

Kitchen Table Conversation Report

Name of Group/Organization: Southern Alberta Group for the Environment (SAGE)

Conversation Topic: Environmental Resources

Number of people in Conversation: 8

Date: November 30, 2016

Describe your Conversation: On November 30, 2016 members from the Southern Alberta Group for the Environment (SAGE) met to have a Kitchen Table Conversation. SAGE was established in 1984 by a small group of citizens in the greater Lethbridge community concerned about the state of the environment, to be a leading voice for a healthy and environmentally sustainable community through informing citizens, participating in public processes and supporting sound environmental initiatives and actions. The conversation was facilitated by Braum Barber (SAGE President), who then captured the feedback of the group and created a KTC report. This report was then submitted to the 100K+ Conversations team and posted to the project website.

Conversation 1: How important minimizing the city of Lethbridge's environmental footprint is. When you think about it from an individual perspective or a community perspective does your view change?

- "There is no such thing as the individual." (riffing on Margaret Thatcher's famous quote 'There is no such thing as society'.)
- We have to consider the community more (and future generations).

Conversation 2: What is the most important argument for minimizing our environmental footprint? Economic, Environmental, Social, Not Important?

- More people walking and cycling - health & wellbeing
- Climate change
- Connecting to nature – exposure to parks.
- Reducing consumption and waste to reduce resource extraction and impact on pollution sinks.
- Important to be part of a community (shared values).
- Future generations – not consuming future generation's ability for wellbeing, and the natural world (other species).
- Foresight is important – planning is important (compared to the ad hoc approach not unfamiliar to planning in the recent past).
- Humans have devolved – time to evolve again, reconnect with our environment.
- Good productive land is being wasted.

Conversation 3: What actions can individuals and families take to minimize their environmental footprint? Discuss some of the examples provided. Are there any other actions that are important?

- Ban three-car+ garages.
- Discourage (through negative incentives) large homes – surtax on homes.

- Learn from immigrant community about what is important – planning for the group, light consumers, share homes for periods of time.
- Recharging stations for electric cars.
- Install renewable energy
- Support Environment Lethbridge to get environmental messages out to community, raising awareness, proving leadership.
- Encourage businesses to sell higher efficiency appliances, furnaces, windows, etc.
- Transit digression:
 - Use efficient (low emissions) & effective transit, more hubs, more shuttle buses.
 - Bus stop information (when it is coming, GPS), clearer information.

Conversation 4: How important is it that the city of Lethbridge conserves water? When you think about it from an individual perspective or a community perspective does your view change?

- Semi-arid region – water is pretty important
- Population growth, diminishing flows, maximized allocation in river basin necessitates better water use & conservation.

Conversation 5: What is the most important argument for conserving water? Economic, Environmental, Social, Not Important?

- Need it to live. Need it for food.
- We have to focus on concerns about water uses and losses that result in immediate reductions to in-stream flows – compared to uses that are sent back to the river after treatment.

Conversation 6: What actions can individuals and families take to conserve water? Discuss some of the examples provided. Are there any other actions that are important?

- Car washes have become more efficient with water use. Enforce bylaws against washing on road.
- Extend bylaw to stop people from washing driveways, sidewalks – provide a tax reduction for buying a broom.
- More efficient appliances (for abstraction license limits).
- Concern about attracting water-intensive industries to Lethbridge. EDL should consider environmental demands when meeting with businesses.
- Lawn / landscaping most important – xeriscaping encouraged.
- Why do we have lawns? Urban heat island can be reduced with drought tolerant landscaping.

Conversation 7: What is the most important argument for conserving water? Economic, Environmental, Social, Not Important?

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Conversation 8: What actions can individuals and families take to conserve water? Discuss some of the examples provided. Are there any other actions that are important?

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Conversation 9: How important is it that the city of Lethbridge protects water quality? When you think about it from an individual perspective or a community perspective does your view change?

- Cosmetic pesticides / fertilizers
- Agriculture is affecting our quality of water in a big way. OWC important to bring together all users to address watershed issues. (Livestock near surface water, riparian zones). Cumulative effects of manures (intensive livestock). City should stay actively involved in this. Emerging contaminants?
- Stormwater retention.
- Headwaters: important to invest in protection. Stop OHVs in the headwaters. Restore linear features (trails and roads) that increase erosion.

Conversation 10: What is the most important argument for protecting water quality? Economic, Environmental, Social, Not Important?

- Economic, Environmental, & Social

Conversation 11: What actions can individuals and families take to protect water quality. Discuss some of the examples provided. Are there any other actions that are important?

- Eliminate use of cosmetic fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides.
- Encourage urban gardens
- Water barrels
- Keep roads / stormwater drains clean

Conversation 12: What is the most important argument for protecting native plant species? Economic, Environmental, Social, Not Important?

- Native ecosystems in pathetic shape.
- City does very little about invasive weeds.
- Not enough encouragement to use native plants in restoration. Detriment to structure of coulees.
- Weedpulls are good, but not enough support (City Plan required)

- Encourage native plant communities.
- Parklands disturbed and not restored properly. Mega-highway trail bulldozed down coulee behind college is reprehensible.
- Trail building not using existing best practices.
- Lack of knowledge what native plants are; how they are integrated into the ecosystem.
- Bike path footprint is huge compared to its need (use existing footprint for bikepaths/footpaths – reduce roads and parking).
- Focus on the specific weed species most virulent in taking over local ecosystems (science-informed priorities).
- Improve terms of reference in bidding projects (not only the cheapest provider).
- Russian olive progressing down Whoop Up drive – no apparent concern. Related to water use.
- Urban forest not using native species (cottonwoods) or drought tolerant species. More diversity of native urban forest (climate change adaptation).
- Consider goats or sheep in river bottom parks

Conversation 13: How important is it that there is a reduction in the generation of greenhouse gases and air pollutants in Lethbridge? When you think about it from an individual perspective or a community perspective does your view change?

- Considering the longevity of current emission in the atmosphere, our emissions today will have a lasting impact. It is not a tap that can be shut off with immediate results. As such, we must reduce our emissions, and begin sequestering carbon (tree planting) immediately.

Conversation 14: What is the most important argument for reducing the generation of greenhouse gases and air pollutants? Economic, Environmental, Social, Not Important?

- Human civilization

Conversation 15: What actions can individuals and families take to reduce the generation of greenhouse gases and air pollutants? Discuss some of the examples provided. Are there any other actions that are important?

- Odours getting much worse over time. Feedlots, manure spreading, industrial smells, french fry smells.
- Greenhouse gases – must do everything possible to reduce emissions.
- Require City policy more directly focused on GHG emissions
- Include designs in building planning to minimize GHG emissions, maximizing energy efficiency.
- More LEED buildings encouraged. (City Corporation and education institutions as a leader).
- Policy / Indicators to measure air pollutants and fuel consumption.
- Ground level smog / air quality monitoring.
- Renewable energy – Co-ops?
- High potential for solar PV – more incentives required. Design new neighbourhoods for solar potential (i.e., no more meandering, more south-facing stretches, maintain elevations for equal exposure on each side of block, etc.)