

STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

1100 Patricia Blvd. | Prince George, BC, Canada V2L 3V9 | www.princegeorge.ca

DATE: November 12, 2021

TO: MAYOR AND COUNCIL

NAME AND TITLE: Deanna Wasnik, Director of Planning & Development

SUBJECT: Integrated Stormwater Management Plan – Public Engagement Results

ATTACHMENT(S): ISMP Public Engagement Report
ISMP Public Engagement Results Powerpoint

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Council RECEIVES FOR INFORMATION the report dated November 12, 2021, from the Director of Planning & Development, titled “Integrated Stormwater Management Plan – Public Engagement Results”.

PURPOSE:

To provide the results of the stormwater management public engagement.

BACKGROUND:

The City’s newly created Integrated Stormwater Management Plan (ISMP) is a strategic document that outlines the City’s short to long-term goals for its stormwater management program and acts as a guide on how to achieve these goals. As part of its development, a communication plan was created and identified two phases of public engagement; the first phase to be conducted in 2021 and the second phase to be conducted in the future.

Phase 1 engagement focused on introducing the community to the ISMP Guiding Document and Roadmap, while providing broad education and outreach on the importance of stormwater management in Prince George. The plan also provides the City with recommendations for ongoing education on the importance of stormwater management and engagement tactics for future initiatives during Phase 2.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

This work was identified as a priority under the Environmental Leadership and Climate Action myPG pillar. It assists with three of Council’s Focus areas:

- Incorporate adaptation to climate change in relevant operations;
- Prioritize infrastructure re-investment and renewal to ensure the delivery of critical recreation, emergency, transportation, and utility services; and
- Maintain fiscal sustainability, balance service levels with the affordability of the City’s services, facilities, and operations.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT RESULTS:

The table below shows the Phase 1 public engagement activities, which occurred in September and October 2021, along with the resulting number of views and survey participants:

Engagement Activity	Stats
City's Stormwater and GetInvolved Webpages (incl. an interactive StoryMap)	376 views
YouTube Video – 'Why Managing Stormwater in Prince George Matters'	4,300 views
Facebook – 'Get Involved with Stormwater'	21,000 views
Twitter	665 views
LinkedIn	82 views
Online Survey	116 participants

Website & Social Media:

Prior to launching the online survey, the City developed a Stormwater webpage that includes information about stormwater and the importance of stormwater management. The ISMP content was added to two additional webpages on the City's website (Get Involved and News pages) for the duration of the public consultation period (September 22 to October 4) to inform the public about the online survey and ISMP education materials.

To visually educate and communicate about the ISMP, the City's stormwater assets and what the potential impacts of stormwater management are, a Stormwater StoryMap was created. A StoryMap is a web-based ESRI application that enables viewers to explore maps, text, and multimedia in a scrolling curated narrative. This tool tells the story of stormwater and stormwater management in the City of Prince George and is available on the Stormwater webpage.

A short video was created, titled "Why Managing Stormwater in Prince George Matters". This video was posted on YouTube and linked from the City's website and social media sites and provided information about stormwater management in Prince George and invited citizens to participate in the online survey.

The ISMP consultation was posted on the City's Facebook page. The Facebook post was titled 'Get Involved with Stormwater in Prince George' and included the video and a link to the City's 'Get Involved' webpage and stormwater survey. Over 21,000 people viewed the Facebook post, which received 71 reactions, 29 comments and 10 shares. The detailed comments are provided in Appendix C of the attached report. The comments addressed many topics including:

- support for densification;
- importance of funding stormwater services;
- support for the use of on-site stormwater management techniques; and,
- appreciation of the information provided by the video.

The City also used Twitter to direct residents to the City's 'Get Involved' webpage to learn more about stormwater and to complete the survey. There was also a post on LinkedIn advertising the public engagement opportunity.

Online Survey:

An online survey was created to obtain feedback from the residents and business/property owners of Prince George regarding stormwater management in our community. The survey was launched on September 22 for two weeks. Along with the posts on social media, it was also promoted on CKPGToday and the PG Daily News. The following is a summary of the results of the online survey.

- **Demographics** - 97% of respondents indicated they were residents of Prince George. Over 78% indicated they had lived in the City for more than 15 years.
- 88% of respondents indicated they were at least somewhat knowledgeable about stormwater. Some of the respondents indicated they were professionals who had a good working knowledge of stormwater management. Each comment received as part of this survey can be found in Appendix A of the attached report.
- 89% of survey respondents feel that the service of stormwater management in their community is moderately to very important.

When providing additional comments related to the importance of stormwater management in Prince George, the survey respondents commented on the importance of protecting the natural environment, preventing flooding, preparing for climate change, and addressing aging infrastructure to avoid sinkholes and emergency work. The comments have been grouped into three themes and are summarized below.

- **Protecting the natural environment** - Respondents expressed stormwater management is crucial for maintaining and improving the health of watersheds and mitigating the environmental impact of stormwater runoff. Respondents expressed concern about the impacts of increased urbanization, aging infrastructure, and climate change on the natural environment.
- **Cost of stormwater management** - The majority of respondents expressed stormwater management and maintaining stormwater infrastructure is essential. Several respondents suggested proactive measures should be implemented in maintaining the stormwater system to reduce the impacts and costs associated with damage caused by flooding and stormwater runoff.
- **Flooding concerns** - Respondents noted concerns related to flooding and that efficient stormwater management is necessary to ensure proper drainage to protect properties from flooding and to maintain safe roads.

When asked *'Have you ever been directly affected by stormwater in Prince George?'* respondents noted that driving through large puddles, enjoying natural watercourses or wetlands within the City limits, and observing sinkholes, were among the three most frequently noted ways in which they had been directly affected by stormwater in Prince George. Over 70% of respondents said they had experienced all three of these. Many of the respondents who provided additional comments expressed concerns over stormwater issues due to construction of new development.

When providing additional comments related to how stormwater affects residents in Prince George, the survey respondents provided insight that can be summarized in the following themes:

- **Safety** – respondents expressed safety concerns related to impacts of heavy rain events such as covers blown out, and mudslides near construction on sloped areas.
- **Flooding** – Some respondents with older properties in Prince George are concerned about the increased occurrence of flooding in recent years.

When asked if they've had a chance to read the ISMP, what they think about it, and if anything is missing, 10 survey respondents gave detailed responses about how they reviewed and understand the information provided, agree with the need to address climate change, and see the value in protecting natural areas that help manage stormwater. ISMP feedback is summarized into these three themes:

- **Consider all building types** – A few respondents believe the ISMP is designed to mitigate the risk of flooding to public parks, commercial areas and new residential developments and neglects existing residential buildings.
- **Highlight the importance of greenspace** – A respondent encourages retention of greenspace as greenspace helps absorb and direct rain and spring runoff which protects properties from potential flooding events.
- **Improve public awareness** – A few respondents believe from observing the impacts of climate change, more action is required to manage the existing stormwater infrastructure. It is encouraged that ISMP information be made easily available and educational materials be created to inform the public.

Survey respondents were asked if they had any concerns, comments, or questions about stormwater management in Prince George. The comments presented the need to improve the development application process, and the importance of ongoing maintenance. Multiple respondents highlighted the need for the City to provide adequate funding to maintain public infrastructure to avoid the impact of costs that are associated with reacting to aging infrastructure (i.e. emergency maintenance).

NEXT STEPS:

The ISMP will be amended to clearly demonstrate it aims to reduce the risk of flooding to all residential properties, and not just new development.

Ongoing stormwater education and consultation will allow the City to move forward in its stormwater management program. The next major public engagement will be related to implementing a dedicated funding source.

The City's Asset Manager has been assigned as the 'owner' of the ISMP in order to keep track of how the City is progressing with implementing the ISMP and its action items and will report to Council regularly on the progress.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

Phase 1 of the City's public engagement for the ISMP was comprehensive as it utilized traditional media, various social media platforms, visual tools, facts, and narratives. It served to both educate and consult.

As a result of the Phase 1 public engagement efforts, the City successfully communicated the importance of stormwater management in Prince George, as well as, provided opportunities for public feedback (e.g., survey, social media post reactions and comments). Having over 21,000 views is impressive for a two-week consultation on an infrastructure issue that is largely out of sight.

Most of the residents who completed the survey or provided comments on social media understand the need to provide effective stormwater management and are supportive of efforts to address stormwater management needs.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Deanna Wasnik, Director Planning & Development

PREPARED BY: Kristy Bobbie, Asset Manager

APPROVED:

Walter Babicz, City Manager

Meeting Date: 2021/11/22