



“There are no real start-overs,
only start-from-heres.”

Richelle E. Goodrich

June 2015

NDP Environmental Platform

SAGE AGM

June 11th

Date and time TBA.

Don't forget to renew your [SAGE membership!](#)

Keen for Green Fest,
Galt Gardens, June 6th,
11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Lethbridge Sustainable Living Organization organizing AppleFest 2015. To be involved, contact lethbridgeeco-coop@gmail.com

Weed Pull June 18th. See [Oldman Watershed Council](#).

An historic election this month represented a call for responsible governance. From the NDP Platform, the following describe promised 'action on the environment':

(5.9) We will establish a green retrofitting loan program that will assist Alberta families, farms and small businesses to reduce their energy usage affordably, which will reduce environmental impacts and create jobs in the construction industry.

(5.10) We will phase out coal-fired electricity generation to reduce smog and greenhouse gas emissions and expand cleaner, greener sources, including wind and solar and more industrial cogeneration in the oil sands, all

of which will improve both the environment and the health of Albertans.

(5.11) We will end the PCs' costly and ineffective Carbon Capture and Storage experiment and reinvest the 2015/16 component of this project into construction of public transit, which will help reduce families' transportation costs and reduce greenhouse gases and other air pollutants.

(5.12) We will strengthen environmental standards, inspection, monitoring and enforcement to protect Alberta's water, land and air. We will build standards based on independent science and international best practices, designed trans-

parently in careful consultation with Albertans.

(5.13) We will take leadership on the issue of climate change and make sure Alberta is part of crafting solutions with stakeholders, other provinces and the federal government. First steps will include an energy efficiency strategy and a renewable energy strategy.

(5.14) We will ban gas drilling in urban areas.

(5.15) And we will protect the Castle Wilderness Area.

See SAGE letter in this Newsletter to Premier Notley on the NDP environmental platform.

Blue Dot Movement

“Across Canada, people are coming together to guarantee the right to a healthy environment — with fresh air, clean water, safe food and a say in the decisions that affect our health and well-being.” This is the vision of the Blue Dot Movement in Canada.

The Plan, according to David Suzuki, is for people to stand up, then neighbours get together to change cities, cities unite to change a province, and together provinces can change a nation ... it is a grass roots effort to move environmental sustainability forward. To date, over 73,000 people and 53 municipal governments have passed declarations recognizing the right to fresh air, clean water, and healthy food. See <http://bluedot.ca/the-plan>

Environment Lethbridge Fee-for-Service Agreement

On Monday, May 25th, the City of Lethbridge agreed to enter a fee-for-service partnership with Environment Lethbridge. The Council vote was 8-1, with Joe Mauro voting against the proposal.

The fee-for-service will include environmental education and begin the process of establishing indicators & benchmarks from which to measure future improvements to our collective footprint.

Environment Lethbridge has already established a web and social media presence which will be expanded in time to include timely information on local activities and initiatives; opportunities for volunteer action; collaboration between groups by developing best practices; and

quality environmental information appropriate for the local climate.

The Municipal Development Plan / Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (MDP/ICSP), which was developed by citizen and technical advisory committees, notes the importance of establishing indicators and developing benchmarks for our environmental impact, including energy consumption, water quality, biodiversity, air quality, and waste management in the community.

Stay in touch through Environment Lethbridge at <http://environmentlethbridge.ca/>

Letter to SAGE: Crowdfunding for *Gods Acre*

My name is Kelton Stepanowich. I am a Aboriginal Filmmaker from Fort McMurray Alberta gearing up to shoot my upcoming short film "Gods Acre" in the Northern Aboriginal Community, Fort Chipewyan this summer with Aboriginal actor Lorne Cardinal.

"Gods Acre" is the story of a older Aboriginal man being forced to adapt to a constantly changing world. Climate change has altered the way people live, bringing droughts and floods to previously unaffected areas. And yet, a man continues to live alone in the wilderness like his family before him. Even before global warming and it's catastrophic consequences, he was an outlier to society. His roots remained firmly planted in the customs his family passed on to him. However, every day the outside world's problems are landing closer to his doorstep. Water is rising and swallowing the land his cabin stands on. Now, he must abandon his birthplace or adapt to the new conditions."

To raise funds for the film our production is going to be starting a crowdfunding campaign on May 25th till June 25th. If you are not familiar with crowdfunding it is a method of raising money for projects

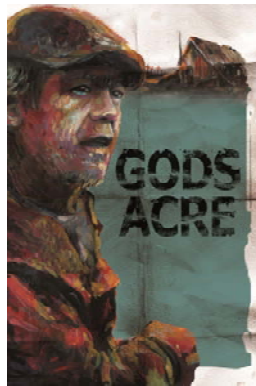
where people donate to a project online and receive perks (such as posters or dvds) for contributing!

I was wondering if our upcoming production could be featured in the SAGE Environment newsletter or on Environmental Headlines of your website. Our project says a lot of about the environment and aboriginal culture.

Below is a preview link of our campaign page when we go live.

<https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/gods-acre#/story>

The goal with our story being featured is to inform the public on our campaign and how to be a part of it. Many people don't know about crowdfunding so our goal is to teach what it is along with our project campaign. I have also attached our press release.



Hope to hear from you soon!

Sincerely,

Kelton Stepanowich (Director)
Half Breed Films
info@halfbreedfilms.net 587.646.9004

Environment Lethbridge
Fundraiser
Rain Barrels—\$70 each
(Only 14 remaining for this

Spring)

Order Online:

<http://>

www.environmentlethbridge.org/



Interesting Links:

If a Tree Falls: The Story of the Earth Liberation Front.
Marshall Curry 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UfVAJ2aECOM>

Feeling a little overwhelmed by environmental challenges? A visit to this site is the antidote with tales of positive change and sustainability: <http://www.ecotippingpoints.org/>

Because we care and because we are a bit anachronistic – knot tying essentials:
<http://www.mnn.com/earth-matters/wilderness-resources/stories/11-knots-you-need-to-know>



Southern Alberta Group for the Environment (SAGE)

A Leading Voice for a Healthy and Environmentally Sustainable Community.

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

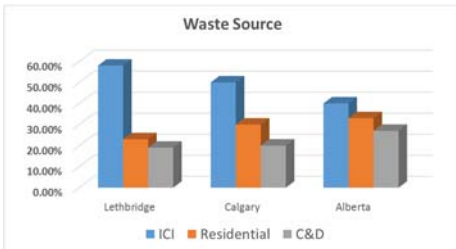
If you are interesting in getting involved, contact us at:

sage-communications@sage-environment.org

Draft Report on Waste Management in Lethbridge

Part 2 - The Statistics (... Part 1 in May newsletter & Part 3 coming in July)

The type and amount of waste that is disposed of in the landfill varies from city to city, and from year to year. It depends on affluence and attitude, and it changes depending on the types of collection that are available to the municipal resident. For example, the following chart compares Lethbridge waste sources to Calgary and the Alberta average.



Note that Lethbridge has a higher percentage of ICI waste than Calgary, and much more than the provincial average. Residential, on the other hand is significantly lower in Lethbridge than elsewhere.

One could argue that the most fruitful focus for waste reduction in Lethbridge will be in the Industrial, Commercial & Institutional sectors. These sectors are responsible for managing their own waste and pay a tipping fee at the landfill (\$60.50 per tonne for mixed waste). This can be compared to Residential waste which is collected by the City of Lethbridge and sent to the landfill, with fees being included in the utility statement.

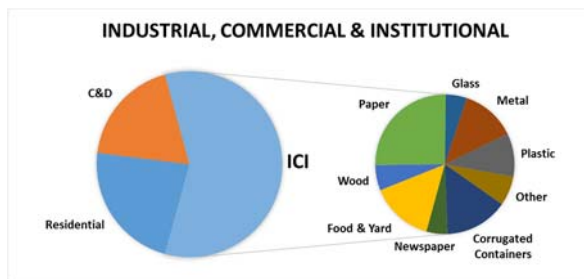
The next question is: What comprises the waste from each source? Based on statistics collected in Lethbridge and some provincial averages, the following picture emerges.

Industrial, Commercial & Institutional (ICI) waste comes from a number of sectors. Provincial statistics suggest that half comes from: Accommodation and Food Services; Retail Trade; Health Care; and Manufacturing.

The waste coming from ICI can be broken down into the following categories:

Food & Yard	15%
Wood	6%
Paper	26%
Glass	5%
Metal	13%
Plastic	10%
Other	7%
Corrugated Containers	15%
Newspaper	5%

The following chart shows that ICI comprises 58% of the total waste going to the landfill.



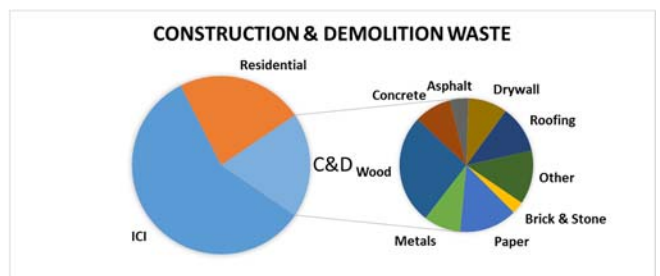
Of that amount, the major types of waste include paper, cardboard, and food & yard waste. Much of this waste is clean and sorted at its source and could be effectively diverted from the landfill as recyclables and compostable materials.

Construction & Demolition (C&D) waste is derived mainly from building homes and buildings, renovation, and demolition activities. Like ICI, much of this waste is clean and separated at the site, but becomes less recyclable or reusable once mixed together and sent to the landfill. We send about 60,000 tonnes of this material to the landfill each year in Lethbridge.

The waste coming from C&D can be broken down into the following categories:

Brick & Stone	3%
Paper	14%
Metals	9%
Wood	27%
Concrete	9%
Asphalt	5%
Drywall	10%
Roofing	12%
Other	13%

The following chart shows that C&D comprises 19% of the total waste going to the landfill. Of that amount, the major types of waste include wood, paper, drywall and roofing materials. With some effort, much of these material could be recycled back into the process used to make the product – asphalt shingles recycled back to make more asphalt shingles, for example.



Willful Blindness (2014)



Willful Blindness, by Margaret Heffernan, is a well-written survey of what makes us blind in the present to what becomes obvious in hindsight. Much of the book is written for a corporate setting, but much of the research relates more widely to how we interact in society or with the environment.

One of the first ‘causes’ of blindness is groupthink. When people homogenize their social environments with like-minded people, we become blind to differing ways of seeing the world. In addition, such groups tend to become more extreme in their perspectives than they would have been individually: “This is natural but it isn’t neutral. In what he calls the “group polarization effect,” legal scholar Cass Sunstein found that when groups of like-minded people get together, they make each other’s views more extreme” (16). This tendency to more extreme positions can be a threat to the credibility of all groups working towards social or environmental goals.

The author uses a wonderful metaphor to describe how our views become more rigid over time: “Imagine the gradual formation of a riverbed. The initial flow of water might be completely random – there are no preferred routes in the beginning. But once a creek is formed, water is more likely to follow this newly created path of least resistance. As the water continues, the creek deepens and a river develops” (20).

The author goes on to say that “The longer we live, and the more we accumulate similar experiences, friends, and ideas, the faster and more easily the water flows. There’s less and less resistance. That absence of resistance produces a sense of ease, of comfort, of certainty.”

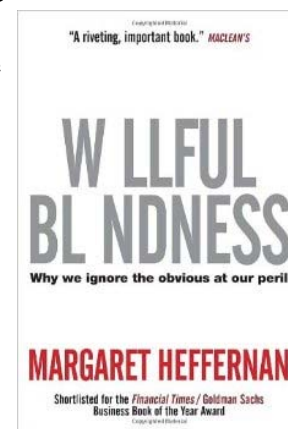
Another ‘cause’ of willful blindness is exhaustion and overstimulation in modern society. “When we are tired or preoccupied – conditions psychologists call “resource-depleted” – we start to economize, to conserve those resources. Higher-order thinking is more expensive. So too are doubt, skepticism, and argument” (78). Heffernan quotes Harvard psychologist Daniel Gilbert, “Not only does doubt seem to be the last to emerge, but it also seems to be the first to disappear.” And doubt is a necessary cognitive function to overcome the first ‘cause’ of groupthink.

The author provides supporting research on recent neuroscience and anecdotal stories from her experience in the corporate world so support these observations. Ultimately, she argues, we have many “drivers of willful blindness: our preference for the familiar, our love of individuals and for big ideas, a love of busyness and our dislike of conflict and change, the human instinct to obey and conform, and our skill at displacing and diffusing responsibility” (198). The goal is to overcome these drivers

to see what we need to see when we need to see it.

One of these issues is climate change, which the author addresses: “We don’t see things that are too far away, that are too distant from our own experience, too separate from our own concerns, or simply too complicated to assemble. But we also don’t see things that are too far away in time, be it the past or the future. One of the reasons it has proved so hard for climate-change activists and negotiators to gain traction must be that the threat feels so far away in time – well after the heads of state responsible for it will have left the stage. Fear of change, of conflict, the pull of inertia, all of these help us to remain blind to something so far away in the future that it’s very easy to ignore it day after day” (179).

She concludes that our monetization of nature and paralysis in the face of institutional inertia make it unlikely that we can overcome our willful blindness. She encourages, however, our Cassandras to keep speaking out. “Cassandras may see the truth, but they inspire fury because those truths were so energetically and necessarily hidden, and because their revelations demand change” (219). She hopes our modern Cassandras will be heard.





A leading voice for a healthy and environmentally sustainable community

Box 383 Lethbridge AB T1J 3E9

March 25, 2015

To: Mayor Chris Spearman and Council
City of Lethbridge

From: Braum Barber, Chair, SAGE

Re: MDP/ICSP Progress

It has been five years since the completion of the City's Integrated Community Sustainability Plan/Municipal Development Plan (ICSP/MDP) process to provide direction for governance over the next decades. SAGE has been a leading voice for a healthy and environmentally sustainable community for over thirty years in Lethbridge, and the organization was an active advisory participant in the public consultation for the MDP/ICSP.

SAGE is interested in an update on the progress and achievements of the City as they relate to the environmental indicators delineated in the MDP/ICSP, and supported by many years of gas tax funding that was ostensibly to be directed to projects that result in 'cleaner air, cleaner water, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.' It is our understanding that the MDP/ICSP was funded from these gas tax funds in an effort to internalize environmental values in future governance – that is, to direct municipal policy development and implementation as it relates to environmental sustainability and community resilience; to facilitate the planning of environmental initiatives within the community; and to enhance the Community's understanding of environmental sustainability options.

The Vision Statement for the ICSP/MDP states that "we will continue to work together to ensure that Lethbridge is a leader in environmental stewardship, innovation and active leadership." With this clear direction, SAGE would value an update on the following:

6.4.1 Lethbridge is a Compact City

The intent of these policies is to minimize the urban footprint of Lethbridge by using land more efficiently by increasing residential densities in future neighbourhoods in relation to existing built-up areas and by increasing residential densities in existing areas in a manner that respects built form and character.

SAGE understands that reducing the urban footprint is a key indicator to reducing travelling distances within Lethbridge, thus reducing related greenhouse gas emissions and infrastructure requirements. Do new developments have a smaller footprint compared to existing built up areas?

6.4.2 Lethbridge has an Efficient and Effective Integrated Transportation Network

The intent of these policies is to provide for viable alternatives to the single occupancy automobile and to design new neighbourhoods, and retrofit existing neighbourhoods, to improve alternative transportation options to destinations within and outside of neighbourhoods.

SAGE understands that designing new neighbourhoods and retrofitting existing neighbourhoods is an essential component to reducing our collective reliance on the single-occupancy vehicle by reducing distances to destinations and providing transportation alternatives. What benchmarks have been established for measuring the effectiveness of neighbourhood design and retrofits as they relate to public adoption of transportation alternatives?

6.5.1 Lethbridge's River Valley is the Primary Open Space System

The intent of these policies is to conserve and enhance the unique character of the Oldman River valley and strive to conserve, enhance and where possible restore the biological diversity of the river valley and riparian areas within.

SAGE understands that the City of Lethbridge has been provided a report evaluating indicators of riparian health. What indicators will the City be using to monitor efforts in sustaining and restoring biodiversity of these natural systems?

6.5.2 Lethbridge Conserves its Natural Resources

The intent of these policies is to minimize Lethbridge's ecological footprint by using resources efficiently, including water quality, air quality, waste management, and energy consumption.

Water Quality Policies:

What programs and practices or incentives have been implemented to encourage water conservation and overall water quality? How have new stormwater management facilities been designed to meet or exceed Province of Alberta standards? What new developments have been demonstrated that have incorporated ecological design of neighbourhoods and buildings to reduce stormwater run-off? Has xeriscaping been widely adopted around City owned buildings and facilities? How has regional distribution of treated water affected minimum flowrates in the Oldman River? What benchmarks have been adopted to monitor improvements in water quality?

Air Quality Policies:

What programs and policies or incentives have been implemented to reduce the generation of greenhouse gases and air pollutants? How has the City encouraged the retention of plant species on private property to improve air quality? What mitigation efforts have been adopted to control the effects of erosion due to high winds during construction within the City? What benchmarks have been explored for air quality in the City (landfill emissions, industrial emissions, intensive livestock operation emissions, etc.)? How has the City collaborated with other communities in the air-shed regarding air quality?

Waste Management Policies:

What has the City of Lethbridge done to conserve natural resources within the City through waste reduction and diversion? What potential has been identified for the utilization of diverted waste? What industrial ecologies have been identified for using the waste of one process for the resource of another? What community programs have been implemented supporting effective household waste management techniques?

Energy Consumption:

How has built environment been designed or retrofitted to optimize opportunities for alternative energy and energy conservation? What policies or incentives have been adopted to conserve energy and materials in the design, construction and operation of municipal facilities and the built environment? What benchmarks have been adopted for measuring community energy use?

In summary, Section 7 of the MDP/ICSP identifies the need for benchmarking and monitoring measurable progress towards achieving the vision. SAGE is most interested in better understanding the progress the City has made towards environmental resilience and sustainability, as it helps direct our organization towards congruent activities and initiatives.

We would very much appreciate your insight for these community goals.

Sincerely,



Braum Barber
SAGE



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

Box 383 Lethbridge AB T1J 3E9

May 20, 2015

To: Premier Rachel Notley
Government of Alberta

From: Braum Barber
Southern Alberta Group for the Environment (SAGE)

Congratulations on the electoral success of the NDP in Alberta.

We look forward to a more proactive and sustainable approach to preserving the natural environment and a more responsible strategy for energy development and consumption in the province.

With respect to the platform that the NDP proffered during the recent election, we support greater incentives promoting building efficiency and the responsible development of renewable energy technologies. The NDP approach to phasing out coal-fired electricity generation and eliminating the carbon sequestration and storage program are significant steps to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions.

We also support the platform proposal to "strengthen environmental standards, inspection, monitoring and enforcement to protect Alberta's water, land and air." Supporting municipalities in developing benchmarks of the current state would help direct better planning decisions regarding transportation, urban sprawl, building standards and improving energy efficiency. Furthermore, Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils have made substantial progress towards the development of environmental monitoring and actions towards protecting watersheds in Alberta – the Oldman Watershed Council has made noteworthy contributions to this important process.

Finally, SAGE enthusiastically supports the platform to protect the Castle Wilderness Area. This is long overdue.

Again, we look forward to your environmental leadership. It's important.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Barber", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

cc. Shannon Phillips, MLA Lethbridge-West
Maria Fitzpatrick, MLA Lethbridge-East

Response on May 26th, from Adam Woods, Premier's Secretariat Division:

"On behalf of the Premier I would like to say thank you for your letter from SAGE. Things are very busy at the moment and we are working very hard to earn the trust Albertans have placed in us. We are very happy that you folks are enthusiastic about our platform, and I know how excited we are to start moving forward on our commitments. As you know the protection of Alberta's land, water, and wildlife has always been an issue of great importance to the Alberta NDP. On that note I would like to say thank you from everyone in our office for all the hard work you and your organization for the protection of our province. Thank you again for the email, and I hope you are well."