

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What is Sustainable Development?**

#### The classic definition

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."<sup>1</sup>

#### A shared framework for Antigonish as a Leading Sustainable Community

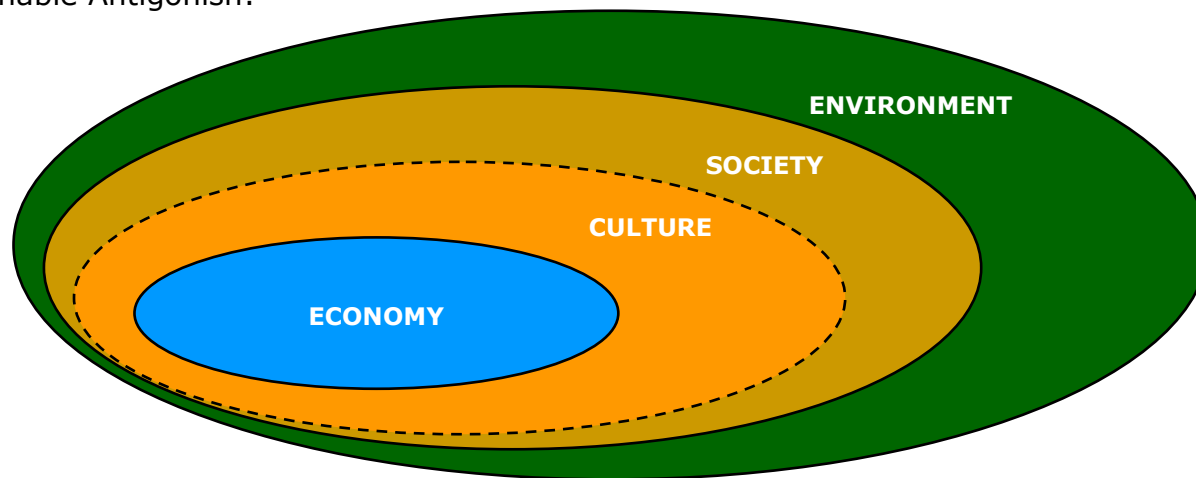
"A dynamic process which enables all people to realize their potential and improve their quality of life in ways which simultaneously protect and enhance the Earth's life support systems."<sup>2</sup>

### **What is the difference between Sustainability and Sustainable Development?**

Sustainability is the intended outcome. Sustainable development refers to the steps taken to get there.

### **What is the link between Prosperity and Sustainability?**

To further the prosperity of Antigonish, and to maintain a viable economy, the well-being of the community and a healthy culture, we must maintain a healthy environment. To achieve this, it is important that a sustainable approach be taken. The following diagram illustrates how we can best protect our interests for a prosperous and sustainable Antigonish:



The economy is dependant on the health of the society which in turn is dependant on the health of the environment. For prosperity, it is thus important to take care of the environment and society so that our economy can continue to flourish in a sustainable manner. Sustainability is the balancing of these three areas (economy, society and environment) through efficient management of our natural, human, social, financial and manufactured capitals (assets).

<sup>1</sup>The Brundtland Report: [http://www.ace.mmu.ac.uk/eae/Sustainability/Older/Brundtland\\_Report.html](http://www.ace.mmu.ac.uk/eae/Sustainability/Older/Brundtland_Report.html)

<sup>2</sup> Forum For the Future: <http://www.forumforthefuture.org.uk/>

### **What is The Five Capitals Model?<sup>3</sup>**

We are facing a sustainability crisis because we're consuming our stocks of natural, human and social capital faster than they are being produced. Unless we control the rate of this consumption, we can't sustain these vital stocks in the long-term. We believe that by maintaining and trying to increase stocks of these capital assets, we can live off the income without reducing the capital itself. But for this to happen, it is the responsibility of every organization, business and community to manage these capital assets sustainability. There are five types of sustainable capital from where we derive the goods and services we need to improve the quality of our lives.

#### **NATURAL CAPITAL**

*Natural Capital is any stock or flow of energy and material that produces goods and services. It includes Resources (renewable and non-renewable materials), Sinks (that absorb, neutralize or recycle waste) and Processes (climate regulation). Natural capital is the basis not only of production but of life itself!*

#### **HUMAN CAPITAL**

*Human Capital consists of people's health, knowledge, skills and motivation. All these things are needed for productive work. Enhancing human capital through education and training is central to a flourishing economy.*

#### **SOCIAL CAPITAL**

*Social Capital concerns the institutions that help us maintain and develop human capital in partnership with others; e.g. families, communities, businesses, trade unions, schools, and voluntary organizations.*

#### **MANUFACTURED CAPITAL**

*Manufactured Capital comprises material goods or fixed assets which contribute to the production process rather than being the output itself – e.g. tools, machines and buildings.*

#### **FINANCIAL CAPITAL**

*Financial Capital plays an important role in our economy, enabling the other types of Capital to be owned and traded. But unlike the other types, it has no real value itself but is representative of natural, human, social or manufactured capital; e.g. shares, bonds or banknotes.*

<sup>3</sup> Porritt, Sustainable Development Commission: <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/pages/porritt.html>

### What is The Natural Step Framework?<sup>4</sup>

The Natural Step (TNS) Framework offers a clear and compelling science-based understanding of sustainability and a practical strategic planning framework to help organizations make smart, economic moves towards sustainability. The Natural Step framework is now being used internationally by hundreds of organizations, including government departments, universities, municipalities, Fortune 500 companies such as Ikea, Nike, and Interface Inc., and small- and medium-sized businesses. The Natural Step Canada is part of an international non-profit research, education and advisory organization. Its mission is to help organizations, businesses and communities make meaningful progress towards sustainability. At the heart of The Natural Step lie four key concepts, or 'System Conditions', which collectively define the conditions that must be met for society to be able to live sustainably within the Earth's supporting biosphere. It is only by understanding how the world around us works that we can properly understand how we need to manage our human systems so that they do not breach the limits set by the biophysical world. The four system conditions for a sustainable society under the Natural Step Framework are as follows:

#### The Four System Conditions for a Sustainable Society

System Condition	In Simple Terms This Means...
<b>1.</b> In a sustainable society, nature is not subject to having systematically increasing concentrations of substances extracted from the Earth's crust.	This means substituting certain minerals that are scarce in nature with others that are more abundant, using all mined materials efficiently, and systematically reducing dependence upon fossil fuels.
<b>2.</b> In a sustainable society, nature is not subject to systematically increasing concentrations of substances produced by society.	This means systematically substituting certain persistent and unnatural compounds with ones that are normally abundant or break down more easily in nature, and using all substances produced by society as efficiently as possible.
<b>3.</b> In a sustainable society, nature is not subject to systematically increasing degradation by physical means.	This means drawing resources only from well-managed ecosystems, systematically pursuing the most productive and efficient use of those resources and of land, and exercising caution in modifying nature.
<b>4.</b> In a sustainable society, people are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their ability to meet their needs.	This means using all of our resources efficiently, fairly and responsibly so that the needs of the people, and the future needs of people who are not yet born, stand the best chance of being met.

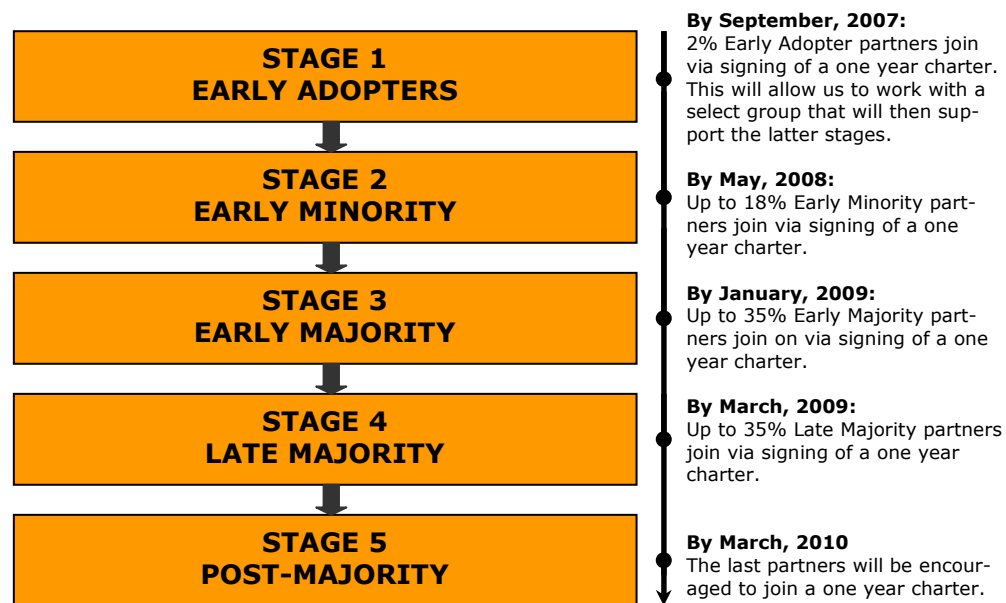
<sup>4</sup> The Natural Step (Canada): <http://www.naturalstep.ca/system-conditions.html>

### What is The Ecological Footprint?

“The Ecological Footprint is a resource management tool that measures how much land and water area a human population requires to produce the resources it consumes and to absorb its wastes under prevailing technology. In order to live, we consume what nature offers. Every action impacts the planet's ecosystems. This is of little concern as long as human use of resources does not exceed what the Earth can renew. Today, humanity's Ecological Footprint is over 23% larger than what the planet can regenerate. In other words, it now takes more than one year and two months for the Earth to regenerate what we use in a single year.” This “overshoot” is maintained by liquidating the planet's ecological resources. This is a vastly underestimated threat and one that is not adequately addressed. By measuring the Ecological Footprint of a population (an individual, a city, a nation, or all of humanity) we can assess our overshoot, which helps us manage our ecological assets more carefully. Ecological Footprints enable people to take personal and collective actions in support of a world where humanity lives within the means of one planet.” To check out your ecological footprint, visit: <http://www.footprintnetwork.org/>.

### What is Adopters Charter at different stages and what are the commitments of organizations?

The Adopters Charter is a commitment by Adopters organizations to using and fostering widespread understanding about sustainability, and through actions, demonstrate how individuals, organizations, and the community as a whole can take tangible, measurable steps toward sustainability. More specifically, within the limits of the organization's resources and capacity, Adopter organizations agree to support and adhere to an implementation program, which will be developed specifically for the process taking place here in the Antigonish Area.



Adopters also commit to:

- ◆ Learn about the framework for Antigonish as a Leading Sustainable Community and using it to guide decisions and new initiatives in their organizations.
- ◆ Establish an internal support network of “champions” within the organization – 1 to 5 individuals who will attend approximately 8 to 10 sessions and workshops over the course of a year.
- ◆ Perform sustainability assessments within the organization.
- ◆ Creating a sustainability action plan for the organization.
- ◆ Begin implementing actions based on the plan and report periodically on the progress made in implementing the action plan and share lessons learned with peers.
- ◆ Play a leadership / support role in the community with respect to sustainability.
- ◆ Participate in evaluating the program’s effectiveness and the outcomes achieved. Participate with other Adopters in developing a strategy for broad community engagement in the Antigonish Area to promote the lessons, stories and benefits of their experiences with sustainability.

### **What is the goal of the Adopter Process? What are the outcomes?**

The goal of the Adopter Process is to build capacity and commitment to plan for and move towards greater sustainability among individuals, public institutions and private organizations in a given community or region. Outcomes of the process include:

- ◆ Building a common language and message around sustainability;
- ◆ Building organizational support for sustainability;
- ◆ Performing a Sustainability Audit of current practices and performance;
- ◆ Creating a Sustainability Action Plan;
- ◆ Developing and participating in a “sustainability network” of Early Adopters and other like-minded organizations;
- ◆ Developing and implementing a community outreach program;
- ◆ And once Adopters become proficient at incorporating sustainability within their own organizations, they will then begin to collaborate on opportunities for moving the broader region towards sustainability.

### **How does the Adopter process work?**

In a typical Adopters process, a group of communities or organizations in the same region come together. Each organization will identify one to five active participants. It is also important that each participating organization have high-level support, even if senior managers are not those who will be participating in the program or implementing changes. Together, Adopters will participate in a series of sessions facilitated by Antigonish Sustainable Development (ASD). ASD will have support from a network of organizations to develop, implement and evaluate the programs. In the intervals between sessions, Adopters will have assignments to take back and implement within their organizations. The basic content of the training will be jointly set by ASD and Adopters. The content will be flexible and modified to suit the particular needs of one or more of the Adopters. For example, if one organization has already completed some training, then their participation may take a slightly different form than other organizations, in terms or structure and even timeline. The Adopter process takes approximately 1 year, but the timeline is flexible. At the end of that year, Adopters reconvene to celebrate their successes, review progress on the implementation of their sustainability action plans, and share stories and solutions. There will also be opportunities for promotion and communication about what the Adopters are doing throughout the process, and in particular at the end when the group reconvenes.