

## My Experience as a Parkland County Sustainability Summer Student

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# The Move from London, ON

- London to Vancouver
  - 4,181 km (38 hours) via U.S.
- Vancouver to Parkland County
  - 1,107 km (12 hours)



# Parkland County, AB

- 30 km west of Edmonton
- Population: ~30,000
- Rural municipality
- 220 administrative staff





121

FILE ROOM

# Projects



## Major Projects Completed

- Partners for Climate Protection (PCP) GHG Emissions Inventory & Forecast (Milestone 1)
- ALUS stand-up display
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Rain Barrel & Composter Sale
- Fleet vehicle Anti-Idling Policy
- Wetland Sustainability Policy
- Solar PV information guide
- State of the Environment Report layout and design
- Established partnership with Alberta Agroforestry & Woodlot Extension Society to support ALUS
- Financial assessment of solar energy project for the Parkland County Centre

## Ongoing Projects

- Sustainability tools mobile application
- Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) decision matrix
- Tri-Regional Composting Feasibility Study
- PSAB 3260 Liability for Contaminated Sites inventory
- Sustainability Partnership program with Parkland School District 70



## Highlight: ALUS

- Learning from experts from Delta Waterfowl, Alberta Environment, and the Alberta Agroforestry Woodlot & Extension Society
- Chance to do a bit of fieldwork
- Connecting with producers

# How the MES program prepared me for this role



## ■ Highly relevant

- Broad introduction to principles of sustainability and current issues
- The Natural Step
- Alternative energy (solar energy)
- Triple-bottom line thinking

## ■ New learning

- Environmental planning
  - Incorporating sustainability principles into long-term development plans
- Alternative land use
  - Wetland rehabilitation
  - Reforestation
  - Native prairie establishment

# Assimilation into the role and the organization



## ■ Role

- Initially assigned specific deliverables without knowing the impact of my work on the broader organization (e.g. Researching sustainability frameworks for the MDP update)
- ALUS: The link between the work and the goals of ALUS are quite clear
- Workload was project-based with many deliverables assigned all at once

## ■ Organization

- Opportunity to develop good relationships with different departments who are integral in supporting sustainability initiatives



# Aspects of my experience that I enjoyed and disliked



- Opportunity to attend conferences and workshops (e.g. International Conservation on Sustainable Communities – The Municipal Climate Change Action Centre and the Watershed Management Planning Workshop)
- Chance to work closely with other departments
- Field work through ALUS
- Opportunity to take photographs and complete graphic design projects
- Exposed to a variety of experiences in a short period of time
- Opportunity to learn from and be mentored by Gabriel
- The municipal government side allowed me to see the industry from different stakeholder perspectives



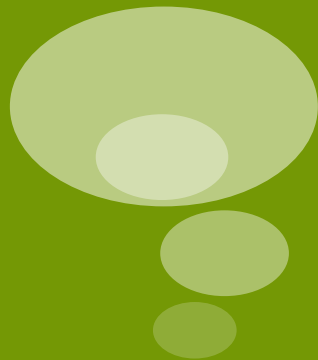
- Onerous review and approval processes can sometimes slow progress
- Many projects require commitment beyond the 4-month work term
- Geographic isolation
- Aggressive drivers and big trucks



# Lessons to keep in mind for the future



- Avoiding living in the river valley
- Alternative renewable energy is an exciting area of sustainability
- Patience is critical to being successful in municipal government
- All perspectives matter and should be respected
- Sustainability is a broad field so focus on what really matters and specialize



# Thank You!

## *Questions?*

I would like to thank and acknowledge Gabriel Clarke, Parkland County, Allison McInnis, the Master of Environment & Sustainability program, and the Centre for Environment & Sustainability at Western University for their ongoing support throughout the year and over the course of my co-op work term.