

myPG Environment Strategy

Section 1.0 - Sustainability Policy Statement

By implementing policies that are connected and comprehensive, the City of Prince George realizes a sustainable future where the local environment is healthy and supports a robust economy and an enviable quality of life for residents.

Guiding Principles:

Strong Relationships – The City will continue to work cooperatively and progressively with its partners in the government, education, health, business and community sectors. The City will also continue to strengthen its relationship with the Lheidli T’enneh and Aboriginal organizations.

Strong Team – The City understands that progress on the city’s sustainability priorities is made possible by a strong team, with Council and Administration working closely together to achieve corporate and community goals.

Citizens as Partners – The City will help shape a “sustainability consciousness” among residents by providing information and education and by encouraging individual action.

Section 2.0 – Environment Policy Statement

The City of Prince George and its partners are committed to protecting our air, water and terrestrial environments.

Since everyone uses, benefits from and affects our local environment in which we live, work and play the City of Prince George is committed to a community approach to maintaining a healthy environment. A community approach acknowledges that there are a broad range of actions, strategies and commitments that can be made by individuals, community and interest groups, education sector, public health organizations, businesses, and all levels of government.

A community approach to maintaining a healthy environment:

- Builds a broad, common understanding and awareness of the values and benefits contributed by our local environment.
- Determines the impacts, risks and trends that could affect our environment.
- Considers the complex interconnections of the various attributes of the environment including water and air quality, natural water and terrestrial habitats, specialized or rare habitats, climate and weather trends, and natural processes.
- Builds collaborative approaches across sectors and interest groups to reduce our impacts and risks on the environment and restore environments, where possible, that have been degraded.

- Works with sectors and levels of governments to ensure a regulatory system addresses potential impacts to the environment and clear accountabilities.
- Provides opportunities for public engagement and connections with the environment.
- Provides accessible and understandable information to the community on the current state of the environment, as well as trends and potential risks.

The Attributes of a Healthy Environment:

The environment is complex and interconnected. Our impact on the environment stems from what we take from it, what we put into it and how we do those things. It is the combined influence of the attributes of a healthy environment that form an overall characterization of our environment and our place in it including:

- Amount, quality and connectivity of natural or unaltered areas
- Clean water
- Clean air
- Diversity of useable habitats
- Numbers and diversity of species present
- Sensitive areas and level of risk to them
- Adapting to the affects of changing climate
- Resiliency from environmental processes (e.g. wildfire)

Section 3.0 - Environment Policy Directions

1. Clean Air

- *Citizens enjoy clean air*

2. Clean Water

- *Waterways and the water supply are protected and consumption is reduced.*

3. Green City, Green Practices

- *Prince George is a green city with healthy habitat and forests, and a strong environmental consciousness, led by government and local organizations that demonstrate sustainable practices.*

4. Green Energy

- *Prince George is a leader in green energy.*

5. Reduce Carbon Emissions and Adapt for Climate Change

- *Prince George has reduced carbon emissions and dependence on fossil fuels, and is prepared for climate change.*

6. Reduced Waste

- *Prince George has reduced solid waste production and landfilling.*

Section 4.0 - Current Strategies in Support of Environmental Policy Direction

4.1 CITY OF PRINCE GEORGE – STRATEGY LEADER

Clean Air:

- In 2001, the City implemented the first Clean Air Bylaw in British Columbia, which bans open burning and restricts recreational fires and wood burning appliances and was updated in 2009.
- The City has prepared a draft Active Transportation Plan to help reduce the number of vehicles on the road and reduce air pollution as well as greenhouse gases.
- The City has been testing different methods and materials for winter road traction in order to reduce street dust.
- The City piloted a Clean Air Ambassador position increasing education and awareness strategies around residential wood burning, which won the 2010 Award on National Clean Air Day.
- The City has set as a policy of “no burning” in conjunction with its wildfire mitigation and dead pine removal programs including on its Community Forest.
- Council passed a resolution to have City staff undertake the process to spot-zone certain properties with the intent to create a limit on the number of asphalt plants that could be established in Prince George.

Clean Water

- In order to maintain Prince George’s excellent water quality and supply, the City of Prince George implemented a Water Conservation Plan in 2005 with several initiatives implemented, such as:
 - Volunteer water meter program for residential customers;
 - Water meter installation requirement in new home construction;
 - Water education delivery too many classrooms and public events.
- The City has established 8 “sentinel” wells for monitoring potential pollutants that could enter our drinking water source through the well at Fishtrap.
- The City has prepared, and continues to prepare comprehensive watershed management plans for major drainage areas in the city.

Green City, Green Practices:

- The City was recently awarded the E3 Fleet Silver award for its efforts to reduce emissions from the city fleet. This includes anti-idling programs, right sized vehicles and driver education programs.
- The City has implemented a Sustainable Procurement Policy to encourage purchasing products that consider environmental, social and economic costs and benefits.

- The City addresses potential impacts from development within important riparian habitats by establishing the Riparian Protection Development Permit area.
- The City of Prince George is a leader in British Columbia in addressing the high wildfire hazards throughout the city, in a manner that maintains important habitat, parks and green spaces.
- The City has worked with the Downtown Partnership in the adoption of the wood-first policy encouraging the use of renewable wood products.
- The City through its Community Forest Agreement is reducing wildfire hazards by conducting fuel treatments (thinning, brushing) and removing dead pine trees as well as encouraging FireSmart practices for residents in interface areas.

Green Energy:

- The City is in the process of implementing the Downtown District Energy System that will use clean energy produced at Lakeland Mill to pipe hot water to several municipal and other buildings downtown to reduce their natural gas use.
- Canada's first microturbine system was installed at the wastewater treatment plant that collects and burns biogas from digestors to create electricity to operate the plant.

Reduce Carbon Emissions and Adapt for Climate Change:

- The City has committed to be carbon neutral in its corporate operations by 2012.
- The City has achieved milestone 4 (Implementation Phase) of a 5-phase process established by the federal Partners for Climate Protection program with set targets for green house reductions of 10 percent corporately and 2% community reductions from 2002 levels by 2012.
- The majority of civic buildings have undergone energy audits and are now being upgraded to reduce energy consumption through the City's Sustainable Energy Management Plan.
- The City of Prince George developed a pilot program to promote green construction and energy efficient building practices in the residential sector. A pilot rebate program provided incentives for home builders to become Built Green™ registered and incentives to new home owners building energy efficient homes under the Built Green program.
- City transit policies, including "Free Fare for Clean Air", U-Passes for CNC and UNBC, and the bus idling policy all contribute to reducing overall vehicle emissions.

Reduced Waste:

- The City's automated garbage system encourages less residential waste by reducing fees for smaller containers through a "user pay" approach.
- The City implements an "adopt-a-block" community program for litter clean-up.

4.2 CITY OF PRINCE GEORGE – STRATEGY SUPPORTER/PARTICIPANT

Clean Air:

- The City of Prince George has been a member and provided support funding for the multi-stakeholder group Prince George Air Improvement Roundtable (PGAIR) and its predecessors for over 10 years. Significant improvements have been made to our air quality over that time including:
 - Shutting down beehive burners.
 - Upgrades at several mills including Canfor and Husky to reduce particulate and odour levels.
 - Implementing a woodstove exchange and anti-idling education programs.
 - Modeling and research furthering our understanding of air pollutants and their movement and dispersion throughout the Prince George airshed.
- The City of Prince George has contributed and participated in an air quality monitoring system for more than 10 years.

Clean Water

- The City has been a member of the Nechako Watershed Council since 1998. The goal of the Council is to facilitate a cooperative approach to finding solutions and foster a river management strategy that balances environmental, social and economic values.
- City is working with Ministry of Environment on water quality and fish sampling for McMillian Creek.

Green City, Green Practices:

- The City was a partner in the ForesTree Fest committee that planted over 6,000 trees in city parks, playgrounds and greenbelts that had been affected by the Mountain Pine Beetle epidemic.
- The City works closely with other levels of government in addressing potential impacts from development on our important fish habitat.
- Establishing for the first time in Northern BC, the “Fostering Sustainable Behaviour” workshop, in partnership with the Fraser Basin Council, in order to increase the effectiveness of environmental education and awareness programs and initiatives.
- The City is working with key partners in addressing wildfire hazards on Crown lands surrounding the city in a manner that addresses habitat, wildlife and green space values.
- Involved in numerous community events with partners that support knowledge of urban forestry and greenspaces (e.g. Rotary’s Adventures in Forestry, Canadian Institute of Forestry’s Walk in the Woods Program, northern invasive species program, Trees for Tomorrow).

Green Energy:

- The City has been working with other municipalities and the Pembina Institute through the Municipal Green Building Leaders initiative to examine legal and policy options encouraging energy efficiency and renewable energy.
- The City participating in a nationally recognized and award winning collaboration with Natural Resources Canada, canmet/ENERGY Department, piloting a newly developed community energy modeling and mapping tool with applications to planning and policy development.

Reduce Carbon Emissions and Adapt for Climate Change:

- The Prince George Cycling club in conjunction with the City of Prince George hosted the 2nd annual Bike To Work Week event this year to encourage motorists to ride their bike to work.
- The City has partnered with University of Northern BC and the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions (PICS) in the development of a Climate Change Adaptation Plan for the City of Prince George.

Reduced Waste:

- The City, working in partnership with the Regional District of Fraser Fort George is developing recommendations for a waste reduction strategy including a curb-side recycling program and drop-depot options.
- Separate bins for recycling and yard waste are provided at City transfer stations to reduce material going to the landfill and education materials on waste reduction play a key role in creating awareness around reducing waste.
- The Recycling and Environmental Action Planning Society (REAPS) community and school outreach programs on recycling and composting.

4.3 COMMUNITY – COMPLEMENTARY STRATEGIES

Clean Air:

- Ministry of Environment's (MOE) regional policy on offsetting emissions for potentially new industries interested in establishing in Prince George or existing industries wanting to expand.
- MOE's policies and regulations including their Best Achievable Technology Policy, their Asphalt Regulation, Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation, and their Solid Fuel Burning Domestic Appliance Regulation.
- Canfor Pulp Limited Partnership (CPLP) planned Green Transformation Projects, funded through the Pulp and Paper Green Transformation Program and CPLP, are expected to reduce particulate emissions and odour as well as achieve other environmental benefits.

Clean Water

- REAPs and Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) education program on salmon, targeting elementary and secondary levels.

Green City, Green Practices:

- Staff at Terasen Gas have conducted several stream clean-up projects at Varsity Creek and Hudson Bay Slough, and have contributed to many other projects such as the new McMillan Creek Fishing Park.
- Victoria Street Community gardens, with REAPs.

Green Energy:

- Many new buildings in our community have tapped into geothermal energy including Duchess Park Secondary School, Gateway Seniors Home and the Friendship Lodge.
- UNBC is in the process of constructing a gasification plant that will heat the campus using wood residue rather than natural gas.
- The 60MW co-gen plant built at the Prince George Pulp plant displaces electricity and natural gas use and reduces particulate matter and odour.
- The Omineca Beetle Action Coalition has proposed a “Leadership by Example” alternative energy programs and initiatives at all levels of government.
- Prince George is becoming a leader in the bioenergy sector, manufacturing pellet biomass fuels for the international market, utilizing waste wood from lumber manufacturing and dead pine trees killed by the mountain pine beetle epidemic.

Reduce Carbon Emissions and Adapt for Climate Change:

- Solar BC highlighted solar hot water heating applications located in Prince George.
- Regional District of Fraser Fort George installation of landfill gas management system at Foothills landfill and investigating capture and alternative uses for gas.

Reduced Waste:

- Ministry of Environment’s Extended Producer Responsibility framework addressing the recycling or proper disposal of such items as beverage containers, used oil, electronics, tires, and paint.
- Regional District of Fraser Fort George’s composting facility at the Foothills Landfill.
- Annual community spring clean-up initiative in conjunction with Earth Day.

Section 5.0 - Actions to Address Gaps between Defined Policy Directions and Current Strategies

Clean Air:

- Create a mechanism or opportunities that encourage senior-level (decision-making) participation in partnership support for implementing key air quality improvement strategies.

Clean Water

- Effective methods in place to reduce household demand and wasteful water use.

- Encourage a more comprehensive and integrated approach taking advantage of program linkages between the management of drinking water, sewer and storm water.

Green City, Green Practices:

- Encourage greater appreciation for our natural environment, water and green spaces.
- Create and implement a brownfield redevelopment strategy.
- Encourage youth participation in implementing environmental initiatives

Green Energy:

- Develop a broad community buy-in and motivation for energy efficiency and reducing energy use through green energy.

Reduce Carbon Emissions and Adapt for Climate Change:

- Encourage community reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and energy reduction.

Reduced Waste:

- Develop a comprehensive policy and education/awareness program with partners leading towards high participation rates for recycling and significant waste reduction.