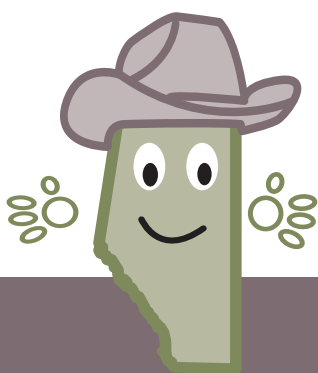


Sustainability at home: A toolkit

Decision-making help
for your everyday choices





Polls* show that most of us -- more than 80% of Canadians -- feel that sustainability should be a top or high national priority. Interestingly, the polls also show that most Canadians think that other people don't care about sustainability.

By making simple decisions in your home, you can help **Alberta** take the lead and **guide Canada** into a sustainable future.

* Hoggan and Associates. *Communicating sustainability: an overview of the sustainability research initiative*. Hoggan and Associates, Inc. 2006

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Congratulations on your new home!

Did you know you are one of almost one million households in the province of Alberta? Each home needs water, energy, building materials, food, transportation to get around and many other things that depend on natural or human-made resources.

That gives you a powerful opportunity to change the way you make some household decisions. This can help your children and family members, your neighbourhood and our province.

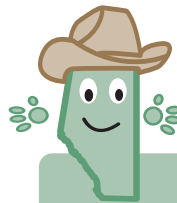
The choices you and your neighbours make affect the future of Alberta much more than you probably think.

For example, if you choose to paint a room with non-toxic and eco-certified materials, you're doing much more than changing the room's colour. You're mitigating potential health risks; you're supporting an emerging industry that values social and ecological factors as well as economic ones and you're lowering the costs to the environment and future generations.

This very day, right here in your home, you

can make choices that will help you become more sustainable.

Those choices can affect the headlines you read about every day; stories about climate change, concerns around Alberta's water supply, even rising rates of homelessness in our cities.



You can help
change those stories.

Alberta's next big venture

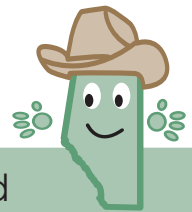


Alberta made history as the first province in Canada to pay off its debt. We reasoned it was unfair to make subsequent generations pay for things we were using now.

Albertans want to make sure we're able to meet our needs today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

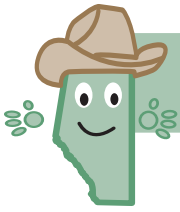
These days, many Albertans are striving to make sure we're not leaving another kind of mess for our children and grandchildren to clean up.

We're striving for sustainability.



By taking a few minutes to read this booklet (and go room by room through your new house) you will learn about simple decisions and different options that will help you save money, improve your health and reap many other benefits of sustainability.





Why should I care about sustainability ?

There are several **benefits** to making your home more sustainable:

- **Save money** over both the short-and long-term by making it more energy-efficient
- **Increase the resale value of your home**
- **Become more comfortable** in your home as you create a healthier, more energy-efficient space
- **Contribute to the preservation of**

Alberta's natural landscapes and natural resources by minimizing your impact on them

- **Help reduce the effect of climate change**
- **Help Alberta lead Canada** in the shift toward becoming a global leader in sustainability.





What is sustainability?

You hear the word thrown around all the time and it seems to be related to a number of different topics, from development in the oil sands to recycling your tin cans. Sustainability is “meeting the needs of the present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.”** While the word “sustainability” is associated with a variety of topics, they are in fact, all part of the same story, much of which is about supply and demand.

In Alberta, we can see this story unfolding in our increasing:

- Water consumption
- Population growth
- Demand for housing

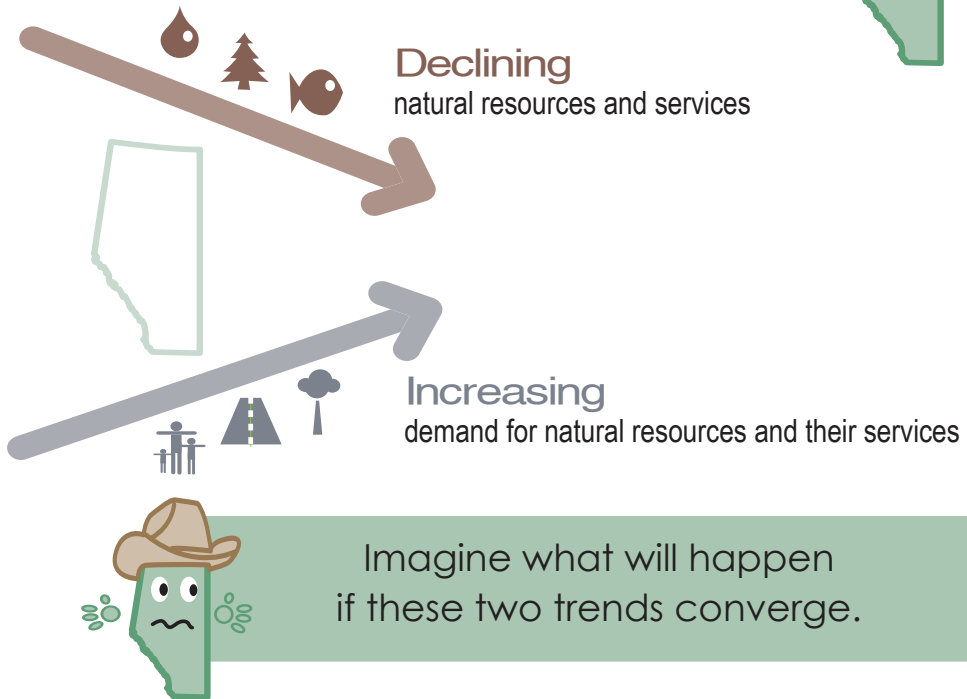
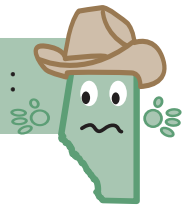
And in our decreasing:

- Available freshwater
- Air quality
- Affordable housing

While we’re experiencing great affluence and growth in Alberta, this is also increasing our demand on natural resources and the services that natural systems provide (such as water filtration, flood control, climate regulation and soil stabilization). Alberta’s astounding economic growth is also leading to a reduction of pure water, farmland, air, forests and natural diversity.

** World Commission on Environment and Development. 1987

If we draw the current situation, it looks like a funnel :



So, we need to look at the demands we make on nature and natural systems and ensure that people's needs – both this generation and future ones - can still be met.

Thinking about the long term means we have to consider how our actions affect not just ourselves, but our children and grandchildren, our neighbours, our economy and our environment.

But it doesn't have to be difficult. We can start this process right here at home with a thoughtful approach to how and why we make our household decisions. To look at how our household decisions can promote sustainability, first we have to take a look at the big picture.

If we want to be sustainable, we have ensure that future generations can meet their needs. A group of international scientists have determined the four root causes of how we negatively impact the earth's ability to sustain human society and the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Hundreds of leading corporations and organizations around the world are using these same four root causes to help them make strategic decisions toward sustainability – decisions that reduce financial risk and support innovation.

Four root causes

Based on scientific consensus, these are the four root causes of the ways in which we compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs. These are the basic ways in which we are **un**-sustainable:

1 We dig stuff (like heavy metals and fossil fuels) out of the Earth's crust and allow it to build up faster than nature can cope with it.

2 We create man-made compounds and chemicals (like pesticides and fire retardants in carpets etc.) and allow them to build up faster than nature can cope with them.

3 We continuously damage natural systems and the free services they provide (including climate regulation and water filtration) by physical means (for example over-harvesting and paving wetlands).

And...

4 We live in and create societies in which many people cannot meet their basic needs (for example, to find affordable housing).

(To learn more about the four root causes of unsustainability and the science behind them, please visit www.naturalstep.ca)

Everyday household decisions

Here are general areas of our household management in which we make decisions every day. Let's look at how they relate to the root causes of unsustainability and at our opportunities to make sustainable decisions in each area. Let's also explore some questions to ask when making decisions in any of these areas.



Utilities are a basic service, and include things like water, electricity and gas, or anything that fuels, heats or cools our home.

Relationship to the 4 root causes: Production of our utilities, for example coal-fired electricity, often contributes to the **overload of materials that we dig out of the Earth's crust**, and can lead to a progressive **physical impact on natural systems**. These are two of the root causes of un-

sustainability.

Opportunity: Make different choices about the kinds of utilities we employ (for example, use renewable energy) and have a significant effect on reducing negative environmental impacts. If you can't change how your utilities are provided, you can decide to **use less** of a given utility (for example, by using energy efficient appliances).

Before you use your utilities ask yourself:

- **Can I reduce my use of this utility?**

When you reduce your use of water, gas or electricity, you reduce the impacts- which can include burning of fossil fuels, introduction of harmful compounds into natural systems and physical destruction of nature – associated with production and delivery of it. Reducing your use can be as simple as turning off the tap while you brush your teeth.

- **Can I get the same utility service another way?**

Many of the services associated with utilities – particularly electricity – can be supplied from

renewable resources. Many utility companies in Alberta now offer power from renewable sources. Ask your local provider what they can do for you.

- **Can I be more efficient in the way I use my utilities?**

There are all kinds of different options now to help you make better use of the utilities you do use. This can range from simple, inexpensive technologies to help you reduce water usage to large investments like re-insulating your home to reduce the amount of energy you need to heat and cool it.

This booklet also has lots of resources to guide you to further information and actions to help you become more sustainable. Look for the 'check out' icon!



Mobility includes all the ways that we move ourselves from one place to another – by driving, walking, cycling, taking the bus, train, plane or boat, or any other mode of transport.

Relationship to the 4 root causes: The ways that we transport ourselves are often dependent on the **burning of fossil fuels**. This relates our mobility to the **overload of materials we dig from the Earth's crust**. Our mobility is also related to a **continual build-up of compounds that natural systems can't cope**

with. When we burn fossil fuels, things like sulphur dioxide and nitrous oxides are released. As they build up, they can harm natural systems and human health.

Opportunity: To reduce our dependence on the burning of fossil fuels, using other modes of transport such as car pooling, public transport, cycling, walking and more efficient personal vehicles like hybrid cars. You can also try to reduce your travelling overall.

Before you travel somewhere ask yourself:

• **Do I really need to go?**

Sounds obvious, but it's a question worth asking. We're used to hopping in our car and going somewhere at the drop of a hat. Consider planning your journeys with an eye to efficiency, and make one trip instead of several. If you do have to go, ask yourself:

• **Can I go somewhere local?**

Is there somewhere close by where you can purchase what you need, like a local grocery or hardware store? Maybe what you need is closer to home than you thought.

• **Do I have to drive?**

If you have to go somewhere, can you find another way to get there that is not in your car? Is there a bus or train that goes where you want to? If you do have to drive, consider partnering up with neighbours or friends and carpool. More people per litre of fossil fuel burned means greater efficiency for you and fewer emissions toward climate change. Also, you could consider saving yourself a gym membership and cycle or walk to those close-by places.

Don't forget, in the following pages we walk room-by-room through your house and show the benefits you'll enjoy from making new decisions.

Everyday household decisions



Shopping is everything that we buy, including food, furniture, clothes, appliances and personal care products.

Relationship to the 4 root causes: Things we buy are often made from or contain stuff **from the Earth's crust** and also **human-made compounds that are foreign to nature**. Both of these can build up faster than nature can cope. Also, **the ways in which our purchases are produced** may be dependent

on unsafe or unfair working conditions which can make it difficult for workers to meet their needs, so our decisions about shopping can also relate to another root cause of unsustainability.

Opportunity: Choose what we buy with a careful eye to **who and what our purchases support**. We can also be aware of **how the components of our purchases may or may not build up** in nature.

While you are shopping ask yourself:

- **Do I really need this product?**

Be honest about this. Can you re-use something you already have? If you only need the product for a short time, can you borrow or rent it? If you have to buy it, can you share the cost and responsibility of owning with others? If you definitely need the product, consider asking:

- **How was this item produced?**

If you don't know the answer, ask. If your vendor doesn't know, ask them to find out. This will help you understand where your dollars are going and what you are supporting. Consider also:

- **How does this product affect my health?**

Huge numbers of products on the market today contain chemicals that are either harmful

to human health or which have never been tested for human safety. Begin to familiarize yourself with the risky ingredients of your purchases. You might be surprised how many there are. Consider also that the children are often more vulnerable than adults to exposure to harmful chemicals.

- **What will I do with this when I no longer need it?**

Before you buy, consider what the ultimate fate of your product will be. Are you buying something that can be recycled? If you are making a large purchase like an appliance, will the manufacturer take it back when you are done with it and recycle and/or reuse the various components, or will it just go to the landfill?

Answering these questions will help you to consider the impacts of your shopping and help you make more sustainable decisions.



Waste is everything that we do not use and which we throw away. Waste can come from things that we buy (shopping), inefficiencies in how we use our utilities and emissions produced from transporting ourselves (mobility).

Relationship to the 4 root causes: When we put things into the landfill, we contribute to an ongoing demand for more land to handle our waste (landfills). This contributes to a root cause of **un-sustainability**, because natural systems may be damaged when we create

new landfills. It can also mean that once our waste is in the landfill, it can, depending on what it's made from, **leach harmful chemicals and compounds into the land, air and water.**

Opportunity: To be careful about the amount and type of waste we create. We can also be careful with the waste we do produce by reusing, recycling and even reducing our overall consumption.

Before you throw something away ask yourself:

• **Can I reuse this?**

You can save yourself a lot of time and money by simply reusing a product that you already own instead of updating it with the latest version. If you need to replace something, can you fix what you already have and stop something from heading to the landfill?

• **If I can't use this, can someone else?**

One person's trash is another's treasure. Consider holding a garage sale, dropping things off at your local thrift store, or putting an ad in the paper to sell things you no longer need.

• **Can I recycle this?**

It's amazing how many things can be properly recycled; even electronics and tires. Instead of

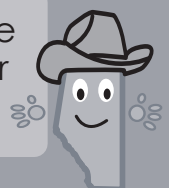
putting something in the landfill, you may well be able to recycle all or part of your waste, creating value as your garbage becomes something new.

• **Even if I've already produced it, can I still reduce my waste?**

Probably. Do you have a compost bin? You can process many food scraps, cardboard and even some fabrics in your backyard compost or patio worm composter. This diverts waste from the landfill, reduces greenhouse gas emissions associated with decomposing waste and creates free fertilizer for your flowers and vegetables.

Check out the Composting Council of Canada for more information and directions on how to get started.
www.compost.org/backyard.html

What happens when you use these questions and change your household decisions? Let's take a walk through your house and see...



Kitchen

Utilities



Dish it up

Only run your dishwasher when you have a full load. If possible, **skip the dry cycle** and let your dishes air dry (open the dishwasher door), **reducing your utility use.**

Can I reduce my use?

Shopping



Be well

Choose detergents that are free from hazardous chemicals and **reduce the harmful chemicals and compounds** your family is exposed to and also those that you flush into the watercourse.

How does this product affect my health?

Did you know that ?...

Huge amounts of energy are required to clean, treat, pump and transport water. For every one million litres of water The City of Calgary produces, around 375 kg of greenhouse gases are emitted. In 2002, The City produced 173 billion litres of drinking water.



Check out !

Check out the Canadian government's list of ECO labelled products: www.environmentalchoice.com or the Eat well guide: www.eatwellguide.org

Skin Deep rates personal care products according to their potential to harm human health: www.cosmeticdatabase.com

Utilities



Be a star

Using Energy Star appliances can increase your efficiency. Look for the ENERGY STAR symbol (even on furnaces); products must meet or exceed technical specifications that ensure they are among the most energy efficient on the market. www.oeenrncan.gc.ca/energystar

Can I be more efficient in the way I use my utilities?

Shopping



Mobility



Support the home team

Whenever possible, **support your local farmers** and neighbours by buying locally produced seasonal and organic foods. **It's good for the Alberta economy and it cuts down on fossil fuel use needed to transport food.** Also, you may not have to travel far to buy your local food.

How was this item produced? Can I buy it locally?

Bathroom

Utilities



Save money

Insulate your hot water tank and set its thermostat to a lower temperature. **Reducing your energy use will save your money.** Every 5.5 °C reduction saves up to 13 % on your water heating costs.

Can I reduce my use ?

Is there a better way to dispose of my waste ?

Waste



Keep it clean

Don't flush expired medications down the toilet or throw them in the garbage where they will only wind up in streams, rivers, the ocean or landfills. **Play it safe** and take expired medications to your pharmacy where they can be disposed of safely.

Did you know that ?...

The amount of energy required to treat, deliver, then re-treat (as sewage) one cubic meter of your toilet water produces one kilogram of carbon dioxide. A low-flow toilet will reduce the amount of water you use, and indirectly, the greenhouse gas emissions you help produce.



Check out !

Check out suggestions on being water-efficient by searching “water-use tips” at www.calgary.ca

Utilities



Can I be more efficient in the way I use my utilities?

Stem the flow

Switch from having baths to taking showers. A 5-minute shower uses about half the amount of water a bath does, **saving resources and money and reducing the pressure on natural systems.**

How does this product affect my health?

Shopping



Get healthier

Many personal care products contain substances that are either hazardous to human health or that have never been tested for safety. Make sure you **use care products that are safe** for you and your family. You'll feel better and also **reduce the amount of chemicals and compounds you flush into natural systems.**

Bedrooms

Utilities



Can I be more efficient in the way I use my utilities?

Turn it down

Turn your thermostat down to about 15°C when you go out or at night when you are sleeping. You can save **10 to 15% on your total energy bill!**

How does this product affect my health?

Shopping



Save your health

Use only natural paints and finishes, or water-based paints with low VOC content. **Most paints and varnishes release harmful chemicals and compounds into natural systems.** They can then be absorbed into our bodies.

Did you know that ?...

"In Canada , there are over 23,000 chemicals registered for production and use, and the majority have not been tested for their impacts on human health, wildlife or the environment. Even chemicals that are known to cause cancer and other health problems are permitted for use by industry and in consumer products. Each year an increasing volume of toxic chemicals is released into the Canadian environment." — Toxic Nation



Check out !

Find out more about the kinds of chemicals commonly found in your home and also healthy alternatives at the Environmental Defence website

www.environmentaldefence.ca. Search 'healthy home' and click on 'make your home a healthy home.'

Shopping



Go with the grain

Use wood products such as beds that are made from certified sustainable wood. This will **reduce physical degradation of nature**, as such wood comes from well-managed ecosystems.

How was this item produced?

Shopping



Sleep in

Buying organic bedding and clothing can help improve the health conditions of farmers. One of the key issues for worker- welfare on plantations in the developing world are the **health risks** associated with over-and -ongoing exposure to agro- chemicals.

How was this item produced?

Common rooms

Utilities



Tune in, turn off and unplug

Your electronic equipment – TV, VCR, DVD etc. – all use power, even when they are turned off. **Save money** by unplugging these devices when you won't be using them for a day or more. If you plug them into a power bar and switch that off, you stop energy use, and you don't have to re-program your equipment when you turn it back on!

Can I reduce my use of this utility?

Can I recycle this?

Waste



Give it away now

Electronics contain dangerous materials such as lead and mercury. Recycle your old televisions, computer monitors, etc. and **keep hazardous compounds and chemicals out of the water and landfill.**

Did you know that ?...

Screen savers do not save energy. In fact, they consume almost as much energy as a computer in use (most power consumption comes from the monitor). Choosing a computer's power management feature to turn off your monitor saves much more energy.



Check out !

Check out the Alberta Recycling Authority. You can recycle your old televisions, computer monitors, CPUs, keyboards, cables, speakers, laptops, etc. for free. See www.trma.com for your local drop-off centre.

Shopping



Sit pretty

Look for natural furnishings that are or can be recycled.

Consider reusing old furniture and buying second-hand and **keep material out of the landfill**. If you buy new furniture, look for pieces that are made from recycled steel other recycled-content material.

Do I really need this product?

Shopping



Magic carpets

Before purchasing new rugs, find out where they were made.

Ask your furniture vendor under what conditions your carpets were produced, and consider buying floor-coverings from vendors that can prove **safe and equitable work conditions** for their workers.

How was this item produced?

Basement

Utilities



Can I be more efficient in the way I use my utilities?

Go cold

Up to 80% of the energy you use (and pay for) to wash clothes comes from heating the wash water. Try **washing your clothes on the cold-water cycle, and flush away extra utility costs.**

Can I reduce my use of this utility?

Utilities



It washes

ENERGY STAR clothes washers use 35-50 % less water and at least 50 % **less energy** per load. They can **save families \$150 in utility costs** and over 33,000 litres of water per year.

Did you know that ?...

The average Canadian house devotes 60% of its total energy use just to space heating. You can slash your home energy bill by as much as 30% by replacing your aging, gas-guzzling furnace with a high-efficiency model.



Check out !

ecoENERGY grants are available for homeowners – the federal government has money to help you retrofit your house to more sustainable and efficient standards: www.oeenrncan.gc.ca/corporate/incentives.cfm?#STAR
For more tips and information on how to make your home energy efficient visit Energy Solutions Alberta at www.energysolutionsalberta.com. Click on 'tips and tools'.

Shopping



Toe the line

An electric clothes-dryer can generate more than six pounds of greenhouse gases with every load. A clothesline generates none. Your clothes will **smell great**, and you'll **save money** too. Even in winter you can get crisp sheets outside or in by creating drying areas in warm basements.

Do I really need this product?

Waste



Reduce, reuse, recycle

Consider using recycled building materials for your next renovations. Find stone, tiles, bricks, windows, flooring, and more at salvage yards and junkyards. **Add personality and value to your home**, help create a market for recycled goods and encourage others to recycle too!

If I can't use this, can someone else?

Indoors

Utilities



Can I get the same service from a different utility?

Power up
Buy renewable energy and stay on the grid. Many Albertan utility companies are now offering green alternatives such as wind power. Ask your local provider what they can do for you.

How was this item produced?

Shopping



Dress to the times
Buy clothing made from organic cotton and other natural materials such as bamboo. **This will reduce the amount** of conventional cotton (a **heavily sprayed** product) used, reducing the overall build-up of harmful chemicals and compounds in natural systems.

Did you know that ?...

Many Albertans spend over 85% of their time indoors. Indoor air quality is a critical factor in maintaining overall physical health! If you have an attached garage, make sure there's a tight air seal between your garage and house, such as taped drywall and a sealed door. This will stop chemicals and car pollution seeping into your house.



Check out !

Check out this great list of tips for more ways on making your household more sustainable: www.treehugger.com/gogreen.php. You can find out more about the kinds of chemicals commonly found in your home by heading to the Environmental Defence website. Check out www.environmentaldefence.ca/toxicnation/pledge/index.php

What will I do with this when I no longer need it ?



Bulk up

Buying products in bulk in refillable, reusable or recyclable containers drastically **reduces the amount of packaging you send to the landfill.**

How does this product affect my health ?



Take a deep breath

Indoor air quality is a huge issue. **It's critical for human health** to have access to clean air. Make sure you and your family do. Having **plants** around your house can **cut indoor air pollutants by half!**

Garade

Mobility



Hail a hybrid

Need a taxi? Don't call any old company. Instead, use a company that can send a hybrid vehicle to pick you up www.hailahybrid.ca. Many Albertan cities are participating in this initiative.

Do I have to drive?

Is there a better way to dispose of my waste?

Waste



Properly dispose of your hazardous waste... for free

Round up those old aerosol spray cans and plant fertilizers and drop them at one of Alberta's designated Household Hazardous Waste Roundups. (see www.trma.com to find out more about a Roundup near you).

Alberta leads the way.

Did you know that Alberta is largest producer of wind power in Canada?!



Check out !

The Calgary Materials Exchange www.cmex.ca, and the Alberta Waste Exchange <http://alberta.wastebank.net/> are dedicated to facilitating exchanges of materials. So is FreeCycle www.freecycle.org . Follow the links to Alberta.

Waste



Can I recycle this ?

Recycle your tires...for free

Round up your old tires and drop them at one of Alberta's certified tire recycling depots. (see www.trma.com to find your nearest tire drop-off centre).

Do I have to drive ?

Mobility



Drive on!

Instead of arriving at work harried and stressed out from driving, consider carpooling. You'll **save money, arrive relaxed**, and help **create a healthier world** for generations to come by reducing your use of fossil fuels. See www.carpool.ca to register with an Albertan car-pool near you.

Gardens



Made in the shade

Consider planting deciduous trees and shrubs, particularly on the south side of your house. In the summer, these plantings will cool your house, **saving you energy**. In the winter they will shed their leaves and allow the sun to shine in, helping you to passively heat and cool your home. If you are planning to install solar panels, make sure that your plantings won't shade the panels.

Can I reduce my use of this utility?



Liquidate

Water use is on the increase in Alberta, placing stress on some of the major aquifers and rivers and making it potentially difficult for everyone to access good water. Connect the downspouts from your eaves trough to water barrels. **Instead of using drinking water**, use this water for your garden.

Did you know that ?...

The Hinton Government Centre in Hinton, Alberta produces less than 50% of the greenhouse gas emissions of most conventional buildings. This has been achieved by a combination of, among other features, low-impact site development, use of materials with low-embodied energy and low-energy lighting systems. Learn more at www.sustainablebuildings.gc.ca by typing 'Hinton Government Centre' in the 'search' box.



Check out !

Check out Evergreen's FREE native plant data base, which lets you find the native plants right for your region in Alberta. Native plants use less water and are well adapted to the local environment. They can save you time and money. www.evergreen.ca/nativeplants/

Utilities



Can I reduce my use of this utility?

Cover up

Huge amounts of drinking water are used to water lawns. Replace little-used grass-only areas with well-mulched native plants. This will reduce evaporation by up to 70%, helping conserve water and **reduce your use of this utility.**

How does this product affect my health?

Shopping

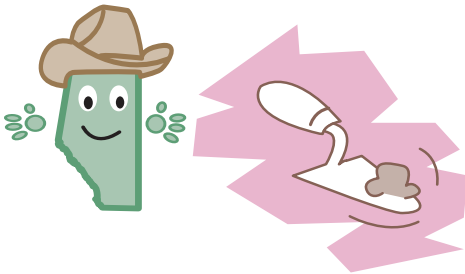


Back to the land

Gardens and landscapes that thrive without chemical pesticides are healthier for you and your family because they reduce the amount of harmful chemicals and compounds around your home. Consider 'heading back to the land' and planting a garden full of species native to your region. It will use less water and be adapted to the local area.

What about renovations ?

Renovations can certainly make your home larger, but do they make it healthier and more sustainable? When you are thinking about renovating, you might consider some of the following:



Necessity

Ask yourself **why** you are developing this new space – do you actually need more space, or are you upgrading your existing home to make it more energy efficient, healthy, comfortable and beautiful? If you don't need the space, consider not building at all. You'll eliminate waste generation; new exposure to harmful chemicals and compounds; eliminate new contributions to ongoing physical damage of natural systems or support of vendors that make it difficult for workers to achieve a healthy, dignified life.

If you need something different, extend the life of your home by incorporating durable, sustainable materials (see below). Choose your contractor carefully and manage the 'green aspects' of him or her.

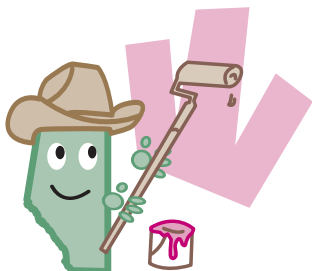
Ask questions like the ones posed for 'shopping' and 'waste' (pages 12 & 13).

Efficiency

Consider making your renovated space more energy-efficient by using high-efficiency heating and cooling systems (which can include free passive solar heating and cooling!); a high-performance building envelope that minimizes heat transfer between the indoors and outdoors (i.e. good insulation); and conventional or alternative HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) systems for human comfort and health. Also consider using low-flow fixtures, dual-flush toilets and smaller pumping systems.

Check out: The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's FREE guide to more efficient mechanical systems
www.cmhc.ca/en/co/renoho/refash/refash_006.cfm





Materials

Are they gathered from well-managed ecosystems? Do they contain chemicals that may be harmful to yourself and your family and which could leech into natural systems? Consider also the embodied energy of the building materials you choose, which includes all the energy associated with the extraction, processing, production, transportation and installation of materials. Consider using **locally produced and less-processed or recycled materials**.

Energy

Consider alternative energy sources for your renovation. This may even be the time to look at switching completely to renewable and sustainable energy options.

Check out the Light House Sustainable Building Centre's site on creating an efficient and comfortable home
www.sustainablebuildingcentre.com/energy/welcome

Check out the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's FREE downloads for making your home renovations more energy efficient
www.cmhc.ca/en/co/renoho and choose your options.

*More questions? Check out the **Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's FREE** guides and checklists to healthy homes www.cmhc.ca (type 'healthy homes' in the search box) You can also ask the **Lighthouse Sustainable Building Centre** www.sustainablebuildingcentre.com/resources/just_ask*

*Or **post a question** at www.grist.org/wakeup/green-living.html*

*...and don't forget the **Alberta database of green building materials and products**. Each product comes with a sustainability rating. www.greenalberta.ca*

Alberta is a leader

The Drake Landing Solar Community is a master-planned neighbourhood in Okotoks, Alberta. Each home in the community will have 90% of its energy needs met by solar power. This is the first development of this kind in North America. Learn more at www.dlsc.ca/index.htm

If you've done everything recommended in this guidebook, congratulations! You have made some significant changes and you've probably already noticed financial savings and you may be feeling healthier too. You may also be asking...

What else can I do ?

Lots!

The path to sustainability is a long one. To help get you there, keep these things in mind as you make your household decisions:

Remember that you are part of a system

Everything you do will impact somewhere else in the household system. Try to imagine how your decision will affect other parts of the system, and take action understanding that your sphere of consequence will inevitably be larger than your action.

Think about where you'd like to be ideally

Consider creating a vision for your household. Ask yourself, "If my household was totally sustainable, what would that look like?" Involve the other people in your house in creating this vision. Ideally, you won't contribute to the four root causes of unsustainability (see page 9) but other than that, you can do or be whatever you want.

Identify actions to move you toward your ideal

These actions can be anything that take you toward your ideal of a sustainable household, in any or all of the four areas of shopping, mobility, utilities and waste. To figure out which actions to take first, consider if they are:

- **Moving you in the right direction**
- **Able to be developed further**
- **A good return on investment.**





In short

Don't forget – you make all the difference

Households are the base-unit of society. The decisions you make in your home will affect the future of the province.

You are not alone

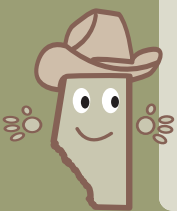
There are many thousands of people and households realizing the excitement, frustration, financial savings and better health associated with moving their household toward sustainability. **Consider volunteering** in your community to help build relationships and create groups to support each other in the transition toward sustainability.

Celebrate your successes

Every change that you make with an eye to becoming more sustainable is reason to celebrate! Give yourself a pat on the back for your foresight in 'avoiding the wall of the funnel.' (See page 8 for description of the funnel)

Continue to ask yourself, "what next?"

This will not only keep you moving ahead, but when applied to decisions you might make, it will help you clarify how the results of your decisions can be stepping stones for other steps down the sustainability path.



We've all seen time and again how a committed group of citizens can change the world. Your household can join the tens of thousands of committed Albertans who are striving toward sustainability. With simple decisions in and around your new home, you can help create the future for generations to come.

Resources

The root causes of unsustainability and the science behind them: The Natural Step www.naturalstep.ca

Energy efficiency and utility use:

- Tips on being water efficient: www.calgary.ca
- Canadian EcoENERGY grants: www.oeenrcan.gc.ca/corporate/incentives.cfm?#STAR
- Tips on energy efficiency Energy Solutions Alberta: www.energysolutionsalberta.com
- Energy efficient upgrade suggestions, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation: www.cmhc.ca/en/co/renoho
- ENERGY STAR products: www.oeenrcan.gc.ca/energystar
- Light House Sustainable Building Centre www.sustainablebuildingcentre.com/energy/welcome

Healthy Homes:

- Information on chemicals commonly found in your home: www.environmentaldefence.ca/toxicnation/pledge/index.php
- Information on personal care products and their potential to harm human health: www.cosmeticdatabase.com
- Tips and ideas for becoming generally more sustainable around the home: www.treehugger.com/gogreen.php
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (type 'healthy homes' in the search box) www.cmhc.ca

Building Materials and recycling:

- Alberta Recycling Authority (information on recycling for electronics, tires and hazardous waste roundups: www.trma.com)
- Green building materials products database Green Alberta: www.greenalberta.ca
- Calgary Materials Exchange: www.cmex.ca and the Alberta Waste Exchange: <http://alberta.wastebank.net>
- Online materials exchange: www.freecycle.org/groups/canada/

Gardens and landscaping:

- Composting Council of Canada: www.compost.org/backyard.html
- Native plants directory: www.evergreen.ca/nativeplants
- The Eat Well Guide: www.eatwellguide.org

Ask a question:

- The Light House Sustainable Building Centre www.sustainablebuildingcentre.com/resources/just_ask
- Grist www.grist.org/wakeup/green-living.html

Other:

- ECO labelled products: www.environmentalchoice.com
- Hail a hybrid: www.hailahybrid.ca
- Carpooling: www.carpool.ca
- The Hinton Government Centre: www.sustainablebuildings.gc.ca and type the Centre's name in the search box

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the NATURAL STEP

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www.aref.ab.ca



www.naturalstep.ca