



Community Summary Report #18

Location: Sault Ste Marie, Ontario

Partner Name: Crane Institute for Sustainability

Green Resilience Project Community Summary Report template

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Conversation date: Wednesday February 2, 2022; key informant interviews between December 2021 and January 2022.

Contact: info@ci4s.org (please use “climate change and income security’ in the subject line)

1. Introduction

A. Summary

100-150 words that highlight the key takeaways from the Community Summary Report. Were there any issues, concerns, solutions or ideas that were talked about in multiple breakout groups and/or were strong themes in discussion of the full group? Did any general points of consensus emerge from the group?

The community partner project in Sault Ste. Marie consisted of two parts: key informant interviews; and a community conversation. The key informant interviews were semi-structured to allow for an organic discussion that was relevant to the interviewee’s role. A primary high level takeaway was that basic income is an opportunity that failed to register on the radar for interviewee’s. Solutions were very much top-down oriented; actions that could be taken by the interviewee’s organisation and its partners. Most of these included actions such as large scale job creation, major investments in private sector activities and global partnerships. In general, solutions identified were standard economic approaches that satisfied growth oriented, job creating and extractive industries using market mechanisms with minimal government intervention. Basic income as a concept was not evident in the interviews. Conventional job creation and economic growth perspectives were predominant.

In stark contrast, the community conversations gravitated towards neighbourhood, cooperative, collective and sharing approaches to climate change and income insecurity community challenges, identifying that we are all part of the problem and therefore need to be part of – and included in – the solutions. The conversations centred on solutions that gave citizens more power and fairly distributed power across society, looking at hubs, neighbourhood issues and very localised solutions such as community gardens. Caring, sharing and gift economies we discussed indicating an interest in transformative change to the prevailing economic structures and systems. Participants noted that local infrastructure remains under-utilised (and is rapidly being privatised), low income populations are under-represented and their issues ignored or poorly understood, and community engagement in general is absent. Community members felt powerless, despite individual efforts. Participants understood many of the problems, and were able to propose solutions, but remain frustrated by the lack of supporting infrastructure and policies that would allow solutions. Simultaneously, frustrations were also directed at the paternalistic and top-down approaches that appear beholden to corporate and private interests, global economic linkages, and large scale projects that neglect the needs of citizens and fail to engage with citizens to understand their needs, especially lower income participants and members of the community. Concerns were expressed over air and water pollution and ecoanxiety related to climate change, including by several youth (under 30). Participants felt it was a cultural problem within the community. Participants also felt many solutions from the individual

perspective had high up front costs, especially for low income citizens, and this ultimately costs low income members of the community much more, trapping them in a perpetual cycle of inescapable poverty that is also detrimental to climate mitigation, climate adaptation, and sustainability in general. Participants were supportive of transformational change, although aware of the concerns people have over change. Basic income was somewhat understood and recognised as a viable option for transformative community change.

The obvious takeaway is that there is a large gap between citizens (bottom-up) and key decision makers' (top-down) approaches to climate change and income insecurity. While elements of both are likely important, finding the right fit remains a challenge in this community. However, the gap may be narrowed by noting that top-down approaches tend to orbit specific projects without guiding policies to support or justify them. Certainly the vagueness of climate adaptation or mitigation and income security in these top-down projects suggests a pivot point for community discussion. Were community leadership to engage citizens on identifying guiding policies, the projects may better align with citizen perspectives.

B. About the Green Resilience Project

This community conversation was part of the Green Resilience Project, a Canada-wide series of conversations exploring and documenting the links between community resilience, income security and the shift to a low-carbon economy. Working with a designated partner organization from each community, the Green Resilience Project aims to create spaces in which a wide range of participants can talk through the links between climate change and income security, and identify possible next steps to build or maintain community resilience in the face of these challenges.

This Community Summary Report reflects what we heard and learned in our community's conversation. Each Project partner organization across Canada will be producing a similar report. In March 2022, the Green Resilience Project will produce a final report summarizing findings across conversations, which will be available to the public and shared with Environment and Climate Change Canada.

Funding for the Green Resilience Project is generously provided by Environment and Climate Change Canada's Climate Action and Awareness Fund. The Project is managed and delivered by Energy Mix Productions, Basic Income Canada Network, Coalition Canada Basic Income - Revenu de base, Basic Income Canada Youth Network, national experts and local partners

C. About the Community Partner organization

This section should talk about what the organization does and its connection to the community in which the conversation took place. It could also discuss how the organization came to participate in the Green Resilience Project and why it was interested in participating. If you used the Green Resilience Project conversation script as the basis of your conversation, you may be able to pull this content from your script.

The Crane Institute for Sustainability is a not-for-profit situated in Sault Ste. Marie. As a catalyst for change (Catalyst for Research and Action into New Environments), Crane resonates the messages of, and motivates sustainable change through education and awareness, network formation and local action. The crane is also considered the messenger in Indigenous lore. Crane acts locally and communicates results for global knowledge translation and transformative change through a transdisciplinary approach. With projects in areas such as climate change, impact assessment, open data mapping, sustainable consumption and ecological footprinting, social justice and poverty elimination, active transportation, and urban forests, Crane draws connections between local action and policy across relevant projects. A key area of focus for Crane is to increase literacy, awareness and knowledge to support and help drive action towards more sustainable behaviour and supporting institutions and infrastructure. A primary role for Crane is catalysing community engagement.

D. Why this community was selected to have a conversation

This section should answer the following questions, and can be pulled from your conversation script:

- *What issues does this community face, and how are they related to income security and/or climate change?*
- *How is the local environment changing, and what actions has the community taken on climate change, the energy transition, income security or community resilience?*
- *What are the community's strengths and/or assets?*

The community has a number of challenges that we can relate to climate change and income security. These include:

- Ageing infrastructure that has led to broken water mains, flooding – both city streets and properties and private homes – poorly insulated and poorly performing buildings, crumbling transportation infrastructure, and a public transport system that is underutilised
- Geographic isolation and distance from larger urban centres intersects with a community that is dependent on transportation for many essential needs and supplies
- Limited transportation options – inter and intra city mobility is almost exclusively by private motorised road transport (some commercial bus and air travel); access and weak urban planning has favoured sprawl for many decades; vehicle ownership is high and many personal vehicles are pickup trucks and SUVs
- Food security given that so much local food supplies are trucked vast distances, with limited local provisioning – growing, processing and local markets
- Housing and especially affordable housing is in short supply. This has been combined with recent market surges largely a result of foreign ownership in the rental market and some population migration from larger urban centres, creating a significant gap between the high and the low income households.
- A lack of economic diversity with limited income producing opportunities from conventional job markets and a general downward economic trend as major industrial employers continue to automate and upgrade production processes

- High pollution and GHG emissions from industry representing 69% of overall community emissions leading to a slightly higher GHG emissions per capita footprint than the average Canadian
- High levels of local poverty and a lower-than-average family income compared to Ontario and Canadian averages
- Lower than average educational attainment, poorer health outcomes, lower levels of exercise and a weaker healthcare system than provincial averages

The historical and physical isolation of the community has generated a sense of climate complacency. To help us think about climate change and its impacts, it can be instructive to consider this: in the Sault, we may be challenged to identify ways that climate change is affecting us now, and because of that, we look at the Sault being fairly secure, and that climate change will affect us some time in the future. After all, we haven't had forest fires licking at our doorstep, and warming winters have happened before. However, we are transportation dependent. We need only to look at our food supplies: much of our vegetables and fruits supplies originate across North America. The raging climate-change-caused wildfires are destroying the croplands in California, year after year are a direct consequence of climate change. We see the indirect impacts of climate change in the form of food shortages and rising food costs. Similarly, the torrid summers (climate change) that the Sault has been experiencing, particularly over the last decade, may have given some of us more beach time, but local fish stocks have declined, and the threat of invasive species has increased (direct impacts) and the indirect impacts are being felt in the loss of the existing agricultural industry and in increased food costs/insecurities.

Some local actions to confront the challenges posed by climate change and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are in place. These include:

- Shape the Sault Official Planning activities
- Future SSM
- Greenhouse gas inventory and emissions reduction plan
- Housing affordability actions
- Food banks
- Farmers markets and expanded agricultural activities
- Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains
- Hub Trail
- Cycling Infrastructure
- Renewable energy facilities

That said, a number of barriers remain to retaining current assets and improving the community's strengths. These will be discussed in the report.

E. About the conversation participants

Based on the criteria provided to you by the Green Resilience Project, who did you choose to invite to your conversation and why? How were participants engaged or invited?

Who attended the conversation? Did your participant group reflect a range of lived experiences? Were any key community groups absent? Did you have high numbers of participants belonging to a certain community group? Did you make any specific considerations or accommodations to enable accessibility?

We recognize that “diversity” is a measure that can vary by community—some communities may have wide diversity in age or occupation but not in race or gender, or vice versa—so here we are asking for your qualitative evaluation based on your familiarity with the community and conversation participants.

To complete this section, please summarize the preparatory work you did to determine who should be invited to the conversation. You can also draw on the identification forms filled out by participants during your conversation (which Project staff will send to you). You are welcome to include numeric data at your discretion and/or based on what you’d like to do with this report.

The recruitment activities included emails, snowballing, social media, regular media outreach and an opinion piece. Local groups were also tapped into with an anticipated reach of >1500 citizens. Social media reach was > 30k citizens.

Remarkably, major media outlets that have been very cooperative in the past responded poorly to our media releases. Three efforts were made and uptake was only by one media outlet. Another regular media partner prepared an opinion piece article on the forthcoming conversation. Despite a similar webinar (climate change and youth) being picked up by three media outlets the week prior, there was no contact for this project. It is anticipated that was the direct result of the event proximities and potential confusion exacerbated by limited media resources to cover many pressing local issues. Perhaps the perception that this was a working session discouraged media, and the final report distribution may be their favoured position.

F. The Community Conversation

A brief description of what the conversation looked liked:

- *Where did it take place?*
- *How was it structured?*
- *Did you make any changes to the list of breakout group questions provided by the Green Resilience Project?*
- *In your view, was the conversation a successful community event? Did you encounter any challenges while organizing it?*

The community conversation was virtual and generally followed the GRP script. Our conversation broke the breakout groups into two separate sessions. This allowed for an initial discussion on questions one and two, followed by a plenary return for a reporting back session to stimulate all groups for a second breakout discussion on questions three and four. The breakout discussion questions were supplemented with local examples.

The only challenge in organising was bringing local media onsite. This will be explored in subsequent weeks to understand the situation. Our anticipation is there was confusion between the two subsequent events, competition given local challenges, and a perception that this was a working activity not suitable to reporting.

The key informant interviews took place over December and January.

The conversation was generally very well received and interest in next steps was expressed.

2. What We Heard

This section summarizes participant responses to the questions asked during the conversation breakout sessions. For each question, please give a brief summary of the key points and ideas discussed across your breakout groups. Please include a selection of 5-10 anonymous quotes (total) to help illustrate key ideas.

A. How are the changes to our community's environment and economy discussed in the introduction affecting you, your family or the community as a whole?

Changes were noted by participants in both the KIIs and the conversation workshop. Economic challenges were generally agreed upon as foundational to many of the social challenges being experienced in the community. Environmental changes were also noted by most participants, such as increased local flooding, extreme temperature events, and wildfire smoke (regional and continental).

B. How are these environmental and economic changes related to each other?

Environmental changes were identified as a source of many economic challenges (examples: severe weather leading to flooding and the disproportionate impacts on lower income households; heat and cold affecting lower income families and individuals and the homeless). The lack of access (urban planning, co-locating work/recreation/food) and a greater effort from the municipality to provide mobility infrastructure (roads) was also identified as a pain point for many low income families and individuals, and equally contributing to climate impacts, further affecting lower income households.

C. What are some possible solutions to the challenges we've discussed that will help the community respond to climate change and create income security for all community members?

At the KII level, solutions were noted as primarily large scale economic and job creating efforts, drawing on formal and global economic linkages and trickle-down economic theories, and selling off surplus assets to non-community interests or utilising P3s. Conversely, conversation participants mostly identified community hubs, cooperative arrangements, neighbourhood gardens, sharing and caring economy solutions and drawing on existing

community assets such as surplus schools and other buildings and pre-existing communities of interest.

D. How do you think these solutions can be achieved to build, maintain or strengthen community resilience? Who is responsible for these changes—individuals, community groups, governments or a mix?

Genuine engagement will be required in the community to provide greater empowerment. However, engagement can be challenging, not only for the municipality, but for people who do not have the time, resources, knowledge and capacities, or modes of access to engage. When, as one participant noted, a parent unable to afford a vehicle must spend three hours on transit to access food, their food insecurity expands, not due to a lack of food, but due to the inability to access that food. If families cannot access 'free' food, they will not be able to engage in community conversations. Government needs to expand choice architecture through policies and mechanisms that enable individuals to engage. Income supports such as a basic income was noted as important tools.

3. What We Learned

Please give a brief analysis of your conversation, drawing on your conversation data as well as the evaluation forms participants filled out at the end of the conversation (which Project staff will send to you). Your response should answer these questions.

- Please summarize your perspective on the key points you listed in section two. Why were they important? Were they brought up frequently, met with contention, surprising to you or your facilitators, etc.? Was there a strong consensus on any of the key points? You are welcome to expand on any key points you find especially interesting.

Please see below.

- To what extent do you think your conversation built wider and deeper understanding of the links and synergies between community resilience, livelihoods, income security and the low-carbon transition? Please explain your response.
 - 1 - Not at all
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - **5 - Very much so**

The conversations were good, and cross-cutting themes as well as common themes among the groups were apparent. There was a general recognition or awareness that climate change solutions are out of reach for low income households and individuals, and this contributes to further climate impacts that disproportionately affect lower income households and individuals. Participants found allies with similar experiences and conversations elaborated key mechanisms and provided a platform for participants to build their understanding of these linkages and develop greater empathy among participants across socio-economic ranges. Individual choice architecture was recognised as limited, and

participants agreed that government support is needed to empower citizens with sustainable and healthy choices that catalyse transformational change.

- To what extent did participants demonstrate increased awareness of climate change and their own capacity for climate action? Please explain your response.
 - 1 - Not at all
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - **5 - Very much so**

Most of the participants were knowledgeable of climate change. However, there were students, early career workers and retired individuals as well as a full range of income individuals from social assistance to financially secure participating and each exhibited different levels of awareness and capacities for climate action. In particular, several low income participants were aware that a single crisis (e.g a flood) could leave them homeless, or a single supply chain interruption would cause a struggle for food or energy essentials. Awareness of challenges and their personal level of struggles under climate risk scenarios was high across all participants.

- To what extent were new relationships between community partners and conversation participants created and fostered? Please explain your response.
 - 1 - Not at all
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - **5 - Very much so**

Several participants formed new relationships and expressed common views and concerns. Many voiced interest in advancing their relationships to solve local challenges, address the climate crisis and work towards a more equitable distribution of wealth using local and national mechanisms to support climate and community resilience.

- To what extent did your conversation create opportunities to foster ongoing discussion of solutions related to climate change, income insecurity and community resilience? Please explain your response.
 - 1 - Not at all
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - **5 - Very much so**

Several expressions to continue this conversation were made and all involved supported participating in future conversations and, encouragingly, action. This includes participants in the community conversation as well as the KII participants. Options and possibilities to advance these conversations were raised during the conversations.

- In your opinion, what does the community need to do next in order to build or maintain resilience in the face of climate change and rising income insecurity?

Many participants expressed awareness of local problems and their solutions and actions needed, but also expressed frustration with the lack of community engagement, support from decision makers and supporting infrastructure, and especially decision making mechanisms that leave power and control in the hands of many unprepared for the requisite transformational changes due to vested interests. At the same time, participants understood these supporting infrastructures include policies and programs such as a basic income to empower individuals with the choice architecture needed to take meaningful action to both mitigate and adapt to climate changes. Conversely, the KII's revealed a greater focus on existing structures and practices that have not and are not serving the community according to conversation participants, and in many cases exacerbate existing conditions (e.g. private appropriation of community wealth and assets) and fail to acknowledge the challenges the community will have to confront adapting to and mitigating climate change. Participatory engagement and community empowerment will be needed to close this gap.

Brief conversation summary - keypoints

Overview

There was recognition in the community conversations that there is a need for individual action, and that supporting policies and infrastructure are necessary to enable choices that support both income security and climate mitigation/adaptation. A metaphor for the impacts being seen and the effects caused is the 'dollar store phenomenon'¹: income insecurity leads people to behave in ways that are against their own best interests and those of the planet. In general, it means that people can only afford the cheap, throw-away, unsustainable products that cause damage to the environment. This may include personal care items such as soaps or larger consumer products such as vehicles. It also means they cannot afford home and content insurance, leaving them disproportionately exposed to climate impact risks. Another problem is the emphasis on consumerism – green consumerism or conventional market solutions (i.e. there is a business case to do X – to solve the climate crisis, an approach several of the KII participants expressed. This sets up our community to a host of externalities that are beyond the control of both the individual and the municipality. Conventional market responses act downstream on symptoms. Homelessness is a good example: homelessness contributes to many problems, including crime. The solution is often to criminalise the crime then toss the individual right back to the same environment. Climate action is very difficult when so many challenges demand financial resources. Acting downstream expands the resources required. Downstream actions that address food systems, labour markets, and transportation networks militate against income security by focusing attention and resources on the symptoms. As the impacts of climate change are added to pre-existing social challenges, adaptation becomes very difficult and mitigation is simply beyond reach of most people. Individual decision making architecture is being constricted at the very time they require more choices to mitigate and adapt to climate

¹ The dollar store phenomenon arises when low income households or individuals are restricted to purchasing less sustainable products because they are cheaper largely due to market distortions that fail to internalise many of their externalities and life cycle costs. This was especially evident during the pandemic when most businesses were locked down for health reasons, the dollar store (and the LCBO among other 'essentials') remained open. While the government recognised the problem of poverty and inequality, in large part the reason the CERB emerged, this has not evolved into long term support needed for many living in low and precarious income situations.

change. Income insecurity reduces individual choice architecture. If people find it challenging today; they will find it so much more challenging tomorrow, and the gap between incomes will widen. The support people need today to make tomorrow's decisions must come from government. Instead of offering incentives that distort the market – such as rebates for certain technologies, industrial energy or food systems, or access networks that prioritise mobility (e.g. private vehicles) - people need and want supports that expand their choice architecture beyond market imperatives. Buying an EV even with rebates, still requires capital for the initial purchase and assumes people 'want' to drive a motorised vehicle. It does not enable choices such as walking, cycling and transit or self-contained community hubs. In fact, one could argue it limits those latter choices by contributing to further urban sprawl and a widening income (and income security) gap. While it may seem obvious, income security requires that greater choice for individuals is provided – where that choice comes from being able to 'make the right decision' and not being penalised for the lack of choice. Five emergent themes are briefly discussed below with examples from the conversations.

Power and politics

Participants in the conversation expressed frustration at their lack of social power and felt generally disenfranchised and disempowered. Top-down activities many of the KII participants described is deeply embedded in the structures of power and local culture. Participants expressed concerns about the level of apathy in the community manufactured by imbalances in power and disenfranchisement that it causes, and this supports a distortion of power structures that favour those with greater social power and wealth.

“I feel like the needs that a lot of the community not that proportionally the concerns of numbers but in terms of influence so a lot of those lower income ones aren't getting represented.”

“It's not like we're lacking in the people wanting to make these changes, we just aren't the people who have the power to do it”

“It's a difficult to deal with when you care so much and you really want to make that positive change but it's out of your control. It's in the control of people in government and for political buy in the millionaires that are holding their millions of dollars and not sharing the wealth. You can do anything that you want to do and do as much as you can but there's a limit to what we can do at the community level and that's the problem.”

“They cut programs and then they get locked into Private Public Partnerships which is basically handed our money over into corporations to make profit.”

“The people who are economically well to do are really not making their proportional contribution to the common good.”

“The people who get the most service typically don't pay their fair share.”

“We have a whole bunch of us packed like sardines and the rest of us living like kings.”

“Well profit is not a bad word. What I think the bigger problem is the fact that a lot of these big corporations are not paying their fair share of the impact that they have particularly on the environment and particularly when it is an environmental disaster.”

“We’re so much focused on all is this gonna make a big difference for me. We need to try to look at others too not just what it’s doing for us but the whole world. The world is interconnected and if climate change wipes out the ability to produce food in one part of the world and Central America for example we’re going to have people wandering around looking to get in and what do we do? Do we build walls like in the southern United States to keep them out and let them die or we need to think a little bit beyond ourselves.”

“It’s back to having enough decision makers at levels of government that are willing to do that and willing to confront corporations and not to be bought out by corporations.”

“The ability to afford gas you know gas prices are going up for various reasons and so I mean in the city like the Sault where public transportation is so flawed and it’s not a walkable city at all you know it’s hard to get to work if you’re not driving and if you have kids and you have to drive kids somewhere you know that’s also really hard so I mean looking at it in that perspective you know that those increasing costs of gas or car insurance as well which is going up for other various similar reasons that makes it harder for people to make a good living and to have income security.”

“I run a program the lunches for learning program that provides food for kids for the school lunches and I’ve got a lot of families who they don’t drive so when kids were home doing virtual learning they would have to drag their kids out onto the buses didn’t want to drag them out of school for like 3 hours to take the bus to come pick up the food so they couldn’t get that food that you know we were trying to help them with they couldn’t afford they don’t have a car so they couldn’t drive and they didn’t want to take their kids on the bus for hours.”

“We all have to be part of the solution but we can’t wait for government and we can’t afford to wait for changes from politicians.”

“I would feel remiss if I didn’t bring up the fact that all of this shit is already done for thousands of years and we don’t have a planet on fire when it was happening like and solutions realistically aren’t gonna come from the same people that colonized this place they’re going to come from the people that we have as our neighbors on literally all sides around us because this land was stolen.”

“We can only attack one paradigm at a time and the paradigm has to be right now is climate crisis and when we address that by asking the First Nations people to help us

in creating these about the way that we deal with the environment it would pull em on on board or better still we get on their wagon.”

“We haven't got time for that we got you just do it we got to work together and we will see from heart to heart that were meeting each others needs we are bolstering one another by admitting or by working with the native peoples we are showing them respect that we understand that they know how to deal with this environment and we are rather asking for help.”

“We need to reforge the link between media and the community.”

Media “can be leaders of this movement yeah you can be motivators of this movement you can be re enforcers of this movement and you definitely are part of this movement but you're more than that you have you have the power to make a vital contribution to this turning now around this paradigm.”

“A lot of our extractive industries especially the ones that are big polluters all directly onto First Nations water lines and it's a huge part of the reason that we have over 40 communities that don't have access to the basic human right of clean drinking water and that those same racialized people are going to be adversely affected by climate change a lot faster than those of us who are by offended by the white supremacist state.”

“The big picture ultimate answer to this is how to change the culture in which certain things are acceptable and which things are and one way to do that is how do we change the diverse composition of senior decision makers in all levels of organisations and government?”

“They have vested interest in maintaining the status quo or they'll be too old if you'll be dead when shit hits the fan.”

Individual versus societal change

Many of the actions taken by those in positions of making decisions reflect market approaches that incentivise private sector businesses with vague assumptions about job creation and income opportunities. They do not empower individuals or provide the necessary resources for individuals to make sustainable choices. Where sustainable products are more costly, market distortions are revealed. Where externalities are produced, government policies need to internalise those externalities within market decisions – whether an EV or a healthy soap product. However, locally, the infrastructure (sustainable options) simply does not exist – whether public transit or sustainable product choices. At the same time, sustainable choices may be expensive up front, but their life cycle costs are lower: the dollar store phenomenon*. There was also evidence of mental and emotional exhaustion among some of the participants working hard for change and dealing with all the social, economic and cultural forces conspiring against their efforts. This tends to lead to burnout and apathy.

“I do a lot in the community. I volunteer at the food bank. I run a soup kitchen team like I'm a volunteer first responder. So I feel like I do so much and I tried to spend my free time to make positive change in the community and then there's some things that you just, there's nothing you can do, and it's very disheartening to be putting so much time and energy into making positive change in the community and then you know there's no political buy in for these things. Then like there's people on disability that can't afford their rent because they're just not supported enough by the government and there's nothing that I can do about that and it's something that's really important. But it's a lot to take on right as somebody that really wants to make a difference and make positive change but as individuals we really can't. Someone made a good point about electoral reform is that if the majority of people aren't being represented then we're not gonna have that political change that we really need for things to actually change. At a community level you can only do so much”

“I think that government groups can make the biggest changes the most easily. I think individuals and community groups can have a lot of positive impacts and make some things happen, but we don't have the power or the resources to make the big things that are going to have a strong impact.”

“It's important that at a higher level things need to change first to make it easier for people at the individual level.”

“We notice all of the laws and cracks in our system and yet we are incapable as citizens of doing anything about it.”

“Sprawl takes the money away from doing things that could help job creation and resiliency particularly with our downtown which is decaying because we built Walmart and then we put big box hospital on the edge of town which again reduces accessibility.”

“To my mind right away is that solution is so simple we need to community care over profit - the constant drive to go towards profit at all costs, human life and wildlife and the life of our planet itself - and if we don't change that it's going to continue to affect poor people at a marginally greater impact.”

“Those externalities are basically put back on the taxpayer and the that reduces our ability to provide programs that helps sustain things that would prevent things like addictions and all these these things that where we are really struggling to have adequate resources to deal with this crisis.”

“We can't change the tax structure.”

“So you need these committees of the city to step up and do what they're supposed to be doing - make this community change the paradigm so everybody is thinking

climate crisis and are addressing it right from City Hall to these committees that are supposed to be doing this kind of thing and make it the talk of the town.”

“I really wanted to take my kids to beach but we went once and the smoke was just crazy and we stayed for about 20 minutes and then we had to leave and we didn't go back so I mean we're you know we're being our family time is being impacted by those kind of projects.”

“Sharing economy. I think that our economy is broken beyond repair and it's time for us to just abandon it completely walk away we don't need money anymore we don't need any of that shit anymore no more debt no more money none of that but we need our people being able to bring their skills and abilities to the table and to be respected for what they can do and what they can bring to the community.”

“We need a paradigm change in this community we need it now we need it from the leaders in this community we need it from media they need to stand up and be the leaders and take the responsible ability that they should.”

Education (of leaders) and engagement with communities

There seemed to be a general consensus that citizens know what is needed. To identify how to get there, those in decision making positions need to learn through participatory engagement with citizens.

“We need to know what they actually need and what they want what they think and what will work for them.”

“The paper mill that was bought by multiple different private business owners trying to convert it into something that the community wanted but no one actually consulted properly with the community to figure out what we needed and they all just eventually said like well this is costing too much money and left.”

There is a need to “find some way of getting their (i.e. low income/income insecure communities) input on all of these matters is really important.”

“It's really important that when a council makes decisions or to be aware that the amount that those businesses are paying are not really adding wealth to our community they are actually draining wealth.”

“We need council and the environmental sustainability committee just stand up and say we need, when we're renovating these houses, we need them to do the proper insulation the proper windows to proper heat sources and you need to invest the money in a climate friendly way. While you're spending the money spend it properly. You don't support natural gas; you put it in heat exchangers and that kind of thing. You develop your solar your solar power and you invest in wind farms.”

“Teach the residences ...like the environmental sustainability committee to provide workshops and webinars in order that the person a citizen who really really wants to address the climate crisis can.”

“This is about changing our mindset you know like we automatically think something new when we start to think about it negatively and that's just cultural norms across the board no one likes change and it's not easy you had mentioned.”

Community solutions

The community conversation participants, in contrast to some of the KII participants, spoke about community efforts, sharing and caring economies, cooperatives and collective actions, community hubs and neighbourhood solutions.

“The rate that we sell off our publicly owned buildings dwindles access to those in the event of an emergency.”

“The question for me is why don't we have the leadership in the community the has the authority and the influence to intervene and save these properties/schools and create some form of cooperatives or some form of collective organization that you know will ensure that the people who live there to have the tools have the equipment and there's no shortage of food?”

“What low income demographic needs especially in terms of transportation a lot of the vulnerable community lives in and around the downtown core and there are no grocery stores down there... if there's no good access to transportation how are these people supposed to even get to a grocery store?”

“Make this more positive goal oriented address the problems of homelessness yes have a hub break the silos have the hub where each person has of their own individual room and they have room in that very hub for counselors and meeting room and a kitchen where they can learn the skills and the meeting room can house guest speakers to help them with career to help them with all the skills that they need and to learn how to socialize with one another and to have private counselors come in there.”

“There's so many ways you can pull it start community together we have the skills we have the people we have the location we have everything.”

“You can't treat the symptoms. You have to treat and act on the causes not siloed.”

“We have an opportunity to really grow our own local economy and I think covid has done a really good job and helping people appreciate what they have and what's closer to home and we have a great number of farms and Agri businesses within the area.”

“Homeless people who naturally have gravitated together leave them together to be a strong community in an off grid community where they can share their skills and their abilities and resources and work together to get what they need they know what they need just let them get what they need let them grow food if they need to learn how to preserve the food without electricity let's do that it's we have the knowledge it's there we just need to get it out to the people who need it.”

“It's already been done downtown in the the community hub downtown on gore St that community hub met the needs of the community it really did and it was run by volunteers there were volunteers coming in and teaching people to grow food can and preserve food cook that food in an inexpensive way so that they could increase their life quality and their food security so these are very very basic problems that were addressed by a community hub.”

Basic Income

There was support for the idea of social policies, including a basic income, to provide greater equity across society and the local community. The first theme above about power and politics reflects the cause of the problem while general support for social policies including a basic income is part of the solution. Basic income would empower people to act on the right decisions and provide greater equality across the community – whether that is flood insurance for low income households or renters, or better housing or time to engage in the community, or the support to make more expensive sustainable choices such as EV's, heat pumps or building upgrades.

“If I get my house flooded then you get your house flooded I might be better for it to fix my house but you might not it's the same flood so it doesn't affect the same people equally.”

“Then thinking as a poor person who can't afford apartment insurance you get flooded OK you have to wait for repairs you eventually have a home to go back to but I have no capacity to have first and last months rent to even move somewhere new or fresh no way of rebuilding my furniture or recover my belongings and I have no capacity to change that situation for myself between now and when we know these floods are inevitable.”

“There is quality of life issues in this town. There is homelessness. There is lack of proper food for people. There is lack of stable income. You're back to your income subsidy's across the board that would a certain amount of money to make sure their living above the poverty level.”

“Of course that relates very much to income security because if you do things that cost more money people that are on the borderline are struggling to get by really can't afford to spend more money and that's where the income security comes into it.”

“In the short term it's gonna cost us money it's that well money well invested but it's gonna cost us money like if we want to get rid of our gas fireplaces that heat or gas furnaces that heat the house right now there really isn't any way to do it without spending money on the same thing with the gas for our cars people go for these because it's the cheapest and this is something that's very much related to income security.”

“Everybody with a with the higher income helps to make sure that we're not putting undue stress on people that don't have adequate income.”

“That's really where government intervention comes and if you got government that's movie to do this paperwork and understand the scenario that T laid out that you look at we use table the tax on desirable behaviors and provide subsidies to desirable behaviors to change the change the math.”

“Those who are or marginalized and struggling economically often feel the brunt's of you know whether it's supply issues in the cost food going up be it from disruptions or climate disruptions so demand still there but we don't have enough citrus so the price goes up for example right these are things that have always been around on but we do have to bear in mind and that's one of the challenges how do we make sure that this this new future of climate problems how is it equitable for everyone.”

“It is a shift in mindset it's a different way of doing things but I like to say we did it with covid we can do it for climate change everyone pivoted they had no choice the virus was biting us right in the front in 2020 we locked down we can do that we proved that we can make those changes.”

“We're running out of time and if we want to do make an impact we're going to have to invest in things as we did with covid.”

”I think that the fact that income security is not something new climate change just makes it worse.”

“You're totally right about the electric cars from the long run are cheaper but because if you're living in the margin you can't afford that up front cost.”

“It's all wrapped up in massive inequality and increasing inequality make some of that transition stuff harder for poorer people.”

“I think that guaranteed income supplement is a good place to start for that it's a foundation to build off.”

“I think a basic income would give a lot of us that time and space to be able to mentally overcome the individualism that we've all been indoctrinated into then get into that place of community mind.”

A basic income “depends on the will of other people too I mean we all think it's a good idea but you know you look at some people like the people that are involved in that revolt Ottawa they do not want to share they want things done you know the world should revolve around them.”

“If we can roll out CERB and I guarantee you a lot of those people on parliament hill who are playing hockey in the street and asking for more gas money guarantee you a bunch of them are OK taking CERB and I guarantee you that if given the opportunity they take universal basic income. Up until the point that they get that money in their bank account though they're going to say it's not going to work.”

4. Next steps

Did conversation participants identify next steps for continuing the conversation, or continuing advocacy related to the topics covered in the conversation? What were they?

There were expressions to continue the conversation and several potential topics and objectives to do so were mentioned during the conversations. There was considerable enthusiasm among the participants. Specific next steps have not yet been identified.

As the community partner organization, do you have a plan for continued advocacy on the topics explored in your community conversation? Are you able to share your plan with us at this time, and whether or how conversation participants might contribute to that plan?

There is as yet no specific plan, but one will be developed based on the conversation. The level of interest and current momentum will serve as a platform for next steps. There is also support from the participants for a basic income, and that may lead to an expansion of the local OBIN group which may serve to increase awareness, expand community dialogue, and coordinate resources within the community and across Ontario about BIG and enable networking with BIG groups nationally and internationally.