



# Air Quality Briefing Note

**Date:** November 27, 2020  
**Issued by:** Paula Tait  
**Agency:** Northern Health (NH)

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## Description

Each member of PGAIR is requested to provide an annual update on implementation activities related to the 2016-2021 Strategic Plan. Please identify your agency's relevant activities (existing and planned) in the template provided. The information from these reports will be posted on the PGAIR website. The next briefing note due date is **December 1, 2020**.

## PM 2.5 Goal:

To achieve an annual particulate matter average concentration of 8 micrograms per cubic meter of air, with an aspirational goal of 5 micrograms per cubic meter.

## Questions

### What have you done in the last 12 months to support the Strategic Plan goals?

- The 2020 Covid-19 Global Pandemic has significantly impacted or shifted the routine work of NH over the last 12 months. Despite this, we know that air pollution can negatively impact respiratory infection rates and severity. Many important air quality and health functions have continued through the pandemic, such as; maintaining working relationships with partners, advising on land use, environmental assessment and permitting processes, and increasing awareness regarding emerging air quality and health impacts, especially in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- NH's air quality technical advisor prepared and delivered presentations regarding the air quality and health portfolio to the new Chief Medical Health Officer and the new Vice President of Population and Public Health, the NH Executive and Board Performance, Planning and Priorities Committee (3P) and to the broader Population and Public Health team. These presentations received positive feedback and increased the visibility of outdoor air quality and health issues across the north within the NH team.
- NH is working with a post-doctoral research fellow at Simon Fraser University's Faculty of Health Sciences. The research fellow is based within the NH Population and Public Health Support Unit, supporting projects focused on air quality-related health impact assessments and surveillance during her two-year fellowship tenure. Within the past 12 months, we have received a grant from the Pacific Institute of

Climate Solutions (PICS), to support a student internship focussed on air quality-related climate change adaptation and vulnerability assessment at NH. We have further submitted three grant applications (one to the BC Lung Association and two to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research) in collaboration with researchers at UNBC, to help support ongoing work around air quality and health impact assessment in the Kitimat-Terrace valley which will inform broader air quality and health policies in the north.

Actions continued from previous years:

- NH supported UNBC with hosting a live-streamed event of the BC Lung Association Air Quality and Health Workshop in Prince George.
- NH's air quality technical advisor continues to provide a presentation regarding outdoor air quality and health to all medical students passing through the Population and Public Health student programming in Prince George.
- NH supports existing and new air quality roundtables across the NH region.
- NH continues to work in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy and other partners to issue and communicate air quality advisories/bulletins.
- NH continues to respond to and follow-up on public and media inquiries and concerns related to indoor and outdoor air quality across the region. We have collaborated with outside agencies when possible.
- NH's internal 'Air Quality Steering Committee' continues to provide internal leadership and support on indoor and outdoor air quality issues in Northern Health.
- NH continues to participate with the 'Provincial Air Quality Liaison Group', to exchange information and expertise across provincial health authorities and health agencies.
- NH participates as a working group member on Environmental Assessments across the region.
- NH continues to review Official Community Plans and Land Use Referrals as they relate to air quality maintenance or improvement.
- NH continues to review new or updated provincial air quality-related legislation and guidance documents.
- The air quality technical advisor participated in many professional development activities (mostly 1-hour webinars) related to air quality.
- NH continues to participate with the 'Provincial Health Sector Wildfire Smoke Coordination and Response Group' and the 'NH Public Health Wildfire Planning Group'.
  - Does the action address a goal and/or strategy from the Strategic Plan 2016-2021?
  - If yes, please list the goal and/or strategy.
- These actions combined support the 5-year goals for PGAIR and strategic priorities.

**What are you planning to do in the next 12 months?**

- NH will continue to engage in the actions already mentioned while also balancing pandemic response. The following actions are planned:

- Promotion of the 2021 BC Lung Association Air Quality and Health Workshop.
- Continuing support for air quality roundtables across the NH region, including the PGAIR Strategic Planning Process.
- Continuing improvements to the NH Air Quality web page and other public education and awareness tools.
- Continuing participation in the provincial environmental assessment process and provincial initiatives.

**What is your long-term plan to meet the 2016-2021 goal?**

As mentioned in previous years, Northern Health’s goal over the long-term is to continue educating and bringing awareness to the public, industrial proponents and other stakeholders on air quality issues to encourage best practices, better policy, behavior change, and action. We plan on doing this by continuing to identify opportunities within our own and partner organizations. We will work with regulatory agencies and decision makers to incorporate health considerations into policy and land-use decisions. NH will continue to strive to support the same goals/strategies as we have in previous years.

**Please indicate your self-assessed progress during the past 12 months:**

Low

Medium

High