

Environment  
CanadaEnvironnement  
Canada

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## GOVERNMENTS WORKING TOGETHER TO PROVIDE CLEAR VIEWS

June 2, 2010 is Clean Air Day. To celebrate clean air, air quality agencies in British Columbia are launching a visual air quality improvement initiative called *Clear Air BC*.

Residents and visitors have long been inspired by British Columbia's beautiful ocean views, city skylines and mountain vistas. However, from time to time, these spectacular views can be impaired by a haze of air pollution. This haze is primarily composed of microscopic particles that obscure distant vistas by absorbing and scattering light. Not only does this haze look bad, it can affect BC's economy. For example, a single poor visibility day in the Lower Fraser Valley is estimated to cause an economic loss of almost \$9 million in future tourist revenue. In addition, the same particles that degrade visibility have been linked to both respiratory and cardiac disease. Therefore, improving visibility will also improve the health of BC residents.

For these reasons, BC Ministry of Environment, BC Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport, Metro Vancouver, Environment Canada and the Fraser Valley Regional District, are working together to implement *Clear Air BC*, an initiative aimed at improving visual air quality across the province.

"Through Clear Air BC, residents in Lower Mainland communities have access to new online resources that support better air quality," said BC Environment Minister Barry Penner. "Our ongoing commitment to improving air quality and our partnerships with local and federal governments is good news for British Columbians."

"Addressing air quality is a priority for Environment Canada making us a ready partner in British Columbia's pilot project looking into air visibility issues in the Lower Fraser Valley," said the Honourable Jim Prentice, Canada's Environment Minister. "We are already partnering with provincial and municipal governments on the Air Quality Health Index, which is the world's first health-based air quality communications tool. We are very pleased to continue our joint efforts in pursuit of cleaner air as part of the Clear Air BC initiative."

The Clear Air BC initiative includes:

1. Scientific studies that will improve our understanding about the causes of haze in the Lower Fraser Valley,
2. A new website that will provide the public with information about air quality and haze, and
3. A pilot project that will test several strategies to improve visibility. The pilot will complement existing air quality management programs, such as AirCare, woodstove exchange programs and diesel emission reduction programs.

"The public in the FVRD continues to be concerned about air quality and improving visibility is clearly a good step toward this goal" said Patricia Ross, Chair, Fraser Valley Regional District. "Clear Air BC is an exciting initiative and the FVRD is an eager participant in helping to further the science, promote public education and to develop a strategy for making our air cleaner and healthier."

"I welcome the Clear Air BC initiative as another step in our continuing efforts to improve air quality throughout Metro Vancouver and the Fraser Valley," said Metro Vancouver Board Chair Lois Jackson. "Working in partnership with our neighbours in the Fraser Valley Regional District, as well as with senior levels of government, has been instrumental in our successes to date and I look forward to clear skies ahead."

We can all contribute to better visibility. To learn more, visit [www.clearairbc.ca](http://www.clearairbc.ca).



## **ABOUT BC MINISTRY OF HEALTHY LIVING AND SPORT**

The Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport focuses on helping British Columbians live with the best possible health outcomes through a strong sustainable public health care system with a focus on health promotion. The Ministry works closely with the Ministry of Environment to set air and water policy, directives and guidelines for the province. The commitment to improving public health is supported by the BC Government's Great Goal to "*Lead the world in sustainable environmental management, with the best air and water quality... bar none*".

## **ABOUT BC MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT**

The Ministry of Environment is responsible for ensuring that BC leads the world in sustainable environmental management, with the best air and water quality, and the best fisheries management. The Ministry is a leader in implementing the government's climate change initiatives and champions the government's vision of unifying British Columbians in the response to climate change by engaging all areas of government, First Nations, stakeholders and society in this critical effort.

## **ABOUT METRO VANCOUVER**

Metro Vancouver is a political body and corporate entity operating under provincial legislation as a 'regional district' and 'greater boards' that delivers regional services, planning, and political leadership on behalf of 24 local authorities. To support efforts to maintain and improve air quality in the Lower Fraser Valley airshed, Metro Vancouver is implementing its second Air Quality Management Plan. The plan sets goals for the region, including a goal to *Improve visibility*.

## **ABOUT ENVIRONMENT CANADA**

Environment Canada is the federal lead department on a wide range of environmental issues facing Canadians. As a science-based department, Environment Canada addresses these issues through research, policy development, service delivery to Canadians, regulation and enforcement of environmental laws, and strategic partnerships. Programs are focused on conserving and restoring Canada's natural environment; equipping Canadians to make informed decisions on weather, water and climate conditions; and minimizing threats to Canadians and their environment from pollution. The Department's program focus reflects the increasingly evident interdependence between environmental sustainability and economic well-being.

## **ABOUT FRASER VALLEY REGIONAL DISTRICT**

The Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) is a local government authority that exists to meet certain local government service needs that neither municipalities nor the province itself are particularly well-suited to address. It provides basic local government services to small unincorporated communities, as well as other services across both municipalities and electoral areas. It consists of six municipalities and seven electoral areas. The FVRD is currently revising its air quality management plan to reflect updated information and knowledge about air pollution. Currently, air quality is regulated by the Ministry of Environment, but the Fraser Valley Regional District is working towards acquiring regulatory authority over its airshed and the ability to implement Metro Vancouver air quality standards.

**For more information, please call...**

### **BC Ministry of Environment**

Suntanu Dalal, Public Affairs Bureau  
(250) 387-9745

### **BC Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport**

Jeff Rud, Communications Director  
(250) 952-2387

### **Environment Canada**

Frédéric Baril, Press Secretary  
(819) 997-1441  
Media Relations, Environment Canada  
(819) 934-8008 or 1-888-908-8008

### **Fraser Valley Regional District**

Bob Smith, Air Quality Consultant  
(604) 951-7843

### **Metro Vancouver**

Bill Morrell, Media Relations & Corporate Communications Division Manager  
(604) 451-6107