

**SAGE****Southern Alberta
Group for the
Environment**

**A leading voice for a healthy and
environmentally sustainable community.**

Box 383 Lethbridge AB T1J 3E9

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Letter to the Lethbridge Herald

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 supports the efforts of the City of Lethbridge to advance waste diversion strategies in the Construction & Demolition (C&D), Industrial, Commercial & Institutional (ICI), and Residential sectors.

We support the three sector strategies on the basis of better managing our natural resources and reducing landfill emissions to the natural environment (protecting our air, soil, and water). According to the Conference Board of Canada, we produce more waste per capita than any other OECD nation, Alberta produces more waste per capita than any other province, and Lethbridge produces more waste per capita than the other cities in the province. This makes us one of the most wasteful groups of people on the planet – over a tonne of waste from each of us, each year.

Relying on voluntary recycling, only about 15% of the residential waste is diverted from the landfill, and waste diversion from the other sectors are less than 10%. Research suggests that these rates of voluntary recycling will not substantially improve without the implementation of community-based curbside recycling of materials and compostable waste. And with the greater amounts of waste being diverted, Lethbridge will have to increase its capacity to sort, store and sell recycled commodities: SAGE supports the establishment of a city-owned, privately operated Materials Recycling Facility to convert our waste into useful commodities.

In addition to the diversion of useful materials from the landfill to be sold as commodities, compostable materials may be transformed into useful products like fuel (which can be used for power generation) and a rich soil amendment. With less waste, the useful life of the landfill would be extended. And with more effective waste diversion, there would be a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and associated environmental risks. Moreover, recycling means less environmental impact from the extraction of raw materials and processing. The result would be positive both economically and environmentally for Lethbridge in the long term.

SAGE believes that curbside recycling of materials and compostable wastes is an encouraging step towards making Lethbridge more sustainable.

Braum Barber
SAGE