



A leading voice for a healthy and environmentally sustainable community.

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January 29, 2016

To: Lethbridge City Council
From: Braum Barber, Southern Alberta Group for the Environment
Re: Curbside Recycling

The Southern Alberta Group for the Environment (SAGE) is a non-profit, volunteer organization that advocates for constructive solutions to environmental issues on behalf of our region. SAGE has a long history of collaborating with government institutions to develop positive policies and promote initiatives that preserve ecosystem integrity, biodiversity, and that help create a culture of sustainability. With respect to the Council decision not to support curbside recycling in Lethbridge on Monday, January 25, we would appreciate some guidance to the following questions. Your perspectives would help SAGE better align its efforts towards a common goal of maintaining and enhancing the health of the environment upon which our community relies.

1. In May 2015, Lethbridge City Council approved an environmental policy to 'inspire, lead, and support actions to conserve, protect and enhance the environment for the Lethbridge community' and to 'support efforts to minimize Lethbridge's ecological footprint by using natural resources efficiently'. In July 2015, Lethbridge City Council approved waste reduction targets of 180 kg per capita by 2021 for residential waste (from the current 330 kg per capita). On November 30, 2015 a proposed Residential Waste Diversion Strategy was presented to City Council that considered consultant recommendations regarding a materials recovery facility and a private vs public comparison for curbside collection operations.

Having defeated the proposed Residential Waste Diversion Strategy, what alternative will City Council propose that would more effectively replace this strategy, demonstrate environmental leadership, and better support the efficient use of natural resources in the city?

2. We were interested in the enthusiasm in City Council for the 'opt-out' strategy as it relates to the provision of city services.

What successful examples are there of citizens being allowed to opt out of paying for the provision of city-wide services that benefit all citizens?

3. Two members of the standing Environment Committee of Council (Councillors Iwaskiw and Mauro) voted against the motion before City Council on January 25 to endorse the Residential Waste Diversion Strategy. The desired outcomes of this committee are to 'ensure that Lethbridge is a leader in environmental stewardship' and to 'encourage the community to contain and reduce our impact on the environment'. A key action for the committee in 2016 was to explore curbside recycling.

It is our understanding that the role of this committee is to guide policy development for leadership in environmental stewardship, and to review research and information that City Council requires to make informed decisions. Given that is the case, why were there so many questions to administration requesting information on the day of decision? More importantly, why were two members of this committee not seemingly engaged in making this plan work, essentially overturning the Finance Committee's decision to support in principle the delivery of curbside recycling in Lethbridge (November 2014). If there were concerns with proceeding with the strategy, why did the Environment Committee not provide options for a viable strategy to achieve the policy targets for residential waste diversion?

We look forward to your insights regarding this process, its failure, and how SAGE might continue to be of service in creating a culture of sustainability in Lethbridge.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'B. Iwaskiw', written in a cursive style.

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