



NEWS RELEASE

Local and First Nations governments invited to engage in sustainability planning

Vancouver, BC (September 22, 2008) The Fraser Basin Council today announced the implementation roll out of *Smart Planning for Communities* -- a BC-wide, collaborative initiative to help local and First Nations governments carry out sustainability planning. *Smart Planning for Communities* offers the services of Sustainability Facilitators, who are based in five locations across the province, and are available to support communities in planning for their long-term social, cultural, economic and environmental well-being. Dr. Charles Jago, Chair of the Fraser Basin Council, made the announcement in Penticton at the annual convention of the Union of BC Municipalities.

Jago said that communities across British Columbia are facing pressing sustainability challenges and a greater degree of uncertainty than ever before. "Local leaders are grappling with aging infrastructure, changing demographics and volatility in local economies arising from many factors, including climate change," he said. "Communities have an opportunity to become stronger and more resilient when they make long-term plans that take into account all aspects of sustainability."

Smart Planning for Communities will offer the necessary assistance to communities interested in pursuing integrated sustainability planning. "Our Sustainability Facilitators can help communities access the funding, tools and resources they need to tap into a network of sustainability experts," Jago said. "The Facilitators also provide process advice, strategic support, education and training, and access to technical expertise."

"The *Smart Planning for Communities* initiative is integral to ensuring that all local and First Nations governments capitalize on the tremendous resources available for sustainable development," said Minister of Community Development Blair Lekstrom.

Smart Planning for Communities is administered by the Fraser Basin Council on behalf of a collaborative partnership involving BC Hydro, BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, BC Ministry of Community Development, BC Ministry of Environment, First Nations Mountain Pine Beetle Initiative, Indian & Northern Affairs Canada, and the Real Estate Foundation of BC. It follows on the 2005 Gas Tax Agreement which provides funding to local and First Nations governments for community sustainability planning and infrastructure development in support of clean air, clean water, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. Municipalities and regional districts in British Columbia can apply for Gas Tax funding through the Union of BC Municipalities. Additional funding sources are also available and are listed on the *Smart Planning for Communities* website at http://www.fraserbasin.bc.ca/programs/smart_planning.html

For more information on the *Smart Planning for Communities* initiative, contact:

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About the Fraser Basin Council

The Fraser Basin Council is a not-for-profit organization that advances sustainability in the Fraser Basin and throughout British Columbia. The Council brings people together to facilitate the resolution of complex sustainability issues, reports regularly on progress towards a more sustainable river basin, and implements basin-wide and regional programs designed to ensure healthy ecosystems, vibrant economies and strong communities.