



**Sustainable
Orillia**

Sustainable Orillia's
First Anniversary Report | *June, 2020*



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Chairman Stan among the solar panels on roof at Barnfield Point

Frank Matys / Simcoe.com

A Message from the **President and Chair of Sustainable Orillia**

May 24-25, 2019 was the official launch of *Sustainable Orillia*—a great example of how people of a community can come together, in cooperation with City Council and staff, to plan a more sustainable community.

A year later, it seems a good idea to remind our community of what we have accomplished together—and what we have in mind for the future.

Look for us to continue to bring the latest ideas, thought-provoking speakers, and meaningful events to an ever-expanding portion of our community.

To ensure that we continue to have a community discussion about the future we are working toward, *Sustainable Orillia* is engaged with the City in developing a statement of intent regarding a community-driven, long-term vision for a sustainable Orillia as part of a memorandum of understanding which will define the relationship between the City and *Sustainable Orillia* as we go forward together.

Our organization is about engaging the people of Orillia and our municipal government in making the changes necessary to become a community that will contribute to a better planet. It will be an exciting journey for our community.

This report is the first of many to document that journey.

-- Stan Mathewson

P.S. Sustainable Orillia will be launching a “Friends of Sustainable Orillia” program very soon. We hope you will consider a membership to show your support for our organization and for the vision of a sustainable Orillia community in our future. Check our website and keep an eye on local media for details.

Executive Summary

Sustainable Orillia has just begun its work. Its goal is long-term—to encourage Orillia and its citizens to make “sustainability” part of the community’s regular way of life, and in so doing, to move toward the creation of a community that will stand as a model for our province and our country. A community where the needs of future generations—our children, our grand-children, and the generations of children that come after them—will be met in a city with clean, clear water and blue skies—a healthy, happy city surrounded by productive and fertile fields and gardens and forests and lakes teeming with life. The Sunshine City, indeed.

Sustainable Orillia is counting its one-year anniversary from the official “launch” of the organization on the May 23-24 weekend of 2019. As the “Story and the Challenge” section below will show, the idea to form such an organization began several months earlier in conversations between its founders and Mayor Steve Clarke. Those conversations, over a few short months early in 2019, led to an organization that kicked off its existence on that May weekend, a weekend that saw well over 200 people come together for two events—an attendance clearly establishing that “sustainability” was not only an idea held by the weekend’s organizers, but also an idea—a goal—that many in our community wished to see our city strive to attain. That passion for an improved community, one that preserved the environment and saw reductions in waste, pollution and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, was the catalyst. *Sustainable Orillia* was born!

By the time of the launch at Lakehead University, Mayor Steve Clarke had already designated the organization as a “Mayor’s Task Force” which he and most members of the Orillia City Council supported. The Council provided seed money to the organization which soon saw financial support coming from a variety of other sources—individuals, a Probus Club, a church group,



A wake-up call at the Climate Strike in front of Orillia City Hall

Simcoe County Elementary Occasional Teachers Federation (SCEOT), and local businesses. Following the launch, the organization incorporated as “Sustainable Orillia Initiative,” added members to its Board, and put into place a more formal structure and organization—a Board of Directors and six Sector Groups. In addition, the Board was joined by a City Councillor and by a city staff member. These city reps provided both liaison and Council representation on the organization’s Board.

In the meantime, the ideas which had been collected at the launch event were being examined, both by the Board and by the Sector groups, and priority actions were being identified and acted upon. Over the last four months of 2019 and the first five months of 2020, the Board and its Sector committees worked to reach out to the Orillia community and, most importantly, to other groups within the city who had comparable goals and equal passion to achieve a better community and a better world. “Fifty Shades of Green” (see Appendix 4) was the result of much of this work, and it laid out a template and a schedule for work that can be done within the Orillia community to reduce the carbon footprint of the citizens and city alike.

Sustainable Orillia

The Story and the Challenge

The original *Mayor's Task Force on Sustainability* was convened by Mayor Steve Clarke at the end of 2018 and began its work in January 2019. The team established task force roles, a budget, a logo (modeled on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals logo, our 9 colours represent our original 9 sectors), a website, and operational categories of citizens, or sectors, from across Orillia. Its mission was to engage the community in actions that build more rewarding and healthy lives for the people of Orillia, our children and grandchildren.

In the minds of Task Force members, there was no doubt that the task is daunting. Leading scientists from around the world had agreed that the consequences of ignoring our changing climate would be dire. However, as the subsequent pandemic has shown, people can rise to the challenge and take radical, collective action when required. The pandemic has caused us to reflect on what's most important and of our planet, must be near the top of that list. In a post-COVID-19 future, it will be increasingly apparent how much our economic and social success depends upon the ability of nature to provide for us.

Early in 2019, the Task Force began launch event with the purpose of range of citizens. The plan promote and implement a wide would form a local, "made-in-climate change.

To guide the work, as "meeting our own needs ability of future generations to were to be directed at creating mobilized, concerned volunteers common cause. Actions would and reduced greenhouse gases.

The six stages of climate denial are:
It's not real. It's not us. It's not that bad. It's too expensive to fix. Aha, here's a great solution (that actually does nothing). And — oh no! Now it's too late. You really should have warned us earlier.

- Katharine Hayhoe, *Climate Scientist*

to prepare for a major community engaging and inspiring a broad for the event was to conceive, variety of local actions that Orillia" response to address

sustainability was defined without compromising the meet theirs." Task Force efforts a broad-based local movement of from across the city around a contribute to a healthier community

During its first year of operation, the leaders of the *Mayor's Task Force* (incorporated in October 2019 as *Sustainable Orillia*) focused on promoting its mission and projects to the local public. Task Force leaders envisioned a city where enthusiastic citizens are taking action—individually, collectively and publicly—as an integral part of our city's lifestyle. The big idea was simply to avoid placing a burden on future generations and the natural environment.

As we recover from the pandemic, we will reflect on our familiar pre-COVID-19 patterns and habits. We know there will be no going back to business as usual. Instead, we have an opportunity to re-invent and re-imagine the way we do things. Rather than bouncing back, we can bounce forward. Our response to the pandemic is a dress rehearsal for an even bigger challenge: ensuring that we can thrive indefinitely and more equitably within the finite limits of nature.

Climate scientists, medical professionals and political leaders are calling for a public mobilization equal to—or even greater than—the the one required by COVID-19. Sustainable Orillia is poised to seize this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to support sustainable projects that will not only create jobs but also create a city that's even better than it was before. Our lives must be different from now on. From now on, we truly are all in this together.

"We need to turn the recovery into a real opportunity to do things right for the future."

-- UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres,



Artwork by the members of the Orillia Youth Centre to commemorate the Launch of Sustainable Orillia.

SECTION 3

A Financial Overview

A very significant sign of Orillia City Council's support for what the founders of *Sustainable Orillia* were proposing was the April 11, 2019 decision of Council to provide \$10,000 in funding for the organization. A major part of this grant was used to set up the *Sustainable Orillia* website (www.sustainableorillia.ca). Fireside Agency worked with the organization to provide a template and email addresses to go with it. Another portion of the grant was used to plan and bring in speakers for the May 23-24 weekend "launch of *Sustainable Orillia*." Following incorporation in October, the Board also determined that annual liability insurance was a requirement, as well, especially given we were inviting guests to events throughout the year.

Council support was again shown with a similar grant for 2020.

In addition to the grants provided by the City, individual donors in our community, who supported the goals of the organization, provided some \$3,500 in donations through 2019. Other businesses in town were generous in providing support in kind, especially in the form of food and refreshments for the events carried out over the year. In addition, venues for the May launch were provided by the Orillia Community Church (OCC) on Colborne Street for a token \$25 and by Lakehead University (Orillia) at a much reduced cost.

NOTE: For a detailed 2019 Financial Report, see Appendix 3.

SECTION 4

Highlights of Our First Year

While there have been many happenings over the past year which have been gratifying to members of the Board and the Sector teams, the following stand out as real successes:



Local high school student volunteers welcome Launch participants

May 23-24, 2019: Launch Weekend for Sustainable Orillia

The Friday night showing of the film, *Anthropocene*, at the Orillia Community Church (OCC) followed by the full-day Saturday program at Lakehead University, kicked off our career as an organization as we had hoped. Some 130 people showed up to view the film at the OCC while about 150 attended the Lakehead program. Passionate conversations occurred; ideas flowed.

It was evident that our community was home to many people who shared a sense of urgency that steps be taken to make our world a better place, that action be taken to point our society, our industries, our businesses, and our individual lives in directions which would better protect our environment and the health of our community. In short, there was support for the goals of *Sustainable Orillia*!

As importantly, the weekend demonstrated the importance of community partnerships. *Sustainable Orillia* reached out to the OCC for use of their venue for the film showing, to Lakehead University for the Saturday program, to local food businesses for the events. Without exception, there was terrific support from everyone involved for what we were trying to achieve. (See APPENDIX 6: S.O. Sponsors)

Of those who turned out for this kick-off weekend, many remain involved with *Sustainable Orillia*'s Sector groups, the groups which are working to implement the many ideas (over 200) that surfaced on this exciting weekend.



September 28-29, 2019: E.V. (Electric Vehicle) Weekend

What a sight it was at noon on Saturday, September 28 to see 22 electric vehicles, most of which were plug-in electrics, assembled on the parking lot at the Orillia Square Mall! Members of the Electric Vehicle Society of Ontario, Tesla owners, PlugnDrive—all were there to welcome drivers interested in knowing more about owning an all-electric vehicle. It was a small vision of what's to come in our society.

Those members of the public who were attracted by the posters or were simply curious about what was going on were invited not only to talk to the owners of the vehicles, but also to get in and take the cars for a spin. Several Teslas, a Kia Soul, a

22 models of electric vehicles greet the public at EV Weekend

BMW, a Nissan Leaf and a Chevy Volt, to name only a few, were sampled by drivers—some 200 or so—who came out over the two days.

And once again, community support (*See Appendix 6: Sponsors*) and the partnerships formed with the members of the Electric Vehicle Society and Tesla owners along with the management company of the Orillia Square Mall demonstrated the interest and support for what *Sustainable Orillia* was doing in our community.

Fall of 2019: Sector Activities and “Fifty Shades of Green”

In the two to three months following the May 23-24 launch of our organization, time was spent reviewing the many ideas and suggestions for increased sustainability in our community. By the Fall, nine Sectors came into being, each one led by a “Sector Leader.” These groups went to work to determine which ideas should be priorities for action. By January of 2020, the groups had identified what became “Fifty Shades of Green”—fifty ideas for implementation in our community (*see Appendix 4 for the full list*). Over the same period, it was realized that the original nine sectors could actually be combined into six for more effective action, the six now being:

- Agriculture and Natural Capital
- Goods and Services
- Infrastructure and Energy
- Arts and Culture
- Education and Youth, and
- Health and Wellness

Over the past several months, the groups have been meeting and working on various initiatives. For example, the recently published “Orillia Food Map 2020” came from the Agriculture and Natural Capital Sector as did the Sundial Creek Project in collaboration with The Couchiching Conservancy. The EV Weekend was also organized by the Infrastructure and Energy Sector. Stay tuned for news of other actions being initiated by these action-focused groups.

September, 2019 to the present – “Tip of the Week” launched in local online media. With the support and cooperation of Dave Dawson and staff at www.OrilliaMatters.com and John Swartz at www.sunonlinemedia.com, Sustainable Orillia’s communications team has published a sustainability “Tip of the Week” each week, the idea being to encourage citizens of our community to make changes in the way we do things in order to reduce waste, prevent pollution, and reduce our carbon footprint—both individually and as a community.

// *We humans can be leading fulfilling lives without stressing the Earth or requiring dangerous technologies. A positive human future is within reach.* **//**

- Mike Nickerson (www.sustainwellbeing.net)

October 11, 2019 – Sustainable Orillia was incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation.

November, 2019 – “Sustainable Orillia Month”— Mayor Steve Clarke and Orillia’s City Council proclaimed the month of November as “Sustainable Orillia Month,” and several events took place as planned during the month to highlight the importance—and the savings—of businesses and citizens moving to more sustainable practices.

November 7. Unfortunately, a session on building carbon neutral housing had to be postponed as our guest speaker was suddenly called out of the country on business. We hope to reschedule this public meeting in 2020 for builders and anyone interested—COVID-19 allowing.

November 14. Speaker Bob Willard, author of the book, *The Sustainability Advantage*, was the guest speaker for a session on “The ROI (Return on Investment) of Sustainability.” Attendees at this session were taken through a variety of ways in which businesses can take action to be more sustainable while realizing substantial savings and/or increased profits from their actions.

November 21. Sustainable Orillia hosted “24 Hours of Reality: Truth in Action” in the Orillia City Council Chambers. Some 70-80 people heard comments on the threat of climate change and the mitigation steps that can be taken from panelists Bruce Nagy, Dr. Charles Gardner, Gabriella Kalopos and Dr. Ellen Field of Lakehead University. A lively question and answers session following the panel’s comments revealed the depth of concern in the room in regard to the climate crisis as well as the support for taking action to make our community more sustainable.

November 28. The Brooks Boardroom at City Hall was packed with a standing room only audience for a seminar featuring Greg Preston, Manager of Water and Waste Management, City of Orillia. The event focused on “Waste Management” in our city and attendees—business owners and private citizens—had dozens of questions answered during the session about how and why Orillia’s waste collection and management processes operate the way that they do.

March – May, 2020. COVID-19 lockdown. The arrival of the pandemic has forced the postponement of some of the events we were hoping to organize in the first part of this year. However, we continue to communicate with our supporters and, through the online media, with the community. Our Sectors continue to look at ways in which our community can become stronger and more sustainable—and to plan for better days to come.

At the same time, some aspects of the pandemic have highlighted the urgent need for changes in the way human societies—including our community—do things in the 21st Century. The pandemic has provided an opportunity for our community, our country and the world at large to pause and re-consider our consumer-driven way of life and just where it is leading us as a species on this planet.



JOIN THE GLOBAL CONVERSATION

With Al Gore's
 **The Climate Reality Project**

 **24 Hours of Reality**
 Truth in Action

How to Get to Zero: A Carbon Neutral Orillia
Presented by: Sustainable Orillia & Lakehead University

A practical and stimulating conversation about how we can turn the low-carbon dream into a reality for a healthier City, economy and planet.
 Part of **Al Gore's 24 Hours of Reality - Truth in Action**




Bruce Nagy - Author & climate solutions specialist, Climate Leader, Climate Reality Project




Dr. Charles Gardner - Medical Officer of Health, Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

Gabiella Kalapos - Executive Director, Clean Air Partnership




Dr. Ellen Field - Climate Change Educator and Lecturer, Lakehead University

His Worship, Steve Clarke - Mayor of Orillia

DATE: WED. NOV 20
LOCATION:
ST. PAUL'S CENTRE
 62 Peter St. N., Orillia
TIME: 7:00PM
COST: \$19 Adults;
\$10 Students

TRUTH IN ACTION IS THE THEME FOR THIS YEAR'S 24 HOURS OF REALITY AND PRESENTERS IN MORE THAN 1,000 LOCATIONS WILL CREATE ACTION PLANS WITH CITIZENS ON THE SAME DAY ALL OVER THE WORLD. THE EVENT WILL BE INTRODUCED BY AL GORE ON SCREEN, INCLUDING THIS EVENT FROM ORILLIA.

   

TICKETS CAN BE PURCHASED THROUGH OUR SITE
sustainableorillia.ca/events/

Free Sustainable Orillia travel mug and door prize ticket with every registration.