



**“The good life and the good person can only be realized in the good society. Prosperity can only be conceived as a condition that includes the obligations and responsibilities of others.”**

**Zia Sardar**

## January 2013

**There is no SAGE meeting in ??.**

**Petro States: Oil and the New Servitude** with Andrew Nikiforuk at SACPA, January 17th at noon.

**Supporting Sustainable Food** panel discussion at SACPA February 12th at noon.

**Locally Sourced Dinner and Conversations**, March 8th at Lethbridge College. Register at [www.cowsandfish.org](http://www.cowsandfish.org).

**Source to Tap: Community Conversations on Headwaters Health in the Oldman River Basin** coming in February/March. Visit OWC for more information.

Don't forget to vote for SAGE's **Moving Towards Sustainability** at [www.fuellingchange.com](http://www.fuellingchange.com)

## Suffield NWA Protected

The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA) decided on November 30th to deny the Cenovus application to drill 1275 gas wells in the wildlife area. The Governor in Council decided that the “significant environmental effects that the project is likely to cause is not justified in the circumstances.”

The national wildlife area was established in 2003 to protect endangered native prairie and the many species of animals and plants at risk in the area, including at least 15 federally listed species threatened with extinction. The decision sets high standards for environmental protection that must be adhered to by any future applicants.

Thank you to the SAGE members who spent upwards of 6 years working for these results.

## ERCB Seeks Feedback on Fracking Regulations

The Energy Resources Conservation Board (ERCB), Alberta's energy regulator, is seeking feedback on its [new directive](#) for hydraulic fracturing in the province.

The directive consolidates some recent regulations that have been written in response to hastily advancing fracking technologies being used to extract oil and gas from difficult formations.

The new directive is designed to maintain well integrity; to reduce the chance of communication between fracked wells and older wells located nearby; and to better protect water aquifers, water wells, and surface water.

Some of the impetus behind this directive is the recently concluded [ERCB report](#) that notes the inadequate management of risks that lead to the contamination of groundwater with cancer-causing chemicals during hydraulic fracturing in Grande Prairie last year.

SAGE has been communicating with the ERCB for a number of years about these issues and we are pleased that the ERCB is making preliminary steps to acknowledge and address the risks. Southern Alberta faces significant oil & gas activity using hydraulic fracturing in the near future.

The ERCB is requesting feedback by January 18, 2013.

## 2012: A Costly Year in Weather Events

The last of the denial-intransigents are no longer looking to the insurance sector for support. Swiss Re, a leading wholesale provider of insurance, has recently published a [report](#) which summarizes that natural catastrophes and man-made disasters have caused economic losses exceeding \$140 billion in 2012. These losses were dominated by weather events in the United States including Hurricane Sandy, tornadoes, and a serious drought that affected agriculture for over half of the country.

Munich Re states: “Climate change particularly affects formation of heat-waves, droughts,

intense precipitation events, and in the long run most probably also tropical cyclone intensity. The view that weather extremes are becoming more frequent and intense in various regions due to global warming is in keeping with current scientific findings.”

Similarly, Munich Reinsurance America states: “What is clearly evident when the long-term data is reviewed is that losses from weather events are trending upward. To simply say that this trend is a statistical anomaly or part of a long-term cycle of activity misses the point ... [we must] search for answers to mitigate the losses that we are experiencing.” Clearly, the insurance industry is beginning to react.

## Bolivia Addresses COP 18 (*an excerpt*)

In Defense of Mother Earth: “The planet and humanity are in serious danger of extinction. The forests are in danger, biodiversity is in danger, the rivers and the oceans are in danger, the earth is in danger. This beautiful human community inhabiting our Mother Earth is in danger due to the climate crisis.

The causes of the climate crisis are directly related to the accumulation and concentration of wealth in few countries and in small social groups; excessive and wasteful mass consumption, under the belief that having more is living better; polluting

production and disposable goods to enrich the wealthy; increasing the ecological footprint; as well as the excessive and unsustainable use of renewable and non-renewable natural resources at a high environmental cost for extractive activities ... The climate crisis leaves us poorer, deprives us of food, destroys our economy, creates insecurity, and creates migration.”

Even without an inspired speech, Canada handily beat Bolivia (and tied with New Zealand) for the *2012 Colossal Fossil of the Year Award*.

## Environment Lethbridge Goes to Council

For the past two years, a steering group representing business, education, and NGOs have collaborated with the City of Lethbridge to create Environment Lethbridge.

The organization has been designed to address the principles of the Municipal Development Plan / Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (MDP/ICSP) which states as its Mission: "We will continue to work together to ensure that Lethbridge is a leader in environmental stewardship, innovation and active leadership."

The MDP/ICSP goes on to say: "The City is committed to taking a responsible leadership role in the efficient use of resources and land. Resources include water, renewable and non-renewable energy sources, air quality and municipal waste. The conservation and reuse of resources can bring long-term cost savings and demonstrate the City's leadership

in managing its resources responsibly." Balancing social, economic and environmental needs through good policy development, education, and community initiatives is precisely the support Environment Lethbridge can provide to individuals and business, and towards good governance.

In other words, Environment Lethbridge will provide a service to the community by providing region-specific best practices for water conservation, energy micro-generation and efficiency, optimizing home design and operation, supporting food security, and reducing waste. Not only can Environment Lethbridge promote opportunities for cost savings, the organization may provide consultation and research for environmental innovation in Lethbridge and thereby help improve the economic climate for future prosperity: a greener Lethbridge may attract new business and retain ex-

isting businesses through the development of sustainability-oriented infrastructure and operations.

For \$1.50 per year for each citizen in the city, Environment Lethbridge will make Lethbridge a more resilient community - both economically and socially - and it will help secure the prosperity of our children and their children.

To abet this important organization, a Community Interests Committee meeting will be held on January 14<sup>th</sup> at City Hall. Check the City's website for the Agenda ([www.lethbridge.ca](http://www.lethbridge.ca)). The proposal will then be presented to City Council on January 21st for budget approval.

Please join us at both events, and show your support for a better Lethbridge.

### Interesting Links:

Big Oil's Oily Grasp: The making of Canada as a petro-state and how oil money is corrupting Canadian politics.

<http://polarisinstitute.org/>

TEDx Victoria: The True Cost of Oil (Garth Lenz)

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84zIj\\_EdQdM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84zIj_EdQdM)

Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation (IPCC Special Report, 2012).

[http://www.ipcc-wg2.gov/SREX/images/uploads/SREX-All\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.ipcc-wg2.gov/SREX/images/uploads/SREX-All_FINAL.pdf)

**My planet, this globe  
The ball I live on  
Does not have sides.**

Shannon Pahara  
(a Lethbridge poet and artist,  
from *Cow Girl Poetry*)

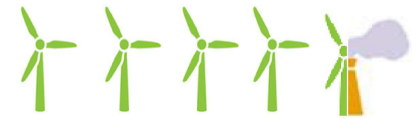
**Southern Alberta Group for the Environment (SAGE)**

**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)



## Prosperity Without Growth: Economics for a Finite Planet (2009)

Tim Jackson begins: "One of the key messages of this book is that we're failing ... Our technologies, our economy and our social aspirations are all mis-aligned with any meaningful expression of prosperity. The vision of social progress that drives us – based on the continual expansion of material wants - is fundamentally untenable. ... In pursuit of the good life today, we are systematically eroding the basis for well-being tomorrow" (p.2). And it is this message that is developed in *Prosperity Without Growth: Economics for a Finite Planet*.

Jackson argues that there are physical limits to exponential growth - natural resources, food production, energy, and the ability of natural ecosystems to absorb wastes: "The idea of a non-growing economy may be an anathema to an economist. But the idea of a continually growing economy is an anathema to an ecologist. No subsystem of a finite system can grow indefinitely, in physical terms" (p.14).

Contrary to the argument that growth is the answer to poverty and environmental degradation, Jackson says that it is precisely the problem: "In short, we have no alternative but to question growth. The myth of growth has failed us. It has failed the 1 billion people who still attempt to live on half the price of a cup of coffee each day. It has failed the fragile ecological systems on which we depend for survival. It has failed, spectacularly, in its own terms, to provide economic stability and secure people's livelihoods" (p.15).

Instead, he offers: "from at least the time of Aristotle, it has been clear that something more than material security is needed for human beings to flourish" (p.36). In the final analysis, "prosperity goes beyond material pleasures. It transcends material concerns. It resides in the quality of our lives and in the health and happiness of our families. It is present in the strength of our relationships and our trust in the community. It is evidenced by our satisfaction at work and our sense of shared meaning and purpose. It hangs on our potential to participate fully in the life of society" (p.16).

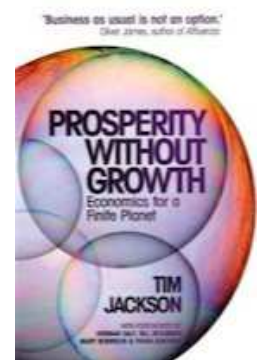
Evidence correlating different measures of well-being with income shows 'diminishing marginal utility' of acquiring more stuff. Most of the measures show strong improvements in well-being up to an income level of about \$15,000. (Hard to imagine for most of us). Beyond this income, the reasoning suggests, "at the level of society as a whole, income growth – and the associated material throughput – may be a 'zero-sum game'. The population as a whole gets richer ... but overall this positional competition adds little or nothing to the levels of well-being" (p.53). In other words, once our immediate material needs and some security for the future are met, much of our income is spent on what Amartya Sen calls 'opulence' - or conspicuous consumption.

As such, Jackson argues that to provide long-term prosperity our measures of prosperity must be better aligned with well-being, rather than with material and energy throughput as measured by the GDP.

This does not mean, he says, living in a yurt under a workers' soviet; it means that economics goes back to school to become ecologically literate. It means striving for resilience, directing scarce investment capital towards those things that contribute to future prosperity and away from activities that threaten collective well-being.

Most importantly, Jackson says, is that we restore a vision of common endeavor: "The less we share in terms of common endeavour, the more and more powerful the social logic of private affluence becomes. But the loss of common endeavour is an inevitable consequence of economies that feed, almost literally, on privatizing our lives. A different kind of economy is essential for a different kind of prosperity" (193). To build social capital and strengthen communities, Jackson suggests creating and protecting shared public spaces; **encouraging community-based sustainability initiatives**; reducing geographical labour mobility; providing training for green jobs; offering better access to lifelong learning and skills; placing more responsibility for planning in the hands of local communities, and protecting public service broadcasting, museum funding, public libraries, parks and green spaces" (182).

This is a well-written and thoughtful book with a bold vision for a prosperous future.





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

Box 383 Lethbridge AB T1J 3E9

December 14, 2012

Hon. Peter Kent  
Minister of the Environment  
401 Confederation Building  
House of Commons  
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6  
Email: [kentp@parl.gc.ca](mailto:kentp@parl.gc.ca)

Dear Minister Kent:

Re: Decision to Deny Approval of Drilling in CFB Suffield National Wildlife Area

I am writing on behalf of the Southern Alberta Group for Environment to express our appreciation for your recent decision to deny approval of the Shallow Gas Infill Development Project proposed by Cenovus Energy (formerly Encana) at Canadian Forces Base Suffield National Wildlife Area. SAGE has been tracking the federal review of this proposed project since June 2005, just two years after the National Wildlife Area was proclaimed.

Given the potential significant adverse effects that had been identified in a hearing under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, your decision is the right one for protection of grassland habitat for the 15 federally listed species at risk that live in the CFB Suffield National Wildlife Area. You have justifiably puts conservation first in management of our national wildlife areas. We encourage you to strengthen government's commitment by ensuring, in policy and regulation, that conservation of wildlife is the priority consideration for any proposed activities (new or continuing) in national wildlife areas.

Best wishes of the season to you.

Yours sincerely

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

Braum Barber  
Chair

Cc: Hon Peter MacKay, Minister of National Defence ([dnd\\_mdn@forces.gc.ca](mailto:dnd_mdn@forces.gc.ca))  
Mr. Jim Hillyer, MP Lethbridge Constituency ([hillyer@jimhillyer.com](mailto:hillyer@jimhillyer.com))