



News Release – For Immediate Release

PGAIR Releases Final Report of Phase 3 Air Quality Management Plan

Prince George, BC – April 26, 2018 The Prince George Air Improvement Roundtable (PGAIR) today released the final report on Phase 3 of its Air Quality Management Plan (Phase 3 Implementation Plan), which evaluates actions and strategies across multiple sectors to reduce fine particulate matter in the Prince George airshed.

The Phase 3 Final Report finds that progress toward community air quality goals set by PGAIR in 2011 has been steady and measurable. Levels of fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) – tiny particles in the air posing a risk to human health – declined 40% from industrial sources from 2011-2016 and a downward trend in average concentrations community-wide is seen, which supports long-term targets. Much remains to be done, however, including a review of mitigation strategies for unmanageable sources of pollutants, such as wildfire smoke, and further reductions in residential, commercial and transportation emissions.

“The City of Prince George is pleased with the significant progress made by PGAIR to improve air quality in Prince George,” said Mayor Lyn Hall. “The City has worked diligently to improve our airshed and achieve the goals of PGAIR through initiatives and activities such as the Clean Air Bylaw and our sweeping operations, which are currently underway 24-hours a day. While Council highly commends the ongoing work of the Roundtable, we realize that this work is not yet complete, and we will continue to work to achieve all of Council’s environmental goals. As residents, we all play a part in bettering air quality and I encourage citizens to consider ways we can all work to improve the air we breathe.”

PGAIR Executive Director Terry Robert said significant reductions in levels of fine particulate matter were achieved through technological improvements in industries with Provincial permits in the northeast sector and through dust management strategies in the City of Prince George and Fraser Fort George Regional District. “The results of the Phase 3 report are encouraging and it’s good to see leadership on air quality emerge in many sectors,” says Robert. “Still, we know more is needed to meet community targets, especially given the additional impacts of wildfire smoke we’ve seen in recent years.”

Adam Lancaster, Environment Manager for Canfor Pulp Ltd. and PGAIR member said Canfor Pulp is proud to be a large contributor in the march toward PGAIR’s Phase III goals. “Through significant capital investment, we have proven that strengthening our position in the marketplace can work in parallel with improved environmental performance,” Lancaster said. “As our strongest gains in particulate discharge

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have been made, we encourage all sectors to continue with incremental reductions as we shift our focus to other air quality and environmental improvements.”

PGAIR’s Phase 3 Management Plan goals reflect our collective understanding of the impacts of air pollution on public health. Overwhelming scientific evidence points to elevated rates of cardiovascular disease, and other illnesses or death linked to high levels of fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) in the air we breathe.

“I’m pleased to see continued success resulting from the work of PGAIR and its partners. These improvements to air quality should be celebrated and will positively impact the health of everyone in our community,” said Dr. Andrew Gray, Northern Interior Medical Health Officer, Northern Health Authority.

About PG AIR

The Prince George Air Improvement Roundtable (PG AIR) is a multi-stakeholder, community-based group, aimed at developing and implementing air quality management strategies through consensus- and science-based decision-making. The members of PG AIR include local, regional and provincial governments, health authority, post-secondary institution, industry, community action groups and members of the public. The Fraser Basin Council serves as secretariat for PGAIR.

To view the full report, visit www.pgairquality.com.

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Backgrounder

The Prince George Air Improvement Roundtable (PGAIR) was created in 2008 as a non-profit society with the goal to bring together sectors and members of the community with a focus on improving the air quality in Prince George. Addressing air quality in the Prince George area began in 1995 with the Prince George Airshed Technical Management Committee, which formalized the air quality management process, beginning with Phase 1. PGAIR now operates under a 5-year Strategic Plan.

The Phase 3 Implementation Plan was in effect from 2010 to 2016. It was characterized by air quality management actions that prioritized the reduction of fine particulate matter in the Prince George airshed, with a focus on specific short- and long-term exposure targets.

Targets:

Phase 3 targets aimed to maintain ambient PM_{2.5} concentrations equal to or more stringent than provincial, national and international ambient air quality objectives:

- daily PM_{2.5} average not to exceed 25 µg/m³ by 2013;
- annual average PM_{2.5} concentrations not to exceed 6 µg/m³ by 2013 and 5 µg/m³ by 2016;
- reduce the amount of PM_{2.5} being released into the Prince George airshed from significant sources by 40% by 2016;
- reduce PM emissions in the Prince George airshed by implementing source-specific reduction strategies for 2011-2016 and beyond.

Particulate matter is an air pollutant that comes from many different sources. It is most commonly measured according to its size. The two most common size fractions are PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀. Both of these size fractions are respirable, can be breathed deep into the lungs, and have the potential to impact human and environmental health.

Air quality monitoring is carried out by the Prince George Air Quality Monitoring Working Group through a network of air quality monitors that collect data about a variety of airborne pollutants as well as meteorological conditions.

Results:

Research carried out by University of Northern British Columbia Professor Peter Jackson* [5.0 Phase 3 Implementation Plan Evaluation, page 11] along with 4th year environmental studies

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students revealed an improvement in average PM_{2.5} concentrations for both the daily and the annual average targets. In large part, these improvements can be linked to local industry investments and efforts to reduce particulate matter. In addition, an evaluation conducted by the regulator, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy confirmed that permitted emitters had, in fact, reduced particulate matter emissions by over 40% over the five-year term of the plan.

Next Steps for Air Quality:

Prince George has long faced a variety of challenges around air quality as outlined in the Phase 3 Plan Final Report. PGAIR is guided into this next phase of air quality management by the 5-year Strategic Plan which builds on successes of working together at the local level and encourages further improvements across all sectors. Further work is needed to continue to reduce PM emissions to ensure a long-term healthy and sustainable community. PM will remain as a priority for PGAIR since research clearly demonstrates its association with negative health outcomes. However, future planning and goal-setting will include a review of other pollutants and community priorities. Community priorities are determined through dialogue and consultation with members of the public and community representatives.

* Jackson, P.L., Albino, J., Birch, C., Nilson, B, Pawluk, J. & Tereshchak, T. 2017. *Trends in fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) concentrations in Prince George, British Columbia, Canada*. Natural Resources and Environmental Studies Institute. Research Extension Note No. 11, University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George, B.C., Canada.[<https://www.unbc.ca/sites/default/files/sections/nres-institute/nresiren-11-jacksonetal.pdf>]

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