



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Omineca Beetle Action Coalition releases Social Development Strategies**

**Prince George, BC** – The Omineca Beetle Action Coalition (OBAC) today released two more of its strategies as it continues to present recommendations for actions designed to build a prosperous future for the region. One strategy addresses Attraction and Retention of workers and others needed to build strong communities. The other strategy being released today addresses Community Social Services needs.

The goal of the Attraction and Retention Strategy is to ensure that the region is successful in retaining and attracting the skilled workers and professionals needed by business, government and service providers. This strategy includes five recommendations:

1. Continue to diversify and strengthen the region's economy.
2. Market the region's considerable assets which make it a desirable place to live, work, play, and invest.
3. Enable the region's young people and other residents to access training, obtain jobs and facilitate growth in self-employment opportunities.
4. Further identify and develop the services and amenities required to attract and retain young people, seniors, skilled workers, professionals and others.
5. Develop and implement improved service delivery models to better meet health care and education needs

"We envision a future where communities in the region are widely recognized as desirable places to live, learn, work, play, and invest," says OBAC Director Bernice Magee. The Mayor of Burns Lake also added "The region has the resources to support diverse business and employment options and we want to ensure the needed work force is available to realize the opportunities."

The goal of the Community and Social Services and Supports Strategy is to support healthy and resilient communities in the OBAC region where residents of the region have access to quality and professional social services and supports. This strategy includes four recommendations:

1. Strengthen social service delivery in the region.
2. Establish responsive and flexible provincial and federal social service programs that meet rural, urban and First Nations priority needs.
3. Enable resident young people and adults to obtain the education and employment services that will allow them to fully participate in the region's economy.
4. Realize the economic benefits of a strong social service sector.

As with all of OBAC strategies, these strategies identify what actions need to be taken collectively and individually by the federal and provincial governments and by local governments, industry leaders and other organizations to achieve the goals that are set out. Together the two social development strategies build a foundation for the achievement of many of the goals and objectives presented in the industrial sector strategies. It is crucial that resources are devoted towards enabling the region to adjust to the change which is upon us now and to build more resilient and diversified communities.

A common theme emerging across all of the OBAC strategies is that strengthening communication and coordinating activities on shared areas of interest across First Nations and local governments will improve opportunities for residents in the region as a whole. Further engagement between leaders of OBAC communities and First Nation communities is a very high priority for all of the strategies. Discussions at the community level are needed to ensure that synergies are identified and that the interests of all communities in the region are brought forward.

Another emerging theme is that focused investments in building community and regional capacity to find solutions will enable the communities of the OBAC region to be resilient. This includes supporting effective preparation for and response to crisis situations should they arise and, enabling communities to respond to the ongoing transition journey. OBAC communities can continue to be vital contributors to the province's future.

"We are better and stronger when we work together and these strategies show the advantages of pooling our resources and knowledge to address our shared needs and improve economic and service synergies across businesses, communities and the region" says Don Bassermann, OBAC Chair and Prince George City Councillor.

The 'next steps' for OBAC include bringing together senior staff from relevant government agencies to work with OBAC to quickly develop two Action Plans that work out the details on the "how to and how much" for implementation of these two strategies. OBAC will also be working with senior governments and other partner organizations to enable implementation of the Action Plans.

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