

Executive Summary:

Implementing Climate Change Adaptation in Prince George, BC Volume 2: The Official Community Plan

In 2009, the City of Prince George began to update its Official Community Plan (OCP). The draft Prince George OCP is unique in that it has been created through the same lens as its Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP), entitled *myPG*, which was completed immediately before the OCP update. OCPs are important community documents that provide a long-range vision for the form and character of a city or town. They are designed to guide the future local decisions related to land use planning and management. Because they are such important plans, significant public involvement and consultation occurs as part of their creation.

In British Columbia, OCPs have to meet the requirements set out in the Local Government Act (LGA), which was amended in 2008 to require greenhouse gas reduction targets (which relate closely to climate change mitigation). Adaptation refers to actions that help us prepare for and respond to the positive and negative impacts of climate change; the LGA sets no explicit requirements for adaptation, but there are many opportunities to incorporate adaptation-related principles and objectives in OCPs. Some of these opportunities are related to topics such as storm-water management, water supply management, infrastructure planning, ecosystem mapping, and flood risk mitigation. Several communities in BC have taken a leadership role in incorporating adaptation into their OCPs and many reports are available that provide advice on how adaptation should be included in these plans. Because incorporating climate change adaptation into existing plans and policies is an effective method to encourage implementation, a priority action for the Prince George Regional Adaptation Collaborative (RAC) project, funded by Natural Resources Canada, was to work with the City to include adaptation strategies in the new *myPG* plan and the OCP update.

Local planners and decision makers in Prince George have been taking a leadership role on climate change adaptation for several years. These individuals recognized the importance of including adaptation in the OCP review, especially as adaptation was an important component of the *myPG* plan. A local researcher drafted an instructional document on how to incorporate adaptation policy into the OCP. This document communicated why including adaptation was important and outlined key adaptation-related objectives, policies and plans. The document followed a structured template that was used for all policy documents prepared, so that the adaptation content could be easily incorporated into the final OCP. A summary of this document is included in Table 1.

Due to extensive stakeholder and public involvement, it is fair to state that the draft City of Prince George OCP reflects the values of the community, and it demonstrates how adaptation can be effectively mainstreamed into local plans. The OCP includes extensive background information about climate change adaptation and explains why responding to climate change is important. There is content related to climate change and adaptation throughout the entire draft document, specifically in the social, environmental, and economic chapters. Many references to adaptation that were included were not initiated by the RAC team, which shows the issue is not simply a concern among a few stakeholders and researchers.

Once the plan is approved by Council (expected in 2012) it will provide the City direction in continuing its leadership role in climate change adaptation investigation, planning, and implementation in order to minimize negative climate change impacts, capitalize on positive opportunities, and become more resilient to unanticipated changes. Prince George has used the process involved in the update of its Official Community Plan to increase awareness and develop policies on climate change adaptation. Using this approach may benefit other communities as they strive to normalize adaptation into local plans and policies.

Table 1. OCP template sections and key adaptation content.

Template Section/description	Adaptation-related content
<p><u>Justifying adaptation:</u> <i>Why it is a local priority</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important to consider adaptation to avoid costly consequences • Adaptation relates to many OCP focus areas including: fire management, hazardous conditions, flood protection, transportation, and agriculture
<p><u>Relevant background information:</u> <i>Existing resources and information</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate information from <i>Climate Change in Prince George: Past Trends and Future Projections</i> • Adaptation priorities from <i>Adapting to Climate Change in Prince George: An Overview of Adaptation Priorities</i> • Overview of relationships between adaptation and other topics in the OCP
<p><u>Relationship to myPG and other plans:</u> <i>How adaptation links with myPG goals and sustainability</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate action is a local myPG goal • Climate change adaptation is an important consideration in City planning and development, as it is crucial to plan for future changes and increase resilience to unexpected events
<p><u>Scope and Jurisdiction:</u> <i>How adaptation is important to the LGA and OCPs</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change affects land use, hazardous conditions, and the design and location of infrastructure and utilities • Several sections of the LGA are relevant to adaptation • BC communities have incorporated adaptation into their OCPs
<p><u>Objectives:</u> <i>Main objectives for OCP that relate to adaptation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote adaptation to minimize impacts on human safety, health, and well-being • Consider local adaptation priorities in all aspects of future decision making • Promote resiliency, awareness, and concurrent mitigation
<p><u>Designation of areas:</u> <i>Specific areas of relevance</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No maps or designations of areas (in the future there may be designations for flooding, fires, and other impact priorities)
<p><u>Policies:</u> <i>Suggested policies to guide future adaptation action</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General policies related to considering adaptation in decisions • Specific policies related to natural hazards (floods, fires, and slopes) and the built environment (infrastructure, development, water, agriculture, and storm-water)
<p><u>Implementation:</u> <i>How implementation should proceed through the OCP</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations made related to: neighbourhood and area plans; city land disposition and acquisitions; general implementation; monitoring, evaluating, and reporting; partnerships; and plan financing