

## Part C Objectives & Policies



## 5 Economy

Prince George has the largest population and employment base amongst all communities in the region and serves as the service and supply hub for industry activities across Northern BC. The City has a relatively young population with access to exceptional education and training opportunities, and a high rate of participation in the labour force. Growth in the education and health care sectors over past decades complements the existing resource base and has helped to diversify the local economy. Prince George is a highly rated investment jurisdiction with competitive taxes, development fees and land costs, and is uniquely positioned with growing transportation links to the world. The community has an abundant supply of land to accommodate business expansion in a variety of sectors and advocates for regional growth in forestry, mining, energy, tourism and other sectors that meet standards for environmental, social, and economic returns.

The Prince George economy has traditionally been reliant on forest sector activities, with a large proportion of employment attributed to the forestry and wood products manufacturing sectors. Diversification of the economy over the past two decades, however, has helped to provide stability in the economy. Growth in education, health and other services has occurred alongside new opportunities in the resource sector, including forest-based bioenergy innovation and mining and oil & gas development throughout Northern BC.



*(Photograph courtesy Abstractions Studio)*

A multitude of economic opportunities exist for Prince George in the forestry, mining and transportation sectors. The BC Labour Market Outlook for 2009-2019 predicts more than 40,000 job openings over the decade in the Cariboo Development Region due to both expansion and replacement needs in a variety of industry occupations including trades, sales & service, business & finance, health and education. The biggest issue impacting the community's ability to embrace new opportunities will be having an adequate supply of labour with the appropriate skills to meet employment demands. The findings of the Prince George Labour Market Research Report (2008) demonstrate a gap in certain skilled and professional labour sectors and qualify a need for further research and strategic planning for effective recruitment and retention programs in Prince George. This labour gap in certain sectors can be equated to an aging workforce, shifting industry trends, changes in educational requirements and competition for labour with other regions.

Statistics illustrating population and labour force characteristics provide insight into the current state of the Prince George labour market:

- Estimates for 2010 indicate Prince George saw a slight increase in population of 0.8%, while B.C.'s population increased by 1.6%. Averaged over the five

years between 2005 and 2010, the Prince George population grew by 0.6% per year while employment increased at a rate of 1.7% per year.

- Prince George has a higher birth rate than the provincial average.
- 11.4% of Prince George residents have aboriginal identity compared to a considerable lower 4.8% provincial average.
- Prince George's population is slightly younger compared with the provincial average, with a median age of 36.5, compared to B.C. where the median age is 40.8.
- Prince George has a considerably lower rate of immigration compared to the province. Only 9.7% of Prince George residents were born in another country. This is in sharp contrast to the 27.5% of B.C. residents who were born abroad.
- Compared to the province as a whole, Prince George has a similar percentage of the population having achieved at least a high school diploma (68.4% in PG and 68.1% in BC). 40.9% of the population has post-secondary credentials, with a slightly higher proportion of individuals having trades education, which reflects the industry structure of the economy. The population's level of educational attainment has increased steadily over the past decade, in line with the creation of the University of Northern BC and other new educational opportunities.

Opportunities exist to integrate underutilized segments of the population into the local work force, including women, First Nations, mature workers, students, immigrants, and people with disabilities. Immigration and migration also present options for growing the labour force, given the attractiveness of the community in terms of affordable cost of living and amenities that contribute to a high quality of life. (Source: Initiatives Prince George)

The unemployment rate in the Prince George area was 7.9% in 2010; in four of the five years between 2006 and 2010, the unemployment rate fell well below the average over the previous decade, and employment reached a higher level than at any time over the past two decades in 2010. The building permit value in 2010 (\$126.1M) remained well above the 10 year average of \$90.9M; the annual average growth in permits between 2000 and 2010 was 21.3%. Housing starts were relatively stable in the city over the decade, with 213 in 2010, slightly higher than the previous 10 year annual average (209). (Source: BC Stats)

## **Objectives**

- Objective 5.1.1 Support land use and planning that enhances Prince George as a sustainable, resilient, knowledge based, resource economy which is connected to the world.
- Objective 5.1.2 Focus on downtown development with the implementation of the policies, plans, programs and projects outlined in the Smart Growth on the Ground Downtown Prince George Concept Plan and Downtown Partnership report.
- Objective 5.1.3 Support connectivity of our businesses to the world by improving our transportation (road, rail, and air) and data networks.
- Objective 5.1.4 Encourage the infill and redevelopment of existing employment centres while accommodating the phased development of designated commercial and industrial lands.
- Objective 5.1.5 Support institutions that enhance our knowledge-based economy such as University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC), College of New Caledonia (CNC), and commercial and trades training opportunities.
- Objective 5.1.6 Support the Growth Management strategy by matching employment growth with population growth.
- Objective 5.1.7 Work collaboratively with the Government of Canada, Province of BC, Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, Regional District of Fraser-Fort George and other partner agencies to advance collective economic priorities.

## **Policies**

### **General**

- Policy 5.1.1 Protect and enhance transportation networks, transit, service corridors and Utilities (water, sanitary, storm, and other public and private utilities) for the efficient movement of people and materials, as well as the transmission of energy, and communications.
- Policy 5.1.2 Promote revitalization with incentives that stimulate development consistent with the objectives of this Plan.
- Policy 5.1.3 Encourage business competitiveness through the efficient use of resources and energy (e.g., water conservation and GHG emission reductions).

### **Commercial**

- Policy 5.1.4 Limit the expansion of Service and Regional Commercial development to designated areas.
- Policy 5.1.5 Incorporate commercial and community facility institutional uses into each neighbourhood to provide a mix of employment opportunities, subject to compatible scale and intensity.
- Policy 5.1.6 Encourage a range of tourist opportunities that promote our arts, culture, and heritage including tourist accommodation facilities such as hotels/motels, campgrounds, and bed & breakfasts.

### **Downtown**

- Policy 5.1.7 Promote a high-density core with mixed use commercial services. Encourage high-density residential, commercial, entertainment, government and administrative uses.
- Policy 5.1.8 Protect and enhance active transportation links to the broader community.
- Policy 5.1.9 Re-capture the essence of 'City Beautiful' design by enhancing public spaces downtown.
- Policy 5.1.10 Support the development of a performing arts theatre, wood innovation & design centre, expansion of the fibre optic network, a range of housing options, integrated health centre, downtown education campus, expansion of the district energy system, as well as local, neighbourhood and regional commercial uses while providing an attractive pedestrian-oriented built environment.

### **Industry** [*See also Section 8.3 E. Business Districts*]

- Policy 5.1.11 Protect the environment (air, water and soil quality) through the strategic location of industry and the application of prudent regulations to reduce harm from industrial discharges and emissions.
- Policy 5.1.12 Encourage eco-industrial projects that link processes, sectors, and buildings to share efficiencies in material, waste and energy production and distribution.

### **Farmland**

- Policy 5.1.13 Protect farmland as an economic generator and increase awareness of the importance of local food for our health and well-being.

Policy 5.1.14 Buffer farmland from urban development to protect farmland capacity and mitigate land use impacts.

Policy 5.1.15 Protect farmers' access to local and regional markets

Policy 5.1.16 Protect farmers' access to a healthy water supply.

### **Airport**

Policy 5.1.17 Develop and maintain adequate transportation links to support passenger and freight movement.

Policy 5.1.18 Encourage compatible land uses on lands adjacent to the airport within the Airport Logistics Park.

Policy 5.1.19 Support the development vision of the Airport Master Plan by coordinating land use and services. [*See also Section 8 Built Environment*].



### **Business Improvement Associations**

Policy 5.1.20 The City recognizes and supports the role of Business Improvement Associations to support the development, maintenance, and redevelopment of commercial areas.

### **Education**

Policy 5.1.21 Collaborate with UNBC, CNC and School District No. 57 to ensure educational programs meet changing labour force needs and advocate for the role of these institutions as research centres for the development of technology, health care, environmental, business and other disciplines.