



# Economic Sustainability Position Paper

March 31, 2009

**Table of Contents**

[Table of Contents.....2](#)  
[1.0 Chamber Position on Sustainability.....3](#)  
[2.0 Context.....3](#)  
[3.0 What is “Sustainability”?.....4](#)  
[4.0 The Four “Lenses” of Sustainability.....5](#)  
[5.0 Our Commitment to Sustainability .....5](#)  
[6.0 Advocacy, Awareness and Engagement.....6](#)  
[7.0 Education.....7](#)  
[8.0 Implementation.....8](#)  
[9.0 Advice.....8](#)

## **1.0 Chamber Position on Sustainability**

***Through collaboration, partnerships and leadership with local business and the wider community, the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce (hereafter referred to as the “Chamber”) will assist businesses in the integration of sustainability principles, policies and practices into their everyday operations, while being mindful of the need to be economically viable.***

## **2.0 Context**

Building on the Town of Halton Hills’ (Town) long-standing commitment to environmental leadership, and to formalize its commitment to the environment and sustainability, in June 2007, Halton Hills Council established a multi-stakeholder Mayor’s Green Plan Task Force to develop a ‘Green Plan’. The Green Plan was to be an ambitious, but practical document underpinned by the PAREE principle - requiring its recommendations to be Practical, Affordable, Reasonable, Enforceable and Educational.

In December 2007, the Town’s first ever Green Plan materialized. The Green Plan provides a framework to guide the Town and the community in developing and implementing environmental and sustainability actions. The Plan also serves to engage and inspire the community to be sustainable. It establishes Halton Hills as a community of leaders, not followers. The Green Plan is a ‘living and breathing’ document that will evolve over time in response to the community’s sustainability interests.

Among the Green Plan’s 70 recommendations are those that focus on the local business community. Recognizing the importance of the businesses community to moving the Town towards sustainability, the Chamber established a ‘Green Business Team Task Group’ in February 2009. The key deliverables of this group, included (i) developing an Economic Sustainability Position Paper, (ii) developing and implementing a ‘Green Business Pledge’; (iii) preparing a ‘Green Business Award’, and (iv) establishing a ‘Green Business Team’ comprised of summer students to assist in the implementation of many activities outlined in this document.

This document fulfils the requirement to develop an “Economic Sustainability Position Paper”.

The membership of the Green Business Team Task Group consisted of:

- Jamie Schumacker, i’m inspired
- Sue Walker, Chamber of Commerce
- Damian Szybalski, Town of Halton Hills
- Denise Dilbey, Royal LePage
- Mark McIntyre, Oramac
- Ryan Stewart, Molson Canada
- Christine Upton, Sustainable Halton Hills

### 3.0 What is “Sustainability”?

Much has been written about the topic of sustainability. Although there are many definitions of “sustainability”, typically the common theme between them is the implicit need to integrate the sometimes competing, but equally important, social, environmental, economic and cultural interests. Sustainability has come into common usage as a principle for guiding public and private actions that affect current and future environmental, economic, social and cultural conditions. Frequent headlines on global warming, high energy prices, economic conditions, loss of natural resources, sprawl development, high levels of poverty, and other inter-related concerns, remind us of the need for such guidance.

One of the more commonly cited definitions of sustainability, and the one supported by the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce, was released by the Brundtland Commission in 1987: “...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

The concept of sustainability is often depicted as four overlapping spheres or lenses of sustainability: social, cultural, economic and environmental (Figure 1). Sustainability has also been depicted as a three-legged stool. In this depiction, sustainability or the stool's seat is supported by three legs, specifically the environment, economy and social equity (Figure 2). Sustainability has also been illustrated in a “nested” fashion, whereby economic and social wellbeing is dependent on a healthy environment (Figure 3).

Figure 1

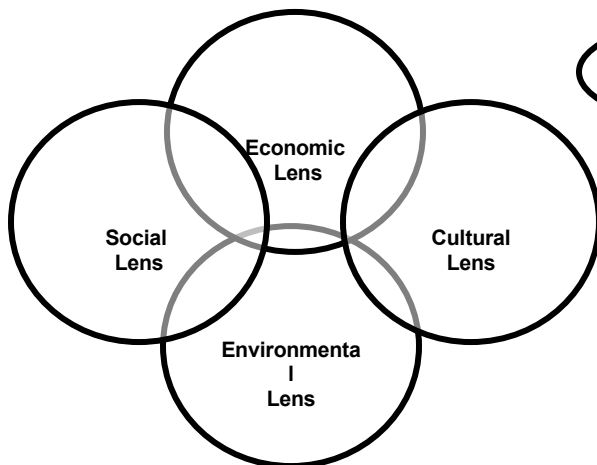


Figure 2

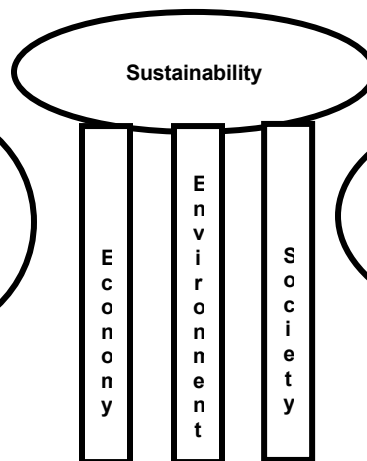
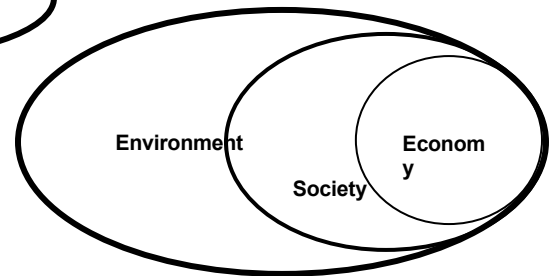


Figure 3



#### **4.0 The Four “Lenses” of Sustainability**

Economic sustainability typically focuses on economic development by attracting new investment, supporting tourism, maintaining downtown vibrancy and improving the tax base.<sup>1</sup> Economic sustainability entails operating a business in a manner that allows the business owner to remain viable over the long-term. It means staying competitive in today’s global marketplace. This requires continually improving products and productivity, supporting employee development, and maintaining good value for shareholders.

Moving towards economic sustainability may involve (i) increasing the number of locally owned and operated businesses; (ii) recruiting and retaining local ‘green’ businesses; (iii) enhancing the natural environment while growing the economy; (iv) using land efficiently; (v) growing the vibrancy of downtown areas; (vi) achieving a balanced tax assessment ratio; and (vii) incorporating triple-bottom line accounting into business operations so that the economic, environmental and social impacts of business operations are taken into account whenever decisions are made. Importantly, economic sustainability is closely tied to environmental sustainability, whereby economic sustainability can be a prerequisite for environmental protection.

Environmental sustainability may entail such things as efficient water management, elimination of water pollution, efficient storm water management, energy-efficient building and community design, greenhouse gas emission reduction, solid waste management and protecting biodiversity.

Housing affordability, labour force growth, community health and crime reduction are some of the characteristics that typically characterize social sustainability. Cultural sustainability focuses on heritage or cultural preservation through such initiatives as the preservation/restoration of heritage buildings.

#### **5.0 Our Commitment to Sustainability**

Many Town of Halton Hills businesses have already embraced a leadership role in sustainability by adopting more sustainable business practices. Others are demonstrating their interest in being more sustainable. Many recognize that economic sustainability is synonymous with good business, including increased profitability, efficiency (e.g. improved employee working conditions) and operational cost savings (e.g. reduced energy costs).

The Chamber is committed to the principles of sustainability and, in partnership with other sustainability-minded organizations, will demonstrate leadership in this area. The Chamber recognizes that it has a pivotal role to play in assisting its members in moving towards sustainability, and in advancing the Town on its sustainability journey.

---

<sup>1</sup> Association of Municipalities of Ontario, A Sustainability Planning Toolkit for Municipalities in Ontario, June 4, 2008

Committed to sustainability, as outlined below, the Chamber will assist the business community through (i) advocacy, awareness and engagement; (ii) education; (iii) implementation; and (iv) advice.

## ***6.0 Advocacy, Awareness and Engagement***

Advancing the Town on its sustainability journey requires a collaborative effort. Sustainability requires the integration of our community's economic, environmental, social and cultural wellbeing, including the viability of the business community. It requires collaboration, partnerships and leadership.

To foster a community-wide culture of sustainability whereby Halton Hills moves towards being a leader in sustainability, the Chamber will help businesses operate in a sustainable fashion whereby the environmental, economic, social and cultural needs of the present generation are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet those same needs.

The Chamber will do this by:

- 6.1 Advocating for sustainability from an economic perspective.
- 6.2 Advocating for economic policy changes at senior levels of government so that the true costs of unsustainable practices are uncovered, and incentives are provided to recognize and encourage sustainable practices.
- 6.3 Actively communicate the strategic benefits/advantages of sustainability and disseminate the message that “good business” is strongly correlated with sustainability.
- 6.4 Championing sustainability through outreach and advocacy by communicating between the business community, the Town of Halton Hills and the wider community.
- 6.5 Improving awareness of sustainability by disseminating relevant information to the business community, including information on relevant educational opportunities and events.
- 6.6 Engaging the business community by soliciting its feedback on sustainability and promoting a shared sustainability vision.
- 6.7 Developing community support, partnerships and collaboration to help implement the Town's sustainability objectives.

- 6.8 Assisting in establishing a paradigm shift whereby a community-wide culture of sustainability is established and nurtured, and sustainability becomes seamlessly integrated into all business decisions and is reflected in the local business community's priorities.
- 6.9 Representing the business community at relevant community events.

## **7.0 Education**

The Chamber will support its Economic Sustainability Position Paper, and the Town's sustainability objectives (as articulated in the Green Plan, Corporate Sustainability Strategy, Strategic Plan and other relevant documents), by educating, inspiring and motivating businesses to adopt sustainable practices.

The Chamber will do this by:

- 7.1 Cataloguing the sustainable practices of its members and actively seeking their suggestions for sustainable initiatives in order to create an inventory of best practices that can be profiled to motivate others and to recognize business leaders.
- 7.2 Developing an ongoing series of information sessions focused on business and sustainability.
- 7.3 Developing templates for staff training/education programs and orientation packages related to sustainability which will assist business owners in engaging their staff on sustainability and in making them feel empowered to take actions that will contribute to sustainability.
- 7.4 Hosting sustainability focused events with the objective of educating the business community and increasing community involvement.
- 7.5 Cataloguing and regularly disseminating information on sustainability tips, grants, conferences, courses, workshops, guides, case studies, best practices and other resources that focus on business sustainability.
- 7.6 Monitoring and reporting on relevant changes in the legislative, regulatory and policy environment. Providing input on actions that need to be taken to ensure compliance.
- 7.7 Through an annual award, newsletters and the Chamber's website, recognizing businesses that demonstrate leadership in sustainability and meet prescribed criteria.

## **8.0 Implementation**

- 8.1 Assist the Town in implementing the:
  - 8.1.1 Green Plan, focusing on those recommendations that relate to the business community; and
  - 8.1.2 Corporate Sustainability Strategy, focusing on those recommendations that relate to the business community.
- 8.2 Actively assisting the Town in the promotion and implementation of specific sustainability initiatives, such as Earth Hour™, Project Clothesline and The Good Life.
- 8.3 Collaborate with other like-minded business organizations (e.g. Acton BIA, Georgetown BIA) to make business practices more sustainable.
- 8.4 Collaborate with the Town Sustainability Advisory Committee, Town Economic Development Committee and other relevant Town of Halton Hills committees and community groups in order to advance the community towards sustainability.

## **9.0 Advice**

The business community can help advance the Town towards sustainability by providing advice from a business perspective.

The Chamber will do this by:

- 9.1 Providing business expertise and perspective on sustainability. This will help ensure that the economic aspects of sustainability are considered.
- 9.2 Identifying barriers to the implementation of sustainable policies, practices and procedures, and corresponding approaches to overcoming these barriers.