



**The strong do as they wish,
while the weak suffer as they must.**

~ Thucydides

July 2010

Special points of interest:

- * CCEMC (Alberta Government) awards ECB Enviro North America Corp \$8.2 million for bio-gas cogeneration facility near Lethbridge.
- * Oldman Watershed Council publishes the final report: Oldman River State of the Watershed

SAGE AGM July 8th at 7 p.m.

SAGE will be convening their Annual General Meeting on July 8th at the Fish & Game Hut beginning at 7 p.m.

After the procedural requirements, the discussion will focus on the future of the organization - including communication and future initiatives.

The plan to be developed at the meeting will be directed to re-vision, refocus and reorganize

the organization to become a useful and effective community group for the environment.

Initiatives to consider for the meeting include developing public support and building capacity in municipal governance to address sustainability issues relating to: Energy (buildings and transportation); Water (rates); Health (toxic emissions, pesticides use, indoor air quality); Waste

(reduction, recycling); and Environmental Education.

The City of Lethbridge endorses a 'distributed model' of environmental management. It is informative to compare this to Medicine Hat's more centralized (and more effective) approach - see www.hatsmart.ca for initiatives successfully implemented in their city since 2007.

Syncrude Concerned About Pesky Federal and Provincial Laws

Syncrude, recently convicted for a mass-death of migrating ducks, faces fines of \$800,000 and jail time for company officers. The corporation warns that

enforcing legal (not to mention social and environmental) responsibilities will send negative market signals to further tar sand development. Meanwhile,

the ERCB has approved new tailings ponds for the company which do not comply with ERCB Directive 074 to improve the performance of tailings operations.

Water Markets

As Alberta plans to review policy and legislation around water allocation in Alberta two divergent papers have been published. The Fraser Institute laments the ‘bombardment’ of public opinion with ‘alarmist claims of widespread water depletion and degradation.’ They advocate a market-based system that would advance the pricing and rationalization of a valuable resource. Such a system, they argue, would promote closer monitoring of flows and maintain in-stream volumes for the dilution of pollution. Unused water could be sold by ‘owners’ and exported to promote economic growth.

The Polis Project focuses more on water conservation through progressive water pricing. They suggest that “With little financial incentive to conserve, we over-

Worth Every Penny: A Primer on Conservation-Oriented Water Pricing from the Polis Project on Ecological Governance

<http://www.poliswaterproject.org/publication/344>

Making Waves: Examining the Case for Sustainable Water Exports in Canada from the Fraser Institute

<http://www.fraserinstitute.org/researchandpublications/publications/7360.aspx>

consume, and over consumption is threatening water supplies and the sustainability of our water service infrastructure.” Conservation oriented pricing can help provide adequate funds to sustainably operate municipal facilities (which are typically operated at a loss) while reducing water use and leaving more in the ecosystem.

SAGE supports the efforts of Water Matters (www.water-matters.org) to secure, at a minimum, water as a top priority for basic human needs and the health of the rivers,

Including their riparian ecosystems. Services provided by healthy rivers and ecosystems are not typically considered in market valuation. More technical knowledge of groundwater and surface water, as well as impacts of interbasin transfers is required before water reallocation is permitted. (For more, see Chapter 8 of the Oldman River State of the Watershed Report)

The Alberta Government has promised an open and transparent review process for water allocation.

**The rose has
thorns only for
those who would
gather it.**

Proverb

Coming Events & Sources:

8th Annual Blue Weed Blitz: July 10th Contact Suzanne Curran at 627-4819

Oldman Watershed State of the Watershed Report at www.oldmanbasin.org

Gasland trailer: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZe1AeHQz8&feature=player_embedded#!

Southern Alberta Group for the Environment (SAGE)

A Leading Voice for a Healthy and Environmentally Sustainable Community.

Visit us at: <http://sage-environment.org/>

If you are interesting in getting involved, contact us at:

info@sage-environment.org

Letter to Lethbridge Herald

A City of Lethbridge innovation has been the creation of councils to administer major activities within the city. We have the Allied Arts Council, Lethbridge Sport Council, and Lethbridge Economic Development. Notably missing is an Energy - Environmental Council based on similar models.

It is recognized that reliable and affordable energy is essential for meeting basic human needs and fuelling economic growth. However, our dilemma is that harvesting, transporting, processing and conversion of energy using the technology relied upon today causes a large share of the most difficult and damaging environmental problems society faces. Both energy and environment determine the long-term state of the economy. In fact energy usage and environmental considerations are the economy. When energy supply fails or when energy is misused to the detriment of the environment then the economy is a measure of this failure.

Energy is the hardest part of the environment problem; environment is the hardest part of the energy problem; and resolving the energy - economy - environment dilemma is the hardest part of the challenge of sustainable well-being for industrial and developing countries alike (Holdren J. P., Science and Technology for Sustainable Well-Being, Science, page 424, January 25, 2008).

Creation of an Energy - Environmental Council is therefore not only

(Klaus, Braum and Paul)

desirable but essential for the long-term health of the economy. Energy and environment considerations have to be at the centre of city planning, infra structure maintenance and development, private and public transportation, business and industry permits, location of food outlets and shops, and park creation. The Southern Alberta Group for the Environment therefore proposes to create an inclusive Lethbridge Energy - Environmental Council that represents all sectors of the city. Extension of such a Council beyond city limits would be of advantage for the city, the county and Alberta. This Council would essentially be a Project - Policy Analysis Council which would serve the long-term interest of City Council.

Such a Council must empower itself with the best science based information on energy production and usage and its environmental consequences. The expertise of such a Council, transmitted to its members must be applied to all city initiatives. As such the Energy - Environment Council would be on par with all other City organizations which would be required to have all their initiatives reviewed by the Energy - Environment Council. This Council would need to enjoy total independence to supply the best unbiased information. Recommendations by this Energy - Environment Council would be given wide public exposure to invite community input and acceptance.

(Special Feature)

An Energy - Environment Council would create a positive image that will attract socially responsible investment, would use local and provincial expertise, provide opportunities for graduates from local post-secondary institutions and build long-term economic capacity. Such a Council would support the provincial commitment outlined in the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan.

An effective Energy - Environment Council is necessary to secure a healthy long-term future for our city. Without it we are failing. There is convincing scientific evidence that the global and Alberta populations are harming not only their backyard but also their frontyard. "Business as usual" will not carry us through the challenges of tomorrow. A further increase of 2 billion humans, the subsequent food demands for humans and food animals, changes in climate and limited water supply will require the urgent correct application of the best information available to us. Alberta and Lethbridge must take part in corrective action. The sooner the cheaper in the long - term.

The following triad is the challenge:

	Energy	
Environment		Economy

Mastering the above triad is our present and future challenge. It will not be easy. We better not fail. Will the City lead?