

CPAA Education Session
By Harvey Buckley

What will this piece of legislation do for me and more importantly for my ranch?

I am located in the Bow River Watershed so that means I supply not only food to the urban centers such as Calgary but also water. My food producing operation is under threat from incompatible land uses but also the loss of water.

There are over 15,000 water wells in the upper Bow Basin from Carseland to the Mountains, all drawing from the supply to the Bow River and we are still drilling wells.

The total landscape must be managed. Bill 36 came out of the Land Use Process that I previously described to you, an accumulation of all the challenges facing agriculture, oil and gas, and forest industries. Bill 36 will give me some options. These options are voluntary.

Part 3 of the Act is the part that can directly affect my land.

1. A conservation easement can be placed on my land with a following tax credit. If you have a business that you can apply this credit to that is a huge benefit. Most farms and ranches don't have a big tax problem therefore your credit that must be used up in 5 years could be wasted. In the U.S. farmers can sell their tax credits which are a huge advantage. In Canada we are working on this at present.
2. Conservation Directive may permanently protect, conserve, manage and enhance environmental, natural scenic, esthetic or agricultural values. A landowner whose land is affected by a conservation directive has the right to apply for compensation.
3. Transfer of Development Credit Schemes – a land owner can sell his development credits. What you need is a buyer and a seller, also a receiving area and a sending area. A credit exchange will also be established. The value of a credit will be the difference between the land's present value and one compared to what future use it could have. When the credits are removed a conservation easement will be placed on the land that the development credits were removed from.
4. Conservation Off-Set Program will operate in the same manner but will be applied mostly to public land and wetlands. You can develop on a wetland but you must replace the wetland you removed.

Regional Plans and Municipal Development Plans may accommodate these conservation programs. The Calgary Metropolitan Plan provides for this in potentially big ways.

Another aspect of these conservation programs is the city of New York purchased the development credits in the Appalachian Mountains watershed to protect that city's water supply. I can see the merit of the City of Calgary considering the same type of program to protect their water supply, the Bow River Watershed. The City of Vancouver has also done this.

I am a first term Councillor for the County of Rocky View. The first thing I did was develop a Vision Statement for the Division I represent. This statement was developed by about 15 of the local residents in the Hamlet of Bragg Creek and surrounding rural area. I then published this vision in the

local paper and also went door to door looking for comments on it. There was an overwhelming positive response. Bragg Creek wants to live within its Area Structure Plan and the Rural Areas want to keep producing food and protecting the watershed.

Bill 36 will give the opportunity to do this. Not only will it go a long way to protect our Natural Capital for future generations but will help compensate farm and ranch families for the goods and services their lands provide to the economy and the environment – CASH –

The cash generated by the conservation programs, for the most part, will be invested back into the land that created it by paying for conservation programs and assisting estate transfers. Most ranchers and farmers want to leave the land in better condition than they found it.

Here in Alberta we do not have an endless supply of food or water. Both Canada and the U.S. are net importers of food today. Although we are still decimating our Natural Capital I believe the LUF and Bill 36 can certainly change that. I believe urban centers will wake up and develop an awareness of what is going on, with regards to food and Water. Then the Land Use Framework (LUF) will have tremendous support. Also urbanites are becoming aware of the hundred mile food supply and the City of Calgary had a Notice of Motion in November 2009 on Food Policy, 2011 GARDENS IN THE CITY BY 2011.

The one aspect of today's economy is that the planners and decision makers do have time to catch up and get ahead of this development brush fire we have been experiencing in Alberta. We need to encourage and support our Provincial Government to keep moving forward and meet the target dates as set out. This is imperative if we are going to maintain the natural capital assets we have. For me 1973 to 2010 has been far too long.

The key message here is the recognition that Alberta is a finite landscape and Alberta has an equally finite capacity to contribute water, land, carbon and soil to the production of natural resource products.

The average Albertan has received a reasonable education about land uses (jobs, royalties, rents, GDP) but remains unaware of the cost incurred to provincial natural capital for them to receive these benefits. If this imbalance is not corrected Albertans are destined to bequeath future generations with an eroded land base unable to provide benefits at the levels it did for their ancestors.