



“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot,  
Nothing is going to get better.  
It's not.”

Dr. Suess

February 2015

## Canada Won't Meet 2020 GHG Emission Targets

No SAGE meeting in February.

**Earth Matters conference**, Canmore, October 15-17. Keynote speakers: **Wade Davis, David Orr, and Suzanne West**

Register at <http://abcee.org/conference>

**Environmental Law Society Conference**, February 13 & 15. U of Calgary. [www.caels.org](http://www.caels.org).

SACPA talk **Fusion Energy - Status and Prospects**, April 9th.

Wild Side of Love - February 12th, Helen Schuler Nature Centre. [www.lethbridge.ca/hsnc](http://www.lethbridge.ca/hsnc)

**OWC Street to Stream Workshop - February 25, 1 pm - 4:30 pm**  
Lethbridge Public Library  
[Register online](#)

## SAGE Membership

As we approach the SAGE AGM this spring, please don't forget to send in your membership dues: \$25 for single member or family and \$15 for students.

SAGE continues to aspire to be a leading voice for a healthy and environmentally sustainable community.

As we enter an election year for the Federal Government, it will be important to evaluate the performance of the current government on environmental issues. In the fall of 2014 the Auditor General of Canada issues its report *Role of the Commissioner of the Environmental and Sustainable Development*. Chapter 1 was related to the important issue of climate change.

In the preamble, the report recognizes the commitment Canada has made with other states to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In 1996, Canada adopted the Kyoto Protocol commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to an average of 6 percent below the 1990 level over the period from 2008 to 2012. This was not achieved, as emissions

continued to rise. The current government has since “recognized the need to urgently combat climate change and has made commitments and allocated funds to reduce emissions. Under the Copenhagen Accord, an international agreement reached in 2009, the federal government committed to a 17-percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions below 2005 levels by the year 2020 for Canada’s economy as a whole. ... the federal government has since reiterated this commitment several times, including in its Sustainable Development Strategy [in 2013]” (p.1).

The main objective of the Auditor General’s report was “to determine whether Environment Canada, working with others, has made satisfactory progress in addressing four key issues from our 2012 audit. We wanted to know whether:

- the federal government has put in place emission reduction measures, following good practices for regulatory development;
- the federal measures currently in place have been assessed in terms of their success;

- Environment Canada has mechanisms for working with the provinces and territories to reduce emissions; and
- the Department has an implementation plan that describes how federal departments and agencies will contribute to achieving Canada’s emission reduction target.” (p.5)

The conclusion of the audit: “Overall, we found that federal departments have made unsatisfactory progress in each of the four areas examined. Despite some advances since our 2012 audit, timelines for putting measures in place to reduce greenhouse gas emissions have not been met and departments are not yet able to assess whether measures in place are reducing emissions as expected. We also found that Environment Canada lacks an approach for coordinating actions with the provinces and territories to achieve the national target, and an effective planning process for how the federal government will contribute to achieving the Copenhagen target. In 2012, we concluded that the

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federal regulatory approach was unlikely to lead to emission reductions sufficient to meet the 2020 Copenhagen target. Two years later, the evidence is stronger that the growth in emissions will not be reversed in time and that the target will be missed" (p.6).

The report evaluates regulations intended to improve efficiency of transportation in the country (transportation is one the principle sources of greenhouse gas emissions) and electricity generation. The concern, however, is that "some measures now being considered by the federal government may have little effect on emissions by 2020 because of the limited expected reductions or because of the long lead times required to make capital investments or to change technologies" (p.10). Though there has been some attention given to the transportation and electricity generation sectors, the report is critical that other major sectors have not been adequately addressed – most specifically, the oil and gas sector:

"According to Environment Canada, the oil and gas sector will contribute 200 megatonnes to national emissions in 2020. This is 27 megatonnes more than in 2012—a larger increase than any other sector. Despite this prediction, regulations for the sector have been repeatedly delayed. Although detailed regulatory proposals have been available internally for over a year, the federal government has consulted on them only privately, mainly using a small working group of one province and selected industry representatives. In our view, this approach and the delays inhibit effective planning by affected parties, including industries and the provinces" (p.10).

Based on current efforts, the Auditor

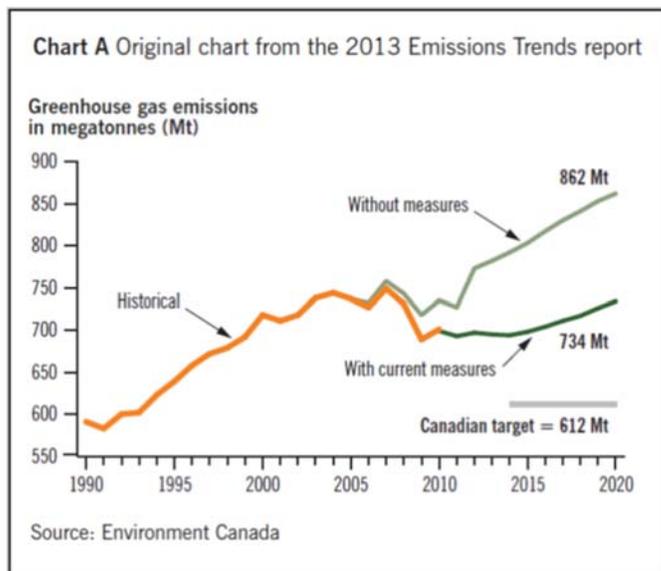
General states that we will fall far short of our commitments: "According to Environment Canada's estimates, sector-specific federal regulations currently in place will reduce emissions by about 18 megatonnes in the year 2020. These measures are expected to achieve a reduction of about 7 percent in the gap between Canada's Copenhagen target (612 Mt) and the projected emissions level without policy measures (862 Mt)" (p.10).

Considering all sectors, the total emission reductions from federal initiatives is 36 megatonnes, with another 62 megatonnes projected for provincial efforts. One problem the Auditor General has identified is the insufficient coordination with provinces to maximize progress towards emission goals: "Overall, we found that the federal government has not provided sufficiently focused coordination to meet its commitment of achieving the national 2020 emission reduction target jointly with the provinces and territories, or to address the need for further reductions beyond that date" (p.16).

The following charts show the business-as-usual trajectory, with the potential reductions based on federal and provincial regulations. The projection falls far short of the commitment to achieve 612 megatonnes of emissions by 2020.

And this is based on optimistic projections premised on an effective process. The Auditor General, however, has identified large gaps in the ability to achieve these goals: the country lacks clear objectives, measurable

targets, and coordinated actions: "The absence of effective federal planning, including unclear timelines, leaves responsible organizations at all levels without essential information for identifying, directing, and coordinating their reduction efforts. It also means that there are no benchmarks against which to monitor and report on progress. For example, industries that may be affected by regulations cannot plan



their investments effectively. In our view, the lack of a clear plan and an effective planning process is a particularly significant gap given that Canada is currently projected to miss its 2020 emission reduction target" (p.17).

In conclusion, the Auditor General of Canada says "that progress in addressing four key issues from our last audit has been unsatisfactory. While the Government of Canada has recognized the need to urgently combat climate change, its planning has been ineffective and the action it has taken has been slow and not well coordinated" (p.32). Canada will not achieve, and appears not to be earnest in its efforts to achieve, emission reduction targets to combat climate change.

## Delusions of Conservation

(Courtesy of Lorne Fitch, P. Biol., November 2014)

For too long we have listened and succumbed to the boilerplate of the federal and provincial government (and industry) that all is well, the environment is in good hands. There is nothing to worry about: the fish are fine, except for the sores, growths and concentrations of heavy metals, pesticides and synthetic hormones; the water is drinkable, but don't touch it until it has been extensively and expensively treated; the air is as fresh as downtown Beijing; the wildlife are abundant, especially sparrows and starlings; and, the viewscape is enhanced by all the marvelous artifacts of the development and engineering mind. Oh, and the noise is the symbol of progress as is the lack of free space.

Reluctantly I have come to the conclusion my fellow citizens and especially politicians who say they support conservation, of maintaining fish and wildlife populations, of caring about watershed integrity and of ensuring basic ecosystem processes continue, have spent too much time smoking hopium.

Hopium is, I assume, since I have never taken a puff, a magical, addictive drug that allows those who imbibe to really, really hope the mindless, frantic pace of economic development will be balanced by some caring, ecologically sensitive counter weight. It is part of the dopiod family of reality-suppressing narcotics, similar to crystal meth and effectively resulting in hypnotic death.

One of the consequences of smoking too much hopium isn't a craving for junk food so much as embarking on a boat trip down the River of Forgetfulness. On the voyage you become immune from reality and all you are told by bureaucrats, politicians and corporate spin doctors becomes believable, soothing and comfortable.

Aldo Leopold, the dean of ecological thinking said, in 1943:

"Our tools improve faster than we do. It is unlikely that economic motives alone will ever teach us to use our new tools gently. The only remedy is to extend our system of ethics from the man-man relation to the man-earth relation. We shall achieve conservation when and only when the destructive use of

### Interesting Links:

There is No Tomorrow [Video]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOMWzjrRiBg>

Crude Awakening [Video]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qGM9ypR-UI>

2014 Fall Report, Commissioner of the Environment

[http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl\\_cesd\\_201410\\_e\\_39845.html](http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_cesd_201410_e_39845.html)



**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:

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land becomes unethical - punishable by social ostracism. Any experience that stimulates this extension of ethics is culturally valuable. Any that has the opposite effect is culturally damaging."

So, the pathway suggested by Leopold for conservation might resemble the passage of a goat through a boa constrictor- highly visible and uncomfortable for all participants. Leopold, of course, speaks for the future, the manner in which we plan for tomorrow and for the children of tomorrow. The way we currently plan is, despite the rhetoric, for today, the economic imperatives of the short term. We leave the future to our children, for them to figure it out, without an ethical course to follow and possibly with an endpoint of them cursing us.

A place in the throes of a resource exploitation boom isn't so different from a person addicted to some mind and body altering substance. There's the denial that things are out of control; there's the frantic, frenetic life style; the moral carelessness; and, the realization you're doing something you know isn't good for you, but you can't stop. Eventually you collapse despite the reality altering substances.

The thing about collapses - of ecosystems, civilizations and individuals - is it never happens according to a plan. No slaving hordes of zombies, no blinding flash of nuclear war, nor an asteroid bumping us from the cosmos. No, the end doesn't come with a

bang, it arrives with a set of virtually indistinguishable whimpers. Water becomes scarcer and harder to make potable. Food prices creep up because of loss of farmland, fertility and transport costs. Driving becomes a luxury based on fuel costs. There is no bird song to remind us of our beginnings and associations. And, before we know it we are squabbling over pieces of firewood and stone tools.

Until we wean ourselves from this pernicious drug of hopium no change, other than the negative slide to landscape degradation will occur. John Maynard Keynes, the famous British economist, whose profession is often the least likely place to turn for wise advice said, "The difficulty lies not in new ideas, but in escaping from the old ones". Good one, John.

It's time to clear our heads of the delusion of conservation. We need to trust our eyes, our brains and the measurements of objective science. It's difficult to look into the swirling, molten pit of endless material progress and not be mesmerized. There is blinding hubris and an empire of illusion created with the myth of growth, of economics being the only metric and technological panaceas providing the escape clause. Let's run from hope, and the drug hopium, to reality.

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*Lorne Fitch is a Professional Biologist, a retired Fish and Wildlife Biologist and an Adjunct Professor with the University of Calgary*

## **Letter to the Lethbridge Herald (Published January 8, 2015)**

### **Assessment of Higher Education Needed**

The Lethbridge Herald reported on the economic evaluation of eight Alberta colleges by Economic Modeling Specialists International on March 5, 2014. Not surprisingly, they found an economic impact of academic institutions to communities and the province. I wonder why such an economic study was conducted and who initiated it? Do we doubt the value of colleges or universities to society?

Following the dollar assessment, an assessment of the quality of education is also needed. A start has been made. On Sept. 26, 2014, the Royal Society of Canada (Atlantic Region) made such an enquiry through a panel discussion on "What should be the business of the university in the 21st century?" The challenges of universities of how they fulfil their function of seeking and sharing knowledge in this rapidly changing world was also recently addressed in the journal "Nature" on Oct 16, 2014.

Education is the foundation of modern society. Universities and colleges are very expensive to build and operate. That is why we need assessment of higher education to inform the taxpayers as to what the impact of higher education is on society.

We need correct application of higher education to meet our challenges of food and energy supply and distribution, climate challenge and health and social issues. Is what higher education offers in line with the needs of society today?

Klaus Jericho

Lethbridge

## Ecology, Community & Lifestyle (1989)

Arne Naess is well known for his contribution to the development of ecosophy and 'deep ecology' - the book *Ecology, Community & Lifestyle* is an important summary of his thought.

A fundamental perspective for Naess is his comparison of 'deep' ecological thinking to 'shallow' ecology, where shallow ecology involves environmental decision-making and action that furthers the interests of human life. As such it is anthropocentric. Deep ecology, on the other hand, acknowledges the intrinsic rights of all species to perseverance ('biospherical egalitarianism'). In principle, it is a rejection of the 'man-in-environment image' while favouring the image of humanity within a relational, total-field

Another way Naess sees the division of world-views is illustrated by the contrasting of ecocentrism with technocentrism. Technocentrism is a growth oriented perspective that is optimistic about the ability of human ingenuity to solve problems and improve the lot of the world's people. Ecocentrism tends towards 'soft' technologies that are of appropriate scale and suitable for the place. It emphasizes regionalism with greater participatory governance and integration with the local ecosystem.

Throughout *Ecology, Community & Lifestyle*, Naess suggests that it is ontology and not ethics that polarizes people about the envi-

ronment - we have to envisage a new ontology, to re-examine how we perceive and construct our world, with humanity as inseparable from nature. From this foundation, Naess asserts, 'ethics and practical action will fall into place.'

To achieve this re-examination of our perceptions, Naess offers "Gestalt formation [that] crosses boundaries between what is conventionally classed as thinking as separated from emotion. The tertiary qualities tend to be separated from the gestalts and referred to as merely subjective emotions. The overcoming of this prejudice has profound consequences for environmentalism" (p.63). In other words, human perception, decision-making, and action must involve subjective emotions - empathy. This defines the 'relational, total-field' of human perception, and it is this gestalt that leads to ecological wisdom ('eco-sophy').

The last portion of the book describes the problems of how we account for the environment, through the failures of accounting in the GNP of states (which does not differentiate between growth that improves life and growth that is responding to correcting damages done to society and the finite environment).

Naess also comments on the 'pricing' of the environment, converting it into a commodity that can be managed in a capitalist economy. One memorable exam-

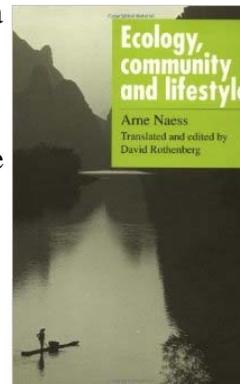


ple from Paul Hofseth is given: "If somebody A asks a person B what he or she will pay in order that A does not break B's arm, the amount suggested by B cannot, says Hofseth, be taken as a measure of the price of value of the arm. B has a right to his arm. It is not permitted to break human arms. Analogously, access to free nature is a right" (p.124).

Naess concludes the book with the statement: "The identity of the individual, 'that I am something', is developed through interaction with a broad manifold, organic and inorganic. There is no completely isolatable I, no isolatable social unit" (p.164).

*Ecology, Community & Lifestyle* is an interesting book, as it offers a philosophical basis for practical action to deepen environmental thinking into human society. Naess clearly understands the reasons (the ontologies) that divide groups of people, and stresses the importance of overcoming these differences in an effort to foster a common ethics and action that will allow all life to persevere and thrive (a goal he calls Self-realization or Self-unfolding).

The book offers a clear view of the goals to those of us who are pre-occupied with the challenges of environmental action.





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

Box 383 Lethbridge AB T1J 3E9

19 January 2015

Lethbridge City Council  
City Hall  
910 – 4 Ave. S., Lethbridge AB  
Attn: Mayor Spearman [mayor@lethbridge.ca](mailto:mayor@lethbridge.ca)  
Councilors [council@lethbridge.ca](mailto:council@lethbridge.ca)

Dear Mayor Spearman and Councilors:

**Re: Rezoning 1410 - 24 Ave. S. (13-20-8-21 W4) from FUD to P-R**

SAGE (Southern Alberta Group for Environment), a non-profit society established in 1984, is a leading voice for a healthy and environmentally sustainable community through informing citizens, participating in public processes and supporting sound environmental initiatives and actions. We are writing to request that City Council rezone the above parcel of City-owned land situated on the edge of the Oldman River valley adjacent to Tudor Estates Neighbourhood from Future Urban Development (FUD) to Park and Recreation (P-R) and River Valley (V).

Previously, SAGE provided a written submission (November 21<sup>st</sup> 2014) and an oral presentation (December 1<sup>st</sup> 2014) expressing concerns about a proposed change in land use classification to allow residential development on the above lands. On December 8<sup>th</sup> 2014, after completion of the public hearing process, City Council voted to reject the rezoning proposal by Douglas J. Bergen & Associates Ltd.

As was stated in our submissions on this matter, a more appropriate zoning for these public lands, currently zoned Future Urban Development (FUD), is River Valley (V) or Park and Recreation (P-R). A change in zoning to P-R public service district for lands above top of bank and to V below top of bank would be consistent with direction in the *Integrated Community Sustainability Plan/Municipal Development Plan* (2010), the *River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan Bylaw 5277* (2011), *City Council's Strategic Plan 2014-2017* (Goal #5) and the *City of Lethbridge Bikeways & Pathways Master Plan* (2007), as well as the majority of views expressed at the public hearing on December 1<sup>st</sup> 2014 about preferred future use of the land. Such a decision would also support the River Valley Parks Master Plan, currently under development, by providing a precedent for rezoning any other parcels of land in a similar situation.

We appreciate being informed of your decision on this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Braum Barber", written in a cursive style.

Braum Barber, Chair