
Subject: FW: April 9 OCP public hearing submission

From: Andrea Erwin <Redacted>
Sent: Monday, April 7, 2025 12:02 AM
To: Mayor and Council <mayorandcouncil@princegeorge.ca>; cityclerk <cityclerk@princegeorge.ca>
Subject: April 9 OCP public hearing submission

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Dear Mayor Simon Yu and Council,

Please include this note in the upcoming OCP public hearing on April 9.

As a citizen and ecologist, I would like to submit my thoughts regarding the OCP and urban sprawl in our great city by starting with a story from my citizen perspective. When I travel to visit my family where I grew up in Rossland, BC, in the amazing Kootenay region, I am constantly met with the same reaction when I tell people where I now call home (since 2006, thanks to UNBC!). "You live in Prince George? How's that??", "ugh, sorry to hear", or "why?!". Always with a scrunched up nose.

Why? Because I love it!!! I LOVE the small city vibe with the easy access to nature that so many of us value!! We can take a bus from anywhere in the city to UNBC and be within a 5 minute walk to a network of trails (Greenway and Forests for the World) unmatched in any city I have visited! The length, area, and overall network in a truly natural setting are a very special asset to this city. And Ginters is even closer and links directly to this network! Through trails with almost guaranteed moose (or at least some form of wildlife) sightings.

From an ecology perspective, the concern of urban sprawl being discussed at this hearing is real. These forests and wetlands within them that surround Ginters field and Shane Lake not only provide us with amazing recreation opportunities, but also ecosystem services, or "natural capital", if you will. Clean air, erosion and sediment control, flood mitigation, water filtration, habitat to wildlife (birds that act as natural pest control).... the list continues. There are real costs to our local economy to replace these natural system services. Eroding slopes, structural damage, water treatment, and health care costs from impacts to human health (mental and physical) are all costly and real consequences of degradation and loss of ecosystems.

Additionally, the educational, spiritual, and cultural values of these areas are difficult to quantify! Just last week I was in the forestry demonstration stands at Forests for the World leading a group of CNC Natural Resource students and we found a cluster of culturally modified pine trees (near Shane Lake). Someone had clearly extracted the cambium of several trees (it can be used as food and for medicines). I personally harvest nettle and other forest medicines on the Greenway trails. I also guide colleagues and community members on ecology and plant walks here because of the ease of access to relatively intact forests.

What I truly struggle with at the thought of losing these areas, is the thought of the resident moose that raise their calves year after year in this amazing habitat! What a true asset for our city!! Research conducted at UNBC has shown moose do not move around a lot in the winter. They find a good buffet and they stay in it. These local forests are clearly a good winter buffet! (Plenty of red-osier dogwood, aspen, and other deciduous winter staples). Moose populations are declining. Prince George has a chance to continue to provide excellent moose habitat instead of going down pathways that should be of the past.

Thinking of solutions, if we MUST sprawl, why does it seemingly need to be a mow down? Can more aspects of these forests and natural system function truly not be considered/required of developers? These new neighborhoods, replacing diverse forest stands with monocultures of lawn and large box houses, are not only aesthetically unappealing but an insult to the truly special place we call Prince George and what this city is and could be.

Existing recreation, spiritual, cultural, ecosystem, and economic values and new opportunities will be lost forever with the loss of these forests and wetlands. Please consider alternatives to sprawl. We CAN be a leader on doing things differently!!

Thank you for your consideration and all you do.

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