li> <li>• What kind of tools (for effective public participation process that fosters sustainability) do you recommend for Waterloo and other similar mid-sized Canadian communities? Can this be generalized to other Canadian communities?</li> <li>• Do you think sustainability assessment criteria is covered in decision- making at the community level? At any level? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a- Socio-ecological system integrity</li> <li>b- Livelihood sufficiency and opportunity</li> <li>c- Intragenerational equity</li> <li>d- Intergenerational equity</li> <li>e- Resource maintenance and efficiency</li> <li>f- Socio-ecological civility and democratic</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•What lessons might be learned about how Canadian communities have used and applied initiatives which foster sustainability and meaningful public participation?</li> <li>•How might these lessons be applied to a mid-sized community such as the City of Waterloo?</li> </ul>

	<p>governance</p> <p>g- Precaution and adaptation</p> <p>h- Immediate and long-term integration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is a sustainability checklist covering the above mentioned sustainability assessment criteria and targeting communities beneficial?</li> </ul>	
Warm-up Question	Acquire/Verify contact information, work position and responsibilities etc...	
Closing Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there anything else that you would like to add or comment on?</li> <li>• If you were doing a study of this kind, what do you think is important?</li> <li>• Are there any questions that I should be asking that I have missed?</li> <li>• Who would you recommend be interviewed as part of this research?</li> <li>• May I follow-up with you in case I had additional questions or clarifications?</li> </ul>	

## Group II: Local Governance

Thesis Information Requirements	Interview Questions	Research Question answered
<p>Effective public participation &amp; barriers to local civic engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think of the Annual General Meetings for Waterloo Citizen Environmental Advisory Committee? Do you think there is a good public turnout? How many usually show up? Do you know of any feedback from the public regarding these meetings? Do you think all citizen advisory groups should conduct such meetings?</li> <li>• What do you think is the role of citizen advisory groups? Do you think advisory committees are living up to their mandates? If yes why and if no what do you recommend? What do you think is good to keep? What do you think should be improved?</li> <li>• What do you think is the role and objectives of Waterloo Citizen Environmental Advisory Committee? Role of staff? Role of attending Councilors? Do you think they are living up to their mandates? Any recommendations or points of strength that you would like to highlight?</li> <li>• How is the Agenda set for the advisory committee? (Is it a top down approach)</li> <li>• In the end what does the advisory committee provide? Is the decision based on consensus?</li> <li>• What happens to the feedback provided by advisory committees? What happens to the minutes of meeting? How do staff operate in regard to recommendations?</li> </ul>	<p>How might citizen advisory committees be more effectively engaged to foster sustainability?</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you assess the extent of feedback provided by advisory committees that cause change in direction of city plans? Did it ever happen, how frequent?</li> <li>• How do you assess the extent of feedback provided by public consultation? Do you think the public provide adequate feedback? Does it cause change in direction of city plans? What do you think and recommend?</li> <li>• Is there an initiative, here in Waterloo that you think is successful in terms of civic engagement? If yes what and why?</li> </ul>	
Sustainability & barriers to sustainability in local governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you define the term sustainability or sustainable communities?</li> <li>• In your opinion, which city or town can be considered an example of how to approach sustainability assessments and sustainability planning? What do you think are the most important lessons learned about how Canadian communities have used and applied sustainability assessment tools?</li> <li>• What kind of tools do you recommend for Waterloo and other similar mid-sized Canadian communities? Can this be generalized to other Canadian communities?</li> <li>• Do you think sustainability is understood by Canadian communities? Do you think there are enough tools for using the sustainable development approach? If so, what kind of tools is available or recommended?</li> <li>• Is there an initiative, here in Waterloo that you think is successful in terms of sustainability?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•How might citizen advisory committees be more effectively engaged to foster sustainability?</li> <li>•What lessons might be learned about how Canadian communities have used and applied initiatives which foster sustainability and meaningful public participation?</li> <li>•How might these lessons be applied to a mid-sized community such as the City of Waterloo?</li> </ul>

Warm-up Question	Acquire/Verify contact information, work position and responsibilities etc...	
Closing Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there anything else that you would like to add or comment on?</li> <li>• Are there any questions that I should be asking that I have missed?</li> <li>• Who would you recommend be interviewed as part of this research?</li> <li>• May I follow-up with you in case I had additional questions or clarifications?</li> </ul>	

**Group III: NGOs**

<b>Thesis Information Requirements</b>	<b>Interview Questions</b>	<b>Research Question answered</b>
Effective public participation & barriers to local civic engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think of the Annual General Meetings for Waterloo Citizen Environmental Advisory Committee? Do you think there is a good public turnout? How many usually show up? Do you know of any feedback from the public regarding these meetings? Do you think all citizen advisory groups should conduct such meetings?</li> <li>• What do you know about Waterloo Citizen Environmental Advisory Committee? What do you expect?</li> <li>• How do you assess the way the city is managing public engagements? Recommendations/Suggestions? Points of strength?</li> </ul>	How might citizen advisory committees be more effectively engaged to foster sustainability?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who decides who participates? Do you receive invitation to participate?</li> <li>• What are the points of strength and weaknesses of the public engagement processes in Waterloo? Any Recommendations?</li> <li>• What do you think is the role of citizen advisory groups? Do you think advisory committees are living up to their mandates? If yes why and if no what do you recommend? What do you think is good to keep? What do you think should be improved?</li> </ul>	
Sustainability & barriers to sustainability in local governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you define the term sustainability or sustainable communities?</li> <li>• What community groups do you think should be involved in sustainability initiatives and planning? In the development of the community's sustainable strategy?</li> <li>• What comprises a good sustainable development strategy?</li> <li>• How can we engage more the public in sustainability initiatives?</li> <li>• How would you define the term sustainability assessments and sustainability planning?</li> <li>• In your opinion, which city or town can be considered an example of how to approach sustainability assessments and sustainability planning? What do you think are the most important lessons learned about how Canadian communities have used and applied sustainability assessment tools?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•How might citizen advisory committees be more effectively engaged to foster sustainability?</li> <li>•What lessons might be learned about how Canadian communities have used and applied initiatives which foster sustainability and meaningful public participation?</li> <li>•How might these lessons be applied to a mid-sized community such as the City of Waterloo?</li> </ul>
Effective participation process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do your citizen advisory committee address all the concerns associated with sustainable or healthy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•How might citizen advisory committees be more</li> </ul>

<p>based on sustainability and public participation criteria</p>	<p>communities? Where are the gaps?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there an initiative, here in Waterloo that you think is successful in terms of civic engagement? Sustainability? If yes what and why?</li> <li>• What kind of tools do you recommend for Waterloo and other similar mid-sized Canadian communities? Can this be generalized to other Canadian communities?</li> <li>• How do you think marginalized and silent groups needs and concerns are covered here at Waterloo? Any recommendations or points of strength that you would like to highlight?</li> <li>• Do you think sustainability is understood by all affected stakeholders in Canadian communities? Do you think there are enough tools for using the sustainable development approach? If so, what kind of tools is available or recommended?</li> <li>• Do you think any of the following criteria are covered in decision- making? If yes at what level? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a- Sustainable Development</li> <li>b- Healthy Communities</li> <li>c- Socio-ecological system integrity</li> <li>d- Livelihood sufficiency and opportunity</li> <li>e- Intragenerational equity</li> <li>f- Intergenerational equity</li> <li>g- Resource maintenance and efficiency</li> <li>h- Socio-ecological civility and democratic governance</li> <li>i- Precaution and adaptation</li> <li>j- Immediate and long-term integration</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>effectively engaged to foster sustainability?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•What lessons might be learned about how Canadian communities have used and applied initiatives which foster sustainability and meaningful public participation?</li> <li>•How might these lessons be applied to a mid-sized community such as the City of Waterloo?</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is a sustainable checklist targeting communities beneficial?</li> </ul>	
Warm-up Question	Acquire/Verify contact information, work position and responsibilities etc...	
Closing Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there anything else that you would like to add or comment on?</li> <li>• Are there any questions that I should be asking that I have missed?</li> <li>• If you were doing a study of this kind, what do you think is important?</li> <li>• Who would you recommend be interviewed as part of this research?</li> <li>• May I follow-up with you in case I had additional questions or clarifications?</li> </ul>	



## Appendix E Ethics Documents

### Participant Recruitment Letter

Dear (name of participant):

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I am conducting as part of my Master's degree in the Department of Environment and Resource Studies at the University of Waterloo under the supervision of Professor Mary Louise McAllister. I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part.

We all aspire for a healthy community but how can we get there? Two requirements that are constantly debated and defined are meaningful civic engagement and sustainability. The purpose of this study is to research Canadian communities past and current practices to come up with meaningful criteria for public participation that fosters sustainability. I will be looking at the City of Waterloo as a case study. The key informants for this research are active members in local governance that are dealing with sustainability and public involvement as well as sustainability and civic engagement specialists.

I would like to include you as one of several individuals to be involved in my study. I believe that you are best suited to speak to the various issues, such as steps to be taken to foster sustainability and meaningful public involvement.

As a participant of this study, the main themes for the interview are as follows:

1. Methods to engage more of the public in sustainability initiatives.
2. The role citizen advisory groups play and how they might be more effectively engaged in development and implementation of sustainability initiatives.
3. Tools that should be available to the public for a more meaningful engagement that fosters sustainability.

Participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately one hour in length to take place in a mutually agreed upon public location. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time

without any negative consequences by advising the researcher. With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the interview has been completed, I will send you a summary of the interview to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study unless you have given written agreement. However, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be retained for 2 years in a secure location and then confidentially destroyed. Only researchers associated with this project will have access. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at 519-772-8696 or by email at [djawhary@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:djawhary@uwaterloo.ca). You can also contact my supervisor, Professor Mary Louise at (519) 888-4567 ext. 35614 or by e-mail at [mlmcalli@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:mlmcalli@uwaterloo.ca).

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. However, the final decision about participation is yours. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes of this office at (519) 888-4567 Ext. 36005 or [ssykes@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:ssykes@uwaterloo.ca).

I hope that the results of my study will be of benefit to both the individuals directly involved in the study and any related groups or organizations involved in sustainability, as well as the broader research community. An anticipated benefit would be contributing to a healthier community in Waterloo and other Canadian communities.

I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Yours Sincerely,

Diala Jawhary

## **Consent Form**

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Diala Jawhary of the Department of Environment and Resource Studies at the University of Waterloo. I understand that the study is looking at the City of Waterloo as a case study. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be audio recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses.

I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in the thesis and/or publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous unless otherwise agreed to in writing.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. I was informed that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact the Director, Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567 ext. 36005 or [ssykes@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:ssykes@uwaterloo.ca).

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

YES NO

I agree to have my interview audio recorded.

YES NO

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this research.

YES NO

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (Please print)

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (Please print)

Witness Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Letter of Appreciation**

Dear (Name of Participant),

I would like to thank you for your participation in this study. As a reminder, the purpose of this study is to promote meaningful citizen engagement practices that foster sustainability.

The data collected during interviews will contribute to a better understanding of the public participation and sustainability requirements.

Please remember that any data pertaining to you as an individual participant will be kept confidential. Once all the data are collected and analyzed for this project, I plan on sharing this information with the research community through seminars and presentations. If you are interested in receiving more information regarding the results of this study, or if you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at the email address listed at the bottom of the page. If you would like a summary of the results, please let me know now by providing me with your email address. When the study is completed, I will send it to you. The study is expected to be completed by August of 2010.

As with all University of Waterloo projects involving human participants, this project was reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. Should you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes in the Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567, Ext., 36005 or [ssykes@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:ssykes@uwaterloo.ca).

Diala Jawhary

University of Waterloo

Department of Environment and Resource Studies

djawhary@uwaterloo.ca

**Waterloo Citizen Environmental Advisory Committee (WCEAC) verbal script to get their consent for me being a participant observer:**

Hello,

My name is Diala Jawhary and I am a Masters student in the Environment & Resource Studies at the University of Waterloo. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Mary Louise McAllister on “Opportunities for citizen engagement in governance to foster sustainable communities”. As part of my thesis research, I am planning to observe WCEAC meetings so as to be able to learn more how citizen advisory groups operate, lessons learned and recommendations.

**Background Information:**

- You may decline my attendance of any of the meetings or discussions at any time.
- With your permission, I will be taking notes.
- All information I witness and notes I take will be considered confidential and nothing will be published without your prior consent.
- The data collected will be kept in a secure location and disposed of in 2 years time.
- If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about my observation, please feel free to contact Mary Louise McAllister at 519-888-4567, Ext. 35614 or by e-mail at [mlmcalli@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:mlmcalli@uwaterloo.ca).

- I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. However, the final decision about participation is yours. Should you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes in the Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567, Ext. 36005 or [ssykes@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:ssykes@uwaterloo.ca).
- After all of the data have been analyzed, you will receive an executive summary of the research results.

Thank You