

494 Ker Avenue  
Victoria  
BC V9A 2B7  
Canada

Tel: (250) 721 9609  
e-mail: greendoc@telus.net

### **Conversations for a One Planet Region – Context for Vision and Mission**

We are living in the Anthropocene, a new geological epoch in which novel geologic layers record massive and rapid human-driven changes in a number of Earth's ecological systems that are essential to human and non-human life.<sup>1</sup> The proposed start date for the Anthropocene is the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the start of the 'Great Acceleration' of social, economic and technological forces that have led to these rapid global ecological changes.<sup>2</sup>

One of these is climate change, but there are a number of others, including ocean acidification, depletion of key resources, distortion of phosphorus and nitrogen flows, widespread pollution of air, water, soils and food chains, and accelerating species extinctions. We are crossing 'planetary boundaries' and exceeding the Earth's biocapacity.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, there is a very real possibility that the complex Earth systems we are disrupting – especially the climate system - could hit 'tipping points' that could trigger cascades of negative changes quite rapidly.<sup>4</sup>

Collectively, humanity's Ecological Footprint is the equivalent of 1.7 planets, while Canada's is closer to 5 planets, with more than half of that being due to carbon emissions.<sup>5</sup> Here in the Greater Victoria Region, our footprint is between 3 and 4 planets,<sup>6</sup> largely because of our milder climate and fossil fuel-free electricity supply. Since we only have one planet, clearly something has to change – and soon.

In short, we have to move our entire society and way of life to requiring and taking only our fair share of the Earth's resources and biocapacity by becoming a 'One Planet' society, and locally, a One Planet Region. But taking Canada to an ecological footprint equivalent to One Planet means an almost 80% reduction in our national footprint, while here in the Greater Voictoria Region it still means about a 70% reduction – while at the same time protecting the most vulnerable and disadvantaged and ensuring everyone has a decent quality of life and good health.

Moreover, as the principal instigators of the problem - and still among the largest contributors – high-income countries and people have an especially important responsibility to act soon and act massively.

---

<sup>1</sup> See report of the [May 2019 report of the Anthropocene Working Group](#) of the International Commission on Stratigraphy

<sup>2</sup> See [The Great Acceleration](#) website

<sup>3</sup> See the '[Planetary Boundaries](#)' website

<sup>4</sup> See the [Cascade Institute](#) website

<sup>5</sup> See the [Global Footprint Network](#)

<sup>6</sup> See [One Planet Saanich](#)

However, while there is reasonably widespread recognition of the challenge of climate change - although opposition and even denial still remains – there is very little recognition of the overall challenge of the massive, rapid and often interacting changes in multiple global ecological systems we have triggered. It follows that there is as yet very little understanding or acceptance of the massive and rapid societal and community changes we have to put in place if we are to ensure that we do not deprive future generations, both locally and globally, of the ability to meet their own needs.

This is why we established the Conversations for a One Planet Region – we need to be talking about this here in this region! We believe that if we do not learn about and discuss the challenges we face and the options open to us we cannot understand our situation, nor can we imagine both the future we face if we carry on with business as usual and the alternative, better, One Planet future we might create. And if we can't imagine, it, we can't design or create it.

We also firmly believe that an alternative, better One Planet future can be created, that we have an opportunity to do this here in the Greater Victoria Region and we have both the knowledge, skills and experience locally as well as many of the capacities and resources that are needed.

So we approach this daunting challenge with a sense of hope, recognising that there are many co-benefits of a more sustainable, healthy and just future, and that this work will create many opportunities for new and better ways of living, new ways of working and earning a decent living.