

STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

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DATE: November 19, 2021

TO: MAYOR AND COUNCIL

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

SUBJECT: Forestry Cluster Development Strategy: 2022 to 2027

ATTACHMENT(S):
- Forestry Cluster Development Strategy: 2022 to 2027
- Powerpoint Presentation: Forestry Cluster Development Strategy

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Council RECEIVES FOR INFORMATION the report dated November 19, 2021 from the Director of Planning and Development titled, "Forestry Cluster Development Strategy: 2022 to 2027".

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to inform Council of the initiatives identified in the Forestry Cluster Development Strategy.

BACKGROUND:

During the November 9, 2020 Council meeting, Administration was authorized to submit a funding application to the Province of British Columbia's Sector Labour Market Partnerships program for the development of a Prince George Forest Cluster Development Strategy and Action Plan. Administration proceeded to do so, and was granted \$42,500 from the aforementioned program to carry out the development of the Strategy.

The City engaged MNP LLP to develop the five year strategy in collaboration with City staff and an advisory committee was formed with representatives from across the forestry sector to provide feedback on the recommendations generated.

The objective of the study was to engage local forestry representatives and stakeholders to create a sector profile for forestry in the Prince George region, explore opportunities to diversify products and operations and further growth. Further, to identify existing workforce challenges and skills gaps and to develop initiatives and actions to help the City support the sector.

Three key initiatives are identified in the Action plan which can be reviewed in detail in the attached Strategy:

1. Promote the industry to improve public perception and attract workers.
2. Facilitate collaboration between industry, educational and research institutions, and the Province.
3. Promote wildfire prevention and mitigation work.

Next Steps:

- Staff will immediately begin sharing the strategy with key stakeholders such as educational and research institutions as well as industry associations to discuss opportunities for collaboration in training and innovation longer term.
- Staff is proceeding with reinvigorating the Move Up Prince George advertising campaign which will focus on the key clusters identified in the Economic Development Strategy, including forestry. The Campaign will begin in March 2022 and planning is currently underway.
- Staff will work with industry to develop profiles featuring jobs within the forest industry starting in 2022.
- Begin the foundational preparation activities to prepare to advocate for a centre of excellence in wildfire prevention, mitigation and wildfire fighting training.

*Longer term actions are listed in the strategy.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Forestry was identified as one of five priority clusters in the City's five year economic development strategy and action plan.

This project is in alignment with the MyPG Goals:

- Diversified and vibrant economy
- Employment diversity and accessibility
- International connections
- Sustainable business

It is also in line with the Council focus area: Enhance local conditions that support existing businesses and attract new ones, with a focus on clean technology.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Staff is not seeking any funding to carry out these initiatives at this time. All planned expenditures for 2022 are budgeting within the Economic Development operating budget.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

The forest industry has faced many challenges over recent years, and this strategy provides an opportunity for government and local business leaders to work collaboratively to further develop and expand the industry. The comprehensive strategy and action plan will guide the City's forest cluster initiatives through 2027 with the overarching objective of the strategy being to strengthen and provide long term stability to the sector.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Deanna Wasnik, Director of Planning and Development

PREPARED BY: Melissa Barcellos, Manager, Economic Development

APPROVED:

Walter Babicz, City Manager

Meeting Date: December 6, 2021