

Let's Talk Site Community!

An update on the City's proactive approach to protecting and promoting the best interest of our community



Cover photos: City of Fort St. John

Open Letter from Fort St. John Mayor and Council

As you may recall, in the summer of 2012, community members participated in various ways to provide their thoughts and ideas on [Council's Let's Talk Site C](#) initiative. We communicated 11 draft objectives that Council felt would protect and promote the community's interests if the Site C Clean Energy project is approved. The majority of participants [supported the 11 objectives and offered good input on strengthening them.](#)

From community feedback on Let's Talk Site C, Council developed [a position paper that we presented to BC Hydro and the Provincial and Federal Governments in the fall of 2012.](#) In the two years that have passed since Let's Talk Site C and submitting our Position Paper, Council and staff have continued to gain knowledge and understanding of the project and its potential impacts.

We want to share with you – and celebrate – the many actions that have been realized since we first launched Let's Talk Site C. Some have occurred as a direct result of that initiative. Others evolved through the City's discussions and participation in the Site C Environmental Assessment process.

In this document we reflect on the original 11 objectives that community members endorsed and we provide information on what has been accomplished as a result of our Position Paper and the Environmental Assessment process – some of which are contingent on Site C approval. As well we identify accomplishments the City has realized outside of these processes.

Thank you again for your contribution in assisting City Council and staff to identify, protect and promote the objectives and interests that will ensure our community's interests are protected and promoted if the Site C Clean Energy Project is approved.



City's Overarching Objective



Photo: City of Fort St. John

It's the view of the City of Fort St. John that Site C must contribute to the long-term sustainability of the community. Council's overarching objective has always been to protect and promote the community's interests. We want to ensure our community is better off in the long-term as a result of the project if it is approved.



1

Optimize economic opportunities for the community



2

House the construction workforce in communities



3

Fully service staging areas to benefit economic use after completion of Site C construction



4

Include all staging areas, camp facilities and the dam itself in City boundaries

Objective 1.

You said you wanted to ensure the City optimizes economic opportunities for the community. If Site C is approved, you agreed you wanted to see:

- Local Hiring
 - Purchasing of local goods and services
 - The City continue to develop as BC's Energy Capital
 - The establishment of a Peace Trust
-

What's been accomplished from our Position Paper and the Environmental Assessment process?

- BC Hydro will maintain a community consultation office in Fort St. John that will provide local workforce with information about procurement and employment opportunities.
- BC Hydro will ensure its contractors and subcontractors maintain a strong local presence and will provide information about employment opportunities to local workforce.
- In collaboration with the Fort St. John Chamber of Commerce, the City and the North Peace Economic Development departments, BC Hydro has developed a business participation strategy. Information sessions are being provided for community businesses so they can be aware of the procurement processes and opportunities associated with Site C.
- BC Hydro made a \$1 Million contribution to [Northern Lights College Foundation](#) to support development of skilled workers in the north, targeting students who may not otherwise have access to post-secondary education.
- BC Hydro has become a partner in [Northern Opportunities](#), a BC partnership that combines high school, college studies and work-based training to develop and retain a Northeastern BC workforce.

What else has the City been able to accomplish?

- The City has historically shared an Economic Development Officer who worked through the North Peace Economic Development Commission to serve the entire NE Peace Region. The City recently refocused some of its resources and hired an Economic Development Officer to serve the City of Fort St. John.
- The City completed a boundary extension to plan for anticipated growth of the community.
- City Staff and Council have been working to increase energy literacy and model sustainable energy leadership to help others in BC understand the facts.
- Because community feedback identified “livability” as an important value for our City, we have been developing a downtown revitalization plan called “Energize Downtown.”
- Mayor Ackerman was a founding member of [Resource Works](#), a non-profit society that provides fact-based information about the natural resource sector and its role in BC’s future and directs research into economic impacts of resource development.



1

Optimize economic opportunities for the community

Objective 2.

You said you wanted to see BC Hydro house the construction workforce in communities to the greatest extent possible – without disrupting the local housing market. That means:

- Adopting a “Workers Living Locally” strategy
- Building one camp, not two

What’s been accomplished from our Position Paper and the Environmental Assessment process?

- BC Hydro will create a worker camp to house temporary workforce that will be self-contained to reduce risk that the camp will have a negative impact on community services.
- BC Hydro has committed to hiring a Community Camp Coordinator, to liaise with the community and help ensure any issues that do come up regarding the camp can be identified and mitigated quickly.
- BC Hydro will add 50 additional affordable housing units to Fort St John’s housing stock – 40 for BC Hydro use to be turned over after project completion, and 10 to be immediately available.

What else has the City been able to accomplish?

- Actively supporting innovation in the housing industry through construction of a “Passive House,” which is a model in energy conservation.
- Working with regional partners to define the camp community, identify how it would be developed and when, set an appropriate framework for its development, and determine whether it should be located within or outside City boundaries.
- We are actively promoting positive City-Camp community relationships.



Objective 3.

You agreed that construction staging areas should benefit economic use after completion of Site C construction (staging areas are locations used to store equipment, resources and materials as well as mobilize personnel)

What's been accomplished from our Position Paper and the Environmental Assessment process?

- The North Peace region will lose a significant component of its industrial land inventory due to the construction staging area. This land will be returned to the industrial land inventory following completion of construction.
- With the staging area property on the edge of City boundaries, the management of the site during construction was very important to the City. BC Hydro will minimize visual, noise and light impacts, install air quality stations and monitor dust, minimize the spread of noxious weeds, and have restrictions on material extraction, transportation and operations times. There will also be site reclamation plans, contractor mitigation plans, and a storm water retention pond designed for the site.



3

Fully service staging areas to benefit economic use after completion of Site C construction

Objective 4.

You agreed that BC Hydro should include all staging areas, camp facilities and the dam itself inside City boundaries.

What's been accomplished from our Position Paper and the Environmental Assessment process?

- The City is no longer considering a boundary extension to include the Site C damsite. We recognized that it is important to balance what we heard from Fort St. John community members with regional interests. Ensuring Site C remains outside of the City's boundary, we believe, is important not only for the City but also for the wellbeing of our region.



4

Include all staging areas,
camp facilities and
the dam itself in City
boundaries

5

Offset the cost of addressing impacts through payment



6

Enhance the regional transportation system through investments by BC Hydro and the Province



7

Conduct a basin-wide assessment for the Peace River basin



8

Develop and implement a master plan for the Site C reservoir

Objective 5.

You agreed that the impacts and costs of Site C to the City of Fort St. John should be paid for by BC Hydro and the Province

What's been accomplished from our Position Paper and the Environmental Assessment process?

- The City recognizes this project is going to impact many areas of the community, and we continue to negotiate with BC Hydro for a community measures agreement that will provide the City with necessary funds to offset impact costs during the construction period. The findings of the Joint Review Panel established by the Federal and Provincial Ministries of Environment recognized and supported these negotiations.
- BC Hydro has provided funding to the City to cover some of the costs of participating, collaborating and being a technical expert in the environmental assessment process.



5

Offset the cost of addressing impacts through payment



Objective 6.

You agreed that BC Hydro and the Province should provide investments to enhance the regional transportation system

What's been accomplished from our Position Paper and the Environmental Assessment process?

- BC Hydro completed an assessment of the traffic impacts on regional transportation corridors and identified, in collaboration with the BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI), ways to mitigate the regional impacts and upgrade roads that will be negatively impacted. This includes, for example, improvements to Taylor Hill on Hwy. 97 descending into the Peace River valley, and fog lights on the Hwy. 97 bridge over the Peace River at Taylor.
- The City secured BC Hydro's agreement to complete a City-specific transportation analysis, as its region-wide analysis did not consider City streets. The Joint Review Panel supported the need for this additional analysis.
- The City then ensured that BC Hydro develop a Transportation Monitoring and Mitigation Plan for City streets. This plan includes traffic counts, and intersection and route service performance analysis.
- BC Hydro has agreed to provide a shuttle system to transport the project workforce from camps to the Fort St. John area and airport.



What else has the City been able to accomplish?

- The City will be undertaking a Transportation Master Plan to be completed by mid-2015 in collaboration with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure.
- We have been in discussions with the MOTI for transportation-related investments, such as the lights at East Bypass Road (100th Ave. and 79th Street), that are a direct result of increased traffic.
- The Airport Society, of which the City is a member, was successful in securing funding for airport development from the Western Economic Diversification, Northern Development Initiatives Trust, and the Federal Airport Capital Assistance Program.
- The City and the Air Service Development Committee, with the help of hundreds of community members, was successful in securing WestJet Airlines to provide regular service into Fort St. John.



6

Enhance the regional transportation system through investments by BC Hydro and the Province

Objective 7.

You said you wanted to see a basin-wide assessment conducted for the entire Peace River basin that would consider not only the impacts of Site C, but also of the W.A.C. Bennett Dam and the Peace Canyon Dam - which were never fully assessed and addressed.

What's been accomplished from our Position Paper and the Environmental Assessment process?

- The mandate of Joint Review Panel was restricted to the Site C project only. The need for a basin-wide assessment is still being advocated by the City, the Regional District, Treaty 8 Tribal Association, local First Nations communities, and other municipalities in BC and Alberta.

What else has the City been able to accomplish?

- The City chose to take a cumulative effect perspective, which included looking at all major development in the region, when assessing Site C.
- All large natural resource projects have impacts on adjacent communities. We have seen that communities are stronger when they work together to promote their objectives and interests. The City of Fort St. John and other northern municipalities have established the [Northeast BC Resource Municipalities Coalition](#). Together, the Coalition will effectively represent municipal interests in resource development issues in the future.



7

Conduct a basin-wide assessment for the Peace River basin

Objective 8.

You said you wanted to see BC Hydro develop and implement a recreation master plan for the Site C reservoir.

What's been accomplished from our Position Paper and the Environmental Assessment process?

BC Hydro has agreed to:

- Develop and manage a public safety management plan during construction and operation of the Site C reservoir.
 - Establish and operate three new permanent boat launches and day-use sites (Cache Creek, Lynx Creek and Hudson's Hope).
 - Enhance Alwin Holland Park.
 - Provide a Community Recreation Site Fund to support new shoreline recreation sites on the Site C reservoir, the Peace River and tributaries between Site C and the Alberta border.
 - Fund the development of a BC Peace River Site C Reservoir Navigation and Recreation Opportunities Plan. The plan is intended to enable the local communities to plan for boating and recreation opportunities created by the Site C reservoir.
-

What else has the City been able to accomplish?

- In cooperation with the Peace River Regional District and the District of Taylor, the City is preparing a Master Recreation Plan. The plan will include an inventory of current recreational facilities and a strategy for adding additional facilities in the future.

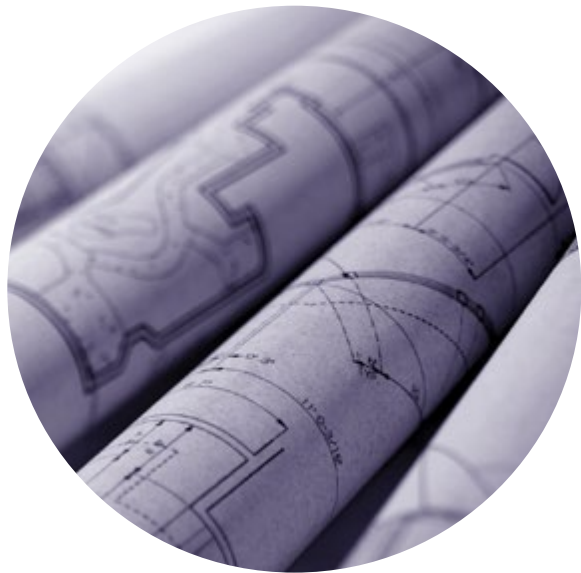
8

Develop and implement
a master plan for the
Site C reservoir



9

Improve the project
review process



10

Establish a monitoring
program to identify
and address any
unforeseen impacts
and issues

11

Enter a formal
agreement
incorporating all
commitments



Objective 9.

You said you wanted to improve the project review process

What's been accomplished from our Position Paper and the Environmental Assessment process?

- The City presented at the Joint Review Panel in December 2013 and January 2014 on the following topics: The Community's Position and Quality of Life; 85th Avenue Lands; Air Quality; Economic Development; Housing; Monitoring; Local Government Revenue; Population; RCMP; Transportation and Water Supply.

What else has the City been able to accomplish?

- The City found that the Environmental Assessment process was not the best forum to hear community concerns. This realization is another reason the City has driven the creation of the Northeast BC Resource Municipalities Coalition. Learnings flowing out of this project will be applied to future projects.



9

Enhance the regional transportation system through investments by BC Hydro and the Province



Objective 10.

You agreed that there should be a monitoring program to identify and address any unforeseen impacts and issues.

What's been accomplished from our Position Paper and the Environmental Assessment process?

- BC Hydro recognized the need, and Provincial and Federal environmental agencies as well as the Joint Review Panel agreed, to develop a significant number of monitoring and mitigation plans. For example, the plans would include monitoring of air quality, water protection, traffic, housing inventory and police services. BC Hydro has hired staff to conduct monitoring and to liaise with communities.
- The City of Fort St. John will be recognized as a key topic expert and will be involved in all of the major regional monitoring programs.
- BC Hydro and the City have developed a Mitigation and Monitoring Plan for the City water supply and transportation. If there were unforeseen impacts from the construction or operation of the Site C dam on our water source (wells fed from the Peace River) or City streets, the monitoring and mitigation plans would ensure the City is alerted of any problems and BC Hydro would be fully responsible for the cost to fix them.
- The City has requested the development of a legally binding dispute resolution process to ensure that our interests are protected.

What else has the City been able to accomplish?

- All large natural resource projects have impacts on adjacent communities. As mentioned above, the City of Fort St. John and other northern municipalities have established the [Northeast BC Resource Municipalities Coalition](#). Together, the Coalition will effectively represent municipal interests in resource development issues in the future.
- The City is planning to ensure the long-term sustainability of the City's current and future water supply.
- The City will be developing a number of master plans for recreation, transportation, liquid waste and facilities.



10

Establish a monitoring program to identify and address any unforeseen impacts and issues

Objective 11.

You wanted to see BC Hydro enter into a formal agreement with the City that would incorporate all commitments.

What's been accomplished as a result of negotiations with BC Hydro?

- The City has been extensively involved throughout BC Hydro's various Site C proposals over the past 40 years, and will continue to do so to advance the community's interests in things like education, medical services, non-profit organizations, impact on our social fabric, policing, housing and air quality. In doing so, we believe we have elevated and advanced the position of the entire region.
- The City continues to work with BC Hydro towards a final agreement between the two parties that would protect and promote the interest of the City if the project were to be approved.



11

Enter a formal agreement incorporating all commitments

What's Next?

- The City will conclude the community measures agreement with BC Hydro.
- We will be continuing to strengthen the social framework of our community.
- We will continue to work within the [Northeast BC Resource Municipalities Coalition](#) to make sure the voice of the Northeast is heard on future major projects.
- The City will be developing an economic development strategy.





“Noah wasn’t in favour of the flood but he built the ark.

We continue to build the ark.”

–Mayor Lori Ackerman



Photo: City of Fort St. John

A skateboarder in a white long-sleeved shirt, black vest, grey shorts, and a grey baseball cap is performing a trick on a ramp. He is in mid-air with his arms outstretched. In the background, another person is on a bicycle, and a third person is partially visible on the right. The setting is an outdoor skate park with trees and a clear blue sky.

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FORT ST. JOHN

The Energetic City

Photo: City of Fort St. John