

Lethbridge Municipal Election- Environmental Survey

This survey was designed in partnership with the Southern Alberta Group for the Environment and the Climate Hub of Southern Alberta. Completing this survey should take approximately 10 minutes. Survey results will be compiled into a report and published on our respective organization's websites, shared through social media, and possibly be made available in the Lethbridge Herald.

As a candidate running in the 2021 Municipal Elections for the City of Lethbridge, your stances on environmental and climate change policy are of extreme interest to our organizations and a significant portion of eligible voters. Policy decisions made at the local level have immense power to regulate critical infrastructure that directly impacts greenhouse gas emissions produced within the municipal boundaries. The Municipal Development Plan (Bylaw 6265 approved June 29, 2021), enacted by the previous city council, provides a foundation for our next council to build and is referenced throughout this survey. This survey aims to give all eligible voters information directly from you, the candidate, about where you stand on these crucial topics. Your responses will help inform voters on how you would approach climate change adaptation, mitigation, and biodiversity preservation from the local level if elected.

This survey closes on October 3 at midnight. To take advantage of this opportunity to share your policy stance with local voters, please submit your responses before the closing date.

Please expand on your policy stance regarding the climate crisis and how you plan to address this issue if elected?

“Think globally; act locally.” This is the best way to approach the climate crisis. I agree with the previous council’s decision to reduce corporate emissions. The new Municipal Development Plan also includes several policies that strive to reduce our footprint, lower GhG and provide incentives on resource efficiency and renewable energy projects. I support these policies as they help further reduce emissions and create environmental (and fiscal) sustainability.

The environment supports “society” and society supports “economy.” If you want a strong economy, you need a strong society, which is supported by a strong and healthy environment – this aligns with the 4 pillars of my platform available at jenschmidtrempe.ca.

Council policies focused on the economy also need to address the environment and society. My platform includes policies aimed at improving multi-modal transportation around the city (through Age Friendly Lethbridge), protecting our urban forest (Natural Spaces and Areas), creating opportunities for new sustainable bio and energy technologies (Our Local Workforce), and ensuring that we have housing opportunities close to amenities (Downtown). We need a local, holistic, and integrated approach to support our environment, our people and our community.

Please expand on your policy stance regarding the health of the environment and local biodiversity. How do you plan to address this issue if elected?

As I stated in my previous answer, the environment is the foundation for our society. In a simple sense, if we are forced to stay inside on hot summer days because smoke from wildfires prevents us from opening our windows or venturing outside, then our quality of life is diminished. Added to that is the further environmental - social and economic - impact on the electricity grid to run our ACs to cool our homes because we can't open windows. Human impacts, such as mining at the headwaters of the Oldman River, also have consequences to our regional environmental health.

We need to be considering sustainable practices for our area as well. This also includes our approach to land development and considering what to locate where when developing City owned properties. We need to ensure that we're building and planning for future sustainability for our geography – that includes what we're planting in our landscaping projects to facilitate water conservation – and caring properly for our urban forest and in a timely manner.

Reflecting on the “think globally; act locally”, the City needs to work with regional municipalities and partners to ensure coordinated environmental health and stewardship efforts. Additionally, City Council needs to be addressing sustainable growth - for the environment, for society and for our economy - as a consideration in present and future capital and operating projects. The best time to be taking action is now.

Are you aware of any organizations in the Lethbridge area that are currently working on issues around the climate crisis? If so, who do you plan to involve them in your approaches to climate change mitigation and adaptation?

Groups would include Southern Alberta Group for the Environment, Environment Lethbridge, Oldman Watershed Council, Lethbridge Sustainable Living Association, Lethbridge Naturalists' Society, as well as groups such as City of Lethbridge Waste and Recycling Services, Helen Schuler Nature Centre, Lethbridge Chamber of Commerce, and Economic Development Lethbridge – all of these groups have valuable roles to play and input to share in how our city and region can work on issues around the climate crisis.

I would look at including as many as these groups as possible. How amazing would it be to bring these all to the same table? Each fulfils a role and brings its own expertise. Working together we could complete a full picture on how our city and region could move forward in our “think globally; act locally” approaches to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Your vision for the future of Lethbridge

Once thought too difficult to implement, many environmental goals have now become accepted, even welcomed, aspects of modern life: sorting waste, choosing light rapid transit over driving, and generating power from wind and solar, to name a few. Describe your “pie in the sky” ideal

environmental or social dream for Lethbridge. What environmental policies or practices that now seem impossible should be commonplace by 2050 or sooner? How do you intend on setting your ideal environmental or social dream into motion?

I would love to see our city become a leader in circular economy practices. As stated by the Government of Canada: “In a circular economy, nothing is waste. The circular economy retains and recovers as much value as possible from resources by reusing, repairing, refurbishing, remanufacturing, repurposing, or recycling products or materials. It’s about using valuable resources wisely, thinking about waste as a resource instead of a cost, and finding innovative ways to better the environment and the economy.”

The City of Lethbridge has participated in some circular economy initiatives including the Smart Cities Challenge, wherein communities were encouraged to adopt smart cities approaches to improve the lives of their residents with digital innovation, data, and connected technology. On a larger scale we have an adaptive reuse policy, which we could look at offering city-wide, and not just in the downtown core.

Specifically, though, I would like to see us develop a refurbishment and reuse centre at the Waste & Recycling Centre, wherein we take in items, and they are repurposed and refurbished for resale. Items such as fridges, freezers, and other appliances and electronics, bicycles, and construction materials. It’s an innovative approach to waste management and would offer a variety of job opportunities.

There is much, much more to a circular economy, but this is a place I feel we could start, and I would be putting it to the City’s Waste & Recycling Services to investigate how it could work for the City of Lethbridge.