

Priority actions include:

- With the support of the governments establish a regional coordinating mechanism that will:
 - Facilitate efficient communications on social services and community supports between local government and First Nations leaders, service delivery agents and the provincial and federal governments;
 - Provide capacity which will facilitate community access to existing social service programs;
- Senior governments to work more closely with the communities to ensure that programs meet actual priority needs;
- Provincial and Federal programs to work with the communities and First Nations to develop integrated Social Service Plans which will guide the delivery of social services and which will address mobilization needs during times of economic downturn;
- Ensure that students in the region are provided excellent secondary school opportunities which are relevant both to them and their communities;
- Develop community employment strategies which will provide youth and others in the region with relevant information on training and employment opportunities and assist them in finding employment;
- Fully consider the economic impact that social service infrastructures have on rural and small communities when social service program decisions are made.



These actions and overall implementation of this strategy will require key and timely decisions and actions by the provincial and federal governments. OBAC communities look forward to working with key implementers to make the vision a reality.



To obtain a copy of the Community Social Services and Supports Strategy or for information on the Coalition please visit our web site at www.ominecacoalition.ca or contact us:

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Community Social Services and Supports Strategy



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What is OBAC?

In September 2005 the Omineca Beetle Action Coalition (OBAC) received financial support and mandate from the BC Government. OBAC is building priority topic strategies and a diversification plan and taking action that supports long-term sustainability for the Highway 16 communities impacted by the mountain pine beetle. OBAC is led by the local government leaders of the region and is accountable to local communities and the provincial government. OBAC works in partnership with First Nations, professionals, researchers, plus all sectors and levels of government.



Why is OBAC Important?

British Columbia is currently experiencing the largest recorded mountain pine beetle outbreak in recorded history. This forest health epidemic is causing widespread mortality of lodgepole pine, the interior's most abundant commercial tree species. Strategies must be developed to mitigate the social, economic and environmental consequences of this epidemic now and in the future.



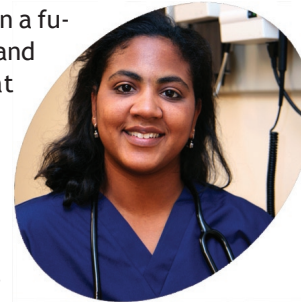
What is the Community Social Services and Supports Strategy?

The prosperity of the OBAC region has long been reliant on its timber resources. However the mountain pine beetle epidemic is expected to diminish opportunities in the traditional forest sector for several decades. OBAC is developing a number of industrial sector strategies which are designed to diversify the region's

economy and create more resilient communities. As well as these industrial strategies, it is also necessary to develop a strategy designed to improve the quality and availability of social services and supports. Community services and supports are important at all times. However, they are particularly important during times of transition. They are critical for the development of stronger, more resilient communities in the region.

Vision, Objectives and Recommendations

OBAC communities envision a future that includes robust and resilient economies that are supported by local and regional social services which are accessible to all. This future is also characterized by communities and First Nations in the region playing an integral role working with senior governments and service agencies in determining social service and support priority needs and approaches to effective delivery.



OBAC has worked with social service specialists a wide variety of perspectives to develop this strategy. Consultations with community members with an interest in social services were also undertaken to inform the development of this strategy.

Five objectives must be attained for OBAC communities to realize this vision. These are:

1. The region's communities have the responsive and professional social services which are needed during transition times and which will support future economic diversification
2. Quality social services and supports are available and accessible to meet the priority needs of urban, small community, rural and First Nations residents.

3. Innovative solutions and active communication and networking are facilitated among agencies and service providers to support the provision of high quality services.
4. Synergistic and cooperative opportunities for the provision of social services across all communities in the region are realized.
5. The region is able to train, attract and maintain a dynamic and skilled workforce that can respond to current and emerging economic opportunities.



This strategy has considered the unique circumstances and the shared needs across municipal, rural and remote communities in the region. OBAC leaders are interested in building upon the good work already being done. It will require team work and synergistic solutions to improve access to services. OBAC leaders look forward to working with First Nations leaders to enable residents in all of our communities to access responsive social services and supports across communities.



The recommendations are:

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.