It Takes a Village: Cooperation and Relationships Between Local ENGOs and Municipal Governments for Environmental Initiatives

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Abstract

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Local environmental initiatives can create visible and essential changes and inspire greater environmental action. Municipal governments and local environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOs) are important local actors, but their partnerships and relationships have not received much attention. This thesis examines what activities and relationships have been developed between municipal governments and ENGOs in the Peterborough region, what benefits they gain and what challenges they face during collaboration, and how these partnerships affect public perceptions of the organizations. I conducted 14 interviews with members of local ENGOs and municipalities and received 52 survey responses from residents. The findings indicate groups have unique relationships for planning, programming, and advocacy activities. Relationships were key and challenges included lack of time and prioritization, communication, and public buy-in. Partnerships provide an opportunity to share positive accomplishments and build reputation. This study sheds light on the complex relationships among local organizations and provides recommendations for improving partnerships.

Keywords: environmental non-governmental organizations, municipal government, community engagement, local sustainability, cooperation, partnerships, relationships

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1: Research Problem

The complex and interconnected nature of worldwide environmental issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution require action at many different scales, including the local. Casey & Smith (2011) give examples of many scales of initiatives in the Canadian context, from Canada's participation in international agreements like the Kyoto and Montreal protocols to local coalitions to protect forests from logging in British Columbia. Municipalities also have a role to play, as David Miller discusses in his 2020 book *Solved: how the world's great cities are fixing the climate crisis*. Miller shows how municipalities have implemented innovative plans that address energy consumption, personal and public transportation, waste management, and how buildings are built and used (Miller, 2020). Local environmental initiatives are essential to support broader environmental improvements and provide meaningful changes of their own (Seyfang et al., 2014).

In addition to contributing to global environmental action and protecting nearby land, water, and air, local initiatives can also enhance citizen engagement, increase community buy-in, and improve peoples' attitudes and behaviors regarding sustainability (Calder & Beckie, 2013). Citizens are more likely to participate in local sustainability initiatives because they see benefits not only to the environment, but to themselves (Hicks et al., 2016). Restoration of the local environment increases health and quality of life by reducing pollution and providing recreational opportunities. Local environmentalism is also becoming increasingly tied to

environmental and social justice, increasing the material well-being of those most in need and most affected by environmental problems (Bulkeley, 2021). Belonging to community groups, including conservation initiatives, leads members to be physically healthier, feel higher satisfaction with their lives, and have improved relationships with their community (Moore et al., 2006).

There are diverse actors in local environmental initiatives, including government at all scales, local businesses, academic institutions, and local, national, and international environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOs). This research project focuses on the local governments of cities, counties, and townships, the local or grassroots ENGOs, and the residents that participate in and benefit from these initiatives. Limited reach and resources means these organizations need to maximize the efficiency of their environmental initiatives, and one common method of doing so is by collaborating with other local organizations (Seyfang et al., 2014). Given the importance of these local programs, it is essential to understand how benefits occur through collaboration, as well as what barriers limit their effectiveness, including money, time, communication, lack of shared goals, and citizen engagement. Understanding citizen engagement is a central aspect of this project, because any government or NGO initiative must have support from the public (Fast et al., 2016), either through direct engagement and uptake of the initiative by residents or indirect support of the organization or governing body.

1.2: Studies that have addressed the problem

There is plentiful research about local sustainability initiatives, usually focusing either on the municipal government (Blay-Palmer et al., 2018; Bulkeley, 2021; Holden et al., 2016; Hoppe et al., 2015; Lee-Macaraig & Sandberg, 2007) or on a local ENGO (Dart, 2010; Pacheco-Vega & Murdie, 2021; Seyfang et al., 2014; Unander & Sørensen, 2020). These studies detail the ways organizations advance their goals, gather and transmit knowledge, and cooperate with citizens and other organizations. Cooperation between organizations is recognized as an essential practice, including partnerships between nearby cities (McLarty et al., 2014) and information and resource sharing between local ENGOs (Seyfang et al., 2014). A key focus of sustainability initiatives is on environmental education and citizen engagement as a necessary tool to increase public support for current initiatives and build social capital for future endeavors (Angelidou & Psaltoglou, 2017; Otto et al., 2020; Rydin & Pennington, 2000), as the participants are, in a way, co-creators of the initiatives.

1.3: Opportunities for Further Research

By providing a foundation of theories and methods, these studies on local collaboration have created an opportunity to research a type of relationship that has not yet been fully explored, that of the relationships between municipal governments and local ENGOs. These relationships are acknowledged to be both essential and difficult to develop (Blay-Palmer et al., 2018), but there has not been significant research examining why this is or how to overcome these barriers (Wamsler, 2017). Evans (2004) came close to this topic when they examined how

individuals from various organizations came together for a particular conservation project, but the research focused on individuals and not on interactions or relationships between the organizations they belonged to. Drawing from Fast et al. (2016) and other studies, the perspectives of local residents on collaboration between local organizations must also be considered.

1.4: Significance of the Study for Particular Audiences

Because of the potential and need for local environmental action, it is important to research the cooperation between municipal governments and local ENGOs and the perceptions of these collaborations by residents as all three groups stand to gain from more successful initiatives. Overall, this study will provide insights that have the potential to improve local environmental initiatives, restore and maintain the health of the local environment, and aid our fight against climate change and other environmental problems. From this study, governmental and ENGO participants will be able to read feedback from other local groups and from the citizen surveys, allowing them to gain a better understanding of how others perceive their actions and relationships. The leaders and organizers of initiatives can learn what their collaborative partners can bring to a partnership and what other groups expect from them.

1.5: Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The intent of this sequential mixed methods study is to explore the relationships and perceptions that affect cooperation between municipal governments and local environmental non-governmental organizations. The first phase involves qualitative interviews of members of organizations involved in planning and implementing environmental programs in the Peterborough area. Second, a survey of local residents asks how the public perceives the local organizations and their initiatives and what they think about collaboration between groups. The results are summarized into information and recommendations for local ENGOs and municipalities, giving organization staff and volunteers a deeper and broader understanding of perceptions of cooperative partnerships both by other professionals and by the public.

To fulfill this purpose, this research project asks the following questions about cooperation between local ENGOs and municipal governments:

a) What relationships have local ENGOs and municipal governments developed?
b) What are the benefits of cooperation between local ENGOs and municipal governments?
c) What are the challenges involved in doing cooperative initiatives, and how can these challenges be overcome?
d) How does cooperation affect how the public perceives ENGOs, governments and their activities?
e) How do ENGO-municipal government partnerships influence public participation in environmental activities?

1.6: Positionality

This study is based on my own personal values and experiences, beginning with my childhood love of the outdoors and later my realisation of the need for conservation. I have a bachelor's degree in environmental science from the University of Alberta, as well as experience working with municipal and provincial governments and ENGOs as an environmental educator and activist. This background influences my positionality, which includes a belief in the need for environmental education and citizen engagement and especially for local action and change. I also recognize that I am of white settler ancestry. I have lived on Treaty 6 land for most of my life and was a visitor on Treaty 20 land in Peterborough/ Nogojiwanong while I took on the journey for this degree and thesis.

As an environmentalist, I have certain preconceived values of nature and of positive environmental action that propel my goals. I recognize that others may not have these same values and will endeavor to leave room for participants in my study to share their own beliefs. I also acknowledge my many layers of privilege and wish to use my platform as a researcher and environmental activist to promote intersectional social and environmental justice. I believe that local action can and should work to benefit marginalized groups and that sustainability outreach must consider the barriers that certain groups face. As part of this research, I hope to learn more about the power dynamics between and within local organizations and encourage these organizations to promote equity and justice.

1.7: Local Context

This research project takes place in the City of Peterborough, also known as Nogojiwanong, and the County of Peterborough. The activities of some groups also extend into the surrounding Kawarthas area. The region has a rich environmental community, with many individuals and groups that prioritize preserving and enjoying the surrounding natural landscape. This makes Peterborough an excellent location for this research project that focuses on these groups. This section provides an overview of some of the local organizations to provide context to the project, including the sustainability priorities and plans of local governments that shape environmental action in the region as well as the local ENGOs that were involved in this study.

The City of Peterborough is known as a leader in municipal sustainability and has many programs and plans that address climate change and other environmental issues. In partnership with Sustainable Peterborough, the City developed the Corporate Climate Change Action Plan in 2016 and later declared a climate emergency in 2019 (*Climate Change and Environment - City of Peterborough*, 2022). The City of Peterborough monitors the greenhouse gas emissions generated by the corporation and has a goal of reducing them by 45% by 2031. They also have programs aimed to help the Peterborough community reduce their own GHG emissions. Other municipal plans that prioritize environmental protection include their Urban Forest Strategic Plan, Watershed Plan, and the Community Climate Change Resiliency Strategy, which is currently in development (*Climate Change and Environment - City of Peterborough*, 2022).

The County of Peterborough is made up of eight local municipalities which also prepared their own climate plans and monitor their GHG emissions through their Energy Management plan. The County advertises their recycling and noxious weed control programs as well as partnerships with Sustainable Peterborough and Peterborough GreenUP (*Green Initiatives - County of Peterborough*, 2021).

Peterborough GreenUP is a local non-profit "focused on climate action, environmental education, and community resilience" (*GreenUP*). GreenUP is a member of the national network Green Communities Canada and receives essential funding from the City of Peterborough, giving them strong ties to both national projects and local priorities. Their activities include running the Ecology Park Native Plant and Tree Nursery, leading environmental education programs, promoting active transportation, facilitating home energy programs, promoting green infrastructure, operating a retail store, and encouraging public participation in planning (*GreenUP*).

Sustainable Peterborough is made up of representatives from local businesses, governments, educational institutions, and community groups that work towards planning and celebrating local sustainability. The group is overseen by Peterborough and the Kawarthas Economic Development and thus the City of Peterborough and Peterborough County. They were instrumental in creating the Sustainable Peterborough Plan that was adopted by local governments in 2012. They report on the sustainable achievements of local governments and other organizations through their website, report cards, and an annual recognition event (*Sustainable Peterborough*).

The Otonabee Region Conservation Association (ORCA) monitors and protects natural resources in the Otonabee watershed, as governed by the Conservation Authorities Act of Ontario. They are funded by the eight municipalities within their borders and keep them informed about water levels, usage, and health. They also lead environmental education programs, tree plantings, and other programs that involve the public in water protection work (Otonabee Region Conservation Authority).

The Peterborough Field Naturalists (PFN) is a club of nature lovers who regularly meet for excursions and nature presentations. They use their membership to get involved in local activism and publish a newsletter called "The Orchid" that shares yearly natural happenings as well as the organization's events (*Peterborough Field Naturalists*).

For Our Grandchildren (4RG) is another activist group that informs and mobilizes grandparents (as well as other people) to take climate action. They share sustainability stories and information and advertise to gain support and pressure politicians, both locally and at higher levels, to take action. One of 4RG's local successes was their involvement with the City of Peterborough's Climate Emergency Act declaration and they continue to pressure the City to act on it. In the 2018 municipal election, they interviewed each candidate and shared their results with the community to encourage people to vote for those who supported climate action (*For Our Grandchildren*).

The Nourish Project's mission is to improve food security for Peterborough residents. They work in partnership with the City of Peterborough to create and maintain many of their community gardens. Nourish also advocates to the City about various social and environmental

issues tied to food access and shares information about councillor candidates so that citizens can learn about them and decide who to vote for (*Nourish*, 2012).

The Peterborough Environmental Advisory Committee (PEAC) provides advice to City Council about environmental matters and municipal projects, as required by the city bylaw on advisory committees. PEAC is comprised of one Council representative and up to eight Peterborough residents with experience in environmental matters. The group has dealt with topics including a bylaw regarding tree maintenance and removal, the municipal climate change resilience strategy, and the cycling plan for the City (*City of Peterborough - Committees*, 2022).

Kawartha Land Trust is a land conservation charity that advises landowners about conservation options and often purchases or receives donations of local parcels of land to protect and manage. They occasionally work with municipalities to purchase and take care of their lands. They engage with people through fundraising and volunteering, as well as providing places for anyone to get out and explore their local areas (*Kawartha Land Trust*).

Peterborough and Kawarthas Economic Development is an economic development agency and not strictly an ENGO, but many of PKED's programs and goals involve sustainability. They work towards that by promoting sustainable businesses such as in the Cleantech Commons, hosting Sustainable Peterborough, and being a partner in Green Economies Peterborough that supports local businesses to follow environmental best practices (*InvestPTBO*).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1: Chapter Summary

I began working on this chapter in the fall of 2021, over a year after starting my program. I had collected and read dozens of sources and used them to design my research methods and to begin analyzing my data. Next, I needed to summarize all these sources in an organized literature review. Most of the theses I read, searching for inspiration, focused their literature review chapter on the central theory informing their research, but I was doing an exploratory study not based on any one theory. Lilian Dart, my friend and classmate, showed me the thesis of Jillian Ackert, a recent graduate of the Sustainability Studies program, as a helpful example of an excellent and unique literature review. Inspired by a classmate of her own, Jillian presented her chapter as the chronological journey of her research, a story of when and how she came to understand various concepts and their connections to her work. This struck me as a very engaging and transparent way to write a chapter, so I decided to write this one in a similar way. I owe my thanks for this chapter to both Lilian and Jillian.

As a story of my journey, this chapter starts with my initial questions regarding ENGO-municipal government collaboration and its components of municipal sustainability, local ENGOs, and the engagement of citizens. After conducting, transcribing, and beginning to analyze and code my interviews, I took a different approach to organizing my research, namely taking the themes I had developed and addressing a range of theories that fit them. This structure mirrors the thought process that led me to where this chapter and this project is

today, moving from broad questions about groups and their environmental activities to more specific explanations for the mechanisms and motivations behind them.

2.2: Beginning Research

I started with the idea of collaboration between ENGOs and municipal government for the purpose of sustainability initiatives due to my involvement with both types of groups, involvement which clearly showed me the need for more effective collaboration. My exploratory research questions asked what ENGOs and municipalities do together, why they do it, what benefits come out of it, and the difficulties of collaboration. It didn't take much time doing research to discover that there was very little work done on this specific local relationship. The literature of ENGO-government relations focuses primarily on international ENGOs and how they influence national (and occasionally regional or municipal) governments through political pressure and organization of citizens to activism (Longhofer & Schofer, 2010; Meyer, 2004; Pacheco-Vega & Murdie, 2021). Section 2.2.1 discusses the history of these larger-scale actions, how they might inform local activities, and why local activities have not been researched as thoroughly.

I began to research my topic of local collaboration between groups, looking at each stakeholder group individually while still looking for examples of collaboration between them. In section 2.2.2, I discuss sustainability in cities and by municipal governments. Research in this topic fell into two categories. Theoretical papers analyzed global trends of sustainability action and debated whether cities were an effective scale for solving sustainability issues by highlighting how cities fit into international sustainability efforts as well as chains of

consumption (Dreyfus, 2013; Holden et al., 2016). The other category comprised case studies of specific cities and their sustainability efforts, taking up the theoretical aspects and studying, for example, how effective cities were at promoting green energy, sustainable neighborhood development, local food councils, and bylaws tackling pollution (Blay-Palmer et al., 2018; Hoppe et al., 2015; Lee-Macaraig & Sandberg, 2007; Miller, 2020). Section 2.2.3 addresses local ENGOs, what they do, and how they interact with other stakeholders. Many papers on this topic focused on the role of ENGOs in assembling and sharing knowledge and on their ability and goals of engaging with the public (Davidson & de Loë, 2016; Grant & Vasi, 2017). Based on my own experience as an environmental educator as well as it being a priority for both ENGOs and governments, the engagement and education of citizens was the third main focus of my research. Theoretical papers discussed the need for engaging citizens to meet social tipping points and strategies for convincing people to go green or join activist groups (Lorenzen, 2014; Otto et al., 2020). Many articles on ENGO and city sustainability also discussed the importance of citizens in their activities (Angelidou & Psaltoglou, 2017; Dart, 2010)

2.2.1: Broad ENGO-Government relationships and lack of local collaboration research

Beginning in the 1970s, there was rising public concern about environmental impacts such as pollution and biodiversity loss as local incidents led people to reconsider the effects of development on the larger environment. Environmental activist groups like Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth arose in opposition to proposed activities that would harm the environment (Bryant, 2009). By lobbying, protesting, informing, and giving voice to the concerns of the people, ENGOs pressured national governments and international bodies to

revise or abandon destructive policies. Many groups continue to fight for policy changes in this way, and a new form of protest has evolved, aided by social media, of “flat networks not hierarchies” of people joining together in grassroots struggles (Bryant, 2009). However, there are also increasing examples of ENGOs engaging with governments in new, innovative ways, including developing national and international policy in conjunction with governments, providing information and technical expertise, and implementing and monitoring new policy effects themselves (Davidson & de Loë, 2016). These two strategies and types of organizations can be contrasted as outsider activist organizations using confrontational strategies and insider advisory organizations using collaborative strategies (Grant & Vasi, 2017). Some examples of the latter strategy are discussed in this section.

One new way that ENGOs can interact with governments is through a stakeholder role that Davidson and de Loë (2016) call “institutional entrepreneurs.” In their case study, small community groups and provincial and national environmental advocacy organizations joined together to form Campaign Lake Simcoe and address the lake’s declining conditions. One of their most important actions was to work with the provincial government to create permanent spaces where ENGOs and citizens could be part of the decision-making and management process regarding the lake (Davidson & de Loë, 2016). Importantly, they did not blame or criticize the government for the lake’s problems or the lack of engagement but focused on improving these aspects of management. The primary goal of the ENGOs in this example was to have the provincial government take more responsibility for the lake’s management. This approach is typical of many ENGOs, who accomplish their goals by coupling increased local

support with more powerful regulatory protection thanks to government involvement (Davidson & de Loë, 2016). The ENGOs aim to build relationships and change structures of decision-making so that they have more influence with the government. Another example comes from Scotland, where the Scottish government engaged a group of ENGOs as a way to increase public participation in the marine planning process (Brooker et al., 2019). This could be seen in contrast to the example of Lake Simcoe, where instead of local ENGOs seeking the legislative power of a higher tier of government (Davidson & de Loë, 2016), the government is required to engage with ENGOs, since they are seen to represent public opinion and satisfy the need for public consultation (Brooker et al., 2019).

In addition to participating in decision-making processes and helping to engage citizens, ENGOs can also serve to gather and share knowledge. The relationship many ENGOs have with governments is to provide them with information and recommendations that help planners and policymakers better deal with environmental problems. ENGOs who transfer knowledge between scientific sources and policy are often called boundary organizations (Unander & Sørensen, 2020). The theory of boundary organizations assumes that there are barriers between scientific knowledge and public understanding. It suggests that science can be inaccessible because of lack of promotion or visibility, paywalls, complexity of the writing or topic, or that researchers don't communicate effectively. Boundary organizations with access to research and experience communicating it are needed to bring it across the "boundary" so that policymakers and the public can understand and make use of it. In this way, even without being directly involved in decision-making, ENGOs can influence policymakers by providing clear and accurate information about the issues at hand. Boundary organizations can also help

knowledge and ideas flow the other direction to provide feedback and new avenues for research.

None of the functions of ENGO-government relationships discussed thus far explicitly deal with both local ENGOs and municipal governments. Of course, given the ever-expanding number of ENGOs worldwide it is impossible to describe each one and research, such as conducted by Partelow et al. (2020) who selected only the ENGOs who participated in Rio Convention meetings, tends to focus on large international groups. This study also sheds light on other inequalities in ENGO research, which is biased towards English-speaking groups based in the Global North, who also tend to have larger workforces and budgets (Partelow et al., 2020). Large, well-funded groups are likely to accomplish more and attract more attention, but that does not mean local ENGOs and local projects cannot accomplish many essential activities.

2.2.2: Municipal Sustainability

The 2021 IPCC report highlights the difficulties of communicating climate information across the world to a diverse set of cultures and values. Among its recommendations is to recognize the value of local understandings of nature and climate (Masson-Delmotte et al., 2021). Just as a focus on national and international ENGOs has neglected the impact of local ENGOs, environmentalism done by countries, provinces, states, and international assemblages has, until recently, been dominant over environmental action taking place in cities and at the municipal scale. The literature on local environmental action has been growing in recent years as its importance becomes recognized (Leffel, 2021). For example, Turcotte & Pasquero (2001) conducted an early study on municipal roundtables for environmental issues.

One convenient scale for studying and planning environmental action is the city, although many of the arguments for the city can also apply to other scales of local environmental action, such as counties and neighborhoods. Dreyfus (2013) provides three reasons why cities are a relevant scale to fight climate change and why they should be included in international planning for climate action as well as act themselves. First, the people living in cities are affected by climate change and are especially vulnerable to some problems such as the urban heat island effect, and so there is a growing expectation for city governments to take action to prevent and mitigate them (Dreyfus, 2013). Second, since most humans now live in cities, urban areas are major contributors to environmental problems, with a large proportion of consumption and pollution occurring directly in cities or to supply their populations. The C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group attributes about 70% of global GHG emissions to cities, mostly made up of emissions from electricity generation, heating and cooling buildings, transportation, and waste (Miller, 2020). Third, on a more positive note, cities concentrate resources that allow for environmental action. Cities, and groups within them, can bring together knowledge, human resources, and technological innovations to address both local and global problems. The very fact that many environmental problems have their roots in cities mean they can also be solved, at least in part, by the organizations, governments, and people of those same cities (Dreyfus, 2013).

There is an entire field of study, dubbed climate urbanism, dedicated to understanding how cities and their residents are affected by climate change and other environmental problems, as well as how they take action to solve them (Bulkeley, 2021). Climate urbanism has so far been composed of two waves. The first, municipal voluntarism, describes how many

municipalities voluntarily began taking steps to reduce GHG emissions, usually because of a lack of national action. Strategic urbanism, the second wave, came about once the benefits of good climate governance and the risks associated with climate change become more well-established, and cities added extensive climate-related projects to their long-term strategic plans, intertwining environmental and economic urban development (Bulkeley, 2021). Now, Harriet Bulkeley (2021) suggests a third wave of climate urbanism that she calls “climate connected,” arguing that cities are beginning to recognize the connections between climate and other issues such as urban consumption, social and environmental justice, and other Sustainable Development Goals, and that local action on any one of these issues should consider all of them as a whole. This means that municipal climate action needs to be thought about in a more holistic manner, more people need to be involved in planning, especially people from traditionally marginalized groups, and new ideas about city development and living in a city must be considered (Bulkeley, 2021).

Some cities focus on designing sustainable neighborhoods that exemplify the goals of urban sustainability. The appeal of neighborhoods is that they are a small enough size that residents can have a “shared understanding of space and context,” so that sustainability is exemplified not only by the built neighborhood, but by the attitudes and actions of its community (Holden et al., 2016). In other, words, both sustainable behaviors and sustainable technology are required to work together for successful initiatives, both of which can be most easily implemented at a neighborhood scale. Neighborhood projects are usually designed to be replicable examples that could be used in other neighborhoods and cities, though Holden et al. (2016) admit that many neighborhood planning projects, both historical and modern, have not

been successful. One reason for this is that we don't properly assess sustainable cities and neighborhoods (Holden, 2020). The main problem with existing sustainability tests and certifications are that they focus on the technical aspect, while ignoring cultural and social aspects, incorrectly assuming they will be identical between projects. Sustainability certifications are designed to be replicable examples of infrastructure and urban design that could be used in other neighborhoods and cities, but neglecting the cultural aspect means that there will be marginalized groups who "never see themselves as part of the sustainable city ideal" (Holden, 2020, pg 15).

There are examples of sustainable city projects from all over the world. Author and former mayor of Toronto David Miller's (2020) book *Solved: how the world's great cities are fixing the climate crisis* describes innovative strategies and cooperation between cities. City carbon budgets and cap-and-trade systems take a market approach to limiting emissions, subsidies encourage businesses and individuals to invest in sustainable technologies, and working with ENGOs helps cities connect to vulnerable groups of people who would otherwise be excluded. All these initiatives are organized by a city's climate plan, a document that reflects the priorities of the government, the best practices and recommendations of science and technology, and the approval and engagement of the city's citizens (Miller, 2020). In Germany and the Netherlands, Hoppe et al. (2015) studied successful local energy initiatives that were developed by public officials. The paper concluded that these projects depended on buy-in from local citizens and organizations, reinforcing the idea that strong local networks are essential to local action. The influence of local governments can also be understood not only through traditional environmental projects, but also other social projects such as accessing food

(Blay-Palmer et al., 2018). The City Region Food Systems approach uses cities as a geographic area to understand and improve resource flows related to the production, preparation, and consumption of food, including the social justice and environmental impacts of the subject (Blay-Palmer et al., 2018). A final example of municipal involvement in environmentalism is found in Lee-Macaraig & Sandberg's (2007) study of the creation of a lawn pesticide by-law in a small town in Ontario. After the 2001 Hudson decision by the Supreme Court of Canada gave municipalities a stronger ability to implement by-laws, concerned individuals in the town of Caledon banded together into ENGOs and were able to pressure their municipal government to enact a by-law restricting pesticide use. However, this example illustrates some of the possible issues with local regulations, as pressure from powerful local industry and confusions stemming from differences between national and local regulations led to the by-law containing several loopholes (Lee-Macaraig & Sandberg, 2007). The town tried to increase engagement in pesticide reductions through an education program, but a lack of funds meant the program was run by youth volunteers. Despite these problems, the by-law still stands as a sign of what ENGOs, individuals, and municipal governments can accomplish by working together (Lee-Macaraig & Sandberg, 2007).

2.2.3: Local ENGOs

This section will focus on local ENGOs and the many roles they can play in their communities through their own initiatives and by interacting with the people and governments in their communities. By influencing and partnering with governments, engaging people, and sharing knowledge, local ENGOs can have unique and powerful contributions to sustainability.

Local ENGOs can play an important role in improving governance of local areas, including of Lake Simcoe, discussed earlier (Davidson & de Loë, 2016). Coastal partnerships in the UK have also been researched by Stojanovic and Barker (2008). These studies assert that when local governments and local ENGOs work in partnership, management is more effective, participation is increased, and outcomes better reflect local needs. It can also affect changes in attitudes and understanding of local citizens, which will be further discussed in the next section.

Grant and Vasi (2017) empirically show that local ENGOs in the United States have contributed significantly to reductions in CO_2 emissions from local power plants. Based on another study that found that nations with more ENGO membership had lower emissions, the researchers took this phenomenon to the local level. Comparing new emission data for specific power plants with the number and actions of local ENGOs around the plants showed many US power plants either shut down or took measures to reduce their emissions because of local ENGOs (Grant & Vasi, 2017). The ENGOs used both direct, confrontational strategies such as protests, lawsuits, and lobbying local governments, and indirect methods of contributing to state pollution and energy laws and collaborating with the industry. Often supported by national ENGOs, the local groups were essential to balance the influence that fossil fuel industries have over their employees and the local communities. Even when the local ENGOs were not able to enact policy changes, they "legitimate and spread environmental norms and discourse" that can indirectly cause polluting businesses to change their practices (Grant & Vasi, 2017, pg 97). Simply having local ENGOs allows citizens to share their interests with each other and communicate those interests to governments.

In Davidson and de Loë (2016), ENGOs also helped to transfer knowledge, circulating documents prepared by grassroots groups to the Ontario government and letting visitors to their website know how government funds were being used for the Lake Simcoe cleanup. ENGOs, either already-existing ones or those created in response to new issues, are a way for people to group together and communicate to other people and to governments, as seen in the creation of the pesticide bylaw discussed above (Lee-Macaraig & Sandberg, 2007).

One of the biggest assets of local ENGOs, and what makes them most unique in comparison to larger organizations, is their closeness to the people of their community and their ability to both educate and inspire these people as well as represent their local beliefs and values (Wang et al., 2020). Local ENGOs have many ways they can engage people, by connecting them emotionally to local issues, linking like-minded people to each other, nature, and organizations, building capacity greater than what individuals could have, providing people with skills and knowledge, and building a platform for people to engage in governance (Wang et al., 2020).

In addition to academic studies of local ENGOs, we can turn directly to the groups and their websites to get an idea of what sort of projects are undertaken. This includes Peterborough-area organizations discussed in the introduction and larger national and international groups. For example, Green Communities Canada is an association of local ENGOs across the country, helping them to “share resources, inspire innovative programming, and elevate our collective impact” (Green Communities Canada, 2021). Their member organizations, including the local Peterborough GreenUP, facilitate a broad range of programs, including audits for home and business energy efficiency, stormwater collection and

management, active transportation, community gardens, school education programs, and depaving (Green Communities Canada, 2021). The Nature Conservancy of Canada takes donations of land and protects them, creating large corridors of habitat for wildlife and other species (*Nature Conservancy of Canada*, n.d.). Other organizations such as Extinction Rebellion focus more on advocacy and activism than on individual initiatives or conservation, organizing people into large demonstrations of civil disobedience to persuade governments to act (*What Is XR*, n.d.).

2.2.4: Citizen Engagement and Education

Citizen engagement is a broad term that is an integral part of most local initiatives. For some groups, it can be measured by the popularity and acceptance of their publications or newsletters or the number of people who attend meetings and other events (Dart, 2010). Governments can have a different definition of engagement as a legal term, where there is an obligation to consult with citizens and discuss a new policy (Brooker et al., 2019). These methods and measurements often hide the reasons why citizen engagement is so important. Public participation can improve decisions thanks to greater input of information as well as build legitimacy for an organization or initiative. It is also essential for a fair process in our democratic society (Innes & Booher, 2004)

The importance of engaging citizens established; how do groups promote meaningful participation? There is a collective action problem implicit in environmentalism, where it is easier for individuals to free-ride on the collective good produced by environmental actions rather than work towards it themselves (Rydin & Pennington, 2000). When people can benefit

from a policy improvement without contributing to it, there will be less pressure to continue changing policy and bring it closer to the actual values and desires of citizens. A proposed solution is that people can be influenced by their neighbors and local groups to become involved in social change in order to maintain their relationships and reputations. While individuals can exert this pressure on their own contacts, the impact can be mediated and increased by NGOs, which allow like-minded people to gather and exert more concentrated influence (Rydin & Pennington, 2000). Other strategies are to rely on personal connections and direct rewards (Lorenzen, 2014). It is easiest to convince people to make smaller, personal changes, as they tend to be apolitical with a low risk of conflict and low entry costs. Avoiding politics and focusing on self-interest helps people make their own strategic decisions. Local action is essential here, as people tend not to follow rational arguments from experts or mass media and instead are more likely to listen to close contacts and role models (Lorenzen, 2014).

When Dart (2010) studied how staff of Canadian environmental organizations think of and measure effectiveness, he found that the primary ways that effectiveness was measured were by popularity with the public and with partner organizations. Even in organizations that had goals of specifically creating change and delivering services, engagement was a priority instead of sustainability outcomes. These different ways of defining goals could be a result of several social factors. Awareness and engagement have been the primary goals of many environmental organizations in the past, and only more recently have they (supposedly) become more results focused. Therefore, staff may retain these values and goals. In addition, funding often depends on the reporting of accomplishments, and it is easier to report on attendance than greenhouse gas reductions (Dart, 2010). Another study also described success

as being able to reach people and concluded that environmental advocacy leads to change only when the necessary political structures are in place. One of these structures is for citizens to have access to participate in civil society, in this case when they are enabled and engaged by ENGOs (Pacheco-Vega & Murdie, 2021).

To delve further into the theory of why engaging citizens is necessary, we can look at the numerous ways that individual actions and attitudes can affect change. Otto et al. (2020) list and discuss a set of social tipping elements that can "activate contagious processes of rapidly spreading technologies, behaviors, social norms, and structural reorganization. (pg. 2354)" These elements of disruptive societal change are needed to stabilize climate change and many begin with individual and local actions. Elements at the local level include incentivizing decentralized energy generation, working towards carbon-neutral cities, disclosing information about greenhouse gas emissions and their moral implications, and strengthening climate education and engagement (Otto et al., 2020). The authors point to social networks as a key way of sharing these opinions, knowledge, and behaviors, in the same way that Pacheco-Vega & Murdie (2021) see ENGOs as a way to increase the impact of these social networks.

Calder & Beckie (2013) draw from case studies in Alberta to discuss benefits and methods of community engagement in municipal sustainability planning. First, dialogue and communication between all stakeholders is necessary to create a common language and understanding of an issue. The more people involved and the deeper the communication goes, the more empowered people are to be involved and the less conflict occurs. This is especially important for improving relationships between citizens, government, and private and public groups. It also helps people view themselves as part of a larger regional or global community,

with responsibilities to lead and collaborate (Calder & Beckie, 2013). Overall, increased citizen engagement is meant to contribute to better environmental outcomes that are in line with the attitudes of the public.

2.3: Themes in Collaboration

The research in this chapter so far helped me to shape my research design. To better understand collaboration between ENGOs and municipal governments, my interview and survey questions aimed to provide answers to how local ENGOs and municipalities around Peterborough conducted activities on their own, collaborated with each other, and interacted with citizens.

After conducting and transcribing my interviews and conducting a first pass of coding, I began to organize the codes into three major themes to focus on in my analysis. Chapters 3 and 4 go into more detail of how these themes were developed. The theme of capacity includes how groups benefitted from collaboration with each other, including sharing knowledge and overcoming limited influence. The theme of legitimacy concerns how the reputation of an organization can help or hinder its activities and how collaboration can improve reputations. Finally, the theme of communication is how the structures of relationships and methods of communication between groups affect their collaboration. For each of these themes, I searched both the resources I read in my first stage, as well as new ones, for theories that could help to explain them. Many of the examples and theories do not deal directly with ENGO-municipal government collaboration, but describe relationships, learning, and conflicts between other

types of groups. With these theories in hand, I have a foundation for analysing my data and discussing which theories my data fits in later parts of my thesis.

2.3.1: Capacity

This theme of capacity deals with the idea that organizations share not only concrete resources of money and time, but also more abstract resources. This includes specialized knowledge that one group possesses, or their experience that allows them to do something more efficiently than another group. One group may not be able to do certain things because of limits on their mandate or lack of another kind of influence, and needs to partner with one who can. Groups also possess unique contacts and ability to work with certain groups of people in their community. There are many theories that explain how and why groups work together.

Social Learning comes from the field of natural resource management and describes knowledge flow through individuals and networks in a socio-ecological space. This makes it very well suited to be applied to local environmental initiatives involving multiple individuals and organizations collaborating and sharing information, such as multistakeholder roundtables (Turcotte & Pasquero, 2001). There is some confusion about what social learning is, which Reed et al. (2010) attempt to clarify. They distinguish social learning from the conditions necessary for it and the outcomes of it, as well as allowing the definition to include not just the learning of individuals, but whole organizations. Their definition includes three parts. One, individuals must undergo a change in understanding, either of information or of deeper changes in attitudes. Two, the change must go beyond the individual, becoming situated in their social units or communities. Three, this spread must occur through social interactions within a network of

people (Reed et al., 2010). The problems that social learning is applied to in natural resource management, such as an issue of water use by the stakeholders in a watershed, are typically complex, with many moving parts, both natural and human. Lack of complete knowledge about an ecosystem and the difficulty of gathering accurate data about causes and effects in real-world problems means that managers of these ecosystems become practiced at sharing information between themselves to maximize their knowledge and effectiveness. I believe that social learning could be applied not only to natural ecosystems, but to the ecosystem of a city or locality, with its own set of moving parts including the environment, citizens, businesses, government actors, ENGOs, and other groups. In the same way that co-management allows managers of ecosystems to gather a larger breadth of knowledge about that ecosystem from the many groups involved (Berkes, 2009), so too do local partnerships allow each group to share their own expertise about community needs, best practices, and existing environmental initiatives.

Strategic niche management is a theory describing how new technologies and ideas expand and grow and is often applied to environmental innovations. These new ideas are seen as somewhat fragile in comparison to the dominant technologies or "regimes," and thus depend on a strong, protective "niche" to nurture them (Hoppe et al., 2015). In this theory, the main way that these ideas grow and improve is through communication between various groups within the niche. These groups include the organizations directly involved in the projects, but also intermediary networks who accumulate and transfer information between them (Seyfang et al., 2014). Intermediary organizations not only generate first-order lessons about direct improvements to the innovation, but also second-order learning of different

cognitive frames and ways to support the niche. If these social networks and learning processes are accompanied by high expectations about the potential of the innovation, the niche grows and is eventually able to influence and disrupt or replace the existing regime (Seyfang et al., 2014). This process generally happens at a small scale, either in a certain geographic area such as a city, or between a small number of organizations, making it a relevant lens through which to view ENGO-municipal cooperation when dealing with development of new ideas and technologies.

The intermediary organizations in strategic niche management share many similarities with the ideas of **boundary** or **bridging organizations**. These organizations serve as a link between government and citizens by providing information about current issues to the public, mobilizing them to action, and representing the public in decision-making and lobbying (Brooker et al., 2019). The next section of this chapter will discuss in more detail the reasons for the divide between government and citizens that requires a third party to bridge, but how these organizations transfer knowledge is interesting in its own right. Boundary and bridging organizations act as science communicators, by reading scientific sources not accessible or understandable to laypeople or governments. However, in a recent study, Unander and Sørensen (2020) found that the Norwegian ENGO staff they interviewed did read scientific papers and reports, but also said that much of the knowledge came from networking with other people and groups, internet searches, and knowledge already possessed by their organization. The authors called this “rhizomal learning” (Unander & Sørensen, 2020), as the network of relationships resembled rhizomes when visualised. Most applicable to my study is the aspect of networking with others to gain and share knowledge. Surprisingly, most of the networking was

informal and many of their interviewees attributed the success of their learning either to luck or to having good contacts in many areas, including political parties, other ENGOs, and important staff in public administration (Unander & Sørensen, 2020). The value of sharing knowledge, whether formally or informally, is widely accepted. One metric of success of environmental organizations was whether a program was copied or imitated by other organizations (Dart, 2010), indicating that not only do organizations seek out the knowledge of others, but may purposefully disseminate their own knowledge and aim to have others use it.

2.3.2: Legitimacy

The idea of ENGOs being boundary organizations that share information between scientists, governments, and people reveals the problems that these groups can have in collaborating and communicating with each other. Intrinsic differences in goals and structures can create misunderstandings, and missed or failed attempts by governments to involve citizens in planning can result in "cynicism, mistrust, and citizens feeling disenfranchised, with outcomes not reflective of their views" (Brooker et al., 2019, pg 2104). Building relationships between stakeholders is an essential first step. Participants of a roundtable in one study agreed that familiarity with other local organizations was an even more important outcome of the roundtable than learning technical information (Turcotte & Pasquero, 2001). Having an ENGO act as an intermediary provides the government access to a population that might not want to interact with them directly. This is especially important for groups who have been systemically ignored and mistreated by governments, including Indigenous peoples. Berkes (2009) discusses the importance of a bridging organization between government and Indigenous representatives

in caribou management in northern Canada, especially to monitor the power dynamics between the two groups. In this example, **co-management** of the caribou resource is examined to determine how well the groups work together and how effective the co-management is. Berkes (2009) warns that just the presence of a bridging organization or of a co-management agreement does not ensure a successful partnership. While not necessarily focused on managing and making decisions about a resource, local environmental initiatives can draw many lessons from theories about co-management, since "co-management is not merely about resources; it is about managing relationships" (Berkes, 2009)**.** While co-management can be a powerful tool to generate trust and a better working relationship between groups, using it simply as a publicity tool and being unwilling to address the power dynamics can just as easily continue eroding that trust.

ENGOs try to involve people in their environmental initiatives, but also to build their reputation among other groups in the field. Ray Dart's (2010) discussion of success for ENGO staff focused on public interest, acceptance, and popularity. The primary goals were of program and activity popularity with participants and clients, but there was also a broader focus on acceptance and validation by stakeholder organizations. Success of programs connected to other organizations was understood through positive informal feedback about the programs. This feedback then created "more funding, recognition, credibility from partners" (Dart, 2010, pg 211), allowing for increased capacity in the future. Simply having a number of local organizations or stakeholders involved in an initiative was another metric of success.

2.3.3: Communication

As we can see in the previous section, communication between groups is essential for sharing information, building relationships, and meeting the goals that organizations of all types set out to accomplish. There are many theories that try to explain communication, and in this section, I discuss a few of them that seem most applicable to the local ENGO-municipal government relationship.

As discussed before, Strategic Niche Management describes how new innovations develop in their niches, are protected and grown, and can spread and eventually disrupt existing networks (Seyfang et al., 2014). A crucial part of growing a niche is communicating with a network of other community groups to share and develop knowledge. Seyfang et al. (2014) found that direct communication between local projects was generally ad-hoc, but some intermediary organizations performed uptake and dispersal of knowledge, a level of networking consistent with the "inter-local" stage of niche development.

Again we can discuss Unander & Sørensen (2020), who researched how ENGO staff acquired and shared knowledge. They found it came from a wide range of sources, including reading papers and reports, networking with other people and groups, internet searches, and knowledge already possessed by those in their organization. Most relevant to my research is how these organizations prioritized and used networking, most of which was informal among acquaintances who were enthusiastic to spend time and share knowledge. Some networking was by luck, but interviewees also worked to develop good contacts "among political parties, relevant parts of public administration, and ENGOs" (Unander & Sørensen, 2020, pg 828). Evans (2004) provides an example of how this local knowledge came together in a biodiversity

planning group in Birmingham, UK. Local experts and academics were important to provide specialised ecological information, while local authorities helped to make sure the plans were practical and would be useful to local governments (Evans, 2004).

Communicating to the public and the media are another two communication goals studied by Luxon (2019). Direct communication to their supporters through social media is easiest and is not at risk of being distorted, but ENGOs still need to attract media attention to broaden their reach and to give them more legitimacy. To do this, their framing and emotional tone may need to be different for supporters and for media, as emotional, negative stories are effective at inspiring supporters, but can be seen by media as inflammatory and irrational (Luxon, 2019).

2.4: Conclusion

Local environmental action is a complex topic involving numerous stakeholders, theories, and priorities, which is displayed here in the wide breadth of this literature review. Above anything else, this project is about relationships between local ENGOs, municipal governments, and the people they represent. Based on this literature review and my interviews, the goals and methods of ENGO-municipal government collaboration have changed drastically over the last few decades, as have the relationships between the groups. Organizations are finding that collaboration can help increase their effectiveness in novel ways, from added capacity and information to building their influence and reputation among local stakeholders, at least when communication is successful. The rest of this thesis will explore what these relationships look

like in Peterborough, understand why and how they are developed, and identify places for improvement in the collaborative environmental governance of the region.

Chapter 3: Research Approach and Methods

3.1: Methodology

This research project aims to explore cooperation between ENGOs and municipal governments for sustainability initiatives. Since there are multiple parties involved in this cooperation, I needed to understand the perspectives of everyone involved, including both the organizers and local residents who receive the benefits of the initiatives. This is the basis for my mixed-methods approach that allowed me to obtain the views of diverse people in different positions. The clear, real-world goals of my project, to better understand and improve cooperation between local environmental groups and municipalities, lend themselves to a pragmatic worldview of research. This viewpoint is common for mixed-methods studies since its goals provide a justification for why several types of data must be collected. The mixed-methods approach is seen as a way to include a larger breadth of viewpoints in order to learn about an issue from a ground-up, grassroots perspective (Johnson et al. 2007).

I recognize that the situations of all ENGOs and municipalities are different and that any one theory won't be useful to all of them. This project aims to think through what works well (and what doesn't) in the Peterborough region, with the hope that some of the lessons will be applicable and useful, helping to improve the local environment through better cooperation. As Creswell (2009) states, "truth is what works at the time," recognizing that there may not be universal lessons to be learned, but that better understandings of issues can be developed to benefit the field.

My mixed-methods approach required me to obtain information about each stakeholder, through qualitative interviews as well as both qualitative and quantitative survey data. Background research was done into each organization to prepare for the interviews and a brief description of each was included in section 1.5. My interviewees shared their professional perspectives on the state of environmental collaboration in the Peterborough area. The results of the survey provided a different perspective of participants in environmental activities. The project was completed in inductive, sequential stages where each set of data collected informed the next. My literature review and course material guided the development of interview questions and the coding process. The results of the interviews identified areas to explore further through the survey. The discussion and conclusion chapters distill and analyse the data and provide the final recommendations of my study.

3.2: Research Ethics

This research project was approved on May 25th, 2021 by the Trent University Research Ethics board, file #26589, and included approval for human participant research through interviews and surveys. The survey was anonymous and asked no identifiable information besides their location of residence and so had very low risk to participants. The interviews were with public figures, including politicians, municipal staff, and prominent members of local organizations. Some of the interview subject matter involved the internal plans and priorities of these organizations, details of collaboration with other organizations, and the personal opinions of my interviewees. Revealing this type of subject matter could put the organizations and

individuals at risk of disclosing information that could harm their reputations. To address this risk, all interviewees signed an ethics form agreeing to participate and be recorded. They also had the option to have their participation be completely anonymous or to not have any quotes directly attributed to them. In addition, following transcription of their interviews, the transcripts were sent back to the interviewees for them to review. This allowed them to improve my data by clarifying any mistakes I had made in transcribing as well as redact any information they did not feel comfortable being used in this research project.

3.3: Interviews

The first step in conducting interviews was identifying local organizations involved in environmental work, including both environmental NGOs and municipal governments. To build a list of ENGOs, I conducted web searches for organizations using the terms “environmental,” “sustainability,” and “climate,” with the location terms “Peterborough” and “Kawartha.” My professors also contributed their knowledge of local groups. I developed a list of 11 organizations and identified members and staff of those organizations who were involved in projects, outreach, and communication. After receiving research ethics approval, I began contacting them by email in June of 2021 and arranged 9 interviews with ENGO representatives. I also contacted members of local municipal governments, both elected officials and staff, whose portfolios included sustainability and arranged interviews with 5 municipal representatives from 3 local municipal governments.

All interviews (n=14) were conducted online via Zoom or by phone call over the summer of 2021. In each interview, I introduced myself and the rationale for my project, then explained the ethics agreement. All signed the ethics form and agreed to proceed with the interview and have it recorded. After explaining the options for anonymity, all municipal representatives asked to remain anonymous and for their words to be paraphrased. All ENGO participants agreed to have their names attributed to their quotes and information. The list of all ENGO interview participants and their organizations can be found below in table 1.

Table 1. List of ENGO interview participants.

Interviewee	**Organization**	**Role**
Brianna Salmon	Peterborough GreenUP	Former Executive Director
Anca Pascalau	Sustainable Peterborough	Coordinator
Meredith Carter	Otonabee Region Conservation Authority	Watershed Management Program Manager
Dan Marinigh	Otonabee Region Conservation Authority	Chief Administrative Officer and Secretary Treasurer
Dylan Radcliffe	Peterborough Field Naturalists	Former President
Guy Hanchet	For Our Grandchildren	President
Jillian Bishop	Nourish	Community Food Cultivator
Sandra Orsatti	Peterborough Environmental Advisory Committee	Chair
John Kintare	Kawartha Land Trust	Executive Director
Rhonda Keenan	Peterborough & the Kawarthas Economic Development	President and CEO

The interviews were semi-structured and were developed through class discussions and from the literature, including DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree (2006) and Dilley (2000). The interview guide can be found in appendix D. For each interview, after the first few questions about their organizations, I could determine which of my questions would be applicable to that organization and which needed to be skipped or altered. For example, some that had not collaborated with other organizations in the past could not speak to those experiences, and instead I asked about why they didn't collaborate and what could change that.

The interviews began by asking personal information about the interviewees and their involvement with the organization to better understand their roles and what unique perspectives they possessed. Then, they were asked to describe their organization, including its origin, what its sustainability goals were, what projects it took on, and the process of how initiatives were developed. This section provided background information about the organization before moving on to deeper questions about their programs; how they define and measure their success and what the strengths and limitations of their organization were. While not overtly about collaboration with other organizations, questions about their goals could be compared with other groups to see if they were similar. The limitations of the organizations are the areas where collaboration could provide help and their strengths are what they can offer to others in need. In the last section of the interview, I asked directly about past and current collaborations with other groups. We discussed who they worked with on what kinds of projects, how they are initiated, how communication happens, and what each group contributed to the partnership. Finally, I asked them to speak about both the benefits and

barriers of working together, finishing on a positive note with ways to overcome those barriers and how improved cooperation could benefit them and the work they do.

All the interviews were recorded and then transcribed, either manually or through Zoom's automatic transcription service, which still required cleaning of the transcript afterwards. The transcripts were then loaded into NVivo and coded based on Braun & Clarke's (2006, 2019) reflective thematic analysis method. Described as "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data," thematic analysis centers the researcher in the analysis process, asserting that patterns don't simply "emerge" from a dataset but are the result of the researcher's interactions with the data and the decisions that the researcher makes. Braun & Clarke (2006) also included a useful step-by-step guide for the coding process. Initial codes were generated for all transcripts, then collated into themes and sub-themes. I completed two more rounds of coding and organizing, refining the responses into three overarching themes: capacity, legitimacy, and communication. The interview results, including themes and codes, are explained in Chapter 4.

3.4: Survey

I created an initial draft survey for the REB application, then refined it with input from the first round of interview coding. The online survey was created using Qualtrics software which could be distributed as a link. I asked my interviewees if they or their organization would be willing to share my survey. Kawartha Land Trust, For Our Grandchildren, Peterborough GreenUP, Peterborough Field Naturalists, and Sustainable Peterborough all agreed to share the

survey through their social media, newsletter, or emailing list. The survey was active between December 8, 2021 and February 4, 2022 (about two months) and received 52 completed responses. I downloaded all data from Qualtrics into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, where I cleaned and sorted the data and created graphs with the results from quantitative questions. For qualitative questions, I sorted and coded the written responses. The survey results are reported in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4: Interview Results

Using Braun & Clarke's (2006) reflexive thematic analysis approach explained in the previous chapter, I coded the results of my interviews into three themes; capacity, social capital, and communication. Each represents different aspects of the ways ENGOs and municipal governments interact with each other and the public to accomplish their sustainability goals. Capacity is what the organizations gain from collaborating with each other, including knowledge and skills. Social capital is required for organizations to work with other groups and with the public, including how their reputations affect their work and how groups work to improve their public image. Finally, communication is the means by which collaboration actually occurs and how people and organizations work together, and is the largest section that includes many of the difficulties and barriers associated with partnerships.

4.1: Capacity – What is gained from partnerships?

Capacity represents all the resources that organizations have and use in their work. Capacity is typically thought of as only the financial and human resources, but there are many more, less tangible resources that are essential. I have decided to focus on these less tangible resources for two reasons. First, financial and human resources are more well-studied and the difficulties associated with them are more well-known and straightforward. Second, since this research project is about the interactions between local groups, I wanted to focus on the many interesting ways groups cooperate. They share their unique skills and knowledge with each

other, gain insight into community needs, and supplement their own limited influence by working in partnership with other organizations.

4.1.1: Institutional Knowledge

The institutional knowledge of ENGOs and municipal governments is an intangible resource that includes the information, skills, experiences, and culture of an organization and its staff. For organizations like ENGOs who often have intangible deliverables such as education and awareness, their ability to produce quality products and organize impactful initiatives often depends on their level of institutional knowledge. In the context of partnerships between organizations, the knowledge and skills of large groups put them in a position where they can help the other, smaller groups that they work with to develop and preserve their own resources. Awareness of a group's own strengths is an important step in marketing themselves to when seeking partnerships.

<u>Increasing and Losing Institutional Knowledge</u>

The importance of knowledge and skills is reflected in the attention that my interviewees gave to ways that institutional knowledge can be increased, maintained, and lost. Having new people join an organization, bringing new knowledge and perspectives, was discussed in several interviews. Dylan Radcliffe of PFN talked about the need to have new members join their organization and to encourage them to exert their influence, such as be being on the board, to bring in new ideas and prevent stagnation. Unfortunately, organizations can often be resistant to changes and it can be *"difficult for newer people on the board to get a*

word in or participate in any meaningful way" (Radcliffe, PFN). There is a balance between prioritizing new members to provide new opportunities for the group and the risk of losing veteran members. As Radcliffe explains, *"it's difficult to operate without [existing board members] because they bring so much institutional knowledge,"* but this also *"limits the opportunities to bring in new blood in a lot of ways" (Radcliffe, PFN).*

Interviewees also thought about why and how institutional knowledge might be lost, and what to do when that happens. Four interviewees identified staff and volunteer turnover as the biggest threat to institutional knowledge. Others spoke about it not as a threat, but a reality that has to be managed through smart succession planning. Institutional knowledge is most safe in a large organization with not very much turnover. GreenUP is a good example of a very stable organization with developed institutional knowledge. As Brianna Salmon states, GreenUP is *"large enough that we have really strong internal structure and culture, we have staff who are incredible content experts and have been with the organization for years and years, who have experience delivering these programs" (Salmon, GreenUP).* When there are positions with high turnover, such as volunteers, organizations must work to retain and pass on institutional knowledge. John Kintare of Kawartha Land Trust follows this recommendation, since he "*know(s) that we're volunteer powered and we need to make sure that those people are taken care of" (Kintare, KLT).* They treat volunteer retention as one of their key metrics of success and do their best to connect people with their passions so that they enjoy the work they do with KLT.

Municipal councillors also have high turnover since they can be voted out or choose not to try for re-election after each four-year cycle. Therefore, councils and municipal

administrators must consider how to transfer knowledge between outgoing and incoming members. A councillor I interviewed expressed that there are challenges for new councillors who are not as knowledgeable about ongoing projects as long-term councillors and staff since they haven't received sufficient training and background. When you do have turnover and new members, it is essential to pass on the institutional knowledge to them to preserve it and make use of it.

A broad definition of institutional knowledge could also include the culture and structure of a group, the way they do things and the passion they have for their work. A municipal staff member explained that the dedication of the people in their organization was one of their main strengths and that they were passionate about delivering positive results for their residents. Dedication and passion come about from the makeup of a team, just as institutional knowledge does, and organizations should also consider how to promote these qualities in their members and staff.

4.1.2: Knowledge and Experience of Others

Organizations have to manage their own institutional knowledge, but through collaboration, they also have the opportunity to learn from and use the knowledge and experience of other groups. Almost all of my interviewees said that they and their organizations worked with other groups in order to expand their knowledge and take advantage of the skills possessed by others. I will note that the interviewees mostly focused on how they benefitted

from partnerships with other groups, not how they help others, so this discussion will be from that perspective.

Many interviewees talked about some variation of not having to *"reinvent the wheel" (Pascalau, SP)* and instead use the information, strategies, and activities already developed by other groups. At a large scale, this includes using the Sustainable Development Goals to inform a group's framework and goals, such as Sustainable Peterborough is doing through their reorganization. The Sustainable Development Goals allow groups to have a coordinated set of goals and strategies and allow them to share their ideas more easily with people and organizations who are familiar with the Goals. Other sources of new strategies are the national or provincial organizations that many groups are part of. For example, GreenUP is part of Green Communities Canada, while the Otonabee Region Conservation Association is one of many similar watershed groups across Ontario. These larger groups can provide a framework for local initiatives. Finally, groups can also connect to local strategies and plans developed by other NGOs and municipalities, such as the Sustainable Peterborough Plan. As the director of GreenUP stated:

> *"Often we try and look to and address community specific needs and to connect to strategies that have been developed regionally, so we would look to strategies like the climate change action plans that have been developed across the region or the Sustainable Peterborough plan as sort of guidance related to keep community priorities. We also benefit from being a member of the Green Communities Canada network and so some of the programming that we are involved with locally is actually based on best practices from across the country."*
> *– Salmon, GreenUP*

Brianna also mentions local strategies and partnerships that they take advantage of. Peterborough benefits from its similarity and proximity to other cities that have robust environmental programs like Toronto and Kingston.

In addition to using the knowledge and strategies of other groups, partnerships also allow groups to directly take advantage of the skills that staff of other groups possess. There are efficiencies by not having to be competent in all areas, and weaknesses can be addressed more easily by looking for those strengths in another organization. A municipal staff member described partners in ENGOs being like consultants they could depend on to provide input, without the difficulty and cost of finding external consultants. Many local ENGOs and municipalities involve students and professors from local institutions like Trent University and Fleming College. Other groups that were often mentioned were First Nations, Public Health, individual community members, and parts of the provincial and federal governments. This is not a static or one-way process; knowledge sharing often means working and talking together to find the best way to do things based on everyone's knowledge. One municipal official talked about the importance of bringing in new ideas through group consultation, which not only provided more effective plans, but also built commitment among the group since everyone was involved in the planning process.

A group's resources can also include their relationships and contacts, so partnering with one group can open the door to the resources of more. A municipal staff member talked about how working with GreenUP allows them to engage with people, organizations, and businesses that they otherwise wouldn't be able to. This is especially effective for targeting specific parts of the community who are represented by a group. Nourish has worked with *"the Friendship*

Center Nogo (Nogojiwanong), for example, they have a clientele that they already work with, that they're well connected with. And so, if I come to do a workshop and partner with them about container gardening, they already have this group that I can just connect with as opposed to me trying to call up like "hey, I'm looking to connect with urban Indigenous people." And the New Canadians Center the same way" (Bishop, Nourish). Some people can be reluctant to engage with a new group, but are happy to work with a group with which they already have an established relationship with.

Grant writing was another common topic where some groups were more experienced than others, or were better fits for the criteria of certain grants. By working together, the amount of competition for limited grants is reduced, and grants were more likely to be awarded to partnerships due to the increased resources and skills that could be put towards the applications and the programs themselves.

It does take some careful effort to take advantage of new sources of knowledge. When entering a new relationship, what each group already knows has to be discussed so that efforts are not duplicated and there can instead be a focus on maximizing the impact of existing strengths and programs. But the benefits are significant and many of Peterborough's organizations seem to have developed strong relationships for knowledge sharing.

4.1.3: Community Needs

The literature and my interviews were both clear that one of the most important advantages of local organizations and governments is their proximity and connections to the

local community. Eight of my interviewees referenced having awareness of unique needs among parts of the community. Most talked about how the local nature of their organization or government, as opposed to provincial or national governments or national ENGOs, allowed them to build relationships with local people, get to know individuals, and tie local perspectives to environmental goals. As a prime example, GreenUP's origin is rooted in community needs; *"…one of the recommendations was for a community based ENGO that would address context specific and community-driven initiatives. And that was how GreenUP was formed" (Salmon, GreenUP).*

The need to be in tune with community needs derives from the very different situations of various groups of people, including their location, demographics, and values. Many of the ENGOs worked with a variety of the City of Peterborough, Peterborough County, individual townships, and First Nations, and found significant differences between rural and urban areas. There is a large seasonal population of cottagers in the rural areas who have different concerns and priorities than year-round residents. There are also different staffing and financial capacities of the rural municipal governments. For ENGOs, the size of their area of work in relation to their capacity is also important. ORCA and KLT focus conservation work in rural areas because of the availability of land, but other groups stay in population centres, because their focus is on the people (including the number of people and the financial power or influence they have). An ORCA staff member puts it very well, saying:

> *"There's also the city who's big and their geographic footprint is small. Well, we get the other eight municipalities, most of our townships have big geography but small bandwidth or capacity. Every Conservation Authority has a different mix of*

municipal partners with different financial capacities, populations, and land availability and development issues." – Marinigh, ORCA

Given these varied local situations, how does an organization learn about and adapt to them? Understanding community needs requires significant input from the community itself, such as neighborhood programs that put people in charge of the planning process. This is directly related to having a solid reputation or relationship with these communities, particularly groups that have been marginalized and prevented from being involved in planning in the past. For example, GreenUP's NeighbourPLAN projects put local residents at the forefront of the planning process. GreenUp's reasoning is that when community needs are prioritized, the individuals involved see deeper benefits. While these kinds of benefits involve fewer people and are more difficult for organizations to implement in other places or to measure with traditional metrics, most agree on the need for them. Organizations see benefits from deeper participation as well, since individuals can become more active in the community and organization.

As discussed earlier in this section, using existing programs is more efficient than designing new ones, and many groups still found the strategies developed by larger groups helpful in addressing community needs, but emphasized the need to fit them to the local situation. Greenup benefits from "*being a member of the Green Communities Canada"* and uses *"best practices from across the country. There will be programs that are designed and developed in other communities that we'll implement locally and try and adapt locally*" *(Salmon, GreenUP).* Borrowing from other groups extends not only to directly using their programs, but knowing what other local groups are already doing, providing opportunities for collaboration by

"thinking through how this program meets community needs, how we can connect this program to other GreenUP initiatives, or to initiatives that are in the community, and sort of providing a bit more of a strategic lens. Thinking about our programming, how does it address some of the municipality's priorities" (Salmon, GreenUP). Other groups may have already identified community needs and either filled them or made them available for another organization to address.

On the opposite side of the equation, there are challenges involved in meeting everyone's needs, something that municipalities are well used to. Councillors especially have to address conflicting community issues if they want to stay elected. Several municipal interviewees talked about how the needs and wants of all community members often could not be met, resulting in problems with their reputation, to be discussed later in this chapter. One municipal staff member jokingly said how pleasing some people will make others mad, fulfilling the saying that a good compromise leaves everyone unhappy. Balance between different areas of development and environmentalism has to be found. Unfortunately, this causes problems for environmental work where compromising dilutes its effects. So, the focus and messaging of environmental programs sometimes needs to be changed to make them more attractive to people, such as by focusing on the cost savings associated with energy efficiency instead of the more altruistic climate goals. Groups are better able to meet residents' needs (and wants) if they know what is important to different segments of the population and can tailor their messaging and programs to them.

4.1.4: Limited Influence

While community needs are about the differences among the people, this section deals with the intrinsic differences in the scope, power, or reach of ENGOs and municipalities that influence what they are able to do. One interviewee said it well, that *"when we look at challenges like climate change, the solutions aren't something that any one organization or level of government or civil society structure or even a type of approach is going to address. It's going to take a diversity of players" (Salmon, GreenUP).* The limitations of any one type of organization are not due to their own failure, but a part of their structure. The limits of each group have to be taken into consideration and can then be overcome through working together.

Unsurprisingly, the biggest constraints involved differences between the missions and abilities of municipalities and ENGOs. In comparison to municipalities, ENGOs are limited in their decision-making and policy potential, amount of concentrated funds and resources, and possession of land on which to work. First, policy is an important tool in affecting change, especially when it has regulatory power that all people and businesses must follow. Without the ability to directly influence policy, NGOs usually have to work directly with individuals to get them to voluntarily change their behavior. As explained in the literature review, many ENGOs have the goal of pushing governments to enact policy change, including GreenUP, who say that *"working with the municipality, they bring decision-making potential and power that that we as a community-based organization don't necessarily have" (Salmon, GreenUP).*

On the other hand, my interviewees identified limitations of municipalities that ENGOs don't have; weaker connections to people, slower and more rigid decision-making, greater responsibilities for areas other than environmentalism, and strict limitations in their scope of work. Many of the people I interviewed, both within and outside of government, expressed frustration with the bureaucracy of governments and the time and effort it takes to get anything done. One staff member admitted they themselves get frustrated that they can't do more, but continued on to justify the time it takes to act on a large issue such as climate change. An entity representing a large public needs to deliberate carefully on what to do and how to do things in order to best meet the needs of their stakeholders. Another part of the issue is the two separate parts of a municipality; the elected officials and the staff. More people and more levels of decision-making complicate things, so some ENGOs try to expedite the process by interacting directly with the necessary staff members.

In addition, despite governments having access to policy tools, they can't fix everything. When trying to get local municipalities to enact more environmentally-friendly building codes, For Our Grandchildren found that *"even building codes, municipalities can't do that. They have to go to the province and the province says, "here's the building codes." So pressure the government, they need to pressure the next level of government up to say, "our town wants us to fix this and we can't do it because you won't let us" (Hanchet, 4RG).* Municipal staff agree, saying that some things like electricity generation are the province's responsibility and they often need to ask for assistance from a higher level of government. Both ENGOs and the public can have inaccurate views of what a municipality is required and able to do, leading to frustrations that will be discussed further later in this chapter. Some of the ENGO interviewees

recognized this and made a point of educating people about municipal processes: *"people complain about things and they're like, "that's actually the federal government. We would love to have control over that, but that is not something we do" (Bishop, Nourish).* According to municipal staff, one of the more prominent misconceptions is about the City of Peterborough's climate policy. As a corporation, Peterborough can set goals to reduce the emissions of its own fleet, buildings, and operations, but can't directly regulate the emissions of individuals or businesses. Programs can encourage people to use public transportation or increase the energy efficiency of their homes, but the programs have no regulatory power behind them.

Influence with different groups of people

Many groups, both municipal and ENGO, recognized their lack of influence with certain parts of the population, depending on who they represented and who was involved with them. Though the demographics of Peterborough are older and white, the membership of Peterborough Field Naturalists and For Our Grandchildren are both almost exclusively in that category. For Our Grandchildren's president says: "*I think our age is problematic. We have tried to get involved with people of different age groups other than retired white people and it's really tough" (Hanchet, 4RG).* This is problematic as it sends a message that the organizations are not representative of many other important groups of people, decreasing the amount of sway the organizations have to share their points. Through concentrated efforts, groups are able to change who they attract, with the results being powerful:

> *"I have to say that the most influential voice was the 17-year-olds who stood up and said, "this is our future, stop fucking around, get on with it!" You could feel the difference in the attention that was paid to them, compared to another old guy*

standing up and talking about the sky is falling. The kids were really taken seriously." – Hanchet, 4RG

Besides demographics of age, race, and wealth, the environmental attitudes of a community create barriers that are difficult to overcome. Whether it's a program led by an ENGO or government, the people who are interested in attending, learning, or taking action are likely already on board. Those who are against environmental action, as well as those in the middle who are uninterested, are very difficult to reach. This is especially difficult for municipalities, who have a responsibility to the whole community and the average citizen likely does not have climate action as their primary concern. Since the membership and staff of ENGOs are self-selecting, they tend to be relatively unified about their goals and are able to work towards them without much conflict within the group. On the other hand, a municipal government has a mandate to serve the interests of all their constituents. They are limited by the need to appeal to all types of people, and even staff and elected officials will have different goals. Trying to please everyone will end up pleasing no one, leaving a government in a constantly difficult decision of whether to follow the "average" opinion of their electorate or to what they believe is right, even though it will not be supported by as many people.

4.1.5: Conclusion

Nearly all my respondents, from both government and ENGOs, reported having goals beyond what they were currently accomplishing. Understandably, many expressed their feelings of discouragement and hopelessness that their environmental goals would not be met, one saying that: *"I go through cycles of feeling like it's just hopeless, and we feel like we're*

making no difference at all" (Hanchet, 4RG). Whether it's because of the inherent limitations of their organization, lack of the necessary connections, or not having the requisite skills, knowledge, or other resources, the environmental problems of our time can seem insurmountable. However, collaboration between groups can provide some of the necessary capacity to make the work possible. By sharing what they have, the strengths of each group can be magnified. In each of the organizations I learned about, the need for collaboration was recognized, with interviewees speaking about working as a network to fix the systemic, wicked problems we're dealing with. And, if for no other reason, working with people who share the same ideals and goals as you is always heartening.

4.2: Social Capital – What is needed to start a partnership?

This second theme of social capital deals with relationships between groups and with the public. In the context of partnerships, it is necessary to build a strong reputation, then develop trusting relationships with those they want to work with, before any work can begin. The first code within this theme is transparency, the need for proper communication about goals and actions to build a strong reputation within the community, as well as the issues that arise when this is not met. The next two sections are about reputations with the public and then with other groups. Though the focus of this thesis is on relationships between organizations, the public is an important third party that does affect how groups are seen by each other. Finally, despite the common goal that environmental groups and governments

share, there is not always unified agreement between them. Some of the interview responses provide insight into why conflicts arise between groups and how they might be overcome.

4.2.1: Transparency

All groups try to communicate their actions effectively and accurately to other groups and to the public. It is essential for building trust and getting buy-in from others. Participants discussed the need for transparency about money and funding and how and when to share information in order to elicit the best possible response from others.

Money and funding

Municipalities and ENGOs are funded by the tax dollars from their residents, grants, and donations from a variety of sources, all of which require them to be accountable and transparent about the way the money is used. When disclosing the amount of money that is spent in different areas, it may reassure people, or make them upset if money is not being allocated in the way they want. For municipalities in particular, interviewees talked about how the broad responsibilities of the government can make it difficult to justify using funds for environmental reasons that don't have the same immediate benefits to their residents. It can also be seen as spending money outside of the municipality, since the benefits of environmental work are far-reaching. A municipal interviewee described the pressure of needing to spend resources on all their citizens' needs before being able to look at other issues. How this relates to cooperation and transparency, however, is that when collaborating with

others, efficiencies and shared costs can make projects seem more attractive to the public, if these actions are communicated effectively.

Sharing information and controversy

Even though participants agreed on the necessity of sharing their organizations' activities, they had to be careful about how and when to release information. Municipalities especially have the obligation to be transparent about all their plans and actions to their citizens. It can be difficult to be fully transparent, but there are benefits to having the public be fully and correctly informed about what's going on. Misconceptions create resentment and take lots of resources to correct, instead of putting in the up-front work to share the correct information. Municipalities take care to be as clear as they can about the decisions they make, hopefully generating buy-in in their projects. The bureaucracy of government is also related to transparency, as information has to be shared and vetted at every step of the process, getting more input and shared understanding about a project, but also making things take much longer. Everyone involved in the process also wants to know what impact they are having. The Peterborough Environmental Advisory Committee has wondered "*what happens when we provide input. Some things, it's clear on, and some things, we know we've been heard at the meeting, but how is it used?" (Orsatti, PEAC).*

Transparency was mostly talked about by people involved with municipal government, but ENGOs also need to be transparent about what they are spending money on, both to funders and to the community. Some controversial topics make it necessary for ENGOs to be careful about being transparent as well. For Nourish, it's the issue of them not wanting to support a

food bank model, but only because they have a better solution. Nourish's director tells this story; *"people say, "oh there's all this food going to the landfill, give it to the hungry, problem solved!" And we're over here being like "maybe poor people deserve better than the stuff you don't want." And then it looks like we're sort of against the hard-working people at the food bank, which is not true at all" (Bishop, Nourish).*

Transparency and reputation can be increased by partnering with another trusted organization who can provide information to back up actions taken or simply spread the word. Several local ENGOs and municipalities have partnered with students and staff at Fleming College and Trent University to provide some proof about their initiatives that helps to convince the public about the potential of their programs.

4.2.2: Reputation Among People

As groups that represent, educate, and involve large numbers of people, ENGOs and municipal governments both work hard to ensure they have a good reputation. Most groups talked about being recognized and having relationships with community members as a powerful tool, one that sets local organizations apart from higher levels of government and larger ENGOs. A municipal official explained that people get used to seeing the same officials and working with the same groups, and that familiarity was very beneficial. Encouragingly, the interviewees feel that most people in the Peterborough area support being sustainable, giving environmental groups and municipalities a positive reputation for the work they do. One interviewee spoke about how much public feeling towards sustainability has improved over the

past 30 years. This section deals with the benefits of a positive public reputation, the limitations of having a poor one, and the ways organizations work to improve their public image.

Benefits of a good reputation:

The first benefit of a good public reputation is that people want to be involved and contribute to the success of the group. As an example, Nourish is well-known for certain activities, such as their community gardens. Their high profile in the community attracts volunteer and financial support. This also brings more recognition to the problem of food insecurity behind their program, so that it can be addressed in other ways. For the City of Peterborough, sustainability is part of their brand, promoting who they are to their residents and to other cities. They recognize that being a leader in sustainability means others will follow suit, increasing their overall impact as well as their own reputation. It also increases community buy-in for projects that require citizens to voluntarily join. One City representative talked about how they worked to design and promote their energy efficiency program so it was as accessible and attractive as possible to a wide range of people.

With groups for whom fundraising is important, their reputation is essential to attract new members and donors, as well as keep them active in participating and donating. Groups that depend heavily on volunteers also need a strong reputation among the community to attract new people and to make sure that their current volunteers are engaged and satisfied with what they're doing. KLT's director explains how they and other "volunteer-powered" groups prioritize their volunteers;

> *"We measure our success based on the number of volunteers that we're able to engage and use and their reports of satisfaction in terms of how they're working with the organization. We know that we're volunteer powered and we need to make sure that those people are taken care of." – Kintare, KLT*

Landowners are an especially important group for KLT. KLT makes sure to promote their good reputation and show that they do a good job caring for their existing properties, then build relationships with landowners so that they feel comfortable donating land. In a similar vein, Nourish has community gardens on the lands of individuals and organizations, and many conservation and restoration activities undertaken by other groups like ORCA also require dialogue and trust with landowners.

KLT also recognizes that the way people view and interact with nature affects the reputation of environmental organizations. People who are more connected to their local land are more likely to be involved in the group, beginning a cycle of them becoming more and more tied to both the land and the group. KLT's director says that; "*if we can connect people with the land and get them to love the land, then they're more likely to become donors or volunteers or landowners, in the future, to help us protect and conserve more land as we go" (Kintare, KLT).* In this way, the popularity of a group is tied to how people view nature as a whole. On the other hand, this also indicates the reverse, that people who don't care about nature or environmental action are unlikely to think highly of ENGOs, regardless of what they try to do to improve that reputation.

Improving reputations:

The positive connotations of a good reputation mean that maintaining and improving their public image is top of mind for leaders of any group. My interviewees all work to share and publicize their sustainable activities and achievements. Organizations use newsletters, advertisements, word of mouth, and visible projects themselves to let everyone know what they have accomplished. Partnerships among groups that share each others' messaging can extend their reach. For some groups, such as Sustainable Peterborough who hosted events recognizing the actions of community organizations, sharing the accomplishments of others is one of their main goals. While the ENGOs in this study tended to successfully share their activities, some municipal representatives feel like they don't do enough. One interviewee felt like they and their municipality don't get as much recognition as they would like for their sustainable achievements and talked about needing to do a better job of promoting themselves and celebrating their successes.

Two ENGOs in Peterborough talked about their difficulties with rebranding. For Our Grandchildren has long considered changing their name to be more inclusive of other age groups. However, they worry that it could also confuse and alienate their existing contacts and lose the reputation they have worked hard to build over the years. Sustainable Peterborough has also run into a challenge as they take a break from their regular activities to reorganize and change the focus of their organization. They have spent several years reviewing their role and creating a new strategic plan based around tangible targets and the Sustainable Development Goals that they hope will their organization and other groups around Peterborough focus their work for greater impact. However, many interviewees from other groups did not know what

Sustainable Peterborough was doing, only that they had stopped doing any of their public-facing activities. This period of inactivity has already harmed the trust that other groups have in them, and it remains to be seen whether their new mandate and actions will satisfy the people and organizations who have come to expect certain things of them.

Poor municipal reputation:

Several interviewees, both from government and not, talked about the poor reputation of municipal governments among some people and groups. Some of the difficulties in effectively communicating municipal activities to the public have already been discussed in the previous section, but there are other reasons that were suggested for this negative reputation. The long time required for most things to happen in government becomes an issue when slow progress is taken as not caring about an issue much or at all. Municipalities also have much broader mandates than most ENGOs. There are plenty of things people can be upset about, like their taxes or roads or other services not related to sustainability, that lower the municipality's reputation and make things more difficult when they do want to have a sustainability initiative (or any other project). The greater resources of municipalities can also lead people to think that they should be able to fund and implement any initiatives they want. In reality, municipal capacity is often stretched thin, and any money that is not being used for essential services has to be carefully planned and budgeted for so that it can be applied to sustainability projects. Those expecting more liberal funding of environmentalism by the municipality may be disappointed. People are attracted by solutions that look simple from the outside, and ask the municipality to take what seems like an obvious step towards sustainability. From the inside though, it's more difficult to implement. The solution could be more difficult than it seems, or

the municipality could just be busy and have resources dedicated to other things. One staff member explained that a solution to this is collaboration with a non-profit organization. Some people are don't want to engage with municipal government and won't change their opinions on that, but non-profits have built up their reputation to a point where they can reach people that governments can't.

To help overcome this barrier, the City of Peterborough partners with ENGOs or has quasi-governmental groups like Sustainable Peterborough or PKED act for them. For example, since GreenUP is trusted by the community, the City works with them to help raise the profile of their sustainability activities, helping people see past their preconceptions and begin to trust in what the City is doing. The coordinator for Sustainable Peterborough explained that "*because we're not direct government, we appeal to both municipal government as well as local area citizens and organizations" (Pascalau, SP).*

Segments of people, and challenges of appealing to all

A challenge for all organizations is appealing to the very different segments of the population. Some groups will naturally have wider, more positive reputations than others. GreenUP is arguably the most visible environmental group in Peterborough, for several reasons. They have a long history of positive impact, partnering with many organizations and interacting with thousands of people. GreenUP also targets their programs at specific communities that experience barriers to participation, expanding their reputation in underserved areas. Their former director explains that;

> *"We're a trusted community-based organization, we have really strong relationships with the community, and we engage with 10s of thousands of people every year, so our reach is quite broad, and we really work to ensure that our programs are accessible, that they meet people where they're at and that they acknowledge some of the real barriers that specific communities, especially communities that have experienced marginalization or oppression might face when it comes to taking action." – Salmon, GreenUP*

However, Salmon does recognize that there are smaller organizations than GreenUP that are even better able to meaningfully engage with specific people, and therefore GreenUP would also try to work with them. There are many different segments of the population, and you can't have the same type or depth of reputation with all of them. GreenUP and others recognize that marginalized communities will have different perspectives and require special care and attention to meet their needs and improve relationships with them.

Another group mentioned before are the people who don't agree with environmental work, or with specific sustainability strategies. These people still must be considered in decision-making, and my participants talked about the different perspectives that they must take into account. John Kintare shared that, before working for KLT, he was involved in a food security organization which didn't agree with the actions of land trusts, since they were removing land from food production. This goes to show that, even between different social environmental NGOs, there can be conflicts in worldviews and methods. Some interviewees considered that organizations that are seen as more "activist" may be dismissed or receive backlash for their activities. Groups must decide whether they limit the things they do to appeal to the greatest number of people as possible or go full-in and align with a smaller but possibly

more engaged group of activists. And while most ENGOs can focus on a segment of the population that they're already popular with, municipalities are required to work for all their residents. This makes it especially difficult to please everybody and to get the things done that only a limited segment of the population wants to do.

To sum up, most groups realize that nothing is going to please everyone, but they must go ahead anyway and build strong relationships to the best of their abilities. PKED's president describes one such situation; *"I think that's one of those areas where if we were going to start it again, we probably would have done it in a different way, we had some learning gaps along the way. I do think it is a good news story for this community, but certainly not without some tension points" (Keenan, PKED).* Things could have been done better, but she still recognizes that it was a necessary and beneficial project that contributed to their goals and will help them perform better in the future.

4.2.3: Reputation Among Other Groups

In the same vein as building relationships with the public is building a network of other groups that can help them with the capacity-building that is discussed in section 5.1. Sustainable Peterborough's primary activity was to present the sustainable activities of their local partners to the public, municipalities, and local NGOs, to help everyone stay in the loop of what was going on in the community. For smaller groups especially, having a solid group of other organizations you can count on is very important. PFN showcases the power of strong and numerous contacts when they were trying to protect a local creek. They had limited

political sway on their own but brought in all their contacts to successfully support them. Groups can also have a reputation of what kinds of projects they undertake. Something that the County of Peterborough wants to share is that environmental initiatives don't have to be large and expensive. By sharing their own more modest projects, they can inspire other groups and individuals to do more things, within their abilities. Having extra cash, or being available to collaborate on a funding opportunity, are sure-fire ways to make friends with other groups. As discussed earlier, applying for funding together with another group can help to maximize funding.

Municipalities work to build relationships with other groups as well. The City of Peterborough aims to be a leader in sustainability, and show that to its residents, its organizations, and to other municipalities. Their sustainability initiatives have their own benefits, but also serve to promote the initiatives and collaborations to others. One municipal staff member explained why they value their relationship with local ENGOs and why they want the relationships to be well-known. They want other municipalities to see what can be done in partnership with ENGOs and how Peterborough has worked on these relationships.

Familiarity:

In the Peterborough area, there seems to be a good overall familiarity and support between many local ENGOs and municipalities. ORCA's sense of their group's reputation is that they have *"a lot of support, you know the watershed people are always willing to work together, so there's a lot of enthusiasm and I would say a pretty high level of awareness, so*

when we are reaching out to people they have likely heard of us, if they haven't worked with us before, or we've got common friends" (Carter, ORCA)

A common theme when discussing a relationship between two groups was who contacts who more often. Is it one group always reaching out, and are they asking for help, offering support, or inviting to work together? Many groups felt positively when they were being contacted by others, that their reputation of who they were and what they could accomplish was enough that they were on people's radars when they needed help. Most seemed happy to help and to be involved as well, despite limitations in capacity.

The closeness of connections between ENGOs and municipalities vary quite a bit. One main factor in their mutual reputations is what type of relationship they have and what their goals are in interacting. Though not a part of the City of Peterborough, GreenUP works very closely with them and the City is one of the founding groups and main funders of the organization. Though GreenUP has expanded to do a wide variety of things, their main role is to be an entity that advances community-based initiatives for the City and County. On the other hand, PFN is mostly focused on the activities of its own members and does not have a developed relationship with the City. This means that when they try to interact with the City, asking or suggesting things, they are less well-received. Interestingly, they felt that Peterborough County was more open to working with them, though they couldn't explain why.

Relationships and feelings of trust between groups have to go both ways. Municipal representatives talked about how they have to be selective about which groups they partner with, saying that they have to first be familiar with a group and what they are capable of,

before they can start building that trust and a shared understanding of goals. Municipalities generally think of partnering as a big commitment, one that needs established trust, good communication, and assurance that the partner organization will be committed for the length of a long project. Partnering with a municipality often also involves a contract, funding, and reporting, which can add a lot of responsibility and stress that may not exist as often in more informal partnerships between two ENGOs.

Negative Reputations and other difficulties:

While many local ENGOs work very closely with municipalities and depend on their support, some have a more antagonistic relationship. My interviewee from PFN described offering the City of Peterborough resources and ideas, low-hanging fruit that they could easily take advantage of, but reported that they were rebuffed. The conversation seemed to suggest that other groups ran into the same problem when interacting with the City, and that *"some of the coolest stuff that's happening in our City is being done in spite of the municipality, instead of in collaboration with it" (Radcliffe, PFN).* From the perspective of a government, ENGO advances could be seen as asking too much, which might not be well-received.

Another risk to a group's reputation is any change in an organization that could make others question whether they will remain the same and be able to partner in the same way. While my interviews were being done, GreenUP was in the middle of changing executive directors and Sustainable Peterborough was in the process of a reorganization. However, these two changes were being received very differently, both by municipalities and ENGOs. Most seemed confident that GreenUP will continue to stay the same and be a powerful partner, likely due to

the very good communication about the process and the local reputations of both the departing and incoming directors. On the other hand, most didn't even know that Sustainable Peterborough was reorganizing or why they had stopped doing their regular activities, which made them frustrated and unlikely to want to work together. This loss of confidence might remain even after the change and Sustainable Peterborough is looking for partners again.

Another challenge is that during Covid, there was some reluctance to start new relationships or even to do too much with existing contacts if it meant having more time in online meetings. In some ways, online meetings cut down on travel time and costs which made things easier for groups with far-flung connections like KLT, but other groups that depend on strong, personal relationships like For Our Grandchildren felt that online meetings were not sufficient.

Prioritizing:

Despite discussing earlier how the shorter-term initiatives of many ENGOs can conflict with the longer commitments of a municipality, Kawartha Land Trust feels that municipal governments might not be looking far enough into the future. In the short term, setting land aside for conservation means added costs and less land for a municipality. Only in the long term do the benefits of conservation, both ecological and social, begin to outweigh the initial costs. Municipalities are generally occupied with other long-term problems that might be of higher priority and make it hard to take the time to consider the environment, however much they want to.

> *"It can be hard for municipalities to be able to take that longer view and say, "well, if we could stop this damage from happening to this land, then that will make life better 20 years from now." And so it's hard for them to look at KLT as an active current partner or somebody to be supported." – Kintare, KLT*

Because of these different priorities, groups must consider where they build relationships to maximize the effects of their efforts. As mentioned before, PFN feel that the City of Peterborough is difficult to work with, and so they focus their efforts on the County and with other ENGOs. KLT, while they would like to form relationships with all the small municipalities in their area, usually has to prioritize the landowners and community groups who can provide more for them and who are easier to build relationships with than a large, ever-shifting municipal staff; *"In the land of limited resources, if I've got a land protection opportunity in front of my face or something that might help 10 years from now, I can't say no to the opportunity in front of my face" (Kintare, KLT*).

All groups want to reach the point where relationships are well-enough established that whenever a new project is started, those involved have people in their minds they know could help to work on it with them. In a municipality where environmental aspects of a project are not always considered, the reputation of environmental staff and of other groups must be built so that they remember to consult them or include environmental considerations of their own. Several municipal staff spoke about wanting to build sustainability into the corporate culture so that decisions can be made with sustainability in mind, even without the direct involvement of the sustainability staff.

4.3: Communication – How do partnerships actually happen?

This final theme is communication, which deals with how groups interact with one another to implement cooperative programs. After relationships are formed and the goals of partnerships are set out, communication is the key to whether a program is successful or not. Interviewees described a large variety of different forms of communication and partnerships that will be discussed in this section. The first relates to strategies that organizations use when they are communicating to the public about their activities. Next, communication between organizations is split into two sections: communication between ENGOs and communication between ENGOs and municipal governments. Each of these sections will use examples from the interviews to discuss the types and methods of communication the groups use, as well as the uses, advantages, and challenges involved in that type of communication and partnership.

4.3.1: To Public

As discussed in the previous section about an organization's reputation with the public, effective and accurate communication is necessary to generate buy-in. Each group wants to educate people about their own priorities and activities for a diverse set of reasons, from having people attend an event to KLT educating landowners about good stewardship practices of their properties, regardless of whether they want to donate the land or not. There are many methods that organizations use to share their messages.

Programs aimed at schoolchildren are common from both municipalities and ENGOs. They are designed to educate children and expose them to new ideas, both so that they will be

more environmentally conscious as they grow up, but also so that they influence their parents. Municipalities can influence peoples' behavior more directly by enacting policies, such as Selwyn's green event and clear bag policies that require people to reduce their waste production through careful event planning and recycling, respectively. Social media and websites are used to tell residents about an organization's plans. Videos are also becoming more popular to explain more complicated topics to a broad swath of people. Newspapers are less common now but are still used to inform people about a group and their activities, such as to advertise events and share a group's accomplishments.

Some communication is solely through those media channels, but both municipalities and ENGOs try to see as many people as possible face-to-face, where they feel communication is most effective. For councillors, an interesting method is going door-to-door while campaigning and giving people a very personal way to have their opinions heard. If their opinions end up contributing to action, the residents will feel very positively. If not, they could lose trust in the councillor and in that type of communication. One councillor I spoke to found going door-to-door very effective, saying that people offered many great ideas that they took into account after being elected.

Effectiveness and Challenges

What is the goal of communication? As was discussed before, building your reputation might only require people knowing about you and your activities. But to engage people and get them to participate and adjust their behaviors is more difficult. For Our Grandchildren finds that one of the most effective ways to convince people to act is to show them that others are

doing the same, saying; *"we're trying to provide the opportunity to let people know, first of all, that there are other people who care so they're not alone. And there are other people who are doing things and they can join with us to do those things" (Hanchet, 4RG)*. The organization finds that many people want to do good, but doubt the impact they can have alone, so For Our Grandchildren provides a place where individuals can join their voices with others and have a collective effect on political decisions through writing letters and talking to their representatives. This problem was common throughout the groups I interviewed, who recognized that even if people are on board with environmentalism, changing some behaviors can be challenging. The silent majority are even more reluctant to change their behaviors and make things tougher for themselves if they don't believe strongly enough in the benefits. One interviewee summarized how people have been very happy with capitalism and consumerism for a long time, and it will take a lot of work to motivate people to go against the messages and lifestyle that they're used to.

These challenges of communicating with people force groups to use creativity to improve the quality and effect of their messaging. Messaging must be tailored to fit peoples' interests and priorities, which are not consistent across the population. To promote anti-idling, municipalities could share the environmental impacts, but some people might be more swayed by the cost of gas or the health impacts due to air quality and noise pollution. Interviewees also talked about focusing on the financial impacts of climate change, or of smaller issues like higher energy prices that may hit closer to home for many people

Many organizations pick a balance between the number of people they can reach and how effectively they reach them. GreenUP claims to engage with *"10s of thousands of people every*

year" (Salmon, GreenUP) while other groups have much smaller bases and municipalities, depending on their size, can reach even more. Reaching diverse segments of the population requires concentrated work, and organizations must decide who they want to target with their programs. Marginalized groups like low-income residents, BIPOC, and new Canadians, seniors or youth, other demographics, interests, or locations are all targets for environmental communication. Regardless of any particular demographics, many organizations experienced difficulty engaging with and communicating to people who are unlike themselves or the main demographic of the organization. That difficulty means they may simply focus on the people who they know will receive the message well. It is more efficient for them to take the path of least resistance and maximize the effects of a project as easily as possible, with the hope that others can spread the word a bit and help to engage and attract more reluctant people.

For Our Grandchildren identified a potential problem in that too much environmental messaging can cause people to become burnt out and feel hopeless about environmental issues. Organizations have to be careful about what message they are sending people;

> *"We've decided that a mix of news that contains three hopeful good news stories to one "polar bear on an ice floe" is enough to give people the combination of outrage that the world is going to be screwed but not get people so down that they think there's nothing we can do about it. So we talk about the successes." – Hanchet, 4RG*

As discussed in the transparency section, municipal interviewees spoke about another way that communication can backfire, with the danger of the public misinterpreting the messaging and becoming upset. Organizations need to be very clear and deliberate with messaging, to avoid

having to do cleanup work that takes much more effort and impacts their reputation and ability to move forward with other programs.

Municipalities struggle with many citizens not being aware of what the municipality can realistically accomplish, whether something is out of their sphere of influence or mandate or that resources are not available or are better spent elsewhere. One of their main asks of ENGOs is to help educate citizens about municipal processes, so that confusion and anger can be reduced and more things can be done with the support of a greater population. One municipal interviewee describes how talking with people face to face, answering countless emails, and sharing news on their website and social media is great, but very time consuming. It would be beneficial to them if they could more effectively educate the public, which ENGOs promise to help with.

Communication about other groups

Cooperating for communication to the public seems to be common. Groups can share each others' messages and promote events. KLT has had other groups ask them to relay messages or recruit volunteers for them and talked about tagging along with municipal communications and newsletters to take advantage of their larger base. Peterborough County has hired GreenUP to do their environmental education for them, banking on the efficiency of the more experienced organization. When ORCA is in need of volunteers for a project, they can ask GreenUP or another group to coordinate their own base of people. 4RG also communicates about municipal politicians, and helps people decide who to vote for based on their sustainability plans. That's a little more judgemental but shows that they want to be involved

with other organizations. Nourish also educates people about their councillors to help them be more informed in their voting. They also educate people about the municipal system, how it works and what the municipality can do something that my municipal interviewees said they appreciate.

4.3.2: ENGO-ENGO Communication

Overall, there was great openness to receiving calls and asks for help or information among organizations in Peterborough. Several interviewees spoke about how happy they were about this, one describing how;

> *"Somebody just says "hey, you should call this person," and it's pretty open. I was actually surprised by how open people in this community are about just picking up the phone and saying, "sure I'll come to the meeting, I'll try to find this out and see how I can help." (Keenan, PKED)*

<u>Who's talking to who?</u>

First, a note that it isn't just environmental NGOs that work with each other. Many interviewees talked about collaborating with organizations that don't have an environmental focus in order to expand their reach to new people and add a different perspective to the issues that both groups deal with. 4RG works with youth organizers, Nourish works with YWCA, Peterborough Public Health, Nogojiwanong Friendship Center, and the New Canadians Center. PKED is another example of this, since it is primarily an economic development organization but

still has ties to some ENGOs, though their main contacts are “Team PTBO,” made up of business and economic groups in Peterborough.

Benefits

This inter-group communication provides many benefits. PFN’s representative spoke of having already built a rapport with other organizations and municipalities in the area, so that when there was a problem that needed collaboration to solve, it was easy to bring in all the different groups and deal with the issue collectively. Another benefit comes about because volunteers are a resource that is distributed unequally between organizations, so they often have to collaborate to receive the volunteers that they need. There are also benefits not just for the actual project that is being collaborated on, but for the individuals and organizations who can learn more during that process. One interviewee describes how;

> *“I think it strengthens the teams that work on the projects because you get more insight into other organizations, how they operate, what they're trying to accomplish. I’ve never walked away from a project without learning something new. It's not just the goals of the actual project itself, I think it strengthens the team players and helps with learning overall.” – Keenan, PKED*

Challenges

Sometimes, ENGOs can have connections that are too close or too exclusive with each other, to the exclusion of other people and groups that might have important stakes in the issue or could provide needed information or resources. Municipal staff, planners, developers, landowners, and contractors have a large role in building a more sustainable city and they need to be involved in conversations about that process. Municipal interviewees expressed their

frustration with some groups composed solely of ENGOs, since they miss out on valuable input from those with experience in the field at hand. Having all stakeholders involved from the start means the final output will be more useful and applicable, understandable to all involved, and will already have the buy-in from these people who would otherwise be taken aback by ENGOs demanding changes from them.

While the perspective of the municipality is of ENGOs not including other groups, it also goes the other direction when municipal governments begin projects or development proposals. If and when they reach out to ENGOs for input, the project can be too far along, and any concerns or suggestions introduced at that point aren't able to be dealt with as easily. These cases also have impacts on relationships between groups by missing out on opportunities to develop them further and possibly eroding them as groups feel frustrated that their input wasn't sought out or considered.

A few other general challenges in partnerships involve coordinating timelines, restarting old partnerships, and determining collective goals. Having multiple organizations involved in a project makes timelines difficult. Each has their own length of decision-making process. Funding deadlines are one of the most important constraints that can be a problem when having to coordinate many groups. Once Sustainable Peterborough is finished reorganizing, they will have to work to communicate their new mission to all the groups in the area, to restart all those partnerships in a different manner. They also hope to be able to leverage more federal funding since they will be SDG-focused, which may help attract other groups. Finally, several groups talked about *"always trying to get down to what problem are we collectively trying to solve?"*

(Keenan, PKED). Most did not specify why there were different problems and what happens when priorities don't align.

> *"I think it's just trying to narrow down that focus so that everyone's mandate and goals and objectives are visible within the project that everyone is working on. That it's meaningful for everyone that is participating. Where we always get tripped up is who's making the decisions, when do they make decisions, and how do they make decisions so that they're all compatible and to meet that never-ending timeline and deadline for funding." – Keenan, PKED*

4.3.3: Government-ENGO Communication

Formal Partnerships

One of the main differences between ENGOs in the study was the formality and structure of their relationships with municipal governments. There were many groups with strong, established ties, and many that partnered only in an ad-hoc manner. This influences the types of cooperation and of communication between the groups. This section starts by providing examples of some of the formal partnerships, then then informal ones.

Since 2012, Sustainable Peterborough has been presenting local sustainable achievements to various councils in the area and see themselves as an information broker, sharing passion and ideas with other groups. For this study, I consider Sustainable Peterborough an independent ENGO, but it is very closely tied to municipalities. It is governed by the City of Peterborough and PKED and funded by the City and County. They must report to the municipalities and need their approval for their strategic plan. There are also representatives of

various municipalities on SPs coordinating committee. Having these close contacts makes it easier to reach out to them, or vice versa, when there's an opportunity for a partnership.

A local township has formal relationships not just with Sustainable Peterborough, but also with local recreation and service clubs that use their land, raise money, or provide programming. The municipality finds these to be valuable partnerships that allow them to save money and increase the quality of programs offered by letting experts take the lead. The City of Peterborough also owns the land on which GreenUP operates the Ecology park and ORCA operates Beavermead campground. Those partnerships involve the ENGOs working both with senior City staff to plan and develop facilities and with grounds and public works staff for maintenance. Nourish has agreements with the City to use land for their gardens and connect to the City water system. Jill Bishop says these are informal agreements, but they are longstanding and quite structured as she works with staff on a regular basis to maintain and create new gardens. She has to submit applications for new gardens and host community meetings in partnership with City staff. Then, they help to dig up the site and donate compost, as well as some ongoing maintenance and cleanup.

Since the City of Peterborough is one of GreenUP's biggest partners and funders, the City is involved in their program development and some grant writing. Their longstanding partnership has allowed GreenUP to be confident of consistent funding, which *"has really allowed us to sustain our capacity and build our impact and not lose momentum or be as vulnerable to changes at other levels of government as I know lots of other NGOs are" (Salmon, GreenUP).* Another aspect of the City of Peterborough that GreenUP appreciates is that it is big enough that there are different divisions that ENGOs can work with more directly, like transportation or

infrastructure, and dedicated sustainability and climate change staff. GreenUP is also contracted to provide education and engagement about new City policies and programs.

ORCA has good communications with municipalities and can connect them to many projects easily, both long-term things like managing the Beavermead campground and one-off projects like tree plantings. ORCA is designed to have partnerships with municipalities based on the Conservation Authorities Act, which the interviewees said is helpful to be able to guide them and makes cooperation a priority.

These close partnerships are seen by both ENGOs and municipalities as necessary for getting things done smoothly. It is useful for a municipality to have one or more quasi-municipal ENGOs like Sustainable Peterborough, PKED, and even GreenUP to be able to smoothly do partnership programs. Having tight, pre-established relationships also cuts down on problems and delays with bureaucracy and decision-making. PKED's director talked about the Green Economy Peterborough project, saying that;

> *"We were grateful that we were all able to make those decisions without having to jump through an awful lot of hoops. I certainly have the delegated authority to be able to do that, the City was able to move that forward, because it was being done by another organization. It's always a challenge on getting those approvals any which way you can." – Keenan, PKED*

Some other groups have infrequent interactions with municipalities. For individual projects, KLT occasionally talks to municipal governments to discuss land and funding for conservation, or to do some small development work, like a parking lot at a popular site.

ENGOs influencing Municipalities

Besides partnering on programs, the other most common way that the ENGOs I interviewed interacted with municipal governments was trying to influence them to take their own actions on environmental issues. These attempts had varying degrees of success, and sometimes led to tensions between the groups.

The Peterborough Field Naturalists do not have formal partnerships with municipalities, but do get involved when there are consultations opened to the public, as well as when there are local issues they want the municipality to address. They feel as though their membership is large enough and engaged in local issues enough that they can have an impact on municipal decisions. They also were part of the official plan committee, and occasionally talk to City of Peterborough staff to get things done without having to go through council. A more passive method of influence is how PFN keeps the municipalities updated as to what they are doing through their monthly magazine that they deliver to councillors for free. In one example of a more formal partnership, PFN was part of the "Kawarthas, Naturally Connected" project, which included many local ENGOs as well as municipalities, to develop a plan for a natural heritage system. My PFN interviewee felt that though the governments were involved, their representatives didn't have the ability to really do anything or implement any of the suggestions. However, he still felt like the process was valuable because of the relationships they created through it, and that in future projects, when there is a better opportunity for recommendations to be implemented, having the municipal staff already be familiar with the ENGOs and the project will help it happen then.

4RG interacts with all levels of government, lobbying their local, provincial, and federal representatives. They have some established relationships with provincial and federal governments, but the governments' responses have been that they didn't feel like there was enough pressure from citizens to get things done. On the other hand, 4RG was more successful in creating local change through municipal governments, especially the City of Peterborough. 4RG was *"instrumental in getting Peterborough to pass their Climate Emergency Act" (Hanchet, 4RG)* by talking to councillors individually, as well as in council meetings, involving as many and as diverse groups as possible. 4RG worked to educate City councillors about climate change by having coffee meetings to explain what the problem was and how they could help. They are also starting a program, delayed by Covid, called "township climate ambassadors" for people to continue to make presentations to council in the various townships in the area. Beyond climate change, 4RG also tries to talk to municipalities about more specific issues, like sustainability in housing or transportation. My interviewee felt that these specific asks can be more successful because there is a clearer course of action. However, these campaigns do take the form of asking or demanding things of the municipality, which can prompt a bad reaction and hurt reputations like was discussed previously.

<u>Challenges:</u>

Sustainable Peterborough tries to ensure that they're providing something useful to the municipalities, without causing them any difficulty. That seems important for any group to try to do, so that they want to interact with you and wouldn't rather ignore you. Sustainable Peterborough has thought about this at length, as their director says;

> *" I think it's worth looking and talking to them about what is challenging, what prevents you from participating, contributing, and that's how you come up with better solutions and help them as well. You don't want to become an additional challenge for these people, for the townships, right? I think just coming up with solutions that work for everyone and don't make anyone's life more difficult than it needs to be." – Pascalau, SP*

As was discussed already, many municipal representatives feel that citizens don't have realistic expectations for what a municipality can do. They don't know what is in their jurisdiction, what has already been done, and what the actual barriers are to the solution they're proposing. These problems apply not only to individuals, but also to organizations like ENGOs. When groups without experience working with government make demands, frustrations occur and barriers go up. While a certain number of demands and pressures are expected by municipal staff, many interviewees focused on the demands not being reasonable. They felt that their time was wasted responding to these demands and thought that citizens and organizations need to be better educated to be able to critique municipal problems and suggest solutions more effectively. All my municipal interviewees were supportive of sustainability since I selected them for their positions and experience with sustainable partnerships. However, we can see that even the advocates for sustainability within each municipality can become frustrated by demands from well-meaning groups who aren't focusing on the correct things.

One example of a problem with communication came up with PFN. The interviewee related that PFN feels that the City of Peterborough is unwilling to listen to them, take their advice, or

accept assistance. PFN sees this advice as “low-hanging fruit” that could lead to easy sustainability advances for the City and is frustrated that their advice is not taken.

> *“People just want to give Peterborough stuff, and they won't take it. It’s just mind boggling to me and I don't know what that's about. I haven't been able to get into the head of some of the decision makers at the City and what they're thinking when they sit down to the table with us and they say “no, we're not interested.” If I could understand kind of what's going on there, what I wouldn't give.”*
> *- Radcliffe, PFN*

This is obviously frustrating for PFN, but from a municipal viewpoint, it is possible that this “low-hanging fruit” is more difficult to implement than it seems from the outside. In addition, a lack of communication channels between the two groups means that neither group can communicate effectively about why or why not a certain plan is feasible, with this current situation as a result.

Another barrier to effective communication that was identified earlier is differences in timing. Municipal staff I interviewed recognize that their internal lead-up time and deadlines are challenging for ENGOs who want to present a report or have council vote on something, sometimes needing things to be submitted months in advance to be included in a council package. Even once things are decided on, funding and additional approvals take even longer to be finished. However, when there is an established relationship between an ENGO and municipality, such as with GreenUP and the City of Peterborough, this lag effect isn’t as pronounced as with other groups and projects. Several people described how the constant and effective communication between the groups made it feel like they’re all part of one team working together. The point in a project at which collaboration occurs is also an important

factor. Many ENGO interviewees described trying to influence a municipality about an initiative or policy, only to learn that it was too late in the planning process for them to have much of an effect. Even the Peterborough Environmental Advisory Committee feels that they are involved too late and too little. In their case, City council initiates collaboration by sending PEAC information packages to provide feedback on. One PEAC member said that they are usually involved after most of the policy has already been drafted, and even if their comments are implemented, they don't have influence on the overall structure of the policy. The interviewee said they would like to be involved earlier, when policies are first being drafted, so that they could guide the direction of the work from the start. They think that part of this problem is that they aren't top of mind for council, and so are working to raise their profile within the City so that both council and staff become used to bringing policy to them at an early stage.

Communicating and building a relationship with government, especially multiple governments, takes a lot of time and energy. For KLT and others, that time could be more efficiently applied directly to landowners. Another challenge that PKED's director encountered is that *"because I'm funded by them, it's a little bit of an awkward situation, an awkward relationship" (Keenan, PKED).* Since all of PKED's funding comes from the two municipal governments, and there are such strict reporting requirements, it can be hard for PKED when they would rather the municipality did something different. PEAC is also limited in that they have a very small scope and are solely responsive to council, and are not supposed to go into advocacy or start their own projects.

Chapter 5: Survey Results

After completing the interviews, I released this survey to see what the people who participate in sustainability programs think about local environmental groups and municipalities and cooperation between them. The survey aimed to answer two of my research questions: how does cooperation affect how the public perceives ENGOs, governments and their activities, and how do ENGO-municipal government partnerships influence public participation in environmental activities?

As discussed in the methods chapter, this survey was distributed through the social media and newsletters of several of the ENGOs involved in this study. The survey was active for two months from December 8, 2021, to February 4, 2022 and received 52 responses. Most respondents completed all questions, but several did not. Responses shown in percentages are the percentages of responses for that question. Each question is reported on in this chapter in the sequence that it was asked. The survey itself can be found in appendix G. The questions begin with demographic information about where respondents live and who they heard about this survey from, move on to their knowledge and opinions of local environmental organizations, and finally ask about their thoughts on municipal-ENGO partnerships. This is a stand-alone chapter but will be analysed in relation to the literature and my interviews in an upcoming chapter.

Q1: Which organization did you learn about this survey from?

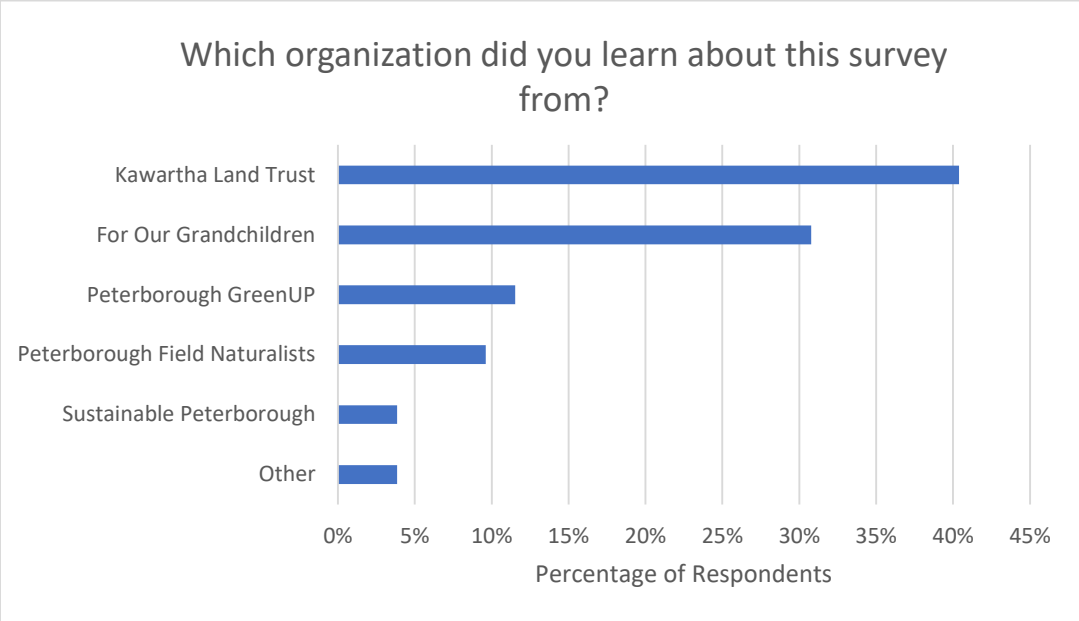

Fig. 1. The percentage of survey respondents that were directed to this study by different ENGOs.

This survey was not a random sample, but was distributed through the networks of local ENGOs. This question answers where respondents learned about the survey from in order to take that into account in the other questions which ask about involvement with and feelings about several local ENGOs. If people were directed to the survey through a particular organization, they are likely involved in that organization's activities and feel positively about that group. The analysis of the rest of the survey will take into account this bias towards certain groups.

The most responses were procured through Kawartha Land Trust (KLT), with 21 responses totalling 40% of the total. The other groups that recruited participants were For Our Grandchildren (4RG) (16 responses, 31%), Peterborough GreenUP (6 responses, 12%), Peterborough Field Naturalists (PFN) (5 responses, 10%), and Sustainable Peterborough (2

responses, 4%). Two respondents indicated they learned about the survey from other sources that must have reshared the survey. One respondent learned about the survey from "Age Friendly Peterborough and the Peterborough Alliance for Food & Farming," another from a "Liberal party member."

Q2: Where do you live?

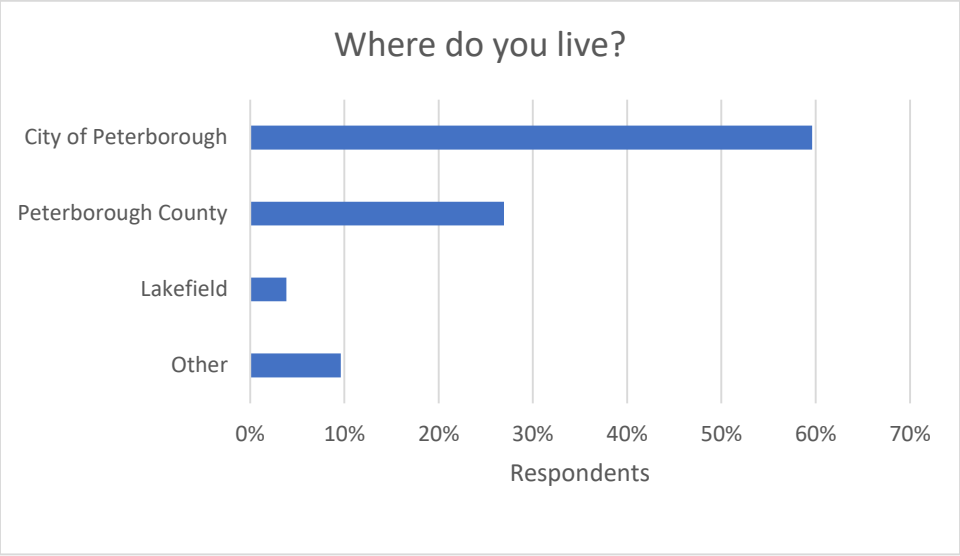

Fig. 2. The location each respondent resides at in the study area.

Some of the survey questions ask about the respondent's "local municipality" which is indicated in this question. Some of the ENGOs in the study primarily work in the City of Peterborough, in rural areas, or both, so this question allows me to determine whether where a respondent lives is related to which ENGOs they interact with. I can also tell whether people rate the municipalities differently in upcoming questions.

Most respondents lived in the City of Peterborough, with 31 responses totalling 60%. Half that many lived in Peterborough County (14 responses, 27%) and an additional 2 (4%) specified they lived in Lakefield. 5 (10%) respondents indicated they lived somewhere else, including two that only live seasonally in the area.

Q3: Which of these local environmental organizations are you aware of?

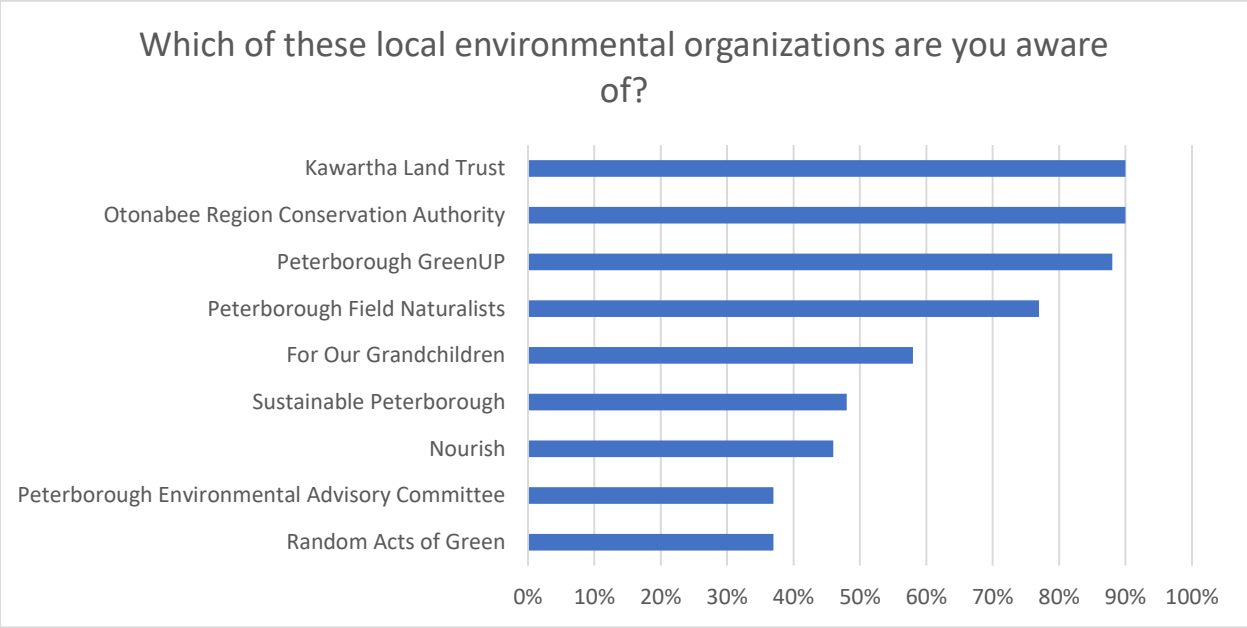

Fig. 3. The percentage of respondents who were aware of each of these ENGOs.

Which organizations to include in this survey was determined by online searches for ENGOs in and around Peterborough, as well as conversations with Trent professors involved with some ENGOs. This is not meant to be a completely comprehensive list, but includes many of the most high-profile groups. This selection seems to have worked, since all groups were known by at least a third of respondents.

The most well known ENGOs were the two conservation organizations in the study, Kawartha Land Trust and Otonabee Region Conservation Authority, each with 90% of people indicating they were aware of the groups. Next were GreenUP (88%), Peterborough Field Naturalists (77%), and For Our Grandchildren (58%). The groups known by less than half of respondents were Sustainable Peterborough (48%), Nourish (46%), the Peterborough Environmental Advisory Committee (37%), and Random Acts of Green (37%). These results may exhibit sample bias as KLT, GreenUP, PFN, and 4RG, four of the most well-known groups based on these results, contributed most of my respondents.

Q4: Have you participated in any environmental events, projects, or initiatives led by any of these organizations?

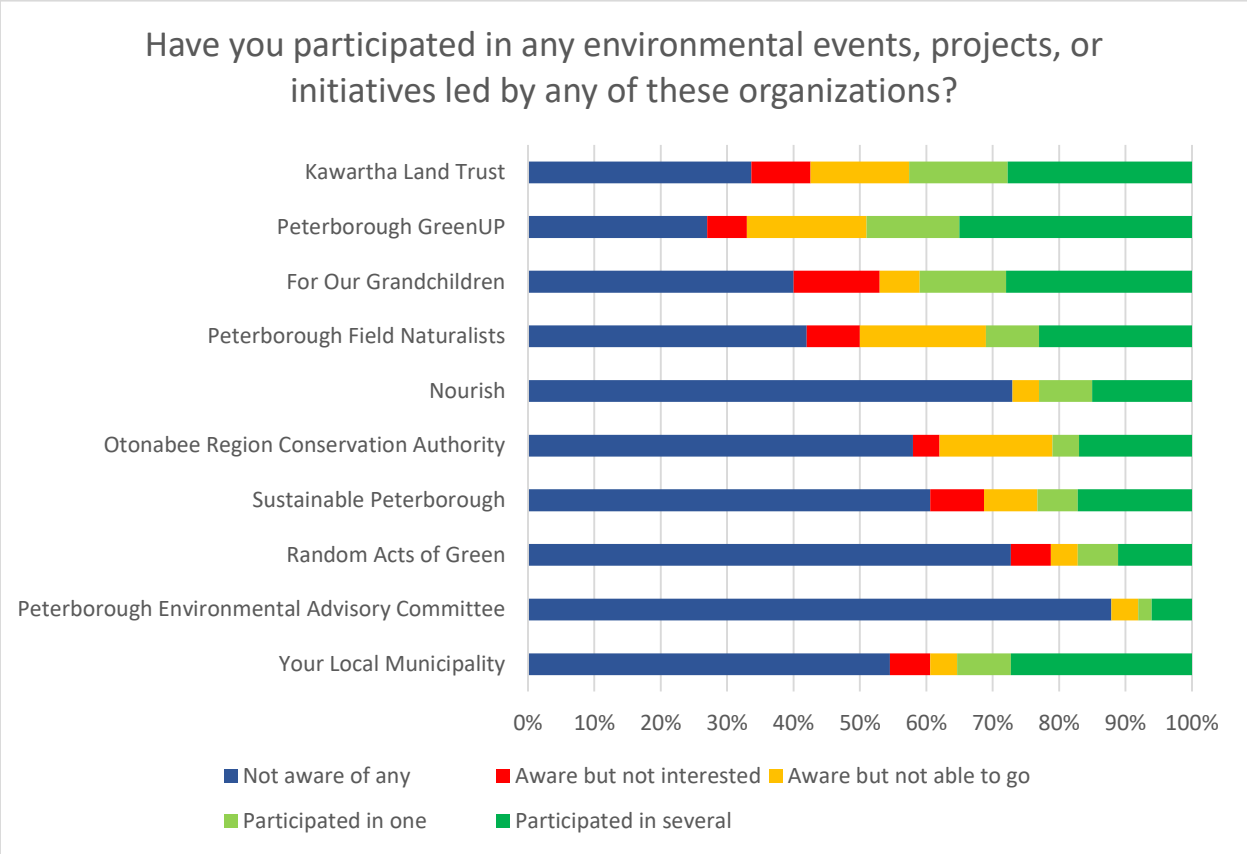

Fig. 4. The percentages of respondents that participated in events led by local organizations and their reasons for not participating.

This question builds off the last, as ENGOs strive not just for recognition, but for people to take the next step and become involved in participating with them.

By combining the "participated in one" and "participated in several" categories, we can see that 49% of respondents participated in one or more events led by GreenUP. 43% have participated with KLT, 41% with 4RG, 35% with their local municipality, 31% with PFN, 23% with

Sustainable Peterborough, 23% with Nourish, 21% with ORCA, 17% with Random Acts of Green, and only 8% with PEAC.

The top three, GreenUP, KLT, and 4RG, were also the three largest contributors for respondents, but not in that order. KLT provided 40% of respondents, and only a few more people (43%) had attended their events. 31% of respondents came from 4RG, and 41% had participated with them. The largest change was for GreenUP, who despite recruiting only 12% of my participants, had 49% of respondents involved in their activities. When comparing KLT and GreenUP, this difference could signify KLT's members are more exclusively involved only with KLT, while GreenUP has a broader base from many different parts of the community. It is also likely that participation numbers for all organizations have been affected by Covid.

For almost all organizations, around twice as many people have participated in several of their events compared to just one. This is good news for the groups, since it means their events are engaging enough to promote repeat attendance. There is sample bias here, since respondents who are engaged in environmental organizations enough to answer this survey would most likely also be active participants in the groups. Most organisations also had small numbers of people who were aware of their events but were not interested enough to attend. The most important reason why people hadn't attended an organization's event was simply that they didn't know about any.

The "not aware of any" category can indicate several things. First, if someone is not aware of an organization (question 3), they won't be aware of their events, highlighting the importance of communication and reaching new people. Second, they are not receiving

communications from that group, which is addressed in question 7. Third, it can simply show that an organization does not host many public events, such as the leader in the category, the Peterborough Environmental Advisory Committee. This last reason depends a lot on the type of organization and whether participation is an essential part of what they do. Some organizations host more activities, or of a type that is easier to participate in, for example an energy retrofit program versus a letter-writing campaign. The different types of organisations and what participation means to them are considered more in the discussion chapter.

Q5: What motivates you to be involved in an organization and their initiatives?

This question gives us greater insight into the previous question by asking why people get involved in an organization. Due to differences in goals and activities of different organizations, these answers would likely change depending on where respondents are recruited from. Still, this question provides a cross-section of some respondents and could be useful for the ENGOs to know why people are motivated to be involved.

After sorting the written responses into categories (some responses were applied to multiple categories), the most common response (n=29) is, unsurprisingly, environmental concern and desire to have a positive change. Respondents pointed out specific aspects they felt most strongly about, such as global warming/climate change, conserving lands, local environmental problems, and contributing to policy and governmental change. Some mentioned “climate despair” and the “need to feel like I’m doing something good.” Others

looked to the future and wanted to “be a good ancestor” and “leave an ethical legacy” for future generations.

Another category (n=12) was personal reasons for participating, including interest, enjoyment, and learning. Many people wrote of their “love of wild spaces and outdoor adventures” or their interest in the work or topics of the event. Others specifically wanted to “to learn about issues from experienced and professional people.” Being involved with people and community was another reason for participating (n=8). Many said they enjoyed working with “wonderful people” with “similar interests.” Others used these organizations’ events as “networking opportunities” and to “build local social community.” Two respondents related community involvement to the success and impact of the initiatives, saying that “If there is pressure from the community, I believe changes will be made on other levels” and “community planning and advocacy for change will only be successful through collaboration and partnerships.”

Some final responses included actions by the organizing groups that made the respondents more likely to participate. Two respondents indicated that just knowing about the events, or being asked to participate, is a large part of whether they attend or not. The final respondent said that they get involved “when the initiative is well thought out, the organization is well run and has clear achievable objectives, and when the goals allow everyone to contribute what they can (not an extreme all or nothing type of thing).” These three responses all show the need for clear communication by the organizing groups.

Q6: Which local environmental groups are closest to your own environmental priorities? List up to three groups and explain why.

The most popular groups for this question were Kawartha Land Trust with 18 responses, Peterborough GreenUP with 17, For Our Grandchildren with 13 responses, and Peterborough Field Naturalists with 7. These were the four groups that most participants learned about the survey from, but they were also popular among those who were recruited by other organizations. The next groups were Otonabee Region Conservation Authority (5) and B!KE (3). There were two responses for each of Nourish, TRACKS, the City of Peterborough, and the Peterborough Alliance for Climate Action and only one each for Peterborough Alliance for Food & Farming, Age-Friendly Peterborough, Peterborough Immigration Partnership, OPIRG (Ontario public interest research group), Diverse Nature Collective, the Cottagers association for Stoney Lake, Stewardship Council of Peterborough County, Camp Kawartha and the Pathway to Stewardship and Kinship project, Random Acts of Green, the Environment Council for Clear, Stony and White Lakes, Nature Conservancy Canada, ALUS Peterborough, and Trout Unlimited Millbrook chapter. Five people indicated some variation of none, and 7 left the question blank.

The respondents' stated reasons for preferring certain environmental groups are diverse and difficult to group as neatly as the previous part of the question. Most of the responses are a variation of what topics they are interested in and what issues they are most concerned about. They were typically matched up with what an organization is known for; respondents appreciate Nourish because they value food security and enjoy gardening, For Our Grandchildren because they recognize the importance of the climate crisis, or Kawartha Land Trust for conserving nature and habitat. Many of the responses are also similar to the main

categories of peoples' motivations from question 5. The various forms of environmental issues and action were most prevalent, alongside a preference for organizations that bring people together to educate and empower them for local volunteer action. Kawartha Land Trust and Peterborough Field Naturalists were the two organizations that people appreciated because of the opportunities for outdoor recreation. As one respondent said, "nature is what makes me happy." One unique answer for why a respondent preferred GreenUP was that it has "big pockets compared to some other NGOs" and the "ability to work with governments." This shows that not only are the goals of a group important, but people appreciate those who have the resources and influence to be able to affect the most change.

Q7: Which groups communicate most effectively with you? List up to three groups and explain why. What forms of communication by local organizations are best for you?

The groups that people felt communicated with them most effectively were Kawartha Land Trust with 18 responses, For Our Grandchildren with 17, Peterborough GreenUP with 12, and Peterborough Field Naturalists with 5. Numerous other organizations had one or two votes. These top four are the same as in question 6 and of the recruiting organizations in question 1. Does good communication cause people to identify with the priorities of a certain group, or are people more likely to participate, sign up to mailing lists, and be happier to receive communication from groups they already like?

The survey question also asked what forms of communication respondents preferred. The most common answer was emails, with 21 responses. The next most popular form of

communication was social media, with 14 responses. Three people further specified they used Facebook for their communication, and one used Twitter. Thirteen people relied on newsletters from the organizations. Some organizations print and distribute physical newsletters, while others email monthly newsletters, so it is not possible to determine which they mean from the way the survey was set up. Four people learned about local events through newspapers, while another 4 said they preferred being contacted personally, such as by phone. One respondent was very adamant about being contacted personally as they "really really really dislike getting unsolicited emails and paper mail." Four got their information from organizations' websites, one specifying that the ConnectPTBO website was a good resource to "keep up with what's happening" in the City. This City-managed website informs residents of many of the municipality's activities, including several environmental initiatives that ENGOs are involved in, but no solely ENGO initiatives. Finally, 2 said they enjoyed Zoom meetings and other respondents said they got information from GreenUP's store and local events like farmer's markets.

Q8: What is your opinion of the effectiveness of the environmental initiatives of each organization?

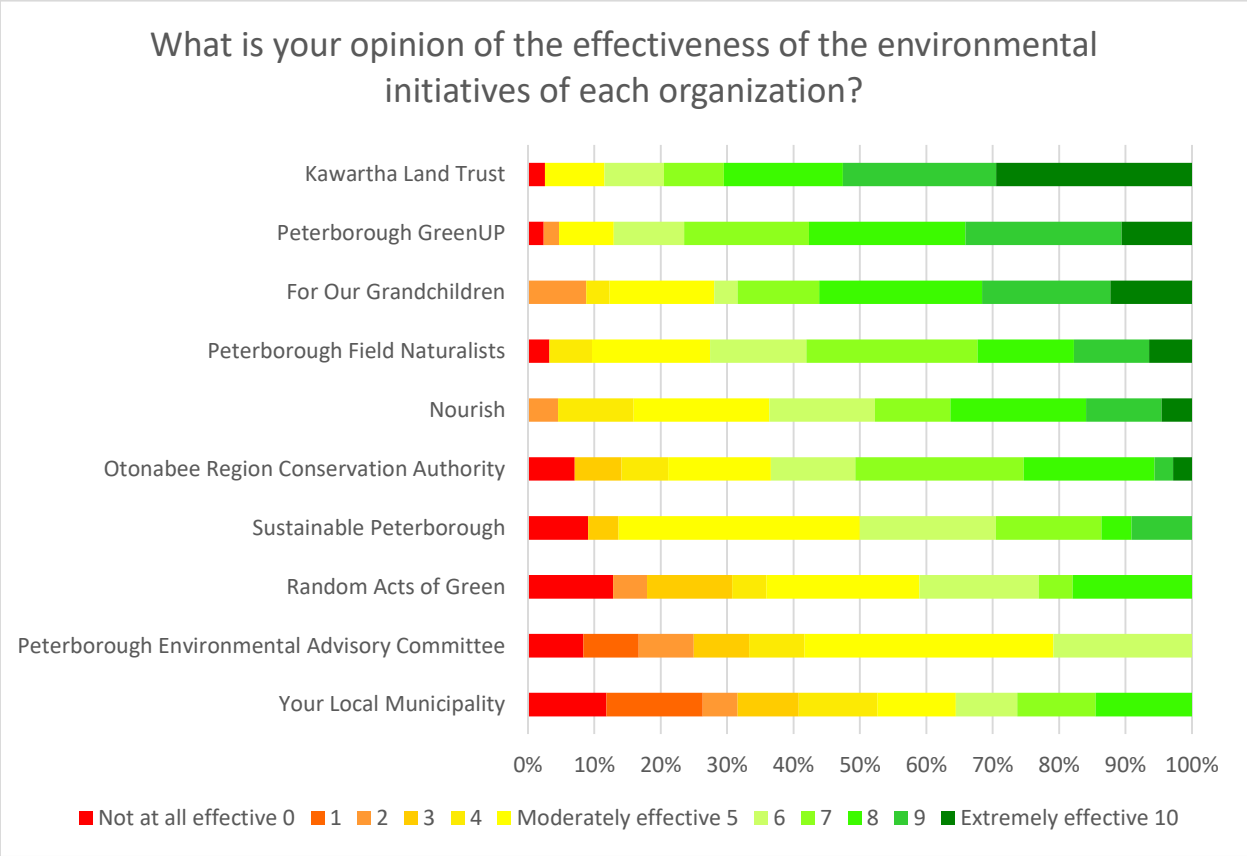

Fig. 5. Percentage of respondents rating the effectiveness of the environmental initiatives of each organization from 0-10.

This survey question asked respondents to rate the effectiveness of the environmental initiatives of each organization on an 11-point Likert scale from 0 to 10. Not all respondents replied for each organization, so the graph represents the percentages only of the completed responses. I sorted the graph based on the rough overall effectiveness for each organization.

Kawartha Land Trust and Peterborough GreenUP were seen as the most effective, with over 85% of respondents rating them as above moderate. For Our Grandchildren, Peterborough

Field Naturalists, Nourish, Otonabee Region Conservation Authority, and Sustainable Peterborough also scored above the average of options, with over 50% describing each as above moderate and with few rating them very low. The lowest rated organizations were Random Acts of Green, the Peterborough Environmental Advisory Committee, and the Local Municipality option.

This question had many people not respond for all organizations, closely resembling question 3 and how many people were aware of the organizations. Random Acts of Green and PEAC had the fewest people who indicated an opinion (39% and 24%, respectively). The percentage of respondents for the other organizations start with 44% for Sustainable Peterborough and Nourish, moving up to 57% for 4RG, 62% for PFN, 71% for ORCA, 76% for the Local Municipality, 78% for KLT, and a high of 85% for GreenUP.

Q9: Please describe an example of an effective initiative led by a local environmental organization.

Many of GreenUP's programs were referenced in this question. Two respondents appreciated their home energy efficiency audit program and four said that "GreenUP Ecology Park is amazing." Their rain and pollinator gardens, rain barrels, and de-paving initiatives were all mentioned as well. Kawartha Land Trust's activities were also seen as very effective. Respondents mentioned fundraising as an important initiative they could participate in and appreciated the conservation of lands both to protect habitat to "enhance corridors for animals" and because KLT "opens them to the public" and they could recreate on the lands. The

benefits of these initiatives are twofold. Purchasing and placing a conservation easement on new land has its ecological benefits, but the fundraising activity also allows for community involvement, another key part of initiatives described in previous questions. Other organizations mentioned include Nourish, Peterborough Field Naturalists, ORCA, B!KE, 4RG, and a municipality. Though the organizations running them are important, these responses are more a way to see which types of initiatives were most popular. Not all responses fit into a "type," but I will group what I can below.

As seen in previous questions, community involvement is an important aspect of an initiative. Before, the context was that people enjoyed networking and being with other like-minded individuals. That it still appears in this question suggests that respondents feel community involvement is, in and of itself, a measure of the effectiveness of an initiative or organization. This could either be because people see popular and well-attended events as effective, or that they see a connection between community participation and the environmental goals of a group or initiative. In cases like Nourish's Community Garden Network, "developing, supporting, and building a large community of community gardeners and gardens" is the goal of the project. KLT's "tallgrass seed-saving workbee" helps with "combining environmental education and action," since having more people doing this action has direct environmental benefits. Other responses did not have as much of a practical, environmental meaning of effectiveness. One respondent stated that "guided tours of lands protected by KLT (allow) volunteers to feel connected to the organization's goals." More connection and involvement could translate to conservation, but it is likely that being connected to an organization is a goal on its own, both for the participant and the organisation.

Another aspect of how people interact with environmental initiatives is how easy it is for people to participate in them. One-off events are exciting, but ongoing projects and activities allow residents to continually interact and contribute. Many of the initiatives mentioned were things that people benefitted from or could interact with, in addition to them being good for the environment. Things like bicycle lanes, recycling programs, tree plantings, and rain barrels all allow people to feel that they are directly contributing to sustainability. Other responses that reflect this include GreenUP's home efficiency audit program and the Ecology Park, visiting KLT properties, bike tune-ups, composting systems, and rain and pollinator gardens. People appreciate that, because of the actions of environmental groups, they are able to visit and use these places and services freely and continually.

A third common type of initiative was protecting land. Most responses associated it with KLT, which I discussed above. Of all the responses, these mentioned people the least, and focused more on the direct benefits of protecting land. As one respondent stated, "this is priority #1 in my opinion. Nature needs its land back."

Finally, respondents also saw education as being a worthwhile and effective goal of an initiative. This includes meetings and newsletters as well as "educational outings" by groups like KLT and PFN. Again, there are no direct environmental benefits to outdoor education and recreation (there could even be some environmental degradation because of it), but it is well-recognized that outdoor experiences and knowledge contribute to more environmentally friendly behaviors. Whether my respondents are thinking of these changed behaviors or just see education itself as a goal is unclear.

Q10: If your local municipality collaborated with a local environmental organization, how effective do you think their initiatives would be?

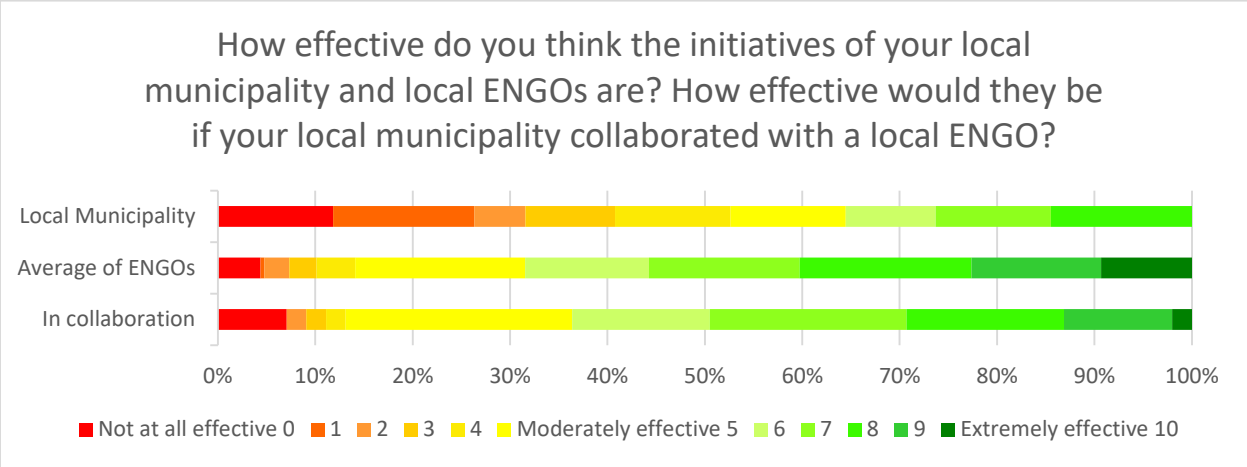

Fig. 6. Percentage of respondents rating the effectiveness of the initiatives of local ENGOs and their local municipality, alone and in collaboration.

The first two bars of this graph are from question 8. The local municipality data was taken directly from that question, while I averaged the responses for all the other ENGOs for the second bar, showing the overall opinions of their effectiveness. Respondents generally viewed ENGOs as much more effective than their local municipality. When asked how effective collaboration between their local municipality and an ENGO would be in this question, the responses were collected in the third bar. This collaboration is viewed to be much more effective than the municipality acting alone, but slightly less effective than the average of ENGOs by themselves. While this question asks specific opinions on the environmental initiatives of a municipality, there are likely other factors that impact peoples' opinions of a municipality that will be discussed later and contrasted with interview results.

Q11: In what ways do you think collaboration between your local municipality and a local environmental organization affects the effectiveness of their initiatives?

The majority of respondents to this question detailed ways that collaboration would or does benefit the organizations and their initiatives, which I have organized into categories that echo responses in this rest of the analysis of this survey as well as my interviews.

First is capacity and funds, which 10 people mentioned. The consensus within my respondents is that municipalities have greater access to money and other resources, giving them "the ability to achieve bigger initiatives than the organizations alone." Respondents also said that municipalities allow for more cost-effective initiatives, possibly because of a larger scale, and that "infrastructure support" from municipalities can make some initiatives more practical. Several respondents said that municipalities should contribute more money than they currently are and not "squander it on more arenas" or "allowing heated sidewalks that use gas fired energy for the new Louis St. park." No respondents said that ENGOs should or could contribute funds to shared initiatives.

The next category is outreach to the public. Seven respondents thought that collaboration would increase outreach to more people, and unlike with money, different respondents said that both municipalities and ENGOs would be able to contribute. Some said that ENGOs have "more experience in the community itself," but others thought municipalities had greater reach and influence with the public. Both statements can be true. As seen in the interview results, the various groups in Peterborough all have contacts and influence with different segments of the population, increasing reach when there are collaborative events.

Related to outreach is the credibility and reputation of the organizations and of their initiatives. Seven respondents agreed that it "adds credibility to the programs" and "provides clout and status when more than one group cooperates." Most did not specify which organization this credibility comes from, or whether its simply having multiple groups involved that raises its status. Some did, saying that "by involving local government it also sends a message about the importance of the initiative to all citizens."

Having multiple perspectives was seen as a benefit of cooperation by 8 respondents. Many treated it generally, but some gave examples of how the different perspectives, generally of the ENGOs, could improve what municipalities do. Cooperation "would force the municipality to engage with and confront environmental issues" and "persuade the municipality that we are living in a crisis and emergency measures are needed." Others believed that "organizations have the ability to identify the most effective focus" and can give municipalities "a wider view of the environmental issues and the concerns of society in general." These answers treat ENGOs as being more in tune with both public concerns and environmental priorities than municipalities. They believe that ENGOs need to "hold the feet of the municipality to the fire," since they won't prioritize or act on these issues without pressure.

Once new perspectives are included in these cooperative discussions, a variety of people at the table are also able to contribute their specific knowledges and skills to the issue. Six respondents agreed that their "municipality needs the expertise and volunteerism of local organizations" and could increase their knowledge base using the expertise of groups such as the Peterborough Environmental Advisory Committee.

Not all respondents, however, thought that cooperation between ENGOs and municipalities was an entirely positive thing. Four indicated that they weren't sure of the effects or weren't informed enough to decide. Eight others pointed out potential difficulties and drawbacks to collaboration. First, that it can be difficult to design an initiative that is "mutually beneficial" so that all entities want to be involved. Second, there were several respondents concerned that partnering with a municipality could harm an ENGO or its programs. One stated that "if the government gets involved it gets bogged down in red tape." Other, even more concerning outcomes that were brought up are the "potential to greenwash/deradicalize" and that "when orgs take municipal money they are really restricted with how they use it and even what opinions they'll communicate publicly, because they don't want to run afoul of a big funder." One also thought that "if government became involved with one group, other groups may oppose." All these respondents show a fairly negative view of governments, including their bureaucracy and their ideologies, and that last comment implies that some ENGOs share that view of wanting to remain separate from government.

Q12: Is there anything else you would like to share about your opinions of the environmental initiatives of your local municipality or local environmental organizations, or partnerships between the groups?

This final question allowed respondents to provide any other feedback they wanted about the survey, this study, or about the work of local organizations. Many did not have any comments, others expressed their thanks and their hope that this research project and the

work of the local ENGOs and municipalities would contribute to better initiatives and environmental goals. Some respondents, however, provided additional comments relevant to the study which will be included in the discussion chapter.

Chapter 6: Discussion

This chapter takes the information gathered from the literature review, survey, and interviews and uses it to address the research questions posed at the beginning of this thesis:

a) What relationships have local ENGOs and municipal governments developed?
b) What are the benefits of cooperation between local ENGOs and municipal governments?
c) What are the challenges involved in doing cooperative initiatives, and how can these challenges be overcome?
d) How does cooperation affect how the public perceives ENGOs, governments and their activities?
e) How do ENGO-municipal government partnerships influence public participation in environmental activities?

The environmental non-governmental organizations involved in this study participated in a wide variety of activities involving municipal governments, from information sharing and collaborative programming to advocacy and planning work. The type of organization and their goals determined their motivations and the benefits of the relationship, whether they wanted to work towards a new policy being implemented or to increase their capacity to provide programs to residents. There were many challenges involved in collaboration, including transparency about goals and expectations, differing timelines, and lack of established communication pathways to plan for new projects and report about what has been

accomplished. The survey provided important information about public perceptions, the most important finding being that the public had much more negative perception of municipal governments than ENGOs. However, it also showed the possibility that cooperation can improve those perceptions as well as get people more involved in local activities and make policy more responsive to the community's needs. Each of the research questions will be discussed in the following sections.

6.1: What relationships have local ENGOs and municipal governments developed?

The earlier context section and the interview results already give an overview of what activities each ENGO does in connection to municipalities, so this question takes the idea further and looks for a link between the types of activities and the type of relationship between the groups. These activities and the closeness of their relationships to municipalities divide the organizations into three roles:

- programming groups that work together with municipalities to fund and implement local events and initiatives,
- planning groups that contribute information and advice to help municipalities plan their sustainability efforts, and
- activist groups that pressure municipal governments to adopt sustainable policies.

The next three sections explain each of these roles and how they influence the ENGO's relationships to municipal governments. Several of the ENGOs in this study have more than one role, so the fourth section examines the connections between these three roles.

6.1.1: Programming

For many people, their experiences with environmental NGOs involve attending an event where they had fun, learned something about sustainability, and/or participated in a stewardship activity. Many common environmental programs include tree plantings, cleanup, education and interpretation events, and school trips or visits. This section deals with these ENGOs who have a programming role.

GreenUP's programs include a wide variety of successful events and initiatives. They run the Ecology Park, lead sustainable neighborhood planning projects, and have programs to address municipal priorities of climate action, water protection, energy conservation, transportation, and waste reduction (*GreenUP*, n.d.). According to GreenUP's executive director, almost all of these activities are planned and implemented in partnership with the City of Peterborough and she often met with City Council and senior municipal staff to plan these initiatives and keep abreast of their sustainability goals. The Otonabee Region Conservation Association also primarily acts in a programming role. Like all Conservation Associations, ORCA provides services relating to water security and safe recreation, but also has many other kinds of environmental programming (*Otonabee Region Conservation Authority*, n.d.). According to my interviewees, some of their most common programs are tree plantings, source water

protection work, and climate action in partnership with municipalities. They also run education programs, particularly in schools, that help to spread municipalities' desired information. Another group that primarily runs programs is Nourish, who works with the City of Peterborough to create and maintain many of their gardens, about half of which are on municipal property according to their Community Food Cultivator. The City approves applications for new gardens and public works helps to create them, preparing the site, donating compost, and occasionally helping dispose of waste.

All these groups in a programming role have some similarities in their relationships to the municipalities they work with. First, all the relationships are well-established, going back at least a decade. While it is not clear from this research exactly how these relationships were different when they were first starting out, it seems that all three benefitted from planning documents or policy that promoted collaboration. GreenUP was created in response to municipal (as well as provincial) priorities and remains funded in part by the City of Peterborough. Conservation Authorities have language in their legislation that mandates community-based collaboration, and Nourish's collaboration with the City of Peterborough arose out of the City's Community Garden Policy. This is similar to Montreal's Éco-quartier program, begun in the 1990s, which offered funding to numerous ENGOs around the city to run programs that fulfilled the City's goals (Senecal, 2002). This suggests that programming partnerships might not happen organically but require a good amount of planning or policy direction to push them forward. In addition to these overarching directives, individual programming relationships were often set out by contracts and agreements with specific goals and scope, and involved grant applications and reporting.

These relationships all involve high levels of trust between the ENGOs and municipalities. The programs they are involved in require high levels of commitment, communication, and resources. Municipal interviewees were especially concerned about careful selection of programs and partners to ensure good use of public resources. The amount of communication during the projects varied by group, however. GreenUP was the most actively involved with the City of Peterborough, due to ongoing dialogue about the wide variety of current and future projects. ORCA and Nourish, on the other hand, seem to reach out to municipal partners on an as-needed basis, often when new project opportunities come up or they have specific requests. Montreal's Éco-quartier ENGOs represent an even more limited relationship. They had to submit proposals and reports to the City, but most said that they ended up having little contact with their municipal representatives besides at special events (Senecal, 2002). These different relationships show a spectrum of partnership types for programming, from hands-off direction to ongoing dialogue and implementing programs together.

6.1.2: Information and Planning

Groups whose role involves information and planning are also very closely tied to municipalities and have established, trusting relationships that allow them to have back-and-forth discussions and work towards consensus in planning. The deliverables for planning initiatives are not events or programs, but policies and other documents that set out an organization's environmental goals and strategies. Public participation in planning processes,

whether by individuals or NGOs, is widely seen as an important aspect of local governance. Some consider participation a democratic right while other believe that public involvement can produce better outcomes (Rydin & Pennington, 2000). Many issues such as waste management involve multiple groups by their very nature, so planning requires all participants to be present (Turcotte & Pasquero, 2001). Some research suggests that, acting alone, municipalities will not always follow either the wishes of their residents or environmental best practices, whether because of a difference in goals or lack of information. Close collaboration between municipal staff and other organizations is critical to ensure that research and planning progress in a way that aligns with the goals of both stakeholders (Wamsler et al., 2014). Recognizing that the goals of municipalities, ENGOs, and the public often don't align with each other, multi-stakeholder planning aims to find a common ground to make progress on.

Some organizations that engage with municipalities in this way are called boundary or bridging organizations, which are discussed in the literature review and include organizations that engage with governments and help to transfer knowledge between science and policy (Berkes, 2009). Unander & Sørensen (2020) suggest the term rhizomic learning for how some organizations or individuals gather knowledge not from purely academic sources, but from a wide network of contacts. In Peterborough, there are a variety of organizations whose activities and relationships fit this concept, including Peterborough and the Kawarthas Economic Development, the Peterborough Environmental Advisory Committee, and Sustainable Peterborough. Other groups like KLT and GreenUP are also involved in planning, but in a more ad-hoc way where they get involved only in certain issues.

Sustainable Peterborough is closely linked to municipalities through their position within PKED, their municipal funding, and the many municipal representatives on their board (*Sustainable Peterborough*, n.d.). SP has worked with local governments and other groups to create the Sustainable Peterborough Plan, as well as "local area government climate change action plans for all of the municipalities, City, County, townships, First Nations" (Pascalau, SP). They also share information between groups through their website, report cards, council presentations, and an annual recognition event. Another group that was created for the sole purpose of helping the City of Peterborough with planning, the Peterborough Environmental Advisory Committee is "responsive to requests from staff and Council" (Pascalau, PEAC). When the City has an issue or proposed policy they would like input on, they can draw on PEAC for their research and comments. My interviewee gave several examples of things PEAC has dealt with, including a bylaw about tree maintenance and removal, the municipal climate change resilience strategy, and the cycling plan for the City. Lastly, Peterborough and the Kawarthas Economic Development is not strictly an ENGO, but many of PKED's programs and goals involve sustainability, including trying to become "the most innovative and sustainable community and economy in Ontario" (Keenan, PKED). They act as a proxy to the City, using their delegated authority to help plan for how to attract and retain sustainable businesses. My interviewee also spoke about how she was involved with many City planning and advisory groups and helps to transfer information and ideas between the City and its businesses.

Other local ENGOs have also been involved in planning activities with various municipalities. KLT's director relayed how they were involved in land use planning through the Kawarthas, Naturally Connected project where municipalities and other stakeholders set out

their plan for a future system of natural areas in the Kawarthas region. GreenUP's executive director and her staff are regularly involved in providing information and helping the City of Peterborough plan for issues such as neighborhood planning and active transportation.

Sustainable Peterborough, PKED, and PEAC all exist primarily to serve their relationships with their municipal partners, as all were created directly because of municipal policies and their contributions to their municipalities remain their main focus. As for the day-to-day relationships, there are established methods of communication and a high level of involvement between these NGOs and municipalities. The need for building trust and respect, aligning worldviews, and creating the network of connections, as outlined by Berkes (2009) in their discussion of co-management, has either already occurred or was not necessary since the organizations were developed to be so integrated with the municipalities.

GreenUP is not as integrated with government as the other planning groups mentioned above, but it does have an established relationship with the City of Peterborough. This relationship, built thanks to their collaborative programming efforts, earns them a place in planning committees. On the other hand, KLT does not regularly work with governments and was only involved in planning through a specific project, Kawarthas, Naturally Connected. KLT's director felt that the project helped to start building relationships with the municipalities involved, but the relationships were not at the point where KLT felt able to easily get involved in other planning discussions.

As a final point, relationships in planning are not only at the level of whole organizations. Individual civil servants and their connections to other people in the community

have a large amount of influence in determining who is involved (Wamsler, 2017). This holds true in Peterborough, as several of the ENGO interviewees spoke highly of individual municipal representatives who were their main points of contact as they engaged in planning processes.

6.1.3: Activism

A third and final relationship type for ENGOs interacting with municipal governments is seen in the role of an activist or advocacy group. Many authors, such as Pacheco-Vega & Murdie (2021) and Partelow et al. (2020) seem to assume that activism is the primary role of ENGOs. While there are other roles as outlined above, advocating, lobbying, and persuading governments to take sustainable action is a very common goal, with up to 97% of local ENGOs in one survey indicating they were involved in some kind of advocacy (Handy, 2001). Academia has been divided about whether advocacy by scientists and ENGOs is justified. Authors claim that advocacy can obscure scientific facts behind political goals, use public money for a political purpose, and erode trust in the scientific process and the organizations that fund, conduct, and share research (Lackey, 2007). However, recent literature and action has been more accepting of advocacy by ENGOs and by individual scientists with some even seeing it as a responsibility, given the value of well-informed policy recommendations (Nelson & Vucetich, 2009). In Peterborough, several groups have taken on this task, and For Our Grandchildren and Peterborough Field Naturalists were the two groups whose relationships with municipal government were most defined by their activism.

While Peterborough Field Naturalists primarily helps their members get together to enjoy and learn about nature, their past president described how the group often organizes its members in activism. Some of their members interact individually with City councillors to build relationships with them, and their large member group gives them influence in council meetings and voting. PFN prints a magazine of their activities and provides it for free to every councillor to keep them informed. One large activism project involved preventing a road being built that would have damaged Harper Creek. For Our Grandchildren also has an activist role where they inform and mobilize their members (grandparents as well as other people) to take climate action. They share information and advertise to the public to gain support in the hope that their membership grows large enough that politicians, both locally and at higher levels, will be pressured to take action (*For Our Grandchildren*, n.d.). 4RG's chair feels that their biggest local success was their involvement with the City of Peterborough's Climate Emergency Act declaration, and they are continuing to pressure the City to take action on it. In the last municipal election, they interviewed each candidate and shared their results with the community to encourage people to vote for those who supported climate action. Both PFN and 4RG continue to get involved in local sustainability issues when they arise.

Several other local groups also engaged in activism, but because they had different primary roles, their relationships with municipalities were much different. For Nourish, their programs that aim to directly reduce hunger, poverty, and environmental inequality are complemented by education and advocacy about those issues. They advocate for guaranteed basic income and provide training for people experiencing poverty and marginalization so they can become activist leaders themselves (*Nourish*, 2012). GreenUP could also be considered an

advocacy group. For example, while GreenUP was working with the City of Peterborough on their active transportation plan, they also acted as an advocacy group by informing their members about the plan and encouraging them to speak up and push for their preferred outcomes, as well as advocating for a more ambitious plan themselves.

The interviews I conducted revealed that the relationships of PFN and 4RG with municipal governments were markedly different than all the other ENGOs, even other groups with activist roles like GreenUP and Nourish. The relationships were not as established as other groups, which led to mainly one-way communication as PFN and 4RG tried to ask or suggest for things from the municipalities. This led to feelings of frustration on both sides, as PFN and 4RG felt that the municipalities were acting too slowly or not at all and people in the governments were frustrated with repeated demands from these ENGOs for things they felt were unreasonable. For the other groups that engaged in activism, their feelings and relationships were much less negative. In my interviews, representatives from GreenUP and Nourish focused on their many positive interactions with municipalities and didn't convey the same feelings of frustration even if their activism had been unsuccessful.

Research about activist ENGOs tends not to discuss the relationship between the ENGOs and the governments, instead focusing on how ENGOs achieve their goals by rallying the public, who then pressure the government, or by directly confronting polluting industries (Grant & Vasi, 2017; Pacheco-Vega & Murdie, 2021). Large national or international activist ENGOs also gain more attention than local ones (Partelow et al., 2020), and the interactions between large governments and large ENGOs are likely to be significantly different than local ones. Given that local issues tend to increase the amount and intensity of public involvement compared to more

distant issues (Pacheco-Vega & Murdie, 2021), it is possible that the personal connections and more frequent interactions with the issues, organizations, and individuals involved in local activism could also amplify feelings of frustration and conflict.

6.1.4: Connections between programming, planning, and activism

As I sorted the ENGOs in my study into categories to help make sense of their different relationships, it also became clear that there were some organizations that filled multiple roles or evolved over time to shift between roles. Peterborough Field Naturalists is primarily a programming group (though not in partnership with municipalities) but also engages in activism, while GreenUP performs all three roles. Moloney & Fünfgeld (2015) describe how climate change alliances in Melbourne were originally set up to "do projects," but have adapted to be involved in strategic planning with municipal governments. One of the alliances also spoke about "a tension between their dual roles as 'strategists' and 'activists' but maintains that both are necessary and important" (Moloney & Fünfgeld, 2015, pg 38).

Even the distinctions between the categories were not concrete. Programming that educates the public is also a form of advocacy (Handy, 2001) and the line between advocacy and planning is widely debated and not easily defined. Lackey (2007, pg 13) defines advocacy as "active, covert, or inadvertent support of a particular policy of class of policies" and argues that scientists should never contribute to policy, only provide and explain scientific facts, a case most prominently made by Roger Pielke (2007) in his book *The Honest Broker*. Others disagree, saying that it is a responsibility of scientists to promote a course of action that is best for

society, given their knowledge, and that science cannot anyway be separated from values (Nelson & Vucetich, 2009).

4RG's programs and events support their larger goals of climate advocacy, and they were also involved in advocacy that led to the creation of the Climate Emergency Act, which functions as a planning document by setting out priorities and actions for the City. In a similar vein, Davidson & de Loë (2016) discussed advocacy groups whose success led to them gaining positions at the planning table. Nuss-Girona et al.'s (2020, pg 18) reflection on environmental activism in Catalonia details the move "from only oppositional to also propositional" activities, e.g. from advocacy in response to particular issues towards providing solutions through land use planning. After all, if the goal of both planning and advocacy is to influence the actions of governments, there is bound to be overlap in the methods and relationships.

6.2: What are the benefits of cooperation between local ENGOs and municipal governments?

Although little research has been done about how ENGOs interact with municipalities, we can use existing research about the goals and challenges for these organizations to see how partnerships could benefit them and answer the research question: what are the benefits that motivate local ENGOs and municipal governments to work together? My interviewees discussed a wide variety of benefits, including the resources they can share, the information and skills that other possess, and the connections and reputation they can take advantage of.

6.2.1: Resources and Capacity

All types of groups benefit from the capacity they gain by partnering with others, which includes both the concrete resources of money, people, and time, as well as the many other types of resources explained in the interview results section, but it seems most essential to groups in the programming role. Other research agrees that programs require the most resources and even suggest that ENGOs will do programming when they have sufficient resources but move towards advocacy when they don't have the resources to accomplish change themselves (Handy, 2001). Programming stands out with a need for lots of people and resources to fund, design, staff, and implement on-the-ground projects, in comparison to activism and planning which have different kinds of deliverables. It is common for programming ENGOs to not be able to have the impacts they hope for because of lack of funding (Dart, 2010). My interviewees from programming groups said that almost all their programs are in partnership with either a municipal government or another NGO. By partnering with others, programming groups and the municipalities they partner with save resources by not having to "reinvent the wheel," develop their own programs, do their own research, buy their own supplies, or hire outside specialists. Municipalities take advantage of these same benefits because they also want to conserve resources. When partnerships are unavailable to them, municipal governments must take on the programming role themselves and despite many people considering them to be pools of funding, municipalities deal with many of the same challenges including funding, staffing, and information shortages (Dreyfus, 2013).

6.2.2: Information

Information sharing was identified by my interviewees as one of the most important benefits of partnerships, in many different contexts. For environmental programming, organizations can bring in new people who are knowledgeable about certain topics and can use that knowledge to develop programs and educate others. For planning groups, the benefit of being involved in the planning process is that the information they share can impact important decisions being made about the future of the community. Along with information also comes the organization's viewpoint and priorities that can guide the direction of the planning process. Many studies discuss how scientific research can be used in municipal sustainability planning (Brooker et al., 2019; Calder & Beckie, 2013; Davidson & de Loë, 2016; Wamsler et al., 2014), but don't explicitly consider how ENGOs can be included in this process. The authors assume that there will be professional biologists and climate scientists available for hire as consultants, but smaller municipalities don't always have the funds or ability to do that. It is extremely valuable then that many knowledgeable people either work for or volunteer their time to local ENGOs and can contribute input into municipal planning processes. Besides scientific knowledge, these individuals can also share their experiences with the local environment and the community context, both of which are key to effective planning (Rydin & Pennington, 2000).

Gaining information about potential or current partner organizations is also an important consideration (Turcotte & Pasquero, 2001). As will be discussed more in the next section about challenges, my interviews revealed several misunderstandings between organizations that prevented them from collaborating. Though having information about a partner organization is

a prerequisite to a partnership, it is also a benefit to continue to learn about a partner and their goals and be able to better take advantage of their expertise. This is one example that illustrates that information sharing is not only about knowledge, but also about the relationships between groups that allow that knowledge to be built, shared, and used (Unander & Sørensen, 2020).

6.2.3: Reputation and connections

Most groups have worked to establish positive reputations among other organizations and among the public. Others suffer from a negative reputation or haven't yet built a reputation at all. A negative reputation can cause challenges in getting participation, buy-in, and having legitimacy. Many interviewees spoke about partnering with other organizations who had positive reputations to overcome their own negative reputation or lack of connection to a portion of the public. My interviews support the literature that finds ENGOs to be more positively viewed than municipal governments (Wang et al., 2020) and my municipal interviewees explained how partnering with well-respected ENGOs gave them more social licence and buy-in from the public. In this way, good reputations with the public will give them more credibility with other organizations, a positive feedback loop that will continue to increase their influence (Dart, 2010).

During planning processes, partnering with other organizations also helps with more effective public participation. Though local ENGOs could be seen to represent public input themselves, they are also adept at engaging the public in planning by spreading awareness to

their membership, hosting events, and gathering information themselves, which all give more legitimacy to the planning process and the end result (Rydin & Pennington, 2000). For example, partnering with GreenUP allowed the City of Peterborough to engage more deeply with the residents involved in the NeighborPLAN program. In addition to general reputations, local groups also have their own relationships with their memberships and specific parts of the public. Municipal interviewees spoke about wanting to get low-income homeowners interested in environmental retrofit incentives. A potential for partnership here is that Nourish has connections with those people through their food programs. Other literature has also shown the importance of bridging organizations to connect and mediate between governments and marginalized groups (Berkes, 2009).

Most of the benefits of partnership discussed in this section so far deal with programming and planning. What benefits do ENGOs and municipalities gain from working together for activism? As discussed in the previous section, activist groups tend not to have true partnerships with municipalities, but their interactions can still affect their reputation. One study found that national governments are more likely to agree to the requests of an activist group when their citizens have a high degree of political liberty or when the country is vulnerable to pressure from other countries (Pacheco-Vega & Murdie, 2021). In other words, a government might follow the advice of an activist group to preserve or increase their reputation among their residents, since refusing them risks their residents becoming dissatisfied and voting the leadership out. From the perspective of the activist group, they achieve their goals not only because of the validity or benefit of their recommendations, but by using their membership and influence to leverage public perspective against the government.

6.3: What are the challenges involved in doing cooperative initiatives, and how can these challenges be overcome?

As a research project with the goal of learning about ENGO-municipal government relationships and providing suggestions on how to improve them, this section on challenges is essential. The final chapter will include a list of recommendations to local organizations, building on this section which goes into more detail about the challenges identified by my interviewees and how their ideas for how to overcome these challenges compare to recommendations from the literature. Challenges for cooperative initiatives include the amount of time required, determining when each organization needs to be involved, partnerships not being a priority for one of the actors, problems with communication channels between some groups, and issues of legitimacy and reputation that make a group hesitant to partner with another.

6.3.1: Timing

Nearly all organizations I talked to had challenges in finding the time to work with others. Covid also created challenges in timing as projects were delayed, meaning that some organizations were no longer able to be involved as planned. However, the biggest challenge was getting partner organizations involved at the right time in the process of a project. Several interviewees spoke about times when groups were contacted only after a proposal or recommendation was nearly complete. Most agreed that if better collaboration had occurred from the start, the deliverables could have been greatly improved. Lack of availability can make

collaboration difficult, but it seems there are benefits to early, continuous, and well-defined collaboration on a project (Brooker et al., 2019), as two municipalities in Alberta also found when they proactively involved the public and built cycles of engagement into their planning processes (Calder & Beckie, 2013). While both parties should do their best to engage the other as much as possible, ENGOs seem more flexible about when they're able to collaborate, and with a little warning and practice should be able to provide input in a timeframe that works for municipalities.

On the other hand, partnerships can also reduce or restrict available time, as some NGOs found that the constraints of some funding agreements with governments reduced their ability to be responsive to other opportunities (Moloney & Fünfgeld, 2015).

6.3.2: Prioritizing

Another reason why communication and partnerships don't happen as much as they could is that they are simply not always a priority, despite increased demand worldwide for community involvement in environmental decision-making (Brooker et al., 2019). Both municipal governments and ENGOs are often overwhelmed with work and don't have the resources and time to commit to a partnership. Kawartha Land Trust would like to have more partnerships with municipalities, but they often have to focus on short-term projects before looking ahead and planning new ones. It is more immediately valuable to them to work with partners who are already close rather than developing new relationships. Of course, this is not only KLT's decision to make because municipal governments also play a role in creating

partnerships. The land protection work that KLT does has benefits for municipalities, including flood and drought mitigation, climate change prevention, and recreational and tourism benefits that can make surrounding land more valuable for municipalities and improve the lives of their citizens, but it has so far not been a priority for rural municipalities to reach out to KLT.

Groups should try to think not only about their current partners, but also about who is not at the table and should be involved in a planning process (Turcotte & Pasquero, 2001). Some ENGOs wanted a voice in more municipal decisions, while municipal staff felt they could contribute to some ENGO discussions as well as bring in developers and other groups who have good background on the topic of discussion and who could be affected by decisions made (Lee-Macaraig & Sandberg, 2007). If it's not a priority to include all the necessary groups, their voices will be left out and make the recommendations that come out of a forum of roundtable unrealistic or much harder to implement.

Both municipal and ENGO staff also spoke about embedding sustainability in the everyday decisions of the government, making it a regular step of the process and culture of the organization to include those considerations. It might not be too much more difficult to make consulting ENGOs, especially ones with strong partnerships already, part of the normal way of doing things. The benefits of collaboration discussed already make a strong argument for prioritizing partnerships between municipal governments and ENGOs.

6.3.3: Communication

Another issue that can create gaps in communication is that each organization has their own goals which are often not communicated effectively to their partners (Brooker et al.,

2019). There are usually shared goals of sustainability, but each organization will have a different way of defining sustainability and how they want to get there. Some interviewees spoke about making sure to be transparent about their organisation's current state, what they want in general and out of the partnership, and what they can contribute. This transparency ensures that all parties are listened to and that a project is meaningful to everyone. This communication can promote partnerships as well, as each group can see each others' needs and decide what they can offer to meet them.

A significant problem in communication seemed to cause tension between activist ENGOs and municipal governments. My interviewees identified two different explanations of what causes the friction. First, the way information is being communicated can cause problems between individuals and groups. PFN and 4RG don't have the same relationship with municipalities as other groups who are involved in programming or planning, so they don't have the same pathways of communication. This break in communication might be what led one municipal representative to feel like they were making demands. The other explanation is that the suggestions of the ENGOs are unrealistic and so cause frustration on both sides that they can't be implemented. Again, due to a lack of a relationship, these ENGOs don't have as much knowledge about the municipalities' goals and abilities which makes it more difficult for their requests to be practical. In my interviews, I didn't hear any instances of a municipality being upset with a request from a close partner, but it's hard to tell if that is because of a strong relationship or if their requests were more in line with municipal expectations. In either case, a lack of effective communication can prevent the joint problem solving that is so important to a partnership (Berkes, 2009).

6.3.4: Reputation and Relationship

Many of these problems with communication stem from a lack of relationships between the ENGO and municipality. For example, KLT identifies that one of the barriers to being able to partner is their lack of relationships with municipalities and recognizes that they need to develop them before being able to work together effectively. The Kawarthas, Naturally Connected project was beneficial not just because of the planning that was accomplished, but because KLT developed relationships with the local municipalities and feels it will be easier to work with them again in the future. Rydin & Pennington (2000) discuss how repeated interactions among a group of citizens builds reputations, trust, and commitment to a common goal and it is likely that the same concept could be applied to organizations and the individuals within them.

Many researchers don't consider the relationships between activist groups and governments and assume that the only way for activism to be successful is to put enough pressure on the government to change (Lee-Macaraig & Sandberg, 2007; Pacheco-Vega & Murdie, 2021). However, my research has shown that a different strategy is to build stronger relationships and good communication channels to make it more likely for advice to be used as well as to cut down on the time and effort it takes. Groups must be willing to work together and take advice. In particular, municipalities spoke about needing to be confident that the other group is a trustworthy partner.

If good relationships and buy-in from the community are essential to local action (Hoppe et al., 2015), how can the relationships be improved and developed? Simply having worked together before is a strong indicator of a relationship, as many ENGOs who have

partnered with municipalities for years had those strong relationships, and even KLT felt a better working relationship after one project together. Other research confirms this, saying that learning about a partner organization is not just a prerequisite to working together, but a key outcome of collaboration that needs to be prioritized in order to have effective long-term relationships (Berkes, 2009).

6.4: How does cooperation affect how the public perceives ENGOs, governments, and their activities?

Just as the reputations of ENGOs and governments affect which other groups are willing to partner with them, their reputations among the public are also important. A topic that came up several times in this study, both from the interviews and the public survey, were the different perceptions that people had of ENGOs and governments and how partnerships between groups can affect how the public views an organization and its activities. This section will discuss why these groups are viewed differently, according to my interviews, survey, and other literature, as well as what effect cooperation between groups can have on these perceptions.

6.4.1: Different Perceptions of ENGOs and Municipal Governments

First, looking at question 10 and figure 6 from my survey, we see that the Peterborough-area respondents rate the effectiveness of their local ENGOs much higher than that of their

local municipality. Even though this could be biased since the respondents were members of the ENGOs, this opinion of municipalities is supported by literature and by my interviews. The topic of a group's reputation among the public came up often, with most interviewees agreeing that ENGOs had more positive reputations. In studies of local action, both local ENGOs and municipal governments are seen to have stronger connections to their public than larger ENGOs and higher levels of government (Calder & Beckie, 2013; Dreyfus, 2013; Evans, 2004) and these studies of successful planning and programming initiatives paint a positive picture of relationships between municipal governments and their citizens. However, studies of ENGO advocacy pit the ENGOs and citizens against the government, leading to a very different view of this relationship (Handy, 2001; Pacheco-Vega & Murdie, 2021).

There are many suggestions for why governments can be mistrusted by the public, including that they use their existing power to insulate themselves from demands for change (Rydin & Pennington, 2000) and that their planning and governance structures are not accessible to the average citizen (Brooker et al., 2019). Other suggestions from my interviewees include that municipalities act too slowly, that they should be spending more money than they are on sustainability, or that people disagree with other municipal policies unrelated to sustainability. Many survey respondents also felt that municipalities should contribute more money, though some did recognize that "municipalities are inadequately funded" and had to focus on "roads and sewers and taxes." In general, respondents felt municipalities wouldn't act on environmental issues without pressure from citizens and ENGOs. Despite significant evidence and arguments for the ability of municipal governments to affect environmental change (Calder & Beckie, 2013; Hoppe et al., 2015; Wamsler et al., 2014) and many innovative

projects that have been implemented in the Peterborough area, local municipalities have to work hard to convince their citizens that they are doing good work.

6.4.2: How Cooperation Changes Perceptions

Beyond the direct benefits of doing so, cooperating with ENGOs benefits municipalities by improving their reputation among their residents. In question 10 and figure 6 of my survey, most respondents indicated that a sustainability initiative run by a partnership of a municipality and an ENGO would be more effective than that of a municipality alone. Most of my municipal interviewees also shared that partnering with ENGOs lets their municipality build their own reputation. They get recognition for a successful initiative and show that they have a good relationship with a well-known and trusted ENGO. Given the limited literature on ENGO-municipal interactions, it is not surprising there is none about how those interactions affect the perceptions of citizens.

There are several caveats to this method of changing perceptions. First, people need to know about an initiative or partnership in the first place. Forty-six percent of people in my survey had heard about programs led by their local municipalities and 35% had attended an event, which is slightly more than the average of the local ENGOs (fig. 4). However, municipal interviewees felt they did not get enough recognition for their sustainability initiatives, with one saying that ENGOs did a better job of promoting their activities and that even in a partnership, the ENGO would often get more credit than the municipality. The opposite problem is that municipalities and businesses can exaggerate how much they actually engage

with NGOs and citizens in order to gain legitimacy they did not earn (Stojanovic & Barker, 2008). In a similar vein, one criticism of municipalities who work with ENGOs is that it allows the government to download their responsibility to care for the environment to others. One survey respondent described how "municipalities can take advantage of nonprofits" when they pay the nonprofits less than they would have to with their own staff. Other research has shown instances of municipalities offloading services they should be providing themselves, such as picking up litter and planting flower beds, by overstating the environmental benefits of these actions (Senecal, 2002).

Perceptions of ENGOs that collaborate with governments are even more unclear. Again, collaboration with municipalities provides many essential benefits and people generally appreciate that the initiatives are more successful, but there are differing views in the literature and among Peterborough citizens about whether people approve of these relationships. Returning to figure 6 from my survey, an initiative run by a partnership of a municipality and an ENGO is seen to be more effective than a municipality working alone, but still much less effective than how most people thought the initiatives of ENGOs would be. Other survey respondents suggested that a partnership could lead to an ENGO "being tied to a municipality's agenda." This finding supports Senecal (2002), who also suggests that partnerships could limit the innovation of ENGOs by forcing them to stay closer to the status quo. This study also described situations where organizations that were too "close to the political power structure" eventually failed because of too much political interference (Senecal, 2002, pg 49). Organizations closely tied to municipal government such as the Peterborough Environmental Advisory Committee and Sustainable Peterborough were rated as less effective than some

other organizations. It is unclear from my study if that is because they are too closely tied to government or because of another reason, such as a lack of public-facing activities. GreenUP, on the other hand, also has very close and public ties to the City of Peterborough but enjoys the highest rating in my survey.

6.5: How do ENGO-municipal government partnerships influence public participation in environmental activities?

Nearly all the ENGOs and municipal governments from my interview cohort discussed the importance of involving the public in their activities. They had several metrics for success: number of people reached, the depth of their involvement, and being able to engage new groups, especially marginalised groups and people who don't typically get involved in environmental activities. Participation and positive reputation with the public are near-ubiquitous goals of ENGOs, even those whose publicly-stated goals are different (Dart, 2010).

This raises a question about the true effects of ENGO-municipal cooperation on public participation. As seen in question 10 of the survey, respondents had significantly lower opinions of the environmental initiatives of their local municipal government than any of the local ENGOs in the study. When asked their opinion about collaborative initiatives, the response was slightly more positive, but not nearly as high as ENGOs on their own (fig. 6). Therefore, can partnering with a municipality hurt public participation for an ENGO? This is difficult to answer and has not been directly researched. Most research on collaboration focuses on the challenges of collaboration, which are overwhelmingly seen as worth persevering through due to the

numerous benefits of doing so (Berkes, 2009; Brooker et al., 2019; Davidson & de Loë, 2016; Rydin & Pennington, 2000). My interviewees felt the same and related that nearly all collaborations between ENGOs and municipalities had great success, because of the benefits of collaboration discussed in previous sections. They spoke about having greater reach among the public because of the different contacts and reputations that each group had.

Even if organizations feel that partnerships attract more participation, there may be a trade-off where a collaboration can attract some people but turn away others. Just as one interviewee spoke about how an ENGO that was too "activist" could dissuade some people who weren't comfortable with that level of environmental action, other interviewees related that some people were distrustful of programs where the municipal government was involved. This worry is supported by Sustainable Peterborough's representative saying that the organisation appeals to more people because they are "arms-length municipal government" and "not direct government." In a similar vein, Senecal (2002) revealed how Montreal organizations with too close ties to the municipal government ended up failing, though they didn't uncover why these relationships failed.

However, most of my findings support the more nuanced conclusion of Wamsler (2017), that pre-existing cooperation or contestation with external stakeholders, including citizens, influences their respective level of involvement for better or for worse. In this case, my own conclusion is that ENGO-municipal government cooperation can lead to increased public participation, but organizations also need to pay attention to perceptions about themselves and their partners that could either increase or decrease trustworthiness and participation. It is also important to consider that relationships and reputations are not static. Several municipal

interviewees, recognizing that their governments did not always enjoy a positive reputation among the public, identified doing sustainability initiatives, partnering with trusted ENGOs, and publicising these activities as ways to improve their reputations and, over time, gain more citizen participation and buy-in.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1: Contributions to Theory

The findings of this study contribute to many fields of research including municipal sustainability, local environmental action, roles of ENGOs in planning and advocacy, and citizen engagement for environmental action. This local example supports the importance of these fields and of local-scale environmental action involving all different stakeholders by providing more evidence about why and how local partnerships happen.

The most significant new contribution is my analysis of the relationships between local ENGOs and municipal governments. Research on local environmentalism has primarily focused on municipalities, ENGOs, or citizens on their own. Several studies have looked at local-scale interactions between ENGOs and municipal governments for advocacy (Lee-Macaraig & Sandberg, 2007) and planning (Rydin & Pennington, 2000; Wamsler et al., 2014), but most do not consider how the relationships between the organizations can influence outcomes. This study's findings of the importance of the relationships and communication between ENGOs and municipalities support Wamsler's (2017) work, but extend past their focus on planning work to show how programming and activism can also be improved as relationships develop over successive collaborative projects. This study also challenges previous work on local activism by suggesting that by focusing exclusively on how ENGOs leverage pressure from citizens, existing research might be missing how closer communication with the municipality can help the ENGO

craft and communicate their requests so they are more achievable and better received by the government.

7.2: Recommendations for Local Groups

Since this study was based on a pragmatic worldview, my goal was to contribute knowledge back to Peterborough-area ENGOs and municipalities to help them better understand each other, communicate more effectively, and improve the effectiveness of their collaborative initiatives. Upon completion, this thesis will be sent to all the organizations and interviewees involved in the study, highlighting this section that provides recommendations and learnings for local groups.

7.2.1: To seek out and prioritize local partnerships

Several of the ENGOs in this study had well-developed plans to partner with municipalities or were formed by legislation that mandated those partnerships. Unsurprisingly, these groups tended to work more with municipalities, while groups without a mandate to cooperate with others didn't pursue as many municipal partnerships. This recommendation can't affect the limitations of time and resources that often prevent more collaboration, but many interviewees mentioned how wanting to work with others more was, in part, limited by it not being a priority for their organization. While not every organization has to partner with others, academic literature, local organizations, and municipal governments all agree on the

importance and benefits of partnerships for sustainable initiatives. One way to prioritize cooperation is through policy or planning documents made individually or as a commitment between two organizations.

7.2.2: To purposefully expand the circle of organizations and voices involved in sustainability planning

Many of my interviewees experienced cases where they or other organizations they thought should be involved in a discussion about a certain issue, weren't. Prioritizing a culture of participation within your own organization is only half the answer, the other is making sure that other organizations are invited into discussions. One example that several interviewees mentioned were ENGO roundtables for sustainability planning that don't always include municipal councillors or staff or other important stakeholders such as developers and contractors.

Just like it can be difficult to recruit survey respondents for a study, sometimes a group can do everything they can to encourage a certain stakeholder or perspective to come to the table and not be successful. Invitations can be sent further ahead of time, but nothing can change whether someone is just too busy or doesn't prioritize partnerships. My interviewees agree that beginning new partnerships is not easy or smooth, since the relationships are not developed. However, the many existing partnerships around Peterborough show that once the first contact is made and the relationship is started, things will become easier. Another way to

increase participation and address social justice issues of marginalized groups not being included is to provide honorariums or other compensation for participants.

7.2.3: To involve other groups early in the planning process.

The benefits of involving others are most commonly seen in the final steps of implementation, but it is in the first steps where a project is being brainstormed and a vision is being developed that outside input can have the most impact. Several interviewees had experiences where their group was involved in a programming or planning project nearing completion. As a result, they were only able to have input on small things and didn't have input into a direction for the project that made sense to them. This could also apply to advocacy, as presenting another group with a finished recommendation is not as valuable as working together to discuss the many aspects of a problem and how to go about solving it in a way that works for everyone. Including many unique perspectives makes sure a project is aligned with the goals of as many organizations as possible. Even if the solution is unable to satisfy all parties, the process of collaboration helps all partners understand each others' goals and why the project is the way it is. One example that could be improved is the function of PEAC, who is given items late in the process and not given time themselves to research the topic. The goal of involving PEAC and other organizations is often to tap into their expertise and experience, so giving them more time to consider a problem should improve the benefits.

7.2.4: To promote the work of partners and other local organizations

This study suggests that sharing information about initiatives and partner groups can help to increase the reputation of both groups among the public. Most organizations in my study already try to promote themselves to attract more members and buy-in from the public, but an added service they can provide to their partner organizations is to emphasize the work they are doing together. Several interviewees spoke about how most of their projects were in partnership, many of them with municipalities. On the other hand, municipal representatives felt that they often weren't getting recognized for the work they did as much as their ENGO partners. Not only can good promotion improve participation in a individual program, but that community buy-in helps groups in all their other activities as well. Organizations working in partnership should make it a priority to recognize and promote their partners in all their regular media channels.

7.2.5: To work on relationship-building between organizations and individuals.

One of the main topics of this study is the importance of relationships between organizations and individuals within them. Established relationships help with communication, make collaboration a bigger priority, and seem to increase the effectiveness of collaborative partnerships. Several well-connected and well-liked organizations and individuals came up often in my interviews and survey and show the benefits of developed relationships with other local stakeholders. One setting that several interviewees mentioned as important for building relationships were multi-stakeholder roundtables and other events. When groups come together for a certain project, they also develop lasting relationships that can enable much

more to happen in the future. Improving existing relationships as well as beginning new ones should both be worked on, as outlined in recommendation 7.2.2 above.

7.2.6: To establish clear and regular paths for communication.

Many of the challenges identified in my interviews stemmed partly from difficulties communicating with partner organizations in an effective and timely way. Discussions about organizational goals and plans help to keep others in the loop and understand the reasons for a certain initiative. It lets partners plan alongside each other and contribute more effectively to the shared goal. Some groups who don't prioritize partnerships or don't see the value in them could be convinced to work together by another organization that listened to their concerns and came back with a proposition that addresses their needs. Better communication can also help avoid misconceptions and frustration, such as I saw between advocacy groups and municipalities. Even if groups don't see eye-to-eye, it can still be helpful to let the other group see not only the decisions and actions, but the reasons behind them. Communication should happen as often as possible given time restraints. It should occur not only when there is an active collaborative initiative, but during regular check-ins which can keep partners updated about the other, such as during changes of staffing or reorganization, and inform and inspire new avenues for collaboration. This recommendation list focuses on interactions between organizations, but a well-developed plan for communicating to the public is also important to provide information, avoid misconceptions, and drive higher engagement.

7.3: Limitations and Future Research

7.3.1: Limitations

The Covid-19 pandemic halted or changed what was possible for many groups. In-person activities were replaced by online workshops or postponed indefinitely. For municipalities, the pandemic was another issue that pushed sustainability further down the priority list. While I was still able to conduct remote interviews and an online survey, it is likely that the pandemic affected some of the results. Many groups couldn't conduct their usual activities, so some parts of the interviews were told in the past tense, before Covid, or in their hopes to resume in the future. Were it not for the pandemic, it also would have been possible to use other methods of data collection, such as attending collaborative planning meetings or going to in-person events to see what happens on the ground. Along with the interruption of usual activities, several interviewees spoke about how Covid limited their opportunities for networking and relationship-building.

The design of the survey also had several limitations that affected the data. First, an increased number of survey respondents would make the conclusions of the quantitative data more valuable. Second, survey respondents were self-selecting from the limited pool of certain organizations' mailing lists. Although it made sense for this study to target the people most likely to respond to the survey, this biases the data towards people who were very passionate about a certain ENGO and who had the time to complete the survey. A recruitment design that would randomly select from amongst all Peterborough-area residents would be the most unbiased and would have a better representation of people who have different opinions on

environmentalism, attitudes towards municipal governments, and relationships with various ENGOs.

Finally, this is a case study of the Peterborough area, and the recommendations might not be replicable in other places. This study has shown that the local context, the different organizations and the relationships between them, and even individuals within organizations all create a complex web of interactions. In addition, the Peterborough area is known for its focus on environmental sustainability and many ENGOs, so the web of interactions could be much different in a place with a smaller number of ENGOs or where the municipal governments have different priorities.

7.3.2: Future Research

The field of local ENGO-municipal relationships has many exciting avenues for future research. First, future research could address some of the limitations identified in the previous section, beginning with wider recruitment for surveys on this topic. Marginalized people, including individuals living in poverty, new Canadians, and Indigenous people, need a greater voice in the environmental movement. Future research could address which organizations these demographics have the most trust in and could direct ENGOs and municipalities to partner with these groups and individuals. This opportunity is especially significant for Indigenous people and organizations for whom relationships are so important. Environmental workers are also trying to involve the large population of people who aren't interested in environmentalism. Perhaps there exists a partnership that could create a connection between

these disparate groups. Finally, a randomized survey would help eliminate biases to create a more complete picture of opinions of local organizations.

There are also opportunities for quantitative research to support the qualitative perspectives of the interviewees and survey respondents in this study. The success of environmental initiatives is notoriously hard to quantify, but an attempt at doing so could reveal more about how partnerships affect the amount of resources available to groups and the level of reach and public participation. A long-term project could also follow one or more organizations as they develop partnerships. This study represents only a snapshot in time but has raised questions about how organizations build relationships over the course of time and how the effectiveness of their initiatives might change along with the relationships.

The literature review for this study revealed a gap in research about relationships between local ENGOs and municipalities, with many opportunities to study how relationships are started and developed, what effect they have on communication and effectiveness of relationships, and how they affect perceptions of the public. This study provided contradictory information about how collaboration between groups can change perceptions about these groups. ENGO and municipal representatives thought partnerships would increase their profile, popularity, and trust, and some survey respondents agreed with that. However, many survey respondents indicated that involving a municipality would decrease the effectiveness of an ENGO by having to compromise on their goals. More research into public perceptions would benefit local groups and identify how they can best work together with each other and the public.

7.4: Conclusion

Local environmental initiatives are a promising avenue for addressing the many intersecting environmental crises of our world today. Biodiversity loss, pollution, and climate change are all massive problems caused by global trends, but action at all scales is required to combat them. Local environmental initiatives are valuable for their direct impacts and for how they can inspire more people, bring together disparate perspectives, and build hope and momentum for further action.

This study addressed an under-researched topic of local environmental action; the collaborations between local ENGOs and municipal governments and how their relationships drive the effectiveness of their initiatives. The research involved interviews with Peterborough-area staff, volunteers, and elected officials involved in local sustainability work, as well as a survey of residents. There were many examples of successful partnerships for programming and planning. Both ENGOs and municipalities gained capacity in the form of resources, information, and local influence, built and made use of social capital to generate buy-in from other organizations and the public, and used many forms of communication to initiate and plan cooperative initiatives. This study also identified challenges to effective collaboration, including timing, lack of prioritization of partnerships, and difficulties in communication. Groups without established relationships struggle the most in initiating partnerships and communicating effectively with other groups.

Interviewees and survey respondents also reported that many members of the public have negative perceptions of municipal governments, but this study suggests that partnering

with well-known local ENGOs can help municipalities build a more positive reputation. This is an avenue of research that requires more attention.

This study contributes to a greater understanding of the complex relationships among local organizations and the public as they work towards environmental change for the benefit of all. The recommendations outlined earlier in this chapter are a prompt for organizations to examine their own priorities and relationships in order to better communicate, partner, and take action on pressing environmental issues.

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Appendix A: Trent University Research Ethics Board Letter of Approval

May 25, 2021

File #: 26589
Title: Cooperation between Municipal Government and Grassroots Organizations in Creating Successful Sustainability Initiatives

Dear Mr. Hvenegaard,

The Research Ethics Board (REB) has given approval to your proposal entitled "Cooperation between Municipal Government and Grassroots Organizations in Creating Successful Sustainability Initiatives".

When a project is approved by the REB, it is an Institutional approval. It is not to be used in place of any other ethics process.

To maintain its compliance with this approval, the REB must receive via ROMEO:

An Annual Update for each calendar year research is active;

A Study Renewal should the research extend beyond its approved end date of April 30, 2022;

A Study Closure Form at the end of active research.

This project has the following reporting milestones set:

Renewal Due-2022/04/30

To complete these milestones, click the Events tab in your ROMEO protocol to locate and submit the relevant form.

If an amendments to the protocol is required, you must submit an Amendment Form, available in the Events tab in your ROMEO protocol, for approval by the REB prior to implementation.

Any questions regarding the submission of reports or Event forms in ROMEO can be directed to Jamie Muckle, Certifications and Compliance Officer, at jmuckle@trentu.ca

On behalf of the Trent Research Ethics Board, I wish you success with your research.

Best Wishes,

Dr. Catherine Thibeault
REB Chair
Phone: (705) 748-1011 ext 7067
Email: cthibeault@trentu.ca

c.c.: Jamie Muckle
Certifications and Regulatory Compliance Officer

Appendix B: Example email sent to recruit interview participants

Hello Brianna,

My name is Carson Hvenegaard, and I am a Master's student in the Sustainability Studies program at Trent University. I am conducting a research project about the events and initiatives organized by local environmental NGOs and the factors that contribute to their success. I especially want to learn more about the benefits of and barriers to cooperation between NGOs and municipal governments. My project has been approved by the Trent Research Ethics Board.

Because of your involvement with Peterborough GreenUP, I am interested in interviewing you to learn more about your group's activities and get your insights on these topics.

I am conducting interviews with individuals active in several local organizations, followed by a survey of people who have attended local events. Later in my research process, I would also like to have a second interview with you to share and discuss the results of the survey.

If you are interested and available for an interview, please let me know and I can send you any more information you'd like, along with the consent form, and set up a time for an online meeting.

All the best,

Carson

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form for interview participants

Research Project:

Cooperation between Municipal Government and Grassroots Organizations in Creating Successful Sustainability Initiatives

Researcher: Carson Hvenegaard, carsonhvenegaard@trentu.ca

Supervisor: Stephen Bocking, sbocking@trentu.ca

Outline of research: This research project studies local environmental events led by the City and the environmental groups of Peterborough. It aims to understand the groups' activities, learn how they create successful events, and identify how organizations can cooperate. This study includes interviews with event leaders and a survey asking local citizens about the events they have attended. This project could help improve the city's sustainability efforts.

Participant's involvement: You will be interviewed twice for this project. In the first interview, you will be asked questions about the successes and barriers your organization has experienced in leading environmental events. You will also be asked if your group works with other local organizations and the benefits and problems of doing so. A second interview will discuss results of a survey of Peterborough residents and their opinions about the sustainability initiatives of your organization and others. Each interview will take around 30-60 minutes.

Conflicts of interest: The researcher and the study organizations will not gain financially from this research.

Use of Data: The information collected from this survey and other parts of the study will be used in the researcher's Master's thesis.

Possible commercialization: There is no opportunity to commercialize the outcomes of this study.

Risk to participants: Participants may risk sharing information that could damage their or their employer's professional reputation. To avoid this, you will be able to view the transcripts of your interviews and remove any information that you wish.

Voluntary participation and confidentiality: Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to answer any question you don't want to. You may withdraw from the study and have your data destroyed at any time. Data will be kept on an encrypted device and deleted at the conclusion of the study in August 2022.

Please specify what you consent to on the next page:

I understand that participation in this study is completely voluntary. I agree to participate in this study:

YES NO

I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, and ask to have my interview data destroyed:

YES NO

I agree to have my interview recorded:

YES NO

I agree that my words can be used in publications and presentations:

YES NO

I agree my that name can be used in publications and presentations:

YES NO

By completing this survey, the participant agrees that they are fully informed and freely give their consent to participate in the research. The participant will receive a copy of this consent form for their records.

This research has been approved by the Trent Research Ethics Board.

Participant Signature:_____ Date:_____

Appendix D: Interview Guide

Interview Question Guide

- **Personal Background:**
    - What is your name and pronouns?
    - What is your position and the organization you work for?
    - How long have you worked in this position?
    - Have you been involved with any other organizations that were similar to this one?
- **Organization Background:**
    - What is a “sustainability initiative” for you and your organization? How would you describe or define it?
    - What sustainability initiatives have you and your organization been involved in?
    - Describe your tasks and involvement relating to sustainability initiatives.
    - Describe the evolution of your initiatives – from first thinking about them, to planning and doing them, to anything you do after.
- **Sustainability Initiatives:**
    - How do you feel about the success of your initiatives, in terms of physical changes made to the city, and in terms of attitudes and involvement of people?

- What is your organization able to do well in leading sustainability initiatives?
- What are some limitations of your organization in leading sustainability initiatives?
- Has your organization worked in collaboration with any other local organizations, such as the municipal government/grassroots environmental organizations?
    - Tell me about some of these collaborations: (with whom, doing what, what were the objectives and activities, and were they successful?)
    - How do these collaborations come about? How are they initiated and how does each organization contribute?
    - What are the benefits of working together?
    - What are the barriers to working together, and how could they be overcome?
    - What are some specific things your organization could accomplish if it were easer to collaborate with others, or collaborate in new ways?

- **Wrap-up Questions:**
    - Is there anything else you would like to add?
    - Is there anyone else I should talk to in your organization or others?

Appendix E: Survey Advertisement

Participate in this short survey to help us understand and improve environmental sustainability initiatives in Peterborough!

This research project is being conducted by Carson Hvenegaard, a Master's student at Trent University.

It is looking at municipal governments and local environmental organizations in the Peterborough area. It aims to understand how they collaborate on environmental initiatives and how these collaborations make them more effective.

This survey will ask 12 questions about your participation in and knowledge of local environmental initiatives. The survey will take about 10 minutes to complete. Please click the link below to complete the survey.

https://trentu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_dnJ6dsC6W38iBTw

Appendix F: Informed Consent Form for survey participants

Collaboration between Municipal Government and Local Environmental Organizations for Effective Sustainability Initiatives

Researcher: Carson Hvenegaard, carsonhvenegaard@trentu.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Stephen Bocking, sbocking@trentu.ca

Outline of research: This research has been approved by the Trent Research Ethics Board. This project studies the municipal governments and local environmental organizations in the Peterborough area. It aims to understand how they collaborate on environmental initiatives and how these collaborations make them more effective. This study includes interviews with leaders of these groups and a survey asking local citizens about their opinions of local environmental groups and initiatives. This project could help improve the sustainability efforts of local groups.

Participant's involvement: This survey will ask 12 questions about your participation in and knowledge of local environmental initiatives. The survey will take about 10 minutes to complete, and there are no other expected actions from you once the survey is complete.

Conflicts of interest: The researcher and the study organizations will not gain financially from this

research.

Use of Data: The information collected from this survey and other parts of the study will be used in the researcher's Master's thesis.

Possible commercialization: There is no opportunity to commercialize the outcomes of this study.

Risk to participants: There are minimal anticipated risks to participants by participating in this survey. There will be no sensitive questions and your answers will be anonymous.

Voluntary participation and confidentiality: Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to answer any question you don't want to. Before completing the survey, you may leave and your answers will not be recorded. The survey will not ask any identifying questions, and the data will be anonymous to protect your privacy. Data will be kept on an encrypted device and deleted at the conclusion of the study in August 2022.

Do you agree that you are fully informed and freely give your consent to participate in this research project? You must agree to continue the survey.

Appendix G: Survey Questions

Which organization did you learn about this survey from?

- ○ Peterborough GreenUP
- ○ Sustainable Peterborough
- ○ Otonabee Region Conservation Authority
- ○ Peterborough Field Naturalists
- ○ For Our Grandchildren
- ○ Kawartha Land Trust
- ○ Nourish
- ○ Random Acts of Green
- ○ Other:

Where do you live?

- ○ City of Peterborough
- ○ Peterborough County
- ○ Lakefield
- ○ Other:

Which of these local environmental organizations are you aware of?

- ☐ Peterborough GreenUP
- ☐ Sustainable Peterborough
- ☐ Otonabee Region Conservation Authority
- ☐ Peterborough Field Naturalists
- ☐ For Our Grandchildren
- ☐ Kawartha Land Trust
- ☐ Nourish
- ☐ Random Acts of Green
- ☐ Peterborough Environmental Advisory Committee

Have you participated in any environmental events, projects, or initiatives led by any of these organizations?

	Participated in one	Participated in several	Not aware of any	Was aware but not interested	Aware but not able to go
Your Local Municipality	○	○	○	○	○
Peterborough GreenUP	○	○	○	○	○
Sustainable Peterborough	○	○	○	○	○
Otonabee Region Conservation Authority	○	○	○	○	○
Peterborough Field Naturalists	○	○	○	○	○
For Our Grandchildren	○	○	○	○	○
Kawartha Land Trust	○	○	○	○	○
Nourish	○	○	○	○	○
Random Acts of Green	○	○	○	○	○
Peterborough Environmental Advisory Committee	○	○	○	○	○

What motivates you to be involved in an organization and their initiatives?

Which local environmental groups are closest to your own environmental priorities? List up to three groups and explain why.

Which groups communicate most effectively with you? List up to three groups and explain why. What forms of communication by local organizations are best for you?

What is your opinion of the effectiveness of the environmental initiatives of each organization?

	Not at all effective 0	1	2	3	4	Moderately effective 5	6	7	8	9	Extremely effective 10	No Opinion
Your Local Municipality	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Peterborough GreenUP	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sustainable Peterborough	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Otonabee Region Conservation Authority	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Peterborough Field Naturalists	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
For Our Grandchildren	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Kawartha Land Trust	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Nourish	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Random Acts of Green	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Peterborough Environmental Advisory Committee	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Please describe an example of an effective initiative led by a local environmental organization.

If your local municipality collaborated with a local environmental organization, how effective do you think their initiatives would be?

	Not at all effective 0	1	2	3	4	Moderately effective 5	6	7	8	9	Extremely effective 10
Effectiveness:	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

In what ways do you think collaboration between your local municipality and a local environmental organization affects the effectiveness of their initiatives?

Is there anything else you would like to share about your opinions of the environmental initiatives of your local municipality or local environmental organizations, or partnerships between the groups?