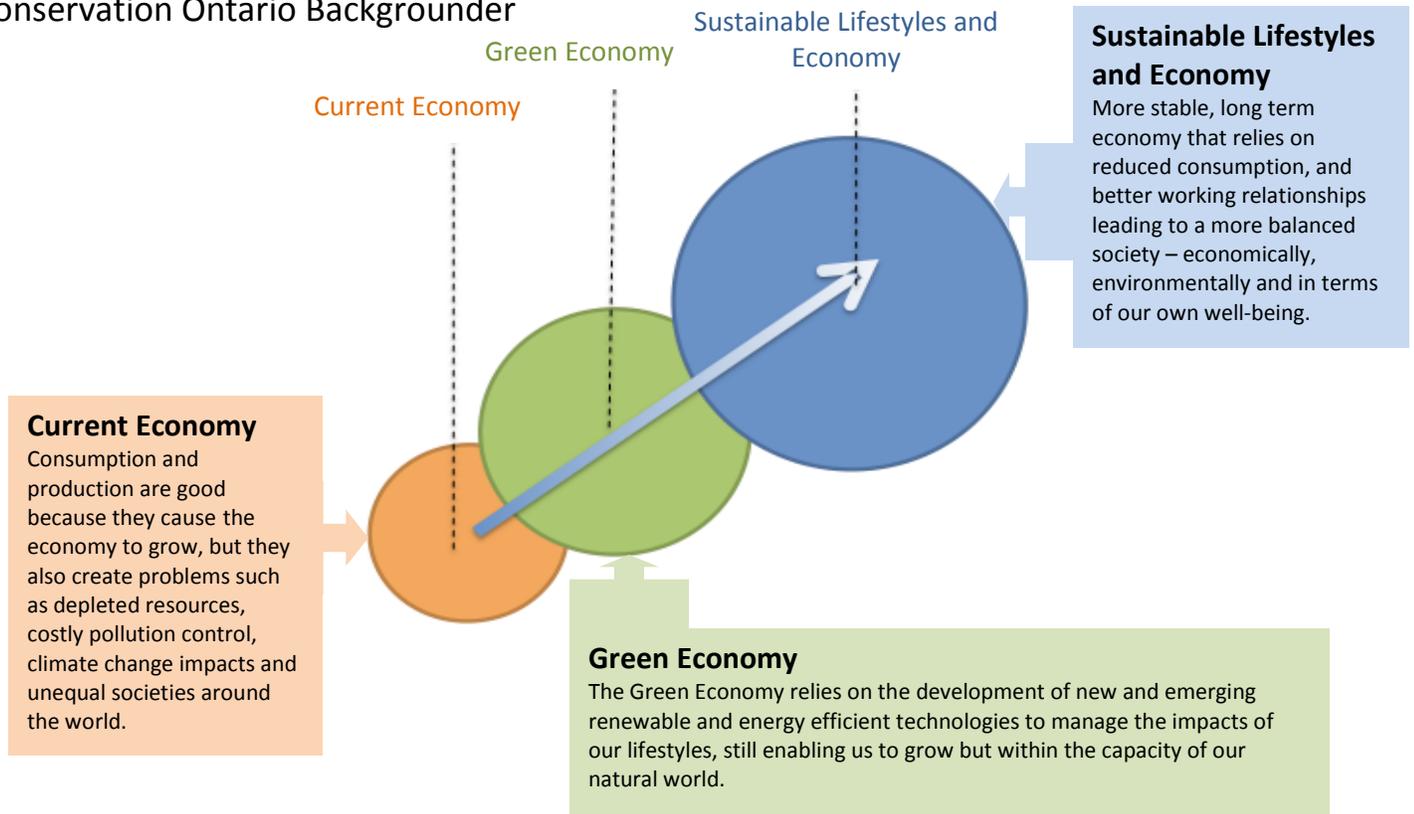


Our Economy is Changing

Conservation Ontario Backgrounder



Why is our economy transitioning?

Unsustainable use of natural resources and years of relatively low cost forms of energy have enabled us to expand our economy beyond limits that can be managed and sustained by our natural environment. In other words, we are living beyond our means.

Significant Challenges which have developed include:

- greenhouse gas emissions creating costly and irreparable climate change impacts,
- urbanization,
- stressed and depleted water resources,
- growing and complex pollution problems, and
- wide ranging inequalities between global societies.

There is a limit to the capacity of our natural world and societies can absorb these challenges and lifestyle inequities. In order to ensure a healthy short term and long term future for everyone, we need to shift how we live on this earth toward more sustainable lifestyles that can be supported economically *and* environmentally.

How do we get there?

- ✓ Use Less Natural Resources
- ✓ Create Less Waste Output
- ✓ Create a more equal society

Our economy and daily lives rely on our natural resources in many important ways:

- clean and sustainable water for industry and households
- energy production
- fuel
- flooding and erosion management
- drought management
- carbon emissions storage
- crop pollination
- food production
- valuable green space

Natural resources contribute to tourism, timber, fisheries, recreation industries, and much, much more.

What does a Sustainable Economy Look Like?

- Lower cost of doing business
- Smaller environmental impacts
- Less carbon / greenhouse gas emissions
- More sustainable water and land resources
- New sources of revenue and business partnerships
- Increased rural development in emerging and new industries such as biofuel, solar, methane capture, new water technologies, local food manufacturing & markets, etc.
- Better policy and program integration between different levels of government and non governmental agencies
- More balanced lifestyles, healthier population



Where are possible opportunities for Conservation Authorities in the Green Economy?

- ✓ Corporate Green Strategies which are cost effective and have a lower impact on environment (fleet, facilities)
- ✓ Green Infrastructure
- ✓ Rural Water Quality
- ✓ Naturalization & Restoration
- ✓ Environmental Education & Recreation
- ✓ Green Technologies (carbon trading, water trading)
- ✓ Development of Conservation / Water Management clusters to integrate expertise and implementation
- ✓ Natural Hazard Management

Developing a Road Map for Conservation Authorities

For Conservation Authorities, 'greening the economy' means reconfiguring Conservation Authority business and infrastructure to deliver better returns on natural, human and economic capital investments, using few resource inputs, reducing waste outputs, improving watershed resilience and social well-being.

