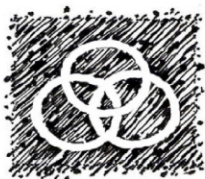




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The Sheltair Group



**A Provincial Airshed Planning Framework:
Summary of Findings from Stakeholder Consultations**

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Introduction

In keeping with a provincial commitment to lead the world in sustainable environmental management, including air quality, and to implement the Canada-wide Standards, the Ministry of Environment (“Ministry”) is in the process of establishing a provincial framework to support airshed planning across British Columbia. This framework, once in place, will provide for:

- The provincial government meeting its obligations under the Canada-wide Standards, which includes implementing programs that provide for continuous improvement and “keeping clean areas clean.”
- A more consistent and integrated approach to airshed planning efforts across British Columbia.
- Collective planning and action in communities towards improving air quality.

As a first step in moving forward, the Ministry sponsored two initial consultations with individuals representing academic institutions, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and community interests to discuss broad issues around implementation of PM_{2.5} objectives and airshed planning. One of these consultation events was held in Vancouver on February 22nd, 2006, and the other in Prince George in early March, 2006.

A discussion paper was prepared and distributed as a result of this first round of consultations, and a series of three workshops with stakeholders from local government, nongovernment organizations, local communities, interest groups and industry groups were held in Penticton (June 19, 2006), Prince George (June 26) and Vancouver (June 27). The intent of the discussion paper and these additional consultations was to explore more specifically the purpose, elements and principles for a provincewide framework for airshed planning.

What was explored during these consultations?

The first set of consultations on airshed planning sought views and comments on the design of a provincewide approach that would foster collaboration and shared stewardship. Particular areas of discussion included the principles and goals of a provincewide framework, along with how the planning process should be structured and resourced. A summary report was produced and is available on the Ministry website (www.env.gov.bc.ca/air/airquality/index.html).

The second series of workshops are described in the body of this report, and focused on:

- Outlining the current role of the Ministry of Environment in airshed planning across the province;
- Outlining the social, political, economic and environmental drivers for airshed planning in British Columbia;
- Highlighting the findings from the earlier consultations;
- Reviewing the stages for an airshed planning process; and
- Discussing key considerations that will influence the implementation of this process and the next steps in advancing a provincial airshed planning framework.

General Observations

In advancing the state and practice of airshed planning across British Columbia, a balance must be achieved between the principles of allowing for flexibility so that communities can develop their own solutions, and promoting consistency in approaches and the effective use of resources and avoided duplication in effort.

At the workshop in Vancouver, it was highlighted that there remains a provincial government responsibility for air quality management. It was also questioned whether the Province can invest sufficient resources to support community-driven planning efforts. Overall, the main issue was that of consistency – that there is a potential for businesses to be subject to differing administrative demands across the province as a result of locally driven processes, if there is not a provincial structure in place to provide for consistency in airshed management. Similarly, it was emphasized that there is a need for congruency in government policy across ministries, and that overlapping regulations or uncoordinated initiatives may undermine one another.

On the other hand, participants in the other workshops stressed the need for a level of local control in planning for airshed management, and that any provincial government guidelines must be developed in a way that continues to foster creative problem solving by communities. At the same time, it was highlighted that the support of the Ministry is invaluable, and that the Ministry has a strong role to play in supporting regions in developing their airshed plans. This includes acting to promote the sharing of ideas and solutions between regions, and continuing to provide important tools such as access to data and assistance in interpreting the data, as well as sharing best practices, creating communities of knowledge, and generally avoiding the need to “reinvent the wheel.”

Despite their divergences, these views are congruous. It is clear that the Ministry has a vital role in continuing to provide a central anchor to the airshed planning process by providing for both consistency and flexibility. This will enable a locally grounded yet provincially consistent approach to be taken towards airshed management.

The remainder of this report outlines findings from these consultations in keeping with the specific questions that were posed during the sessions.

Question One:

How do we foster local commitment for an airshed planning process?

The following strategies for fostering local commitment and action were raised by participants:

- ***Highlight the impacts of poor air quality on health:*** This suggestion was raised at each of the three sessions, with a number of participants highlighting the work of the BC Lung Association. It was further suggested that high-profile support from positions such as the Provincial Health Officer, and scientific findings from other jurisdictions, could promote airshed planning. Participants also indicated that focusing on the individual-level effects of poor air quality in terms of health could motivate community action, even in the face of incomplete information.
- ***The vital importance of public outreach and education:*** This point was also raised in each session, often in the context of health issues. Outreach and education materials in a variety of mediums and languages to support air quality planning could assist in generating local commitment. Promoting key successes and working with the media were related strategies highlighted as important in creating broad public support for the airshed planning process.
- ***Incentive programs:*** A number of participants commented that incentive programs – such as those that exist for appliance removals – are useful (if properly implemented) and popular. Some individuals indicated that incentives could be created to encourage local businesses, and industry sectors (such as agriculture), to participate in the airshed planning and management process. However, it was also pointed out that some incentive programs, for example, the one in place for woodstove changeouts, have not been as well utilized by the public as anticipated.
- ***The Ministry of Environment providing leadership and in-kind support:*** The skills and dedication of Ministry staff in generating local awareness and supporting communities in their airshed planning processes were

highlighted, particularly in the Prince George workshop, as very important. The expertise the Ministry has developed in promoting other types of planning at local levels (such as waste reduction) can be applied to airshed planning processes. Further, the Ministry can provide leadership in sharing best practices, providing both data and assistance in interpreting that data, and in educating community interests on the “drivers” for planning.

Question Two:

What types of information and related support could the Ministry of Environment, or other groups and organizations, provide in this regard?

- **Data, skills and expertise:** This was of primary importance to participants, as was access to technical support in interpreting the data and applying it to inform action. In particular, participants mentioned that the following tools and information would be useful: material on how to “get the process started”; baseline data; emissions inventories; techniques to identify priority sources; modeling; monitoring resources; professional interpretation of the data; and sample bylaws or policies.
- **Promoting information dissemination and sharing of best practices:** This was highlighted by participants as a role for the Ministry, with specific focus being placed on the formation of a “community of knowledge” and the sharing of best practices across the province. Participants further highlighted that a number of issues will be common to most communities and that provincial government leadership in sharing information would be useful.
- **A provincial airshed planning committee:** A number of participants, in particular those at the Vancouver workshop, supported the formation of a provincewide airshed planning committee. This desire was expressed on the basis of ensuring consistency across the province in airshed management planning, particularly as it pertains to the regulation of industry and development, and as a means of presenting a unified provincial position on issues relating to the federal government. However, the role and composition of the potential committee was not discussed in detail.
- **“Seed money”:** A majority of participants indicated that the provincial government should invest at a regional and local level in initiating – as well as implementing – airshed management plans, and that a portion of this support should come in the form of financial funding.
- **A high-level mandate:** This was not universal, but it was frequently raised that participants would benefit from having a broader mandate to promote airshed planning locally. Those who supported this idea felt that harmonization and integration would be difficult to achieve without more of a provincial direction to engage in planning. A provincial mandate, which might include a statement from the Premier, was seen as something that would leverage support, enhance commitment from a variety of stakeholders and contribute towards the longevity of results from airshed planning.

Question Three:

What types of tools, approaches, and/or data would be:

- a) Valuable at this stage of the airshed planning process, and why?*
- b) Particularly important for communities where there is no monitoring?*

Beyond those mentioned above, participants suggested the following:

- **A toolkit:** Participants would like to see a provincial toolkit developed that addresses some of the following key areas:
 - Outlining the steps to developing an airshed management plan;
 - Guidance on how to set goals and targets;
 - Guidance on how best to build off existing processes and lessons learned (e.g., in solid waste management);
 - Guidance on how to ensure that the plan is integrated into other relevant planning and policy areas – such as municipal-level policy;

- Community engagement tools – guidance on how best to work with a variety of community groups and the media;
 - Guidance on how to manage development while in the planning process; and
 - A “virtual version” of workshops as an education and support tool.
- **Funding:** Participants felt there is a need for adequate funding to ensure success in planning and implementation, particularly in light of the labour-intensive processes of coalition building and cross-policy integration (mainstreaming) of airshed plans once they are developed. Participants did not specify, though, how this funding should be delivered.
 - **Mapping the communities of responsibility¹:** Some participants felt that, given the complexity of the issues and the levels of government that have a bearing on an effective airshed planning process (particularly regarding implementation of the plan), the Ministry could provide an outline of the various levels of responsibility for airshed management, with an emphasis on outlining provincial, regional and local responsibilities.
 - **Outreach and education:** Participants see a strong role for the Ministry in providing public outreach and education in support of regional airshed planning processes. They felt that this kind of outreach will be essential to creating broad stakeholder engagement and buy-in.
 - **Data collection and interpretation:** Participants noted that the continued access to the technical resources of the Ministry – both in terms of data collection and monitoring activities, but also with regard to providing professional interpretation of the data – is vital to their ability to manage airsheds.

Question Four:

- Should the Ministry of Environment review airshed plans in a formal manner?*
- Should the Ministry of Environment formally approve airshed plans?*
- Should the Ministry of Environment establish and maintain a central registry?*

Participants generally stated that the Ministry should promote the sharing of information and consistency in practices, which would be aided by a registry that serves as a one-window source of information.

- **A formal Ministry review or approval process:** Most participants saw these as linked, with a substantial number of people questioning how one such approach could be pursued without the other. There were a number of opinions both in support and opposition to this suggestion of a review and approval process, as outlined below.
- **“Pros” of a Ministry review process:** Some participants felt this could be used to provide for common standards, and emphasized that if the Ministry does engage in formal reviews and/or approval of plans this should be accompanied with consultation and support. Participants also commented that a process of approval from senior government could generate higher levels of commitment at the regional and community level. Individuals who supported this strategy further noted that a Ministry-level review of airshed plans would promote consistency between plans (in particular, that requirements for industry throughout the province are similar), compliance with provincial and federal policies, and the pursuit of an integrated (as opposed to “patchwork”) approach towards managing airsheds.

¹ “Communities of responsibility” refers to organizations and groups that play an important role in airshed planning processes at a provincial, regional and/or local level.

- There were two general observations that fell between the “pro” and the “con” on this issue – these participants stated that if the Ministry has responsibility for reviewing the plans, then it will also be accepting de facto responsibility and accountability (i.e., which can be both an advantage or a disadvantage, depending on the perspective). Secondly, and in a related point, participants suggested that if the Ministry is to review and/or approve airshed plans, then it should or could have an adjacent responsibility to “veto” plans that do not meet established standards.
- *“Cons” of a Ministry review process:* Participants who were not supportive of a Ministry review and approval process emphasized that it would be time consuming, would possibly reduce flexibility in planning and “stifle creative, local solution finding,” and finally that a local commitment to airshed management is key to success. As such, there was a general observation that a formal review process would be a misplacement of resources. One suggestion was that any such process could be modified to ensure the involvement of those who have been directly engaged in the development of an airshed plan.
- *A Ministry registry:* Participants indicated that a web-based registry could be useful, but that “a new bureaucracy” should be avoided. Such a web-based tool could be used to facilitate information sharing, support community-led activities, provide resources and best practices so there is consistency in the structure and content of plans, provide guidance on related regulations, and generally serve as a one-window service for information. Some participants further highlighted that a registry could serve as an “incentive to reluctant participants,” and provide for access to information about the state of planning in various airsheds, as well as the specific targets and regulations in place.

Question Five:

Should the Ministry of Environment provide for a periodic status report on:

- a) The state of airshed planning across the province?*
- b) Results (outcomes) using a common set of measures?*

Participants in all three workshops expressed more of an interest in a report on the state of airshed planning, with results using a common set of measures being a secondary focus. As such, it was felt that a “State of the Airshed Planning” report could foster “communities of knowledge” and information sharing. At the same time, some participants cautioned that reporting on results could foster a spirit of competition rather than cooperation. With this qualification, individuals who have been involved in developing airshed management plans in their own communities seemed particularly eager to share with each other their ideas, successes, and solutions to problems, and would like Ministry support in doing so.

The Interview Matrices

As a part of this workshop, participants were engaged in a facilitation technique called the “Interview Matrix,” through which they were given the opportunity to explore the potential roles and functions of an airshed planning group. In the Interview Matrix, participants are broken into groups of three and each participant is given a question to pose to their colleagues. Individuals are asked to record the responses of their group to their question, and then participants are regrouped by question (i.e., all the people assigned question one gather together, and so on). The overall responses are then presented to the entire group for further discussion. The responses to each of these questions are summarized here below:

Question One:

In general, how would you describe the desired composition of an airshed planning group, and what would you do to engage those stakeholders that may be unwilling to participate?

The following groups were identified by participants as important to the airshed planning process, and as potential members of airshed planning groups:

- Local and provincial politicians;
- Nongovernment organizations (NGOs);
- Advocacy and community groups such as the asthmatic society, environmental groups, etc.;
- Health professionals;
- Industry and permit holders;
- Individuals with technical skills;
- Provincial government staff from a variety of relevant ministries (e.g., Transportation, Health, Economic Development, etc.);
- Those with regulatory control, including municipal representatives and the Ministry;
- First Nations;
- Tourism-based operators and associations;
- Chambers of Commerce; and
- Economic-development specialists.

There were also a number of suggestions about how to facilitate planning group processes:

- Make use of individuals with facilitator skills and communication specialists.
- Keep the groups small (around 12 participants), particularly in support of consensus-based decision making.
- Consider a structure of a small planning group that could then assemble subcommittees to provide specific types of expertise as needed.
- Make membership and/or principles of the planning groups “solution oriented.”

In order to engage stakeholders who may be unwilling to participate, individuals suggested the following strategies:

- Distribute information on an ongoing basis – keep everyone informed and “in the loop” about processes and their outcomes, about why the planning group exists and what it does.
- Continue to invite community interests to participate, and explore the reasons for reluctance to play a role.
- Make participation and the process as open as possible.
- Conduct ongoing outreach and education.
- Promote incentive-based programs for action.
- Provide per diems or other incentives to participate.
- Promote successes and demonstrate the benefits of planning.
- Develop projects that would be attractive and invite participation.

Question Two:

Of the range of possible functions for an airshed planning group, which do you consider to be the most important?

Common responses focused on identifying the issues, finding solutions, and communicating them well. Specific comments included:

- Effective public education, communication and outreach;
- Issue identification and data collection – scientific or experiential data;
- Setting of goals and objectives for the airshed;
- To act as a forum for expression of interest;
- Inclusion and building relationships;
- Showing successes and identifying champions;
- Developing buy-in with all stakeholders;
- Developing recommendations for solutions and taking this to the implementation level;
- Providing a balance between regulatory and economic needs;
- Funding or budgeting of needed equipment (government plays a role as a stakeholder);
- Liaising with other airshed planning groups around the province; and
- Building commitment to and support for the plan and its implementation.

Question Three:

What criteria should be applied to those who would like to participate in an airshed planning group (experience, competencies, representation, etc); and,

Would these differ depending on whether or not a consensus or majority-vote approach is used for decision making?

The following are some of the criteria developed by participants:

- A committed, diverse and representative group;
- Impartiality;
- Experience, competencies and representation;
- People who can work together (so the process does not stall) and who are committed to donating their time to this project;
- People who will feel accountable and take responsibility; and
- Avoid political representatives but have people who are politically influential.

Participants identified two broad categories of membership – those with needed technical expertise, and those who represent broadly based community interests. Technical skill sets that were identified as important included health, environment, and industry and regulatory expertise.

Overall, participants felt that a consensus decision-making model would be preferable. One point raised in this regard was that a majority-rules decision structure risks alienating people. However, given the complexities and challenges of this approach, a group suggested setting a timeline for consensus, and moving to a majority vote if a fuller agreement could not be reached in a reasonable time period.

We would like to thank the following individuals for their invaluable input and participation in the workshops to explore the issues related to regional airshed management planning in British Columbia:

Penticton, June 19, 2006:

Nicole Marzinzik, Waste Reduction and Air Quality Coordinator
Kristin Dangelmaier, Weyerhaeuser Incorporated, Kamloops Environmental Lead
Liz Wilson, RDOS Air Quality/Fire Dept/Agriculture Burning permits/interface clean up
Councillor Penny Gambell in place of James Baker, Mayor, Lake Country
Janice Johnson, RDOS Air Quality
David Knowles, Chair, RDCO Air Quality Committee
Deb Leroux, Chair of the North Okanagan Air Quality Stakeholder Committee and Councillor, Village of Lumby
Steve Brown, Air Quality Board
Allan Patton, Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Don Hamilton, Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Bill Schwarz, Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen Air Quality Chair, RDOS Area Director
Art Purdon, Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen Air Quality
Greg Baytalan, Interior Health
Mark Watt, Environment and Solid Waste Manager, City of Kelowna
Corey Davis, RDCO (City of Kelowna)
Terry Condon, Councillor from Peachland
Dan Kaneda, Tolko Industries Limited
Eric Taylor, BC Ministry of Environment
Ralph Adams, BC Ministry of Environment
Dave Evans, orchardist
Jen Frentz, City of Kamloops, environmental coordinator
Jennifer Bridaroli, City of Merritt administrator
Harry Thompson, Traffic & Transportation Engineer

Prince George, June 26, 2006

Sharlene Lively, Northern Health
Jocelyn White, City of Prince George
Brian Skakun, City of Prince George
Jim Martin, Fraser Fort George
Debora Munoz, City Councillor, Price George
Mark Fercho, City of Prince George
Glenda Waddell, Canfor
Ray Randall, Pope and Talbot Ltd.

Sophie Mullen, Abitibi Consolidated
Lucy Beck, Northern Health
Dennis Fudge, Ministry of Environment
Gina Layte Liston, City of Prince George
Katja Otting, Husky Energy
Dora McMillan, Quesnel Air Quality
Laurie Gallant, BVLD Airshed Management Society
Councillor Cress Farrow, Town of Smithers
Tracy Bond, works with the round table delivering education
Jo Graber, Public Action Committee for Health Air
Wayne Strang, Cariboo Pulp & Paper
Bob Beatch, 27-year resident of Prince George
Sergio Petrucci, PACHA – Prince George
Nadine Hale, PACHA – Prince George
Joan Chess, Fraser Basin Council
Melanie Noullet, Air Quality Task Force/UNBC/Clean Air Coalition
David Brogliatio, CN Rail
Rich Girard, Ministry of Environment
Dave Sutherland, Ministry of Environment

Vancouver, June 27 2006:

Lorne James, BC Hydro
Cindy Macdonald, West Fraser Timber
Peter Larose for Mary Mahon Jones, Council of Tourism
Anne Mauch, COFI
Neal Carley, Kerr Wood Leidal (Representing Lafarge)
Robin Archdekin, Director of Environment, Lafarge North America
Brian McCloy, BC Business Council
Graham Kissack, Catalyst Paper
Michael Jordan, Canfor
June Yoo Rifkin, B.C. Lung Association
Rudy Sunderman, EnCana Corporation
Lynn Ross, Terasen
Toni Frisby, Manager, Environmental Affairs, Terasen Gas
Catherine Elliott, Environmental Health, Community Medicine, Resident
Mary Margaret Gaye, BC Agriculture Council
Paul Beauchemin, Envirochem Services

Rika Saha, WCEL

Trace Acres, BCAA

Sumita Fons, Husky Energy

Cindy Walsh, Ministry of Environment

Jesse Fletcher, BC Chamber of Commerce

Jon Garson, BC Chamber of Commerce

Hu Wallis, BC Ministry of Environment