



Hello friends:

We often talk “future generations” when we talk sustainability. What kind of world are we leaving for those coming up? How can we thrive today, without compromising the ability of future generations to thrive? How are we equipping people and organizations to flourish in tomorrow's world? Those questions are often posed in the abstract, but there's nothing like the birth of a specific “future generation” to bring it all into very real focus. In July I became a grandmother, making the future of society and the health of our environment more critical to me than ever before.

And I'm pleased to be able to say that I'm seeing encouraging trends: increasing interest from shareholders, boards and governance professionals in the sustainable board agenda; ongoing pivot to social purpose by companies; the Government of Canada's resurging interest in the CSR role of business; acceleration by the post-secondary sector to harness all its assets for community good.

Walt Disney was well-known for his futurist views, and it was from those views that the theme park “Tomorrowland” was created. Its vision was to demonstrate achievements and ideas that could benefit the generation of that day, as well as generations to come. Some of its vision has been surpassed and some has been re-shaped, much in the way the organizational and academic world is recognizing the need to re-tool and re-imagine itself in order to create a healthy blueprint for our future. I'm heartened by this because, like Mr. Disney, I believe that with the right kind of investment and imagination tomorrow can be a wonderful age.

Let's take a look at the transformational roles that business, academia, associations and boards are taking on to positively help shape the real world of tomorrow. Read on to learn more.

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News

Transformational Role of Business

The [Social Purpose Institute at the United Way](#) graduated eight companies in June, all committed to a social purpose as the reason for their existence. Notably, nearly all the companies are dedicated to transforming their industries to become environmental and social stewards. As the lead facilitator I was honoured and inspired to see this, as it points the way for sustainable progress in the future. [Here's a video that shows the potential](#). The federal government is equally interested, and last spring committed over [\\$1M to the United Way](#) to scale this model across Western Canada.



Transformational Role of Universities

As demonstrated in this [paper I wrote for SFU and the McConnell Foundation in 2017](#), the post-secondary sector has considerable untapped assets it can leverage for social impact. This year, the federal government sponsored me to write a thought leader paper on [academia's role in advancing corporate social responsibility in teaching, research and partnering](#). The cross-cutting findings from both studies point to the conclusion that academia is poised to make a profound difference as it mobilizes its resources for greater good. As universities and colleges upgrade their strategic plans in the coming years, they now have [a set of guidelines](#) sponsored by the McConnell Foundation which I developed from a national scan of best practices. Check out these guidelines and see how they can be applied to your institution or organization.



Transformational Role of Professional Associations

As documented in this article “[Professionalism on the Line](#)”, professionals and the associations that educate them are on the sustainability front line. The sustainability mega-forces such as climate change, looming resource and water scarcity, rising income inequality, digital disruption, and changing workforce, government and consumer expectations, are thrusting the professional into the spotlight. To be relevant in future, professionals need to upgrade their competencies and they need their associations to show them how. Recently I was commissioned by the Real Estate Foundation of BC to explore this changing terrain from the perspective of the real estate professional. Professionals and professional associations may well discover relevance to their own industries in this study. The provocative question for all professionals is how to change a vicious circle into a virtuous cycle. [This paper shows the way](#), as does [this webinar recording](#).



Transformational Role of Boards

This past June the federal government amended the Canada Business Corporations Act to allow corporate directors to look beyond shareholder benefits when evaluating the best interests of a corporation, and to consider the broader interests of employees, consumers, governments, the environment and the long-term viability of the corporation. While the legislation does not cover all businesses in Canada it shows how the narrative is moving away from shareholder primacy.



In August, this move was further reinforced at the US Business Roundtable, with CEOs from 181 of the world's largest companies declaring that the purpose of a corporation is not just to serve shareholders, their official position since 1997, but to create value for stakeholders.

For several years I have helped the Governance Professionals of Canada (GPC) educate its members on the role of a board in providing oversight of the company's relationships with its stakeholders and its corporate social and environmental impacts. Last spring I moderated a deep-dive on that topic to help governance professionals get it on their boards' agendas. One of the key goals of the deep-dive was to lay out an environmental, social and governance (ESG) roadmap for Canadian boards and the governance professionals that support them. You can find a [link to the proceedings here](#).

Events

Professionals, Industries and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Join me at the [Canadian Society of Association Executives annual conference](#) in Vancouver, Oct. 22 – 25. I am moderating a panel on the role that professional and industry associations can play in equipping their members to accelerate sustainability in their profession and sector.



Hiring for Social Impact: Higher Education Leadership in Diversity, Recruitment and Retention

Attend this [free one-hour webinar](#) to learn how colleges and universities are advancing progressive hiring practices via the CAUBO-McConnell Foundation webinar series on social purpose administration. November 20, 12:00-1:00 PM EST.