



# Biannual Briefing Note

**Date:** 14 November 2013

**Issued by:** Barbara Oke

**Agency:** Northern Health

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## Questions

### 1.) What have you done in the last 6 months?

- Northern Health continued to chair PGAIR's Education and Awareness Working Group to help educate and bring awareness to the public and encourage social behavior change. Recent successes from this group include the development of a PGAIR Communication Plan, a Clean Air Day Poster Contest and the first Clean Air Champion contest, the Clean Air Forum that was held this spring, continued engagement through our Facebook page, education support for the Woodstove Exchange Program, and various other education and outreach activities;
- Northern Health has expanded its internal air quality education and awareness capacity by updating our air quality brochures, developing air quality health promotion slides that will be rotated on screens at hospital and waiting rooms and developing a new air quality banner. We have also featured air quality and the Clean Air Champion on our Northern Health blog;
- Northern Health continues to post air quality advisories on our website and social media sites;
- Northern Health recently formed an internal Radon and Air Quality Committee to improve the air quality and radon capacity at Northern Health;
- Northern Health has been working with the Health Authority Air Quality Council to develop resources for Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) to help increase the air quality capacity of EHOs across the Province. Currently this group is working to develop an air quality resource list for EHOs;
- Northern Health continued to respond to air quality related referrals from other agencies to ensure that health impacts and the Phase 3 Plan Objectives were taken into account by agency decision makers. Two recent referrals for which Northern Health provided comments is the Stella Jones Ministry of Environment permit amendment and the proposed re-zoning of agricultural land along Highway 16 to allow the use of a campground;
- Northern Health continued to incorporate fuel mileage as an important purchasing decision for Northern Health fleet vehicle, requiring departments to write a business case for any vehicles other than a fuel efficient compact sedan. Northern Health also recently partnered with the University of Northern British Columbia, The Regional District of Fraser Fort George and the City of Prince George to purchase an electric

vehicle. It is estimated that in 2013, this vehicle will be driven 8,245 kilometers, saving \$1,086 in fuel and \$1,992 kg of greenhouse gases.

**1 b.) Does the action address a goal and/or strategy from the Phase III Plan? If yes, please list the goal and/or strategy.**

Yes, it addresses the following strategies from the Phase 3 Plan:

- “Through research and education, increase public understanding of air quality issues, advisories, potential solutions and success stories”
- “Reduce emissions from wood burning heating systems and backyard recreation fires by encouraging woodstove upgrades ..., increasing knowledge of proper burning practices and increase awareness of the City’s Clean Air Bylaw”
- “Encourage implementation of Province’s regional-office developed off-setting policy for new or expanding industry in Prince George
- “Encourage continuous improvement and use of best achievable technology for current, expanding and new permitted industry”
- “Encourage alternative transportation”
- “Encourage clean-burning practices for back-yard recreational fires”
- “Reduce emissions from space heating”
- “Facilitate public forums and event that promote and encourage clean air practices”
- “Improve awareness for air quality issues and potential solutions”

**What are you planning to do in the next 6 months?**

Over the next 6 month, Northern Health will continue to build on the existing initiatives and will look for opportunities to further expand our air quality program. While we expect that the below list will likely be modified and expanded based on opportunities that may arise, some upcoming air quality work that we expect to be involved in for the Prince George airshed includes:

- Working with the Education and Awareness Working group to develop and move forward on a non-permitted business engagement strategy. This will likely include a Clean Air Champion program for the business community.
- Joining the Research Working group and supporting health related air quality research in Prince George
- Using what has been learned in the Prince George airshed to help address air quality concerns in smaller communities, such as Vanderhoof and Valemout. PGAIR resources and successes will be shared with the Valemout community at an open house in November.
- Writing an article on air quality in the Northern Health “Teacher Reacher” newsletter.

**2 b.) Does the action address a goal and/or strategy from the Phase III Plan? If yes, please list the goal and/or strategy.**

In addition to the goals and strategies outlined above, upcoming work over the next 6 months is expected to address the following two goals:

- “Establish a PGAIR awards and recognition program to recognize achievements in air quality by local businesses”
- “Recognize best practices within the commercial and industrial sector”

**What is your long-term plan to meet the 2016 goal?**

Northern Health’s goal over the long-term is to continue educating and bringing awareness to the public on air quality issues to encourage behavior change and action. We plan on doing this by continuing to chair the Education and Awareness Working group and identifying opportunities within our own and partner organizations. We also expect to continue participating in policy and land-use decisions through the referral and public consultation process and by encouraging decision makers to incorporate health impacts and goals of the PGAIR’s Phase 3 Plan into their planning decisions. It is also our goal to further increase the air quality capacity at Northern Health.

**Please indicate your self-assessed progress during the past 6 months:**

Low



Medium

High