



North Central British Columbia Clean Air Forum 2018 Summary Report

The North Central BC Clean Air Forum 2018 was planned and organized by the Prince George Air Improvement Roundtable (PGAIR) and the Fraser Basin Council (FBC) to **bring together** air quality managers, health professionals, air quality technicians and analysts, and members of the public to share information about **air quality challenges facing small to mid-sized communities** around British Columbia.

The overarching theme of the event was “**Community Tools for Change**”, the forum covered pertinent themes such as the **wildfire smoke management and policy options, technology tools for the future, and local government approaches to residential wood smoke**.

Program Summary

The two-day long forum included a Woodsmoke Education and Outreach Tools Workshop, a walking tour of the Prince George District Energy System, and a public evening session focused on Prince George residents and, several presentations related to community tools for change. Sponsors included Canfor, Sinclair Group, Apollo Forest Products, Lakeland Mills, Nechako Lumber Co, Husky Energy, Fraser Plumbing & Heating, City of Prince George, Fraser Basin Council, Government of Canada, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, and Northern Health.

Day 1: Woodsmoke Education and Outreach Tools Workshop

The Woodsmoke Education and Outreach Tools workshop was targeted to coordinators of the Provincial Woodstove Exchange Program, and other community air quality managers or educators. The workshop started with an introduction to online wood smoke education and outreach tools as well as an overview of the Provincial Wood Stove Exchange Program to introduce wood smoke outreach and education tools being developed. Presenters during the workshop included Kim Menounos the Assistant Manager of PGAIR, Paula Tait from Northern Health, and Markus Kellerhals from the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy.

About PGAIR

PGAIR is a multi-stakeholder, community-based group, aimed at developing and implementing air quality management strategies. The members of PGAIR include local, regional and provincial governments, the Northern Health Authority, UNBC, industry, community action groups, and members of the public.

About FBC

FBC is a charitable non-profit society that brings people together to advance sustainability in the Fraser Basin and across British Columbia. Established in 1997, FBC is a collaboration of four orders of government (federal, provincial, local, and First Nations), along with those from the private sector and civil society.

Day 2: Community Tools for Change

Community Tools for Change was targeted to health agencies, municipalities, airshed interest groups, citizens, and provincial agencies. The forum focused on air quality issues and challenges faced by small to mid-sized communities in British Columbia along with policy, education and regulatory mechanisms to apply toward lasting solutions. Presenters at the forum included Dr. Sarah Henderson from the BC Centre for Disease Control, Gail Roth from the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, Roland Schigas from the University of British Columbia, David Conway from Mariposa County, Julie Saxton from Metro Vancouver, Taylor Bachrach from the Town of Smithers, Andrea Byrne from the City of Prince George, Peter Jackson from the University of Northern British Columbia, Charlotte Argue from the Fraser Basin Council, and Ben Weinstein from the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy.

Complete list of slides: <https://www.pgairquality.com/2018/12/North-Central-BC-Clean-Air-Forum-2018-Was-a-Huge-Success>

Advancing Awareness, Consideration for PGAIR and Other Interest Groups

Representatives from regional districts, municipalities, First Nations communities, health-related non-profits, academia, provincial ministries and the concerned public all gathered in Prince George to learn, network and focus on the important health topic of air quality. A few recommendations listed below are drawn from comments received, and insights into important next steps.

1. Consider planning and organizing a smaller event to be held every 2 to 3 years, in various communities around the interior.
2. Create communication links between communities with similar air quality challenges to improve the network of community contacts and unify efforts to reduce air pollution.
3. Assess air quality and pollution messages and delivery programs around the province to ensure they are well-designed and deployed across all health authorities.
4. Further develop education and outreach tools for use by communities that are simple to deploy and cost little to adapt.
5. Seek financial resources to support the continued development of the online wood smoke education tools and engage user groups in the review process prior to launching the tools.
6. Consider organizing a similar event with increased facilitation to better capture the extend of the feedback, and creativity of the group engaged.
7. Collaborate and deliver important information to First Nations communities regarding residential wood burning.
8. Advocacy groups and clean air roundtables need to push elected officials to support stricter air quality bylaws.

Conclusions and Opportunities

Each community, and each region in the province has a unique perspective on the air quality issues facing their own residents with no one-size-fits-all solution or prescription that can be applied. Residents often deny their individual contribution to local pollution. Similarly, the perception persists that pollution coming from local industry far outweighs any residential inputs. There is an opportunity for continued awareness and education on air quality issues, and residential inputs in particular, in small to mid-sized communities in the central and northern interior.