



## OPINION COLUMN

### Dealing with blue/green algae

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Strong communities are built around people and vision. If the people in a community work at establishing good relationships and have a common vision then there will be a strong sense of community and together the community will have the ability to address and overcome any of the obstacles that they may face.

It has been my privilege to serve the Drayton Valley-Devon constituency and in doing so I have been able to meet many amazing individuals who dedicate their many talents and a great deal of their time towards making their local communities across the Drayton Valley-Devon Constituency exceptional places to live. The people I am most impressed by are the citizens that see a problem and work together with other citizens to try and solve that problem.

Life is not without challenges and one of the challenges that we face in this constituency is the blue-green algae problem at Pigeon Lake that is adversely affecting the enjoyment of this recreational jewel in the middle of the constituency. Over the last 19 months that I have served as an MLA I have come to admire the efforts of the many people that are working together collectively to try and address the adverse effects of blue-green algae blooms at Pigeon Lake.

While there are many groups and players involved I would like to focus on two groups today: the Alliance of Pigeon Lake Municipalities and the Pigeon Lake Watershed Association. The various Pigeon Lake municipalities are working together through APLM along with scientists and provincial government stakeholders to address the in lake issues and the PLWA has drawn together a wide variety of citizens and experts to address the surrounding watershed issues as they impact Pigeon Lake. Together these two groups work closely with each other and with other local and provincial stakeholders to identify effective solutions to our common problem.

I have had the pleasure of working with people like Brian Waterhouse and Susan Ellis and the boards of their two groups. Their dedication research and to cooperation and to education are slowly but surely moving us forward towards some lasting solutions to the blue-green algae problem.

Eco-systems are complex, the blue-green algae problem is complex and the solutions will also be complex. It is the biggest lake in central Alberta, almost 100 square kilometers with twice that land draining into it. Scientific data, such as that by the Bio Monitor Institute, helps to focus the efforts to reduce the nutrients that run off from the watershed into Pigeon Lake. These groups are educating residents by developing materials such as their Alberta Clean Run Off Guide (find on plwmp.ca), on how best to add landscape approaches to their yard and what deep-rooted plants to grow from grass to bushes in order to slow and filter the nutrients that run off and feed the lake algae and plants. Their work with the University of Alberta on its research regarding the Trophic Cascade and whether harvesting the blue-green algae blooms may lead to additional measures to control the blue-green algae problem.

There is still a long way to go but because of the many efforts in these two groups and the people from around Pigeon Lake the lake will eventually begin to turn around. It is only because of these amazing and engaged volunteers and the common vision they share, that Pigeon Lake will continue to be enjoyed by Albertans for years to come.

And so on your behalf I would like to thank these two groups and the other stakeholder groups that are working hard around Pigeon Lake. As your MLA it is a pleasure to work with groups like yours to ensure that Alberta's environment is healthy and capable of sustaining itself both the present and future generations.

