

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Proposed drilling in city would put population at risk

As my previous letter indicated (“Many reasons to not allow drilling in city,” Dec. 28 Herald), the health of our populous is being put at serious risk . . . unnecessarily.

My subsequent research into this high risk/low reward venture has found three serious public health threats.

1. The reasonable probability that the proposed oil exploration will emit “sour gas.” It will contain hydrogen sulphide — a deadly chemical. Since the prevailing winds in Lethbridge blow from the west, the health, even lives, of people living in the entire city could be put at undue risk. Seniors and children would be at the greatest risk.

2. In the event of an “accident,” a contingency evacuation plan is needed. A public health doctor has told me that such a plan could not be implemented to evacuate the 33,000 people living in west Lethbridge. Should those women, men and children be

put at risk to their health and life for the sake of drilling three wells that may not be viable?

3. Since the proposed wells would be proximate to the Oldman River, the source of this city’s drinking water, there is more than a reasonable probability that our water supply would be contaminated with poisonous fluids. Which is more important: safe water or three exploratory wells?

In addition to these serious health threats to our citizens, a serious threat is posed to Lethbridge’s economy. A University of Alberta study has shown that property losses in the range of four to 16 per cent has been suffered from “accidents” related to oil-field exploration and development. If 10 per cent, an average loss within that range, is incurred, a chain of major adverse economic effects would result. That “chain” would include losses of property values by owners, lower real estate market values, lower

assessment values, lower property taxes for the city and its resultant need for tax increases.

On July 25, 2013, Alberta Energy issued a news release, “Building Fort McMurray.” The essence of this document is:

1. 32 leases, owned by 10 oil companies, have been cancelled;
2. the province is negotiating the compensation with the companies; and
3. 55,000 acres will be made available by the province to establish a buffer between the town and future oil development.

This progressive agreement between Alberta and Fort McMurray has been confirmed by municipal officials. This agreement is considered a precedent by expert, experienced oil exploration people.

Fortunately, the Alberta government has created a responsible way to escape the very serious health and economic consequences

of drilling, fracking and flaring within the city. That way is:

1. cancel the lease to GoldenKey;
2. refund the company’s \$500,000 licence fee paid to the government; compensate it for expenses related to the proposed wells;
3. impose a permanent moratorium on all oil and gas drilling within the city of Lethbridge; and
4. provide Lethbridge with the legislative way to create a buffer for its future expansion.

With a province totalling 661,000 square hectares, certainly there must be nine or 10 hectares that GoldenKey could explore where the health, lives and the economic well-being of its citizens would not be put at serious risk.

Al Barnhill
Lethbridge

Civilizations
won't crumble
without traditional
marriage

Citizens losing control of their own country

Canadian democracy is almost a thing of the past! Why would our government back a company to drill and fracture within Lethbridge city limits and not seem to care what the voters want?

Why do the MLAs sit quiet and not fight for the

RE/MAX
real estate - lethbridge
517 - 6th St. South
Lethbridge, AB T1J 2E1

RE/MAX

Bill