

The Daily Gleaner

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By Alycia Morehouse

Sustainability Lives Here

Fredericton began a journey over a decade ago that wasn't necessarily tagged with a name, though it had a goal. It was born out of desire to ensure this city was viable, vibrant and liveable for many years into the future by protecting and nurturing our natural attributes; fostering our areas of economic competitive advantage; and working to create a community that existed 'for' people. Now, we've put a name to our journey: *sustainability*. Sustainability essentially means possessing, protecting and growing the attributes that make it possible to sustain oneself into the future: environmentally, socially/culturally and economically.

Fredericton is making its way down this road, and over the past decade has earned some things to worth celebrating: one of the Best Cities to live in Canada, an Intelligent Community, an international Liveable Community, and one of the most walking-friendly cities in the country. We have some of the cleanest air in the world, an urban tree cover to be envious of, and just this week, our City Hall ranked 5th of 60 in a national challenge of exemplary energy performance in municipal buildings.

It's good to celebrate our successes, and the fact that we are a clean, 'green' city, but the work in this respect is far from over. What we know to be true is that we have a reason to protect this beautiful place in which we live, our pride of place, and the long-term sustainability of our community.

I had the opportunity to attend the 10th Greenbuild Conference last week, a joint offering of the US and Canadian Green Building Council. For those not familiar with the organizations, they are the folks behind LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Certification. I attended the sessions and expo with about 23,000 of my environmental compatriots, to learn about the latest and greatest in green building, and some exciting environmental initiatives happening around the world. The energy at this event is indescribable. It was so motivating to be in the same room with people like David Miller, former Mayor of Toronto; and Thomas Friedman, economist and author extraordinaire of titles like *The World is Flat* and *Hot, Flat and Crowded*. But, it was the stories that came out of the communities that were most motivating.

One of the most inspiring sessions I attended was about whole-school sustainability; an effort to provide students both an environment (through interior and natural infrastructure), and the knowledge about sustainability, and what the balance between the environment, society, and the economic reality. Inner-city schools have built rooftop gardens, up and protected from the dangers of the streets, so that students have the opportunity to learn about growing their own food, the science behind it, the benefits of buying local, and being taught how to harvest and then cook, and provide healthy meals for themselves and their family. And that is but one

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example of the type of thinking that is creating a knowledge of sustainability that translates into to better, more vibrant communities.

The inspiration provided by Greenbuild was overwhelming.. Many of these communities and community leaders dreamed a little dream and then made it happen. And what I take away from this event is the strong desire and belief that our own own community can continue to move decisively along our path to sustainability. The unique thing about this journey is that it is never finished, but instead we move along a spectrum of heightened social, economic and environmental awareness and practice. It's up to us - citizens of Fredericton - to make good decisions that are respectful of our natural environment, but that also take into account what our society requires to function well, and what our economy needs to thrive. And this is the challenge we are meeting head on – together.

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