



**“Not everything that can be counted counts.  
Not everything that counts can be counted. .”**

**Albert Einstein**

**October 2016**

## Tackling Fossil Fuel Subsidies

**SAGE Meeting Wednesday, September 28, 2016** at Lethbridge Public Library, upstairs.

**Green Superheroes.** Nominate someone who has worked to become more sustainable. Contact [Environment Lethbridge](mailto:Environment.Lethbridge).

**SAGE Memberships** gratefully accepted (anytime). \$25 by mail or online at [sage\\_environment.org](http://sage_environment.org)

Federal Government seeking feedback on **Species-At-Risk Act (SARA)**. [sararegistry.gc.ca](http://sararegistry.gc.ca)

In the past election, the federal government promised to end subsidies for the production and use of fossil fuels in Canada” “We will fulfill Canada’s G-20 commitment to phase out subsidies for the fossil fuel industry.” It appears, however, that the practice will continue.

A subsidy can come in the form of a direct handout or as a tax break—though the result is the same for the industry receiving the subsidy. It is estimated that Canada subsidizes fossil fuels in the order of \$3.3 billion each year.

Subsidies are entrenched in programs such as the Canadian Development Expense, Canadian Exploration Expense, Atlantic Investment Tax Credit, Crown Royalty Reductions in Alberta, and the Deep Drilling Credit in British Columbia.

A new study titled *Unpacking Canada’s Fossil Fuel Subsidies* suggests that \$3.3 billion could be redirected to pay for the education for 260,000 students each year; or open 44,000 hospital beds; or provide job training for 330,000 workers.

The irony is that while Canadians subsidize fossil fuels, many provinces are planning to implement a carbon tax. In other words, tax revenues designed to discourage carbon emissions from burning fossil fuels are being used to subsidize industries producing fossil fuels.

For more information, visit the International Institute for Sustainable Development (<http://www.iisd.org/library/g20-subsidies-oil-gas-and-coal-production-canada>).

## City of Lethbridge Developing Environment and Land Use Strategies

Lethbridge is in the process of developing a *Efficient Land Use Strategy* (ELUS) that is expected to direct the City in developing areas and coordinating capital projects. The Strategy is to be aligned with the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP).

The SSRP Compliance Initiative will be composed of four different strategies including environment, economy & tourism, relationships, and efficient land use. The

ELUS will be used to update the Municipal Development Plan and Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (MDP/ICSP). Specifically, ELUS is directed to ensure ‘lands are efficiently used to minimized the amount of area taken up by the built environment.’

Acronyms aside, the ELUS process is an important process in establishing the type of development Lethbridge can sustain within the limits outlined in the SSRP. Increasing densification, im-

proved housing types and performance, alternative transportation options, increased urban gardening/agriculture, and limited greenfield growth (a.k.a. urban sprawl) will be addressed in the strategy and eventually articulated in the MDP.

To date, background information has been compiled for setting a baseline. This autumn, the City will be discussing values to establish targets and an implementation roadmap for efficient land use.

A similar process is being undertaken for the Environment & Historical Resources Strategy.

Feedback can be given through online questionnaires (<http://www.lethbridge.ca/City-Government/Get%20Involved/Pages/100K+.aspx>), including environmental footprint, water conservation & quality, native plants, and greenhouse gas & air pollutants.

## STILL WAITING FOR THE CASTLE PARKS

From the [Alberta Wilderness Association](#) (September 2016):

On September 4, 2015, the Government of Alberta announced its intention to fully protect the Castle area in southwestern Alberta as a Provincial and Wildland Provincial Park.

"Albertans have asked for the Castle to be protected for more than four decades. In that span of time, it has been logged, drilled and damaged by off-highway vehicles but it is still an extraordinary place. Prioritizing restoration of the Castle is long overdue," says Andrea Hlady of the Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition (CCWC).

"A full year later, we're still waiting," says Joanna Skrajny of Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA). "And, unfortunately, many things that have been damaging the Castle for years, including off-highway vehicle use, continue."

"We were encouraged by the decision to protect the Castle; we're anxious now to ensure that the ecological values of the region are given priority," says Stephen Legault of Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative (Y2Y). "The Castle could be the jewel in the crown of Alberta's parks system but before that can happen we need to put an end to off-highway vehicle use in the parks. Ending logging was a good first step; now we encourage the government to finish the job and fully protect the Castle."

"Albertans want parks for quiet recreation so that wildlife and wilderness can thrive. Off-highway vehicle use is incompatible with those values," says Katie Morrison of Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS S. AB).

The Castle area, southwest of Pincher Creek, has the highest biodiversity in the province outside of Waterton Lakes National Park, and is an essential headwaters area for the Oldman River basin. The Castle also contains critical habitat for the threatened westslope cutthroat trout, and is recognized as core grizzly bear habitat. Conservationists and local citizens were delighted when the Castle Park announcement was made, and continue to pressure the government to follow through on its commitment to fully protect the area.

"It has been a year since the Castle parks were announced," says Andrea Hlady, CCWC President. "We're calling on the government to pass legislation and manage the proposed Castle Parks as protected areas. The longer we wait the more difficult and expensive it will be to restore the Castle to the standard that Albertans expect in their provincial parks."

## Wildlife Need Room in the Castle

Global Forest Watch Canada's September 20, 2016 report highlights how human disturbance has significantly reduced wildlife habitat in the proposed Castle Parks. The report found there is only 1.54km<sup>2</sup> of secure Grizzly Bear habitat in the provincial park and confirms that all westslope cutthroat trout and bull trout critical habitats in both proposed parks are located in areas of high human disturbance. This level of human disturbance exceeds any acceptable thresholds for wildlife.

"High quality habitat is essential for maintaining grizzly bears and native trout species in our parks. If we don't secure this habitat, we may not have these threatened species in Alberta in the future," says Andy Hurly, Vice President of the Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition. "Off-highway vehicle (OHV) use must be stopped; it continues to damage this critical landscape and prevents the recovery we need to support fish and wildlife."

Much of Alberta's remaining westslope cutthroat trout habitat is in the two proposed parks. Linear disturbances such as cutblocks and seismic lines impact trout habitat even if they are not being used for motorized recreation, because these disturbances contribute to increased water temperature and sedimentation.

"The Alberta Government must do its part in recovering protected species," says Joanna Skrajny, Alberta Wilderness Association Conservation Specialist. "We have long maintained that restoration is urgently required in the Castle region and must become the focus of management planning. The GFWC report is one more critical evaluation confirming what local advocates and scientists have said for years."

In September 2015, the Government of Alberta announced plans to designate the Castle Wilderness Area as a Castle Provincial Park and a Castle Wildland Provincial Park. Management planning for the Castle Parks is presently underway.

For a copy of the report, [click here](#)

### Interesting Links:

Sustainable Cities Collective

<http://www.sustainablecitiescollective.com/>

Alberta Energy Efficiency Program

<http://www.alberta.ca/energy-efficiency-get-involved.aspx>



**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](mailto:sage-communications@sage-environment.org)**

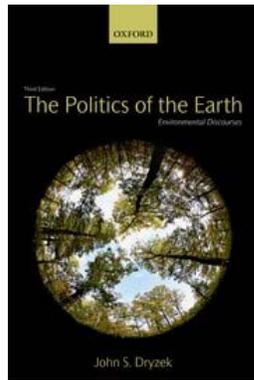
## The Politics of the Earth & Managing Leviathan

I know, I know ... two textbooks. But it turns out that they offer excellent discussions on sustainability, on administrative processes, and democratic pragmatism.

In *The Politics of the Earth*, John Dryzek describes a current state of administrative rationality: "It is, then, elites who have agency, the capacity to act. Their motivations are up for grabs.

Elites can choose to operate national political economies according to established principles of maximizing economic growth, leavened by a touch of social justice and the need to placate special interests; or they can choose to listen to scientists, be it to oversee the transition to a stationary state through coordinated global action, or to bring humanity back to a 'safe operating space.' 'Populations,' be they national, global, or class-specific, have no agency, they are only acted upon, as aggregates to be monitored through statistics and controlled by government policy" (p.42). It is the lack of agency by the citizenry that Dryzek shows to be a main source of our inability to respond to complex ecosystem problems.

Dryzek begins the history of environmentalism from the Promethean confidence in the veracity and power of statistical indicators of environmental trends and their refusal to recognize complexity and uncertainty in ecologic affairs. He critiques the problem-solving discourse of administrative rationalism which takes the political-economic status quo of liberal capitalism as given. Administrative rationalism takes scientific and technical expertise and organizes it into a bureau-



cratic hierarchy for solving environmental problems without public participation and without challenging the structural status quo.

By contrast, Dryzek offers examples of more effective process in countries that feature "an advanced economy, a strong civil society, a strong and respected tradition of scientific research, and a diverse media" (p.117). This democratic pragmatism becomes the main focus of the book - an effort to create transparent and effective processes that can deal with the complexity of environmental challenges.

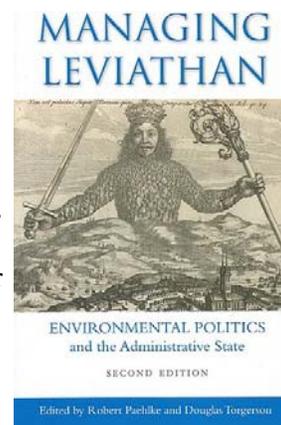
A more ambitious effort for promoting democratic and effective management of environmental rationality in society may be found in *Managing Leviathan: Environmental Politics and the Administrative State*, edited by Robert Paehlke and Douglas Torgerson. The essayists work from a similar critique of current governance models as Dryzek, quoting Plumwood who argues "that so long as it remains under the sway of liberalism, democracy can never extend itself in a truly ecological direction. For inherent in liberalism are assumptions about the degree to which individuals are properly isolated from one another, rational in a narrowly instrumental and egoistic sense, and unequal in both material wealth and the capacity to exercise power and reason" (p.191).

The authors make two main points



about the administrative state. The first is that one must engage with it (as opposed to 'voluntary exile in a political wasteland'), and the second is that one cannot get absorbed or 'captured' by it: "Seemingly democratic exercises might provide legitimating cover for business as usual: (p.82). It is a fine line.

Though scientific expertise is important, many of the authors are concerned about the role it plays in excluding citizens and value-based considerations in the decision making process: "The consequence of this reliance on experts is thus an intellectual barrier to popular participation in the affected communities. Besides merely underplaying certain kinds of interests and values, the methodology functions in a way that impedes the very participatory processes that make the advancement of community interests and values possible" (p.68). A more robust and democratic process based on 'values' is required.



NGOs can play an important part in the democratic discussions around government policy: the instruments include "the rhetorical ability to change the terms of policy debate, creation of fear of political instability, the production of ideas, and the embarrassment of governments" (p.224).

The two books are complimentary but have different focuses. They both demonstrate a wisdom for creating a democratic governance model that is inclusive and can effectively address the complexity of environmental issues in contemporary society.

# THE ENVIRONMENT AND HISTORIC RESOURCES STRATEGY

Produced by Planning and Development Services Department, City of Lethbridge

February 2016

## What is the Environment and Historic Resources Strategy (EnvS)?

The Environment and Historic Resources Strategy or EnvS, is one of four data gathering projects under the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP) Compliance Initiative. The SSRP was adopted in 2014 and sets out a visionary and regulatory context that guides future land use and decision-making in the region. All municipalities in the South Saskatchewan region are required to be in compliance with the SSRP by September 1, 2019.

The SSRP Compliance Initiative is the City of Lethbridge's approach to achieving compliance. The Initiative focuses on gathering baseline data and using it to inform the next update of our City's Municipal Development Plan.

The EnvS is the second of four baseline data gathering projects. The goal of the project is learn more about our local environmental and historic resources so that they can be protected for the use and benefit of future generations. The on-going sustainability of our community requires us to know and consider the full impact of our land use planning and decision-making on these resources.

The EnvS will identify key environmental resources within our community (air, land and water-based), assess their current state, and opportunities for their protection. Similarly, the Strategy identifies historic resources in the community, including for the first time both First Nation and post-settlement heritage sites. Historic resources will also be assessed for their current state and we will explore opportunities for their protection, including through the framework of the Heritage Management Plan.

By exploring these vital resources within our community we will be better positioned to inform planning and decision-making.

EnvS brings together a cross-disciplinary team of technical experts, and engaged stakeholders and residents in a conversation about environmental and historic resources in Lethbridge and how to plan for the future.

Timeline: November, 2015—January, 2017.

For more information on the SSRP Compliance Initiative or the Environment and Historic Resources Strategy, please contact Perry Stein, Community Planner.





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

Box 383 Lethbridge AB T1J 3E9

September 6, 2016

To: Hon. Shannon Phillips, Minister of Environment and Parks  
Government of Alberta

From: Braum Barber  
Southern Alberta Group for the Environment

Re: Energy Efficiency Feedback

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The Southern Alberta Group for the Environment (SAGE) has been a leading voice for a healthy and environmentally sustainable community in Lethbridge and region since 1984. SAGE commends the Government of Alberta for its efforts to protect the Castle as an important source for clean water in southern Alberta, water storage for late season streamflow, and as a migration corridor and crucial habitat for wildlife. We support government efforts to reduce carbon emissions in the province to mitigate climate disruption and for the improvement of air quality and health. And SAGE encourages the implementation of programming and incentives to reduce energy consumption as an important component of the Climate Leadership initiative.

Based on the Energy Efficiency Feedback Form, we would like to offer comments related to the program in general, and some specific perspectives on implementation. Generally, we appreciate the expansive approach of the plan to improve energy efficiency, including conservation and the application of more efficient technologies. We agree that greening the supply side of power generation is important, but more important is the reduction in consumption through demand-side management of industry and households.

The 'Barriers' section of the document is thorough, though we are concerned that it does not emphasize enough the impact of perverse discount rates on cost-benefit or payback calculations – discount rates are ultimately value-based, which should be addressed more directly and transparently. Furthermore, the prominence of economic measures seems to diminish normative measures typical of issues around common-pool resources and intergenerational justice. With high discount rates, and an inability to properly quantify the price of 'ecosystem services' and opportunity costs for future generations, the conversation ultimately becomes one of values. Furthermore, individualizing the problem to issues like 'health' may have some influence in public discourse, but at the risk of obscuring systemic issues. In summary, we would encourage the Government of Alberta to remain steadfast on a clear discussion around values – meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

With respect to programming tools, SAGE believes that public information and education is paramount. Unfortunately, there is evidently a significant gap in our region of the province regarding the public understanding of the benefits renewable energy and energy efficiency, and the impacts of climate inaction. Local voices are needed to provide context, credibility, and an inclusive and interactive program to advance energy efficiency and the Climate Leadership initiative. In other words, the Government of Alberta would be wise to connect with and support the many quasi-independent organizations working within the major cities of the province: Edmonton's The Way We Green, Green Calgary, HatSmart, and in our region, Environment Lethbridge.

Solutions to environmental problems must be locally appropriate to be effective, and aligning with local businesses is important as it relates to finding common goals and advancing energy efficient technologies. Solutions should also be holistic – the reductionist approach to applying technologies can have negative consequences in establishing credibility in public discourse. For example, there is very little sense in promoting ground-source heat pumps ('geothermal') using predominantly coal-fired electricity; there is little sense in embedding emissions in renewable technologies unless these technologies are situated and utilized at an optimum level; and there are reasonable concerns about the base load of the electricity grid without the necessary storage technologies. The public dialogue has to step out of the techno-reductionist perspective of the administrative state, and begin to open a more ambiguous and value-oriented discussion in the public forum. SAGE believes that the energy efficiency discourse is an appropriate venue for this, and we believe that it would be most effective at the local level. The organizations that can help already exist: they are underutilized at present.

If you wish to discuss these comments further, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Braum Barber  
Chair, SAGE

cc. Kathleen Sheppard, Executive Director, Environment Lethbridge