



## STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL ENGINEERING and PUBLIC WORKS

1100 Patricia Boulevard, Prince George, B.C., V2L 3V9

**DATE:** SEPTEMBER 4, 2015

**TO:** MAYOR AND COUNCIL

**FROM:** DAVE DYER, GENERAL MANAGER, ENGINEERING AND PUBLIC WORKS

**SUBJECT:** HEALTHY COMMUNITIES DECLARATION

**ATTACHMENT(S):** Declaration of the Right to a Healthy Environment

### RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. THAT Council endorse the Healthy Communities Declaration in Appendix 'A'.

### PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to provide information on the implications of the *Declaration of the Right to a Healthy Environment* and present to Council for endorsement the *Declaration of the Right to a Healthy Environment* as presented in Appendix A.

### BACKGROUND:

At the Regular Council Meeting on May 25, 2015, Blue Dot Prince George presented to City Council and requested that Council endorse a declaration to protect people's rights to a healthy environment. City Council directed administration to report back regarding the implications of adopting the proposed 'Right to a Healthy Environment' declaration for the City.

The Blue Dot Prince George's request relates to a current campaign by the David Suzuki Foundation focusing on the recognition of people's right to a healthy environment – clean water, fresh air, healthy food and a chance to participate in decisions that affect these things – by all levels of government across Canada. This campaign includes a declaration that municipalities from across Canada are asked to endorse. At this time, thirty BC municipalities have passed the declaration with an additional fifty having endorsed the declaration across Canada. The intent of the declaration as described by the Blue Dot Prince George delegation is to:

- coincide with existing City of Prince George policies and initiatives such as the *Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (myPG)*, the *Official Community Plan*, the *Climate Action Plan*, *Air Improvement Roundtable Phase III*, etc;
- not to cost the City any additional money; and,
- not to substantially increase workload of City staff.

Many of the City of Prince George's existing policies and initiatives are consistent with the Blue Dot Movement and the *Declaration of the Right to a Healthy Environment*. A few examples:

- The construction of the Downtown District Energy System and organizational assessments of energy consumption and fleet practices which have reduced municipal greenhouse gas emissions.
- The myPG Sustainability Plan sets out the vision and goals for the organization and the community. This process has provided significant guidance for economic, environmental, social, city governance, and land use development. For example, the Environment Strategy includes the following policy tools: Official Community Plan, Zoning Bylaw, City Fleet Idling Policy, and the Energy Efficiency and GHG Reduction Policy.
- The Official Community Plan is a critical planning tool that helps staff, Council, and residents make decisions on things such as where we locate housing, what our transportation priorities are, which lands we protect from development, how we protect development from hazards, and how we provide services for more sustainable development over the next 15 years.
- The City provides a variety of opportunities for active and passive outdoor and park enjoyment throughout the City.
- The City of Prince George has enacted various bylaws in support of the maintenance of clean air, clean water and protection of the natural environment. For example, the Clean Air Bylaw No. 8266, 2010 regulates from a human health and air quality perspective, woodstove burning, open burning, and street sweeping.
- The City of Prince George is a member of PGAir, and a signatory of the FCM Partner for Climate Protection program and the Provincial Climate Action Charter. The Charter has been signed by more than 180 local governments across BC and declares our shared understanding that:
  - the evidence of global warming is unequivocal and the effects of climate change are evident across British Columbia;
  - reducing GHG emissions will generate environmental and health benefits for individuals, families, and communities;
  - climate change and reducing GHG emissions are issues of importance to British Columbians;
  - governments urgently need to implement effective measures to reduce GHG emissions and anticipate and prepare for climate change impacts; and
  - protecting the environment can be done in ways that promote economic prosperity.
- The City of Prince George completed a Climate Change Adaptation Strategic Plan in 2009. This was followed by the inclusion of climate change adaptation awareness and policy direction in the City's integrated community sustainability plan, myPG, and the Official Community Plan. Implementation has been initiated for adaptation priorities in the areas of forestry, flooding, transportation and storm water management.

The above policies are consistent with the *Declaration of the Right to a Healthy Environment* as presented in Appendix A.

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

While the City's strategic plans, policies and initiatives align with the *Declaration of the Right of a Healthy Environment* that was presented by Blue Dot Prince George, there are some financial implications and staff requirements to implement and to report the progress of the City with respect to the declaration. The hiring of an Environmental Coordinator and Environmental Assistant in the coming months will allow for much of the fundamentals of the declaration to be implemented and then reported on through these two position's work plans. The costs of these two positions have been incorporated into the recent reorganization of the Engineering and Public Works Department.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:**

Recognition of environmental rights goes hand in hand with recognition of a collective responsibility to work towards the preservation of a healthy environment. The endorsement of this declaration seeks to reflect, reaffirm and reinforce the City's strategic plans, existing policies, and annual work plans towards the continued health and success of our community. Furthermore, endorsement of this declaration would raise the profile of people's right to a healthy environment in solidarity with other municipalities across Canada towards inspiring action at other government levels, ultimately resulting in a healthier country for all.

Staff recommends that Council endorse the attached '*Declaration to the Right to a Healthy Environment*'.

Respectfully submitted:

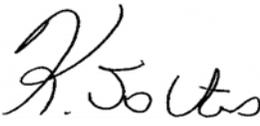


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Dave Dyer, General Manager Engineering and Public Works

Report prepared by Gina Layte Liston, Director of Public Works

To: Mayor and Council



## APPENDIX A

### **Council Declaration THE RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT**

**As BC's Northern Capital, the City of Prince George is committed to preserving the environment for the community of today and into the future. Our City depends upon the environment, the land on which we live, the air we breathe, and the water we drink.**

Whereas the City of Prince George understands that people are part of the environment, and that a healthy environment is inextricably linked to the well-being of our community;

All people have the right to live in a healthy environment, including:

- the right to breathe clean air;
- the right to drink clean water;
- the right to consume safe food;
- the right to access nature;
- the right to know about pollutants and contaminants released into the local environment; and,
- the right to participate in decision-making that will affect the environment.

Within its jurisdiction, the City of Prince George has certain authority to respect, protect, fulfill and promote these rights and commits to encouraging the respect, protection, fulfillment and promotion of these rights.

Consistent with commitments articulated in myPG and the OCP, the City of Prince George will apply the precautionary principle: where threats of serious or irreversible damage to human health or the environment exist, the municipality shall take cost effective measures to ensure that the right to a healthy environment is considered when decisions are made.

The City of Prince George shall commit to the use of the best and latest available science to ensure that the right to a healthy environment is protected and are considered when decisions are made.

The City of Prince George shall continue to improve upon and include in the community's long term integrated sustainability plan and the Official Community Plan, clear objectives, targets with timelines and actions that will be taken, within its jurisdiction, to fulfill residents' right to a healthy environment, including priority actions to:

1. Ensure infrastructure and development projects take the environment into consideration, including air quality;
2. Ensure the City of Prince George continues to address climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and implementing adaptation measures;

3. Ensure responsible growth and development throughout the City and where possible consider compact energy efficient infill development to improve population density and to maximize the use of existing infrastructure;
4. Prioritize walking, cycling and public transit as preferred modes of transportation;
5. Ensure adequate infrastructure for the provision of safe and accessible drinking water;
6. Encourage a culture of and access to local, healthy foods;
7. Develop resiliency and be best prepared to handle environmental processes (e.g. wildfire/floods);
8. Continue to work with the Regional District of Fraser Fort George to reduce solid waste production and promote recycling and composting;
9. Establish and maintain accessible green spaces in residential neighbourhoods; and,
10. Include the municipality's progress on fulfilling residents' rights to a healthy environment in the City's annual public report.

The City of Prince George shall review the objectives, targets, timelines and actions every five (5) years, and evaluate progress towards fulfilling this declaration.