

A Bright Future for Ecological Villages in Canada

By Hugh Perry

First printed in Eco-Community News in Spring 2003

Those who have attempted starting a community of their own are well aware that the major obstacles are provincial and municipal regulations. This discouraging factor is attributed to 19 out of 20 failures to start up communities in Canada compared to less than half of that in the US. The reason being that zoning regulations favour single family deeds over group ownership. So who would have expected that a breakthrough for Eco-Communities would come from a municipality.

The Town of Craik in Saskatchewan has launched a program in their small town of 400 that will not only include sustainable technologies, a common facility, but also a genuine EcoVillage. In their own words, "We believe that sustainability will become the dominant issue of the 21st century. Our society needs to develop ways of living that are economically viable and socially just, which do not at the same time destroy the ecological base that sustains us and all other life on the planet. The Town and the Rural Municipality of Craik therefore, propose to embark on a joint long-term project in search of ways of living that address the issue of sustainability and rural revitalization through physical demonstrations of viable solutions".

The town administrator, Shirley Eade says, "We have 127 acres of land available for 4 - 10 individuals/families to come and build an energy efficient house and a business plan of how they can make a substantial portion of their income on from 5 - 20 acres of land. We are very excited about this aspect of the project as well." Twenty eight people participate in their 1st meeting.

This opens a new door for future Eco-Communities across Canada whether they refer to themselves as CoHousing, EcoHamlets, EcoVillages or other, because as we have known for years, they represent simple solutions that works, and now governing departments understand this as well. For example:

- The town of Craik considers their project as a model solution to meet Kyoto.
- Mayor Rod Haugerud is quoted as saying in the Saskatchewan News Network, "We want Craik to be known as one of the greenest places on earth".
- The town administrator says, "If we want to survive as a small community we have to do something ourselves, and be an example for the cities".
- The MP for Regina announced funding from the Green Municipal Funds (GMF), and Craik was awarded a \$100,000 grant and a \$150,000 loan to undertake the building of an interpretive centre, which will serve as their common space, using straw-bale construction, solar, wind power, green technologies and environmental practices.
- The GMF is managed by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and it's director Louise Comeau, recognizes that municipalities are an important partner in Canada achieving its Kyoto target.

Municipalities continually communicate there successes in managing difficult issues between other municipalities across Canada. Environmental challenges have been one such issue and now they are spear heading attempts to meet Kyoto using the EcoVillages model. All forms of

Eco Communities place responsibility for services on individual, turning its residents into micro managers for such services as sewage, water quality, electricity, food production, and much more. This is a plus for government on all levels as it offers alternatives to a trend toward international corporate management.

The Eco-Village model implies living sustainably with nature and each other and within this model exists solutions to many of today's problems. It is a future frontier that is happening in the present and provides nourishment for those with a pioneering spirit. So let's lend our support to the Town of Craik and grow with them as they set a new trend in municipal management. For more information see www.craikecovillage.ca

Return to Articles page: <http://www.celebratingcommunity.ca/Articles.html>