



**“When society requires to be rebuilt,
there is no use in attempting to build it on the old plan.”**

John Stuart Mill

November 2012

A Reprieve for the Siege on the Castle

SAGE Meeting November 1st. Guest presentation by Lori Harasem from Climate Reality Project Canada starts at 7:15 p.m.

Watch for SAGE’s proposal on the **Shell Fueling Change** website beginning November 4th.

Real Beef: Local Food Forum & Slow Food Dinner at Lethbridge College on November 20th. Register through [Cows & Fish](#).

APTN Investigates will be airing a show 6:30 p.m., November 30th on Lois Frank and fracking on the Kainai reserve.

Logging in the Castle Special Place has been suspended pending the outcome of the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan under the Alberta Government’s Land Use Framework..

The **South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP)** covers over 8 million acres and affects almost half of the population of Alberta. The terms of reference under the Land Use Framework involves “managing public and private lands and natural resources to achieve Alberta’s long-term economic, environmental and social goals. It is a blueprint designed to guide [the province] in making decisions about our land and natural resources, developed after extensive consultation with Albertans.”

The Land-use Framework establishes three desired outcomes including:

- a healthy economy supported by our land and natural resources;
- healthy ecosystems and environment; and
- people-friendly communities with ample recreational and cultural opportunities.

The Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resources has recognized the importance of the Castle region as the headwaters of the Oldman River. This region is a source of clean water and provides environmental services like flood control, erosion control, and carbon sequestration, and it is important habitat for many

species. The region is also important economically as a popular destination for recreation and tourism.

The government has promised more public consultation on Castle logging this winter, and there will be ongoing opportunities to participate in Phase 2 of the **SSRP**.

Spray Lake Sawmills have been allowed continue their operations to remove 38,000 cubic meters this year in addition to the 12,000 removed last winter. It is also important to note that logging will continue in other areas of the C-5 management area without waiting for recommendations from the SSRP.

SAGE Shortlisted for FuellingChange Grant

A microgeneration demonstration project has been shortlisted for a Fuelling Change grant, sponsored by Shell.

The submission was for the \$25,000 category to install approximately 2 kW of photovoltaic (solar) panels to generate electricity. The project would include the solar technology and a real-time public display indicating the amount of power these panels generate over time and the greenhouse gas emissions avoided.

The 2 kW of solar panels (about 200 square feet) will produce approximately 2800 kWh of electricity in Lethbridge. This region is known for its high potential for solar electricity generation due to the clarity of the air and the number of sunny days. At \$0.10/kWh, the project will generate \$280 of electricity each year, which can be net-metered to the grid.

The project will be featured on the Shell FuellingChange website [fuellingchange.com](#) after the November 4th launch.

Here We Go Again ... Omnibus Bill C-45

The Government of Canada has tabled another Omnibus bill - a hefty 443 pages that critics suggest will be more changes to fundamental legislation under the guise of budget implementation.

In addition to the weakening of the Fisheries Act and Environmental Assessment in the previous omnibus bill, the current bill is designed to weaken the Navigable Waters Protection Act to include only select rivers and lakes in the country. In Alberta, only the Athabasca River, Bow River, and Lake Athabasca are listed, and only 62 rivers

and 93 lakes in the country will worthy of concern in this act.

The Navigable Water Protection Act was **originally written** “to protect the right to navigate the millions of lakes, rivers, and streams of Canada without being impeded by pipelines, bridges, power lines, dams, mining and forestry equipment, and more” which it has done for 130 years. The emasculated legislation will further distance the federal government from its responsibilities to protect the environment from damaging mega-projects involving our rivers.

Clearing the Air in Alberta

The Government of Alberta has released a **Clean the Air Strategy** to address air quality in the province. The outcomes include: ensuring the well-being of humans through effective air quality management; to maintain, protect and sustain healthy ecosystems; and to support economic sustainability.

The plan will address the impacts of growth on Alberta's airsheds; increase public interest in air quality issues and health; coordinate cumulative effects with the Land-Use Framework; and develop a new Air Quality Management

System. The later refers to a strategy to "create a collaborative approach between federal, provincial and territorial governments to engage with stakeholders to develop national standards and work toward continuous improvement of overall air quality in Canada."

This new direction for air management is largely based on recommendations developed through a comprehensive process by the Clean Air Strategic Alliance.

SAGE was diligently represented in CASA process by Ann Baran.

Investment Opportunity

The Government of Alberta is considering a proposal from an industry-funded consultancy group to convert open pits and tailing ponds (from bitumen extraction in the Albert tar sands) into recreational lakes.

Roughly 100 square kilometers of 'engineered' lakes over a 2500 square kilometer area are proposed. Lakeside property may be developed for recreational enjoyment. Just imagine the joy you will feel as you watch your children splash and frolic in the engineered water!

[The Small Print: water may include sand, clay, hydrocarbons, naphthenic acids, salt and other byproducts of bitumen extraction].

Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) Terminated

The Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) has recently been terminated by the federal government after 77 years of managing water use and erosion, and species protection on grasslands across the prairies.

This land involves as many as 85 community pastures totaling over two million acres in the prairie provinces which provide livelihoods for many rural families and support the economic health of small communities.

The recent decision by Canada's Agriculture Minister, Gerry Ritz, was to close

community pastures over a six-year period "to ensure this process optimizes future economic and employment opportunities for the rural communities affected." The process will be to transfer land ownership from the federal government to provinces in the first step to eventual privatization.

Local management through the PFRA considers multiple dimensions of value (including such values as species protection and carbon sequestration), as opposed to a market value that only considers agricultural productivity in the short term.

The PFRA was supported by the Alberta Prairie Conservation Forum (APCF) with the goal of conserving the biological diversity of Alberta's native prairie ecosystems for the benefit of current and future generations through research and educational initiatives.

Ironically, it was this type of approach of overexploiting fragile land for short-term gains that lead to the 30s dust bowl and the eventual creation of the PFRA - that is, after much hardship suffered by the agricultural community and long-term damage to prairie ecosystems.

Interesting Links:

End Pit Lakes Guidance Document

<http://cemaonline.ca/>

Moving Waters: Water Management Options to Achieve Social, Economic and Environmental Goals. Water Matters

<http://www.water-matters.org/>

Government of Alberta's Clean the Air Strategy

<http://environment.alberta.ca/>

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



Already Extinct (2012)

Have you ever noticed that books about sustainability and the environment tend to outline in great detail the daunting challenges to civilization, and then seem obliged to conclude with a fantastical statement of hope? These statements range from humans-are-resourceful, to we-have-the-technology, or to the mantra that each-individual-act-matters. What is refreshing about *Already Extinct* is that it does none of this. In fact, it is one of the few books that lays out the current environmental conditions and technological trends without resorting to a Hollywood ending where the world finally ascends the step-ladder to replace its incandescent bulbs with LED.

Minoru Kyo begins with a dense philosophy of trauma - ignore these first few pages, as it is a metaphor that is meant to be a barrier to lazy readers. Begin with the Belated Preface where Kyo lays out his 'reductive thesis' - that is, "*we don't understand the problem; we couldn't do anything about it if we did; and we wouldn't do anything about it if we could.*" And the book delivers.

With some humour and almost 300 references, *Already Extinct* provides a succinct outline of human impact on the earth, and the ability of the biosphere to provide resources at our rate of demand and act as a sink for our waste (emitted to the air, diluted in rivers, and buried in the soil). The author is sensitive to the complexity of Impact as a relationship between Population, Lifestyle, Organization (political, economic), and Technology - as expressed by the relationship I=PLOT. Each dimension on its own is manageable by altering the others, though Kyo shows that these dimensions are largely inelastic in practice (i.e., not so easily changed or improved).

The second part focuses mainly on renewable energy technologies. Some might complain that the arguments presented are too critical of renewable energy. The basis of the critique is that there

are some very real limits to renewable energy technologies in satisfying the energy demands of a consumer (and wasteful) culture. It is argued that it is important to know these limits to make realistic projections for future energy consumption.

The structure of the argument is, basically, that it takes energy and resources to make renewable energy technologies (many of which are becoming more scarce or energy intensive to acquire); that the current rate of implementation is miniscule compared to increasing demand; and that there is no incentive to increase manufacturing in a market system where greater profits are to be had through other investments.

An interesting perspective on renewable energy technologies is to view them as a means to improve the efficiency of fossil fuels. In principle, fossil fuels are invested (embodied) into renewable energy technologies which eventually make more energy than was invested. In other words, they are emission-dilution machines: using fossil fuels to make renewable energy technologies can lower GHG emissions over time. This is a good thing, but the point is that renewable energy technologies are dependent on fossil fuels.

The continuation of the second part addresses the political and economic barriers to addressing challenges to energy, clean water, climate change, and food. The discussion on economy is simply a critique of exponential growth which is the sine qua non of capitalism. Though the argument is more complexly presented, Kyo suggests that capitalism requires growth, and that infinite growth on a finite earth is not possible. The (orthodox) economic delusion of 'replacement,' where one resource can be replaced by another given the requisite price incentive, is shown to be patently absurd.

Kyo discusses the issue of population growth, but mainly focusses on food production which is premised on fossil fuel

availability. In fact, many of the arguments return to our current consumer civilization being a product of cheap and available fossil fuel energy - which, as discussed, are finite resources with limits to the rate of production.

The final section on "*we wouldn't do anything about it if we could*" is a general discussion on consumer culture, education systems, political corruption, media culpability, community atomization, and individual ennui. Kyo argues that even if we were to somehow curb our appetite for resources, manage our wastes, and implement renewable energy technologies, it wouldn't happen in a system with so many social barriers.

As promised, *Already Extinct* offers no trite solutions. But, the solution is clear nonetheless: that is, to take back our democratic/economic system from "a meritocratic oligarchy allied to a predatory plutocracy" (as William Ophuls famously said). It will also require a reorientation of economy to a steady-state that preserves finite resources, and exploits nature at the rate of replenishment and rejuvenation. That this can be accomplished (given the current state as elucidated by Kyo) is the challenge.

What *Already Extinct* offers is a (dangerously) honest statement on our current predicament. Kyo argues that knowing this is better than being lead into complacency by an unachievable vision. In other words, you have to delimit the problem before you can address it. *False hope is ultimately lost hope.* The resources are plentiful and accessible for those who wish to explore the issues on their own.

If you are thinking of a book to gift to a friend (or nemesis), this is it.

