

Sustainability in the County - “think like a farmer”

What is sustainability? Sustainability is making the best of life today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

As we prepare to embark on a “Sustainability Plan” for the County as required by the Federal Government, Council and staff have been attending workshops and learning all we can about this subject. When we know better we do better!!

At a recent world wide Conference on sustainability called ICLEI, Councilor Yakimchuk and I attended in Edmonton, my favorite quote was,.... we all need to “think like a farmer” What they were saying is thinking long term, only use what we can replace for the good of the land, so it can continue to supply use with what we need next season. What we instinctively know, the great “rural common sense” as I call it, puts us in a good place to understand sustainability. It is those choices that we make each day to leave the world a better place, reduce energy use, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, save money by making better choices, save the environment by making better choices.

What are we at the County currently doing ? In our new plans to protect Environmentally Significant lands and riparian areas during the subdivision and development stage, we are truly leading the way as a municipality in Alberta. Our Agriculture department. is offering funding to land owners for riparian fencing initiatives, we currently host wire and plastic round ups and we are now asking for stricter inspections of septic system installation to protect our ground water. We just completed a County wide Environmentally Significant Areas (ESA) study. We are developing a more stringent topsoil removal bylaw. We are partnering with Olds College on Bio Diesel research and using it in some of our County trucks. In development applications we keep water protection always at the forefront as well as protecting good agricultural land through our MDP.

Can we do more – you bet . Here are some *potential ideas* we can look at for our sustainability plan: perhaps annual inspections for septic fields (this could be a good idea as done in many other rural municipalities in the US); make rain barrels and composting bins available (50 % of the gases emitted from the land fill sites is from compostable waste); promote recycling more by supplying some mobile sites at rural community halls; lead by example in regard to our County buildings becoming more energy efficient; encourage green residential developments by giving bonusing initiatives; form a Land Trust to allow land owners the choice to keep lands preserved into the future; bring a strong voice of the role of rural municipality to the provincial and global community; promote educational tips in regard to saving water, septic, and recycling; put 1% of our tax dollars to green initiatives in the County; help promote the fact that the Provincial and Federal Governments give rebates to replace your older appliances and much more.

On a personal basis sustainability can be as simple as choosing to do **one simple act**, replace your light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs, limit showers to five minutes or shorter, compost. etc. If you have any other ideas please relay them to me. As we move

forward to build a good Sustainability Plan your input is important, email or call me I'd love to hear from you . Enjoy your summer ! 403-337-3527 , gwen.day@mountainviewcounty.com