



# REPORT

To: Chair and Directors

Report Number: DS-BRD-457

From: Development Services

Date: February 20, 2025

**Subject: Draft Regional Growth Strategy**

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## **RECOMMENDATION:** *[Corporate Unweighted]*

That the Regional Board receive the report titled “Draft Regional Growth Strategy – DS-BRD-457” for information.

## **BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:**

The Regional Growth Strategy project is nearing completion, and we are pleased to present the draft strategy for review and comment.

## **PROJECT TIMELINE:**

- May 26, 2022:** The Regional Board authorized PRRD staff to apply to UBCM for a grant to support the development of a Regional Growth Strategy.
- February 2, 2023:** The Regional Board authorized a supplemental budget request to fund the Regional Growth Strategy.
- July 20, 2023:** The Regional Board authorized the contract award for the Regional Growth Strategy to EcoPlan International.
- November 16, 2023:** PRRD staff and EcoPlan presented to the Regional Board at the Committee of the Whole introducing the project and presenting the draft vision statement.
- April – May, 2024:** Presentations were made at every municipal council to share information about the project.
- May 20, 2024:** PRRD staff shared the June 2024 public engagement events schedule with the Regional Board.
- June 8 – 12, 2024:** PRRD staff and EcoPlan hosted public engagement events throughout the region to gather feedback on the Regional Growth Strategy.
- November 7, 2024:** PRRD staff and EcoPlan presented the “What we Heard” report to the Regional Board which summarized the results of the public engagement events held throughout the region and online.

**Next Steps:**

PRRD staff are preparing for the final round of engagement where comments will be sought on the draft Regional Growth Strategy. PRRD staff will be presenting the draft to each member municipality from February to March 2025 and anticipates that the draft Regional Growth Strategy will be presented for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Readings at the March 20, 2025 Regional Board meeting.

Once 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Readings are given, staff will prepare for the Public Hearing. Once the Public Hearing is held, the municipalities will have 60 days to provide a formal resolution of acceptance, or non-acceptance of the strategy. After all responses are received staff will prepare a report for 3<sup>rd</sup> Reading and Adoption.

**ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:**

1. That the Regional Board provide further direction.

**STRATEGIC PLAN RELEVANCE:**

- Not Applicable to Strategic Plan

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATION(S):**

The project is entirely funded through federal and provincial grants.

**COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATION(S):**

The Draft Regional Growth Strategy will be shared on the PRRD's '[Have Your Say](#)' webpage and will be shared with all member municipalities.

**OTHER CONSIDERATION(S):**

None at this time.

**Attachments:**

1. Draft Regional Growth Strategy

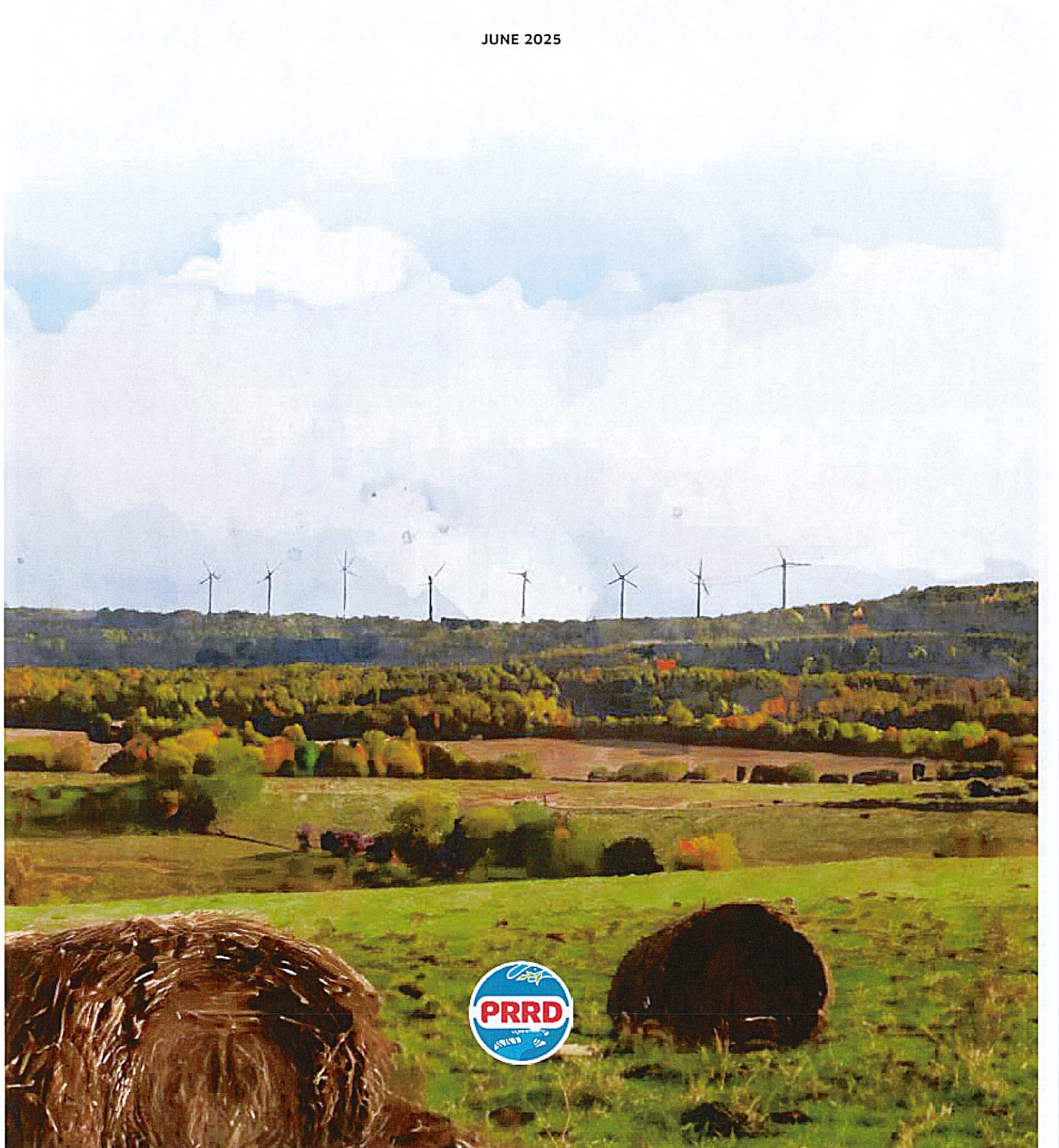
**External Links:**

1. [RFP Award 54-2023 Regional Growth Strategy](#) – See Item 8.11 on the Regional Board Meeting Agenda dated July 20, 2023
2. [EcoPlan International & Peace River Regional District RE: Regional Growth Strategy Intro Project Overview](#) – See Item 4.2 on the Committee of the Whole Meeting Agenda dated November 16, 2023
3. [Regional Growth Strategy Vision Statement](#) – See Item 9.18 on the Regional Board Meeting Agenda dated November 16, 2023
4. [Regional Growth Strategy and Regional Climate Resiliency Plan Public Engagement Events](#) – See Item No. 8.14 on the Regional Board Meeting Agenda dated May 30, 2024
5. [Planning Department and EcoPlan International Re: Regional Growth Strategy "What We Heard" Report](#) – See Item 4.2 on the Committee of the Whole Agenda dated November 7, 2024
6. [Regional Growth Strategy – Project Update](#) – See Item 13.1 on the Regional Board Meeting Agenda dated November 7, 2024

PEACE RIVER REGIONAL DISTRICT

# REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY

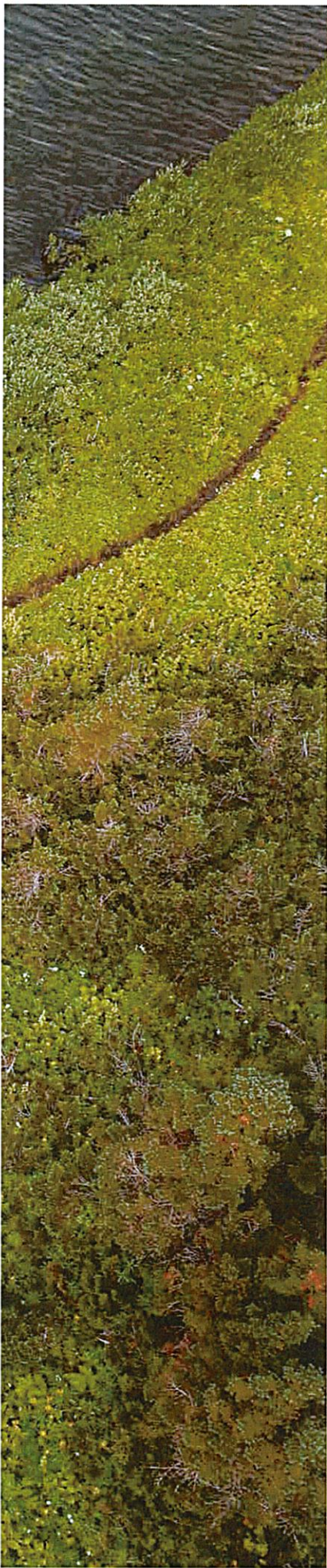
JUNE 2025





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Peace River Regional District

Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 2571, 2025

WHEREAS the Peace River Regional District (PRRD) wishes to adopt Bylaw No. 2571, 2025, pursuant to Part 13 – Division 3, of the *Local Government Act*;

AND WHEREAS the Board of Directors gave notice to affected local governments on \_\_\_\_\_, that included information on the proposed Bylaw;

NOW THEREFORE the Regional Board of the PRRD, in an open meeting assembled, enacts as follows:

The Peace River Regional District Growth Strategy attached hereto as Schedule 'A' forming part of this bylaw is adopted as the PRRD Regional Growth Strategy.

If any statement, section, sub-section, clause, sub-clause or phrase of this bylaw and the Regional Growth Strategy adopted by this bylaw is for any reason held to be invalid by a decision of a court of competent jurisdiction, the decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this bylaw and Regional Growth Strategy.

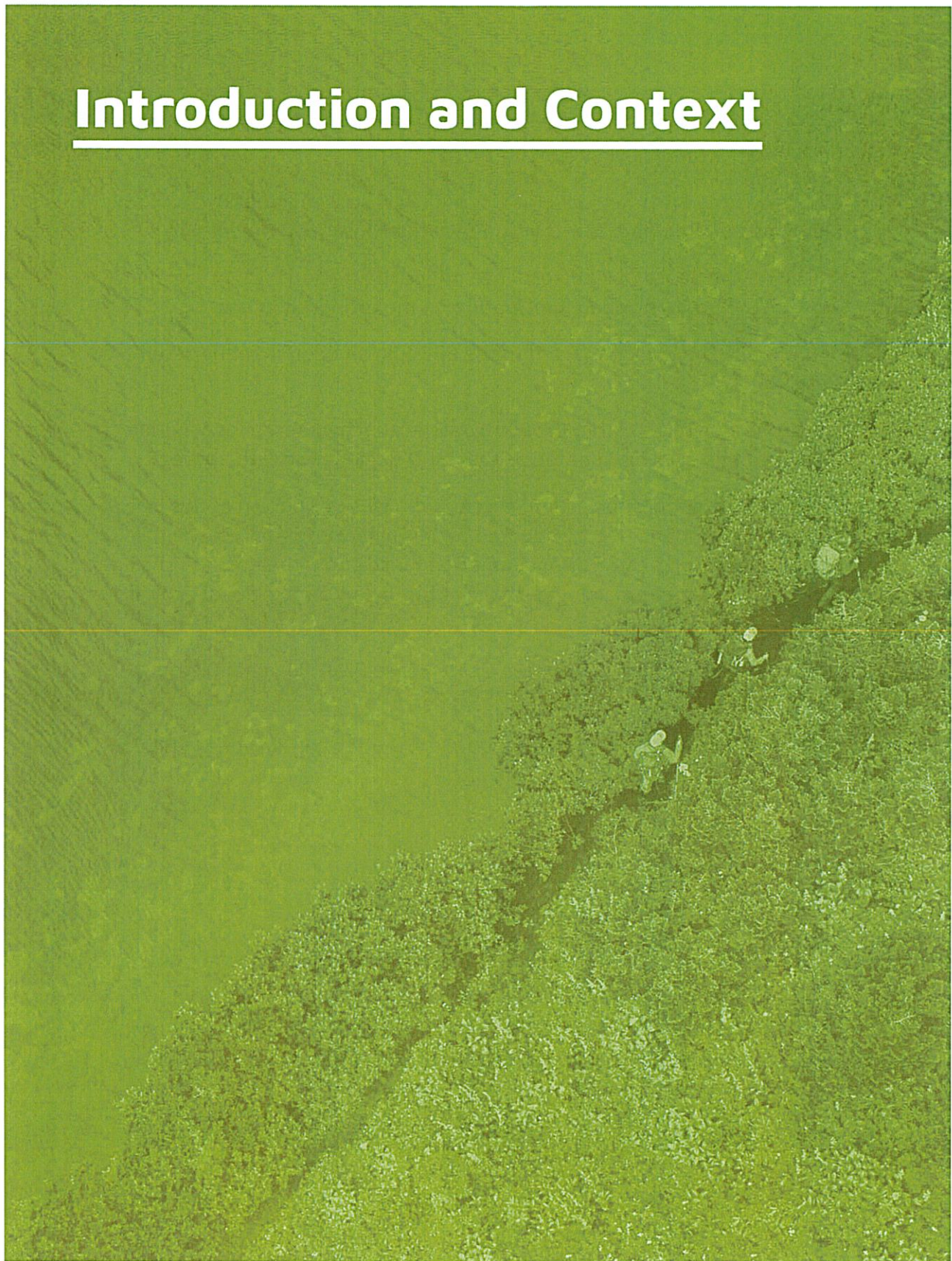
This bylaw may be cited for all purposes as the Peace River Regional District Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 2571, 2025.

READ A FIRST, SECOND, THIRD TIME AND ADOPTED on the \_\_ day of \_\_\_\_, 2025.

.....  
Chair

.....  
Corporate Officer

# Introduction and Context



# Purpose

A Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) is a strategic plan enabled by the provincial Local Government Act that provides an overarching planning framework for coordinating the activities of local governments and the provincial government. They are prepared and enacted by a regional district with the involvement of its member municipalities.

An RGS can cover a wide range of interconnected policy topics but must meet basic provincial requirements, which include:

- A 20-year time frame.
- A regional vision statement.
- Population and employment projections.
- Regional actions or policies for key areas such as housing, transportation, regional district services, parks and natural areas and economic development.

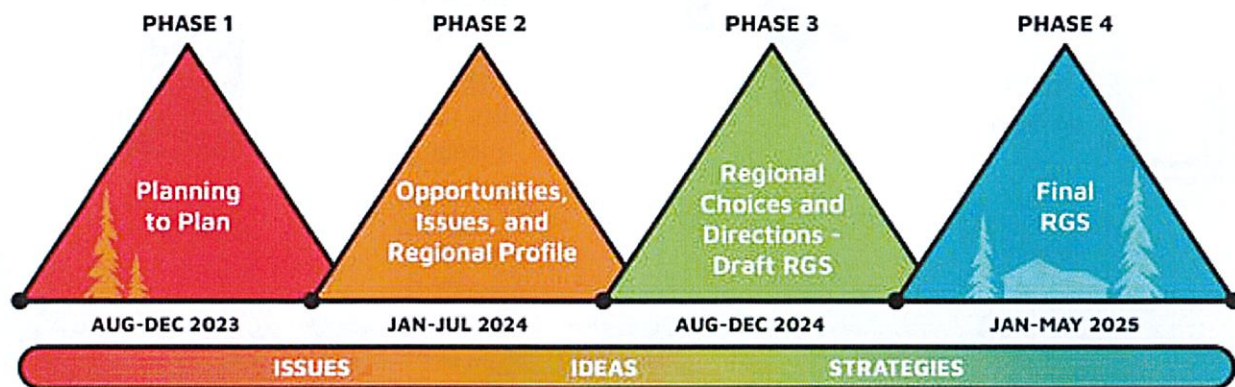
As a long-range plan, an RGS aims to ensure the region is working toward a common future shared by its member municipalities and electoral areas. This includes helping guide long-term regional growth and development and supporting more coordinated region-wide planning, particularly around issues that cross jurisdictional boundaries. An RGS can also help strengthen links between regional districts and the provincial ministries and agencies whose resources are needed to carry out projects and programs.

For the Peace River Regional District (PRRD), this RGS will help the region better understand and prepare for the potential changes that can be expected over the next 20 years. These changes include a growing population, new service demands, the regional economy and a changing climate.

This is the PRRD's first RGS. Launched in August 2023, the project was completed in May 2025.

The content and policies in this RGS were developed with input from member municipalities, the public and other stakeholders and partner groups throughout the region, including First Nations. Input was gathered through a series of open houses, surveys, workshops and direct communications. An RGS Steering Committee was also established as a core project planning group. It was made up of representatives from member municipalities, PRRD staff and representatives from key provincial ministries and agencies, including the Ministry of Transportation and Transit, Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs, Northern Health, and the Agricultural Land Commission. A representative from Doig River First Nation also sat on the committee.

**FIGURE 1:** RGS Project Timeline



This RGS is comprised of three major sections with supporting maps. The first section introduces the RGS process and planning context. The second outlines the RGS Goals, associated objectives and supporting policies. The third section provides details on RGS implementation and monitoring.

As per Section 445 (3) of the *Local Government Act*, the RGS does not commit or authorize a regional district to proceed with any project or action in this plan.

**FIGURE 2: RGS Engagement Summary**



## Who We Are

Established in 1967, the PRRD is the largest of the 27 regional districts in B.C. with a 119,200 square kilometre land area. The PRRD has a population of approximately 61,532 and is the 13th most populous regional district in the province. The PRRD has a low population density with most residents living in the primary urban centers of Fort St. John and Dawson Creek.

Regional districts like the PRRD are a federation of local governments with three main roles:

1. Providing region-wide and sub-regional services.
2. Advocating to the province and senior government agencies on shared regional issues and priorities.
3. Providing land use planning services to unincorporated areas (electoral areas).

The PRRD plays a vital role in providing various regional (e.g., solid waste management), sub-regional (e.g., water) and local services (e.g., wastewater) that are valued by residents and contribute to the region's economic activity and high quality of life. The PRRD also actively collaborates with local government members, First Nations, provincial agencies and ministries and local community organizations to address challenges and needs in the region.

The PRRD's four electoral areas (Electoral Area B, Electoral Area C, Electoral Area D, Electoral Area E) are home to over 40 unincorporated, rural communities. The four electoral areas are represented by Electoral Area Directors on the PRRD Regional Board.

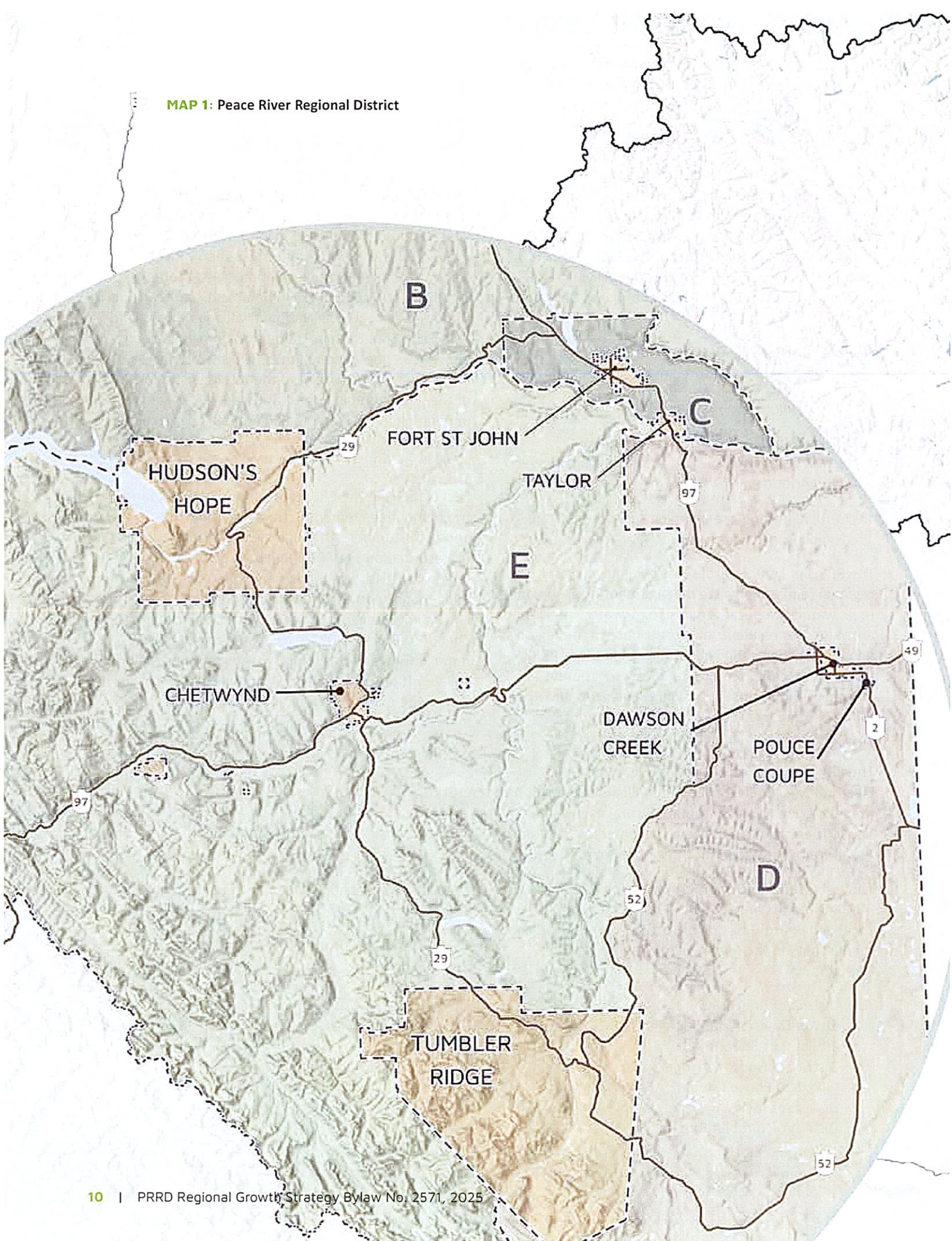
There are seven incorporated municipalities in the PRRD. Directors are appointed by their councils to the PRRD Board. The City of Fort St. John, the largest municipality in the region, is represented by two Directors.

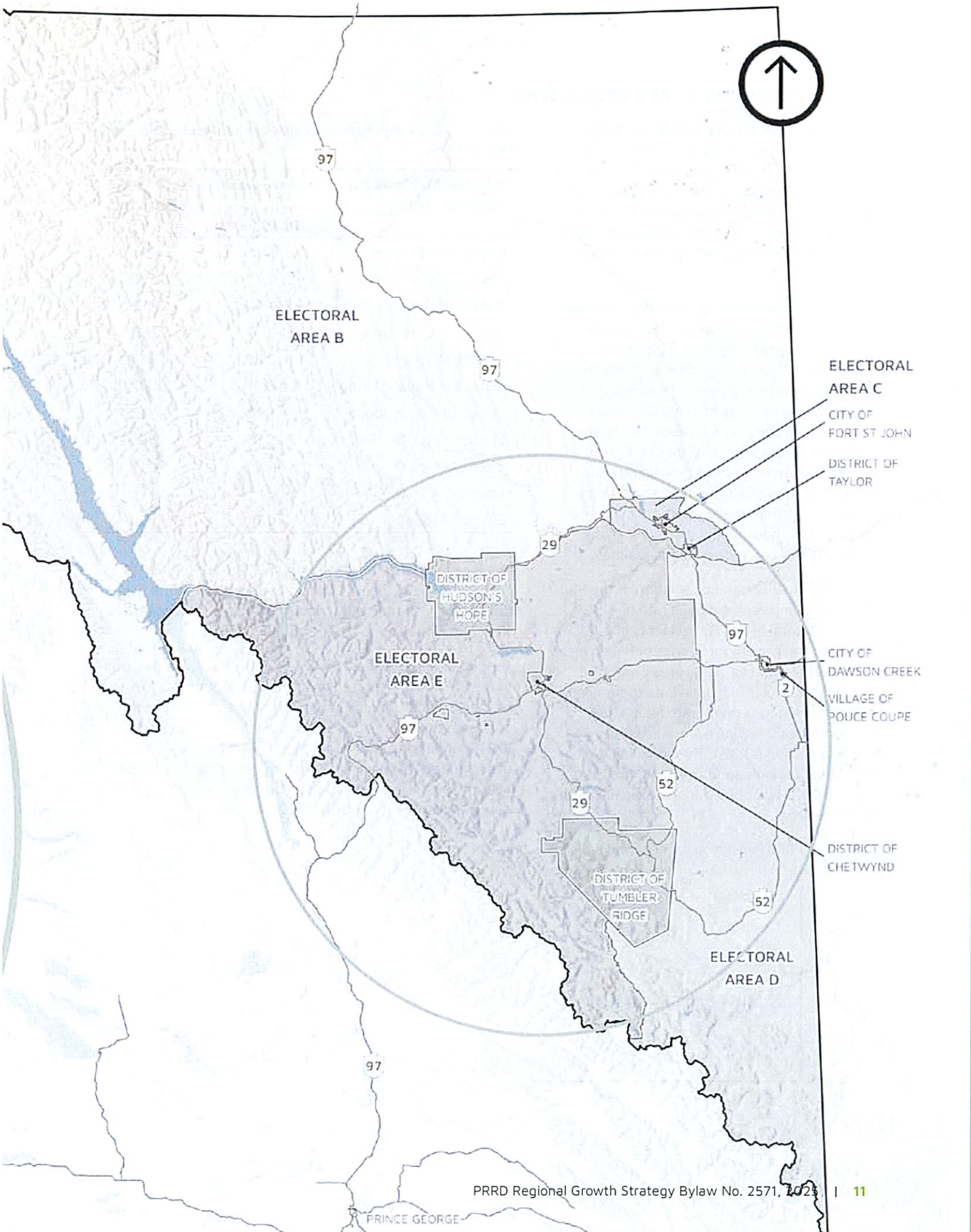
- District of Chetwynd
- City of Dawson Creek
- City of Fort St. John
- District of Hudson's Hope
- Village of Pouce Coupe
- District of Taylor
- District of Tumbler Ridge

The PRRD is situated on the traditional territory of the Dane-zaa (Beaver), signatories of Treaty 8 and the Métis Nation BC Region 7. There are nine First Nations communities in within the PRRD. They include Doig River First Nation, Blueberry River First Nation, Halfway River First Nation, West Moberly First Nation, McLeod Lake Indian Band, Saúlteau First Nation, Tsay Keh Dene Nation, Kwadacha Nation and Kelly Lake Cree Nation. There is a significant urban Indigenous population in the PRRD's two principal urban centres. According to the 2021 census, 13.1% of the population in Fort St. John and 15.2% of the population in Dawson Creek identified as Indigenous, which is relatively high in comparison to the provincial average of 5.9%.

First Nations in the PRRD are continuing to expand their land management authorities, capacities and opportunities. Although First Nations are not represented on the PRRD Regional Board, the regional district values the significant contributions of Indigenous peoples who have lived and worked on the lands and waters of our region for time immemorial. The PRRD Board's 2023 – 2026 Strategic Plan is representative of this effort, which identifies regional collaboration and cooperation with First Nations as one of the plan's six strategic areas.

**MAP 1:** Peace River Regional District





ELECTORAL AREA B

ELECTORAL AREA C

CITY OF FORT ST JOHN  
DISTRICT OF TAYLOR

ELECTORAL AREA E

DISTRICT OF HUDSON'S HOPE

CITY OF DAWSON CREEK  
VILLAGE OF POUCE COUPE

DISTRICT OF TUMBLER RIDGE

DISTRICT OF CHETWYND

ELECTORAL AREA D

PRINCE GEORGE

## POPULATION ESTIMATES AND PROJECTIONS

The region’s population has historically been sensitive to natural resource development (coal, natural gas, forestry), which has resulted in fluctuating census counts. Using historical data and projected population estimates, the PRRD could see a population increase of up to 30% (19,000 new residents) in the next two decades.

The PRRD’s population, on average, is younger than the rest of the province. However, its residents are gradually getting older and moving away from labour-intensive industries. This demographic shift is accompanied by population declines in many Electoral Areas and smaller municipalities, but larger municipalities such as Dawson Creek and Fort St. John are experiencing gradual and steady growth. At the same time, households in the region are getting smaller, with an increase in single-person households, reflecting changes in living preferences and economic realities.

From 2016 to 2021, the population of the PRRD declined at an average annual rate of -0.45%, reaching a total of 61,532 residents in 2021. However, the growth rate varies between local municipalities and electoral areas, with the District of Tumbler Ridge having experienced the fastest annual growth rate (4.1%) and Electoral Area D having experienced the greatest decline (-3.8%). The following table details the region’s annual growth rate from 2016 to 2021 by population, municipality and Electoral Area.

**FIGURE 3:** 2021 Population of PRRD Member Municipalities and Electoral Areas

Member Municipality/ Electoral Area	2016-2021 Annual Growth Rate	2021 Census Population
City of Fort St. John	1.2%	21,465
City of Dawson Creek	0.2%	12,323
District of Tumbler Ridge	4.1%	2,399
District of Chetwynd	-1.6%	2,302
District of Taylor	-2.1%	1,317
District of Hudson’s Hope	-3.4%	841
Village of Pouce Coupe	-0.8%	762
Electoral Area B	-0.9%	5,379
Electoral Area C	-2.2%	5,947
Electoral Area D	-3.8%	4,793
Electoral Area E	-2.0%	2,660

The locations with the largest populations are the City of Fort St. John, the City of Dawson Creek and Electoral Area C. The smallest are the District of Taylor, the District of Hudson’s Hope and the Village of Pouce Coupe.

Despite a slight decrease since 2016, the overall population in the PRRD has increased steadily, with around 3,300 new residents since 2006. If these increasing growth trends continue, the PRRD could expect to welcome roughly 5,000 (0.3% per year) to 19,000 (1.1% per year) new residents over the next 20 years. However, if the population decline over the past 5 years continues, there may be 6,000 (-0.4% per year) fewer residents by 2046.

**FIGURE 4:** PRRD Population estimate and projection, 2006-2046

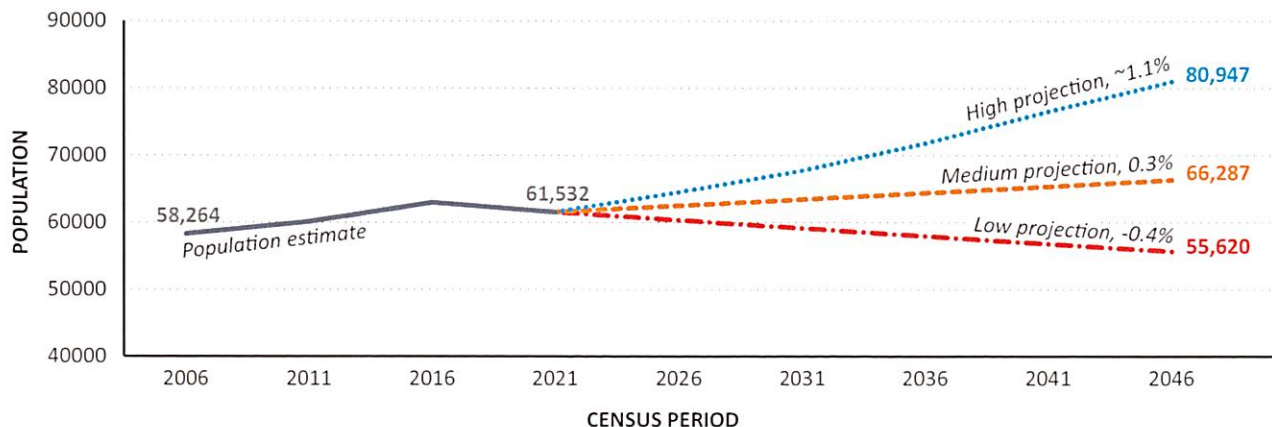


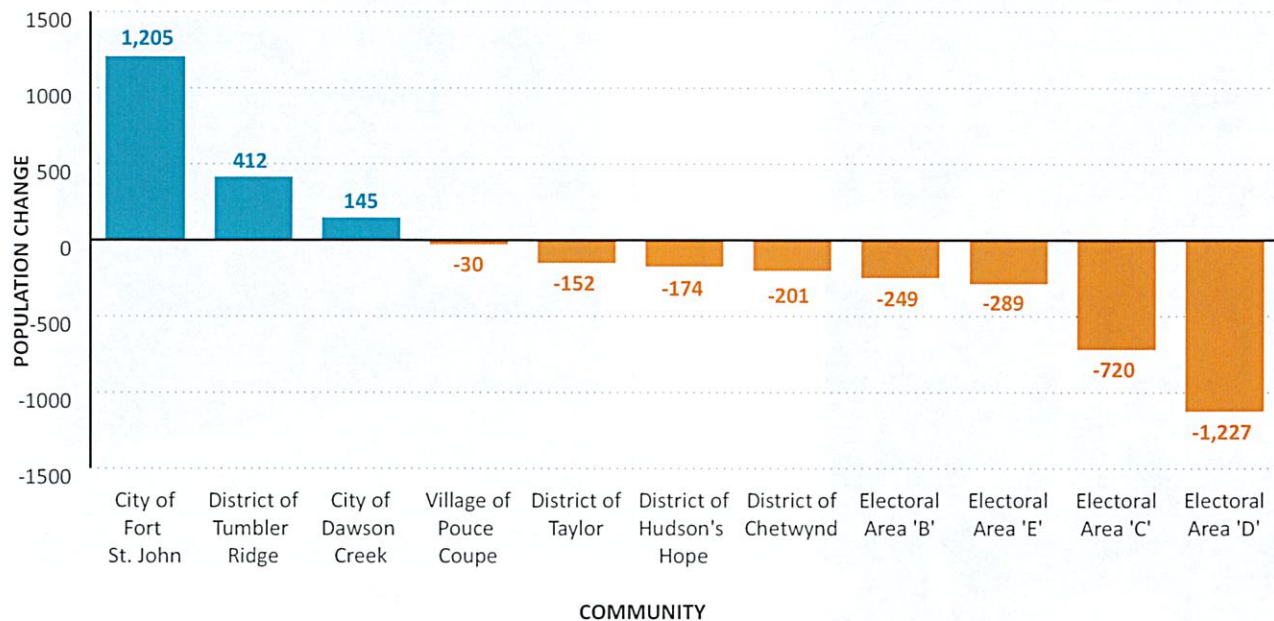
Figure 4 shows overall population estimates in the PRRD since 2006 with the solid line. The dashed lines represent population projections under high (BC PEOPLE Projection App<sup>1</sup> average growth rate, +1.1%/yr.), medium (average annual growth over the past 10 years, +0.3%/yr.) and low (decline since 2016 continues, -0.4%/yr.) growth scenarios.

Since 2016, the population has only grown in three communities: the City of Fort St. John, the District of Tumbler Ridge and the City of Dawson Creek (roughly 1,800 combined). Electoral Area C (the most populous Electoral Area) and Electoral Area D experienced the greatest population decline, around 1,800 combined.

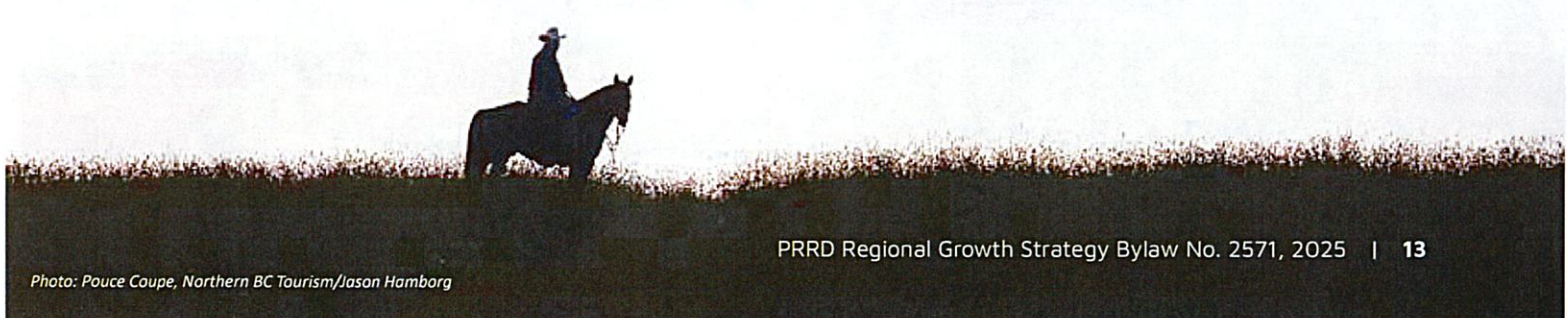
Population decline is more pronounced in smaller and more rural Electoral Areas and Municipalities. The City of Fort St. John, the District of Tumbler Ridge and the City of Dawson Creek were the only communities where populations increased. This demographic shift underscores the challenges that smaller and more remote areas face in sustaining their populations in contrast to larger urban centers that continue to attract most residents in the region.

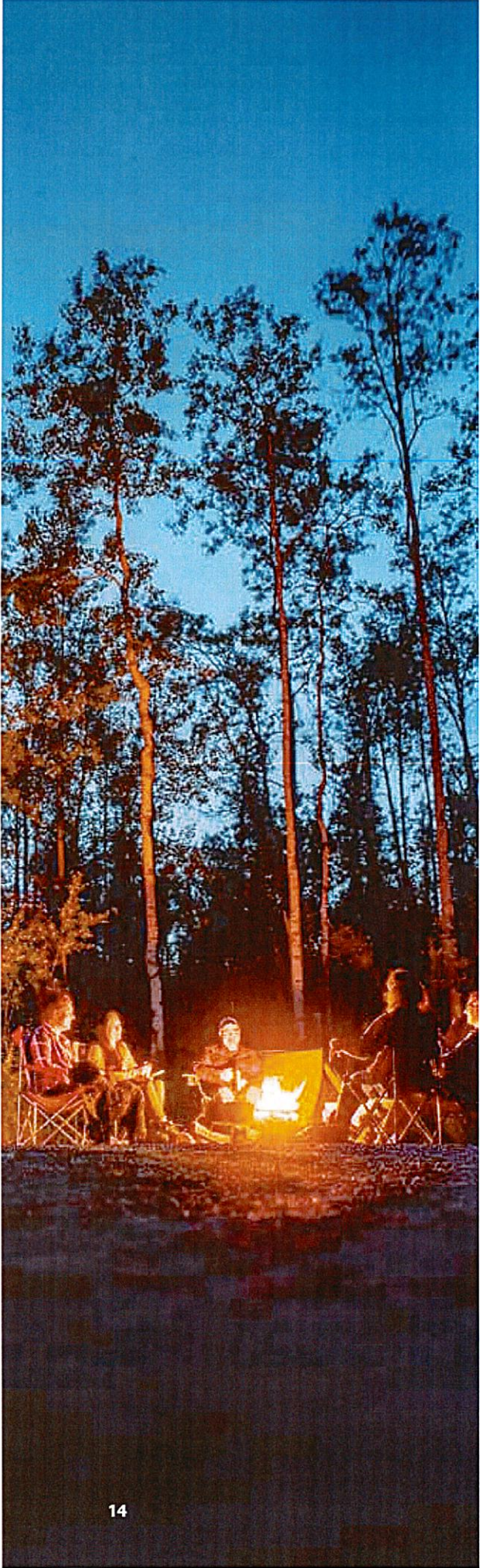
In some municipalities and electoral areas, population decline is accompanied by moderate levels of people moving into the municipalities. This dynamic suggests a less stable population with a higher turnover of residents moving in and out.

**FIGURE 5: Population change by community, 2016 - 2021**



1 BC Stats Population Projections Application <https://bcstats.shinyapps.io/popApp/>

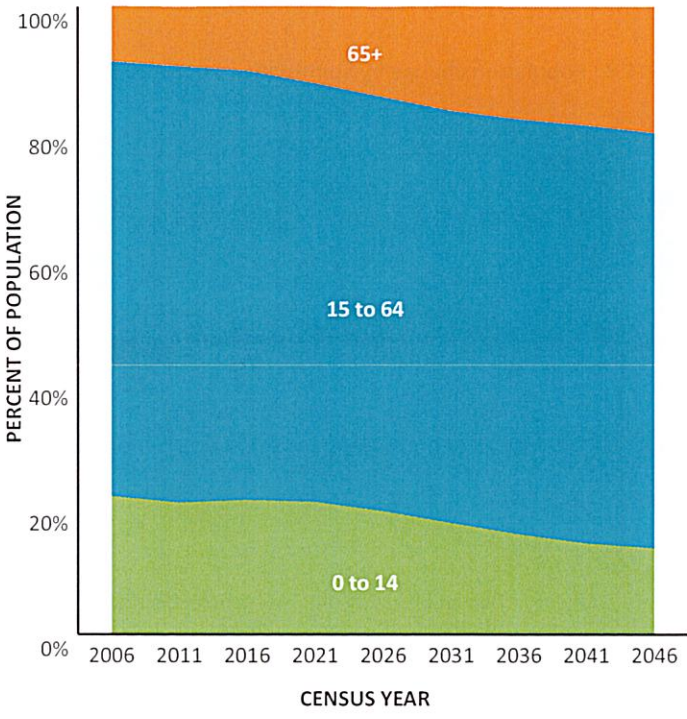




Although the median age of the PRRD is low compared to the province, the proportion of youth is on the decline, while the proportion of seniors is on the rise. The population in this region is aging, though more slowly than the provincial average. Managing an aging population is becoming an important consideration for the PRRD and regional partners. This issue is growing in significance.

In 2021, the median age across the PRRD was 35.6, compared to 42.8 across the province. The District of Hudson's Hope had the highest median age (46.8), while Electoral Area 'B' had the lowest (30.6).

**FIGURE 6:** PRRD population by age, 2006 - 2046

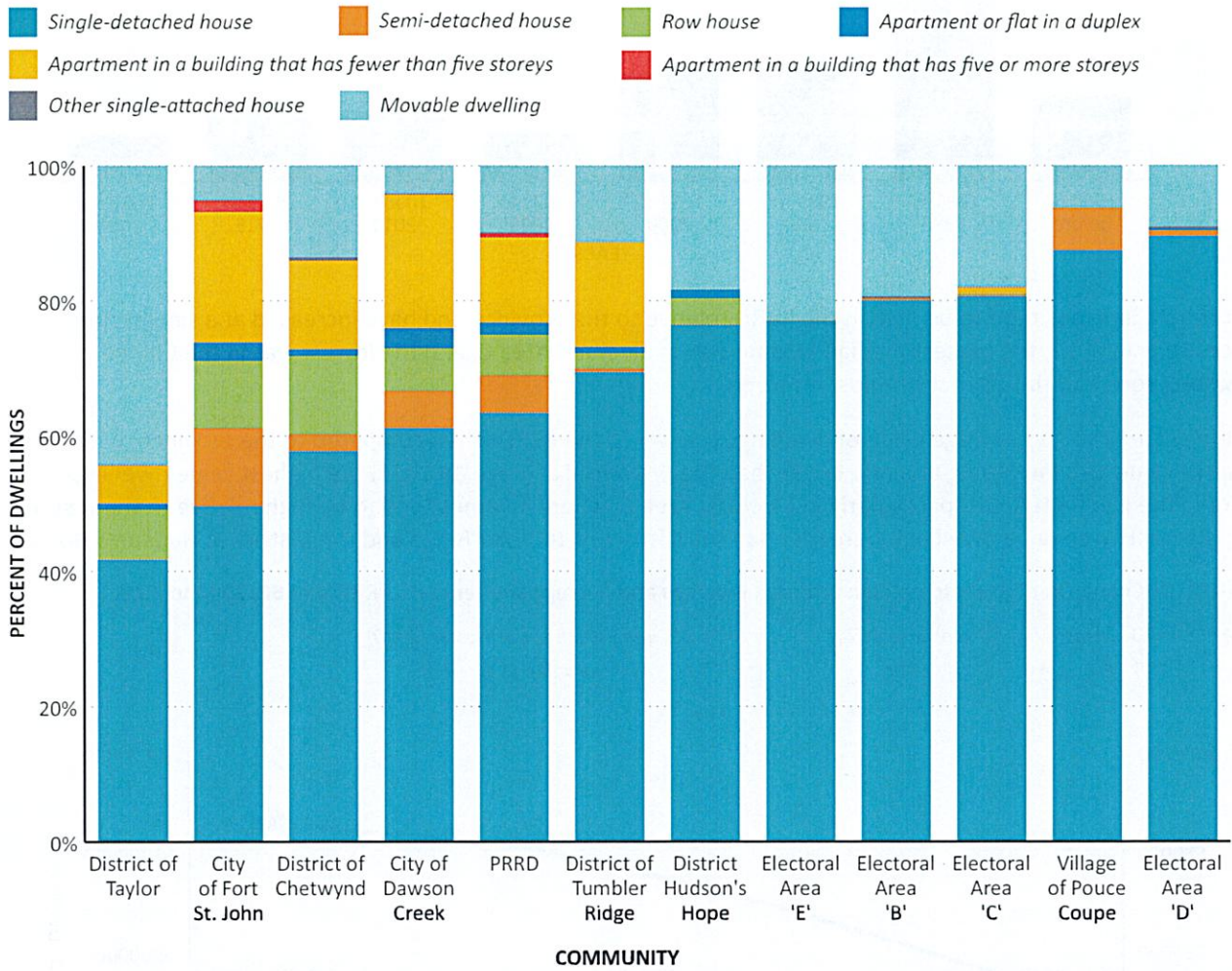


*Photo: Tumblr, Nicole, Destination BC/Jeana Class*

## HOUSING OUTLOOK AND PROJECTIONS

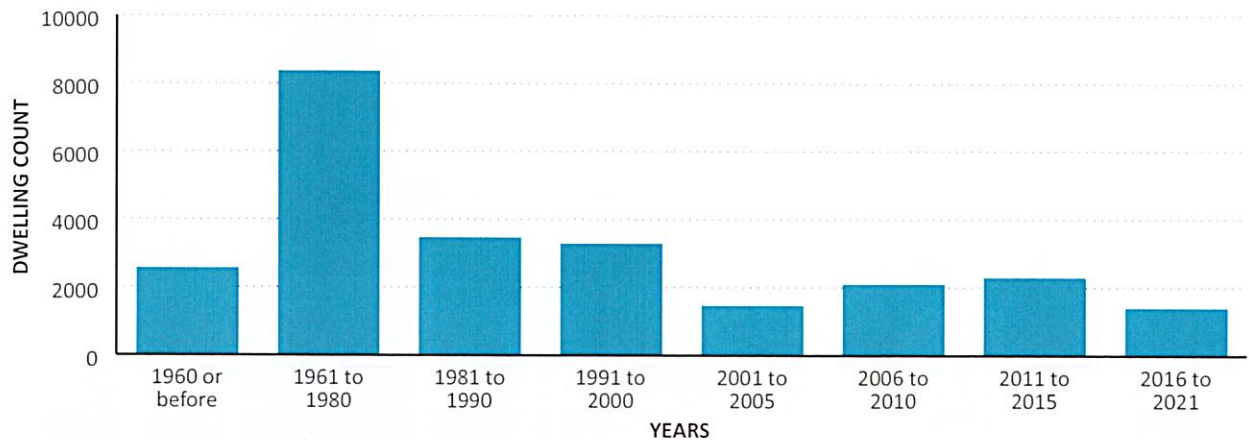
The regional housing stock has changed slightly since 2016 (Figure 7). The proportion of single-detached homes in the region decreased by three percent, and the proportion of mobile homes (which the province defines as movable dwellings) decreased by one percent. Meanwhile, the combined proportion of semi-detached homes, row homes and apartments with fewer than five storeys has increased by 4%.

**FIGURE 7: PRRD Housing Stock, 2021**



Across the PRRD, nearly 60% of dwellings were built before 1990.

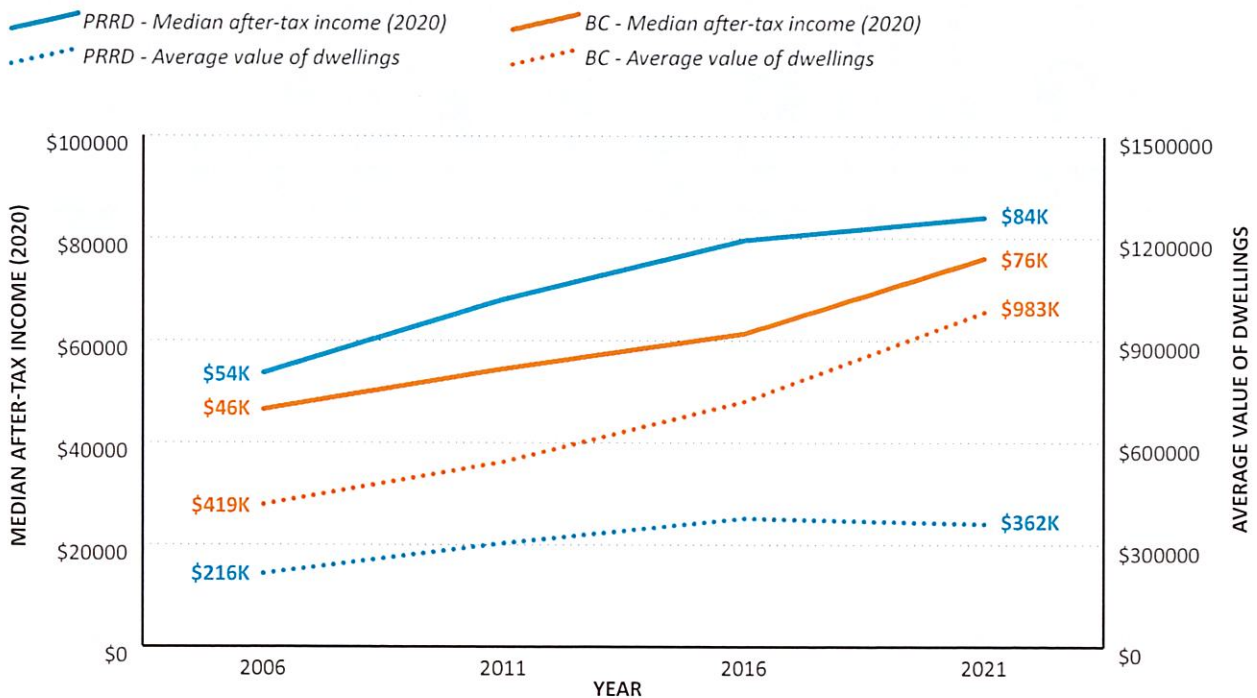
**FIGURE 8: PRRD Dwellings, Year Built**



Household incomes tend to be high in the PRRD relative to the province and have increased at a similar rate since 2006. In 2021, the highest median income was in Electoral Area C, and the lowest was in the City of Dawson Creek and the District of Hudson’s Hope.

At the same time, the average value of dwellings is lower in the PRRD when compared to the province, with their relative value also increasing at a rate lower than the provincial average. In 2021, the highest value dwellings were in the Electoral Areas, particularly in Electoral Area C, where incomes tend to be high relative to the rest of the region. Lower-value dwellings were found in the District of Tumbler Ridge and the District of Hudson’s Hope.

**FIGURE 9: Change in household median after-tax incomes and average shelter costs PRRD and BC, 2006 to 2021**



The average rent in the PRRD was similar to the province from 2006 (\$720) until 2016 (\$1,100). By 2021, the average rent increased by nearly \$500 across BC but remained relatively stable in the PRRD. In 2021, a slightly smaller proportion of PRRD renter households lived in subsidized housing (9.3%) than across the province (11.0%).

Nonetheless, rising rental prices can displace locals. Noting limited rental units and relatively high costs, the *2021 PRRD and Partner Member Municipality Housing Needs Implementation Framework* stressed the need for more purpose-built rental buildings.

With relatively high household incomes and inexpensive dwellings, fewer households spend 30% of their annual household income on shelter costs in the PRRD (15%) when compared to the provincial average (26%). In 2021, the greatest proportion of households spending more than 30% of their income on shelter were in the City of Dawson Creek (18.6%), the City of Fort St. John (16.4%) and Electoral Area C (15.2%).

Housing needs assessments were completed across the region between 2020 and 2022. Provincially mandated updates were released in early 2025. Together, these reports highlighted the following regional issues and trends:

- **Workforce housing:** Increasing rental costs make it difficult for employers to recruit employees. There is a need for more affordable housing, especially for one-person or single-income households.
- **Seniors' housing:** Seniors tend to move from rural areas to be closer to services and family. However, residents seeking senior housing may face long waitlists of up to three years or be placed prematurely in long-term care facilities when appropriate supportive housing units are not available.
- **Supportive housing:** There is a pressing demand for enhanced supportive housing options, particularly in rural areas, as some individuals relying on extended hospital stays or long-term care homes often lack necessary services. In addition, those with mental health issues encounter housing barriers which restricts access to essential support.

- **Residents at risk or experiencing homelessness:** Experiencing hidden homelessness, some residents must couch surf, live in overcrowded homes, or live in vehicles, emphasizing the need for strategically located emergency housing and shelters with support services. There is a particular need for more supports dedicated to youth.

Other important regional housing trends and issues include:

- **Changing household dynamics:** While there is a total increase in the number of households, they have decreased in size since 2006. Seniors, including the aging farming population, are moving to larger population centres, creating a need for younger workers and families in rural areas.
- **Housing instability linked to economic changes:** The shifting nature of the economy and surges in the number of workers and visitors entering the region affect shelter costs and availability. Scarcity and high prices can be associated with periods of robust economic growth, which adversely impact employers and their ability to recruit workers.
- **Affordable rental housing:** Renters in the PRRD typically have lower household incomes than homeowners and generally have fewer affordable rental options. For example, the Fort St. John's 2020 Housing Needs Assessment found that the median homeowner income was \$120,000 versus a median household income for renters of \$60,000. This assessment also noted more limited affordable rental opportunities for this group.



## ECONOMIC OUTLOOK AND PROJECTIONS

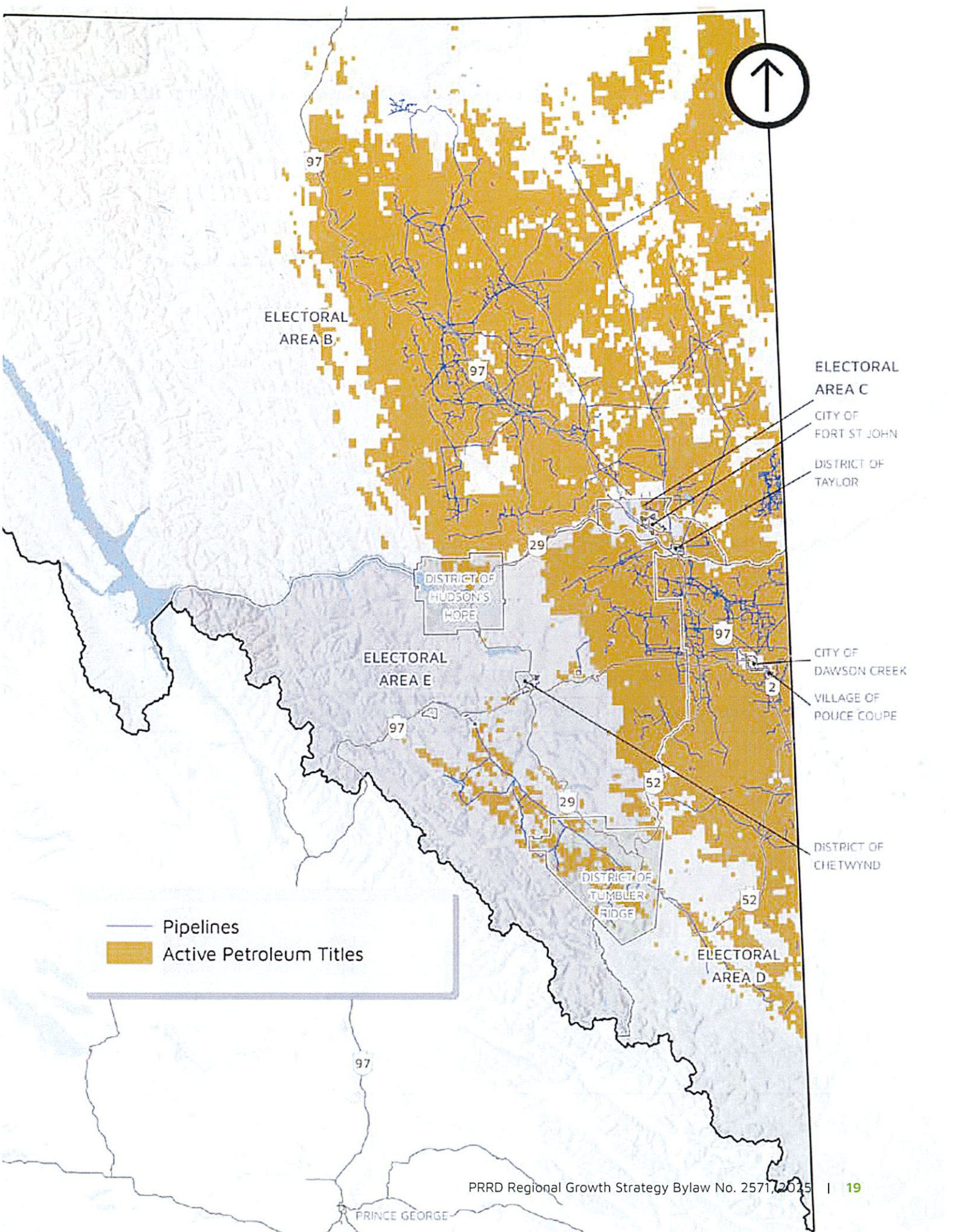
A strong and diverse regional economy is one of the key building blocks for healthy and resilient communities. The regional economy is largely built around primary resources, including agriculture, energy, forestry and mining.

While the oil and gas sectors are the principal economic drivers in Fort St. John, Dawson Creek and the surrounding areas, agriculture also plays an important role. Agriculture is a mainstay in the PRRD, and there is a significant amount of land in the region in the provincial Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). Mining and forestry are also important sectors and are the primary economic drivers for the communities of Chetwynd, Tumbler Ridge and Area E.

**MAP 2:** Peace River Regional District – Oil and Gas Tenures and Pipelines



Photo: AltaGas



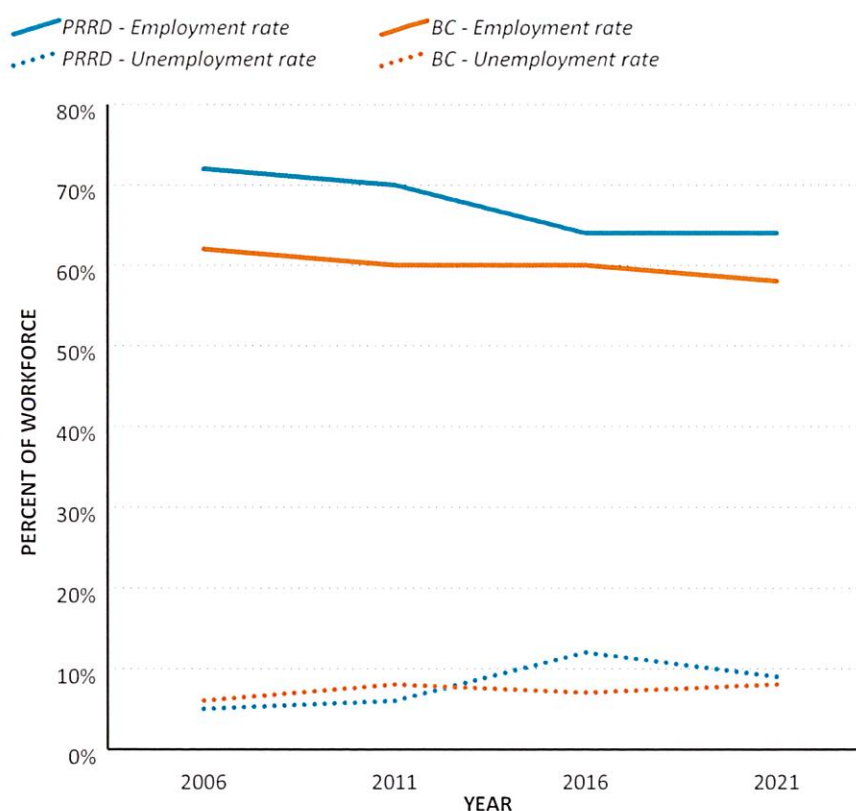
- Pipelines
- Active Petroleum Titles

- ELECTORAL AREA C
- CITY OF FORT ST JOHN
- DISTRICT OF TAYLOR
- CITY OF DAWSON CREEK
- VILLAGE OF POUCE COUPE
- DISTRICT OF CHETWYND

PRINCE GEORGE

The PRRD has long had a high employment rate relative to the province. However, both the province and the PRRD have experienced a slight decline of 8% and 4%, respectively, since 2006. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate has grown by 4% in the PRRD and 2% across the province. The greater increase in the unemployment rate in the PRRD relative to the province may indicate worsening job market conditions, in addition to people leaving the labour force (e.g., retiring, going back to school, etc.). Conversely, informal feedback from PRRD staff suggests there may be a larger proportion of stay-at-home parents in the region. This trend could be attributed to the area’s low cost of living and higher income levels.

**FIGURE 10:** Employment and unemployment rates in BC and the PRRD, 2006 to 2021



**FIGURE 11:** Workforce participation, employment and unemployment rates 2021

Member Municipality/Electoral Area	Participation rate	Employment rate	Unemployment rate
City of Fort St. John	75.9%	69.2%	8.9%
PRRD	70.4%	64.2%	8.8%
Electoral Area 'D'	68.4%	64.0%	6.5%
Electoral Area 'C'	68.8%	63.4%	7.6%
District of Chetwynd	67.6%	62.9%	7.1%
City of Dawson Creek	69.6%	62.8%	9.8%
Electoral Area 'B'	67.0%	62.2%	7.2%
Electoral Area 'E'	66.7%	61.0%	8.1%
District of Tumbler Ridge	65.3%	59.9%	7.7%
District of Taylor	67.5%	59.7%	12.2%
BC	63.3%	57.9%	8.4%
Village of Pouce Coupe	66.4%	55.2%	16.9%
District of Hudson’s Hope	57.6%	53.8%	6.6%

The following table provides regional employment estimates (2021) and forecasts (2046) in the PRRD by industry. Low and high growth scenarios are based on low and high rates of change over the past five and 10 years.

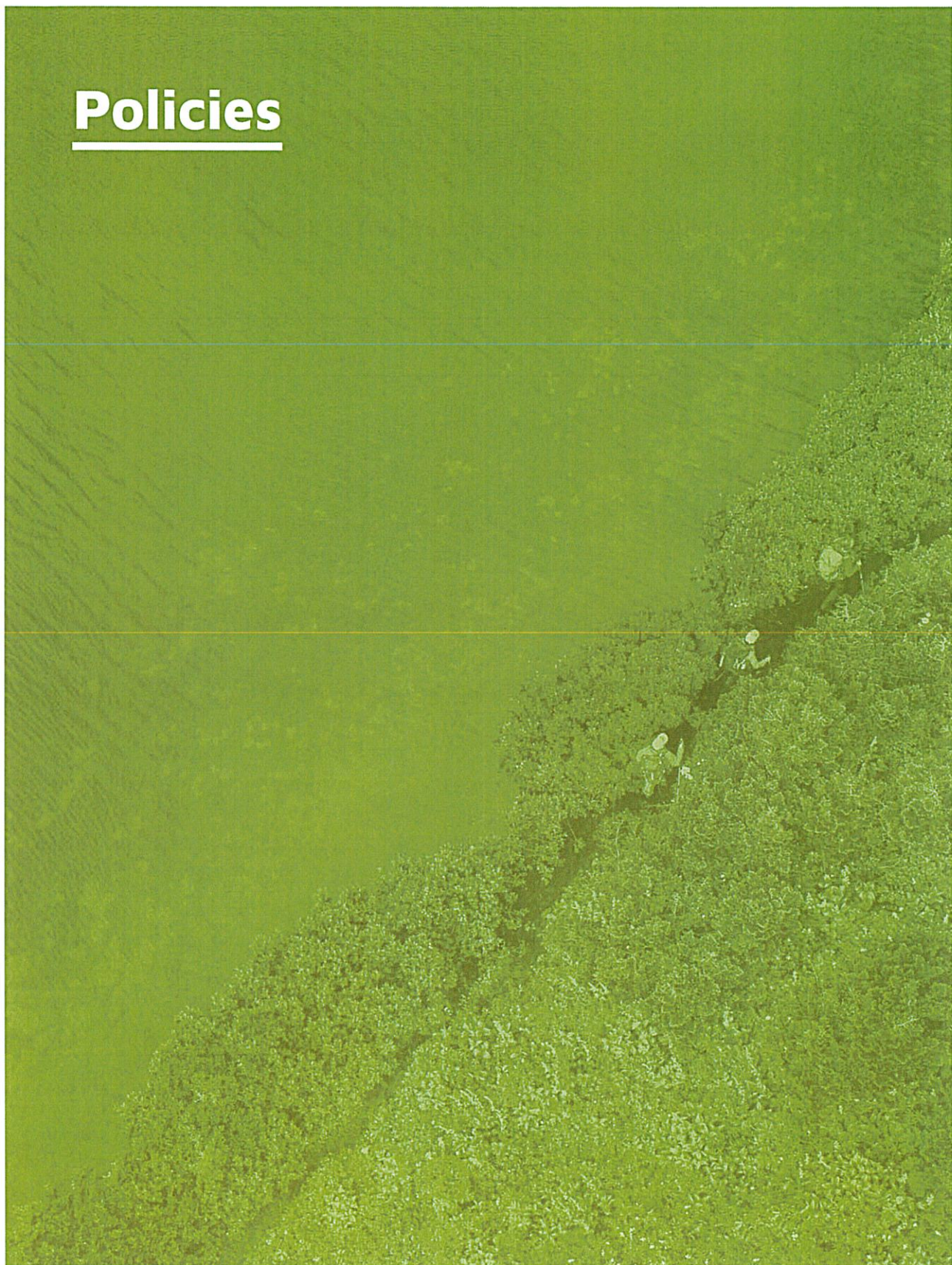
- ▲ Green arrows indicate industries that have consistently grown over the past 10 years and are expected to continue doing so.
- ▼ Red arrows indicate industries that have consistently declined over the past 10 years, and are expected to continue doing so.
- ▬ Yellow bars indicate industries that have experienced both growth and decline over the past 10 years.

As illustrated, health care and social assistance, and educational services are growing sectors and should continue to be a significant source of employment in the region.

**FIGURE 12:** PRRD Employment Estimates (2021) and Forecasts (2046)

Industry - PRRD	2021 est.	Projected annual growth rate	2046 Low	2046 High
<span style="color: yellow;">▬</span> Mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction	3825	-1.6% to 0.2%	3620	5440
<span style="color: red;">▼</span> Construction	3740	-2.2% to -0.1%	3760	6090
<span style="color: red;">▼</span> Retail trade	3505	-1.0% to -0.6%	3540	5210
<span style="color: green;">▲</span> <b>Health care and social assistance</b>	<b>2830</b>	<b>1.5% to 2.3%</b>	<b>3690</b>	<b>6440</b>
<span style="color: yellow;">▬</span> Accommodation and food services	2290	-1.3% to 1.1%	2790	4200
<span style="color: green;">▲</span> <b>Educational services</b>	<b>2195</b>	<b>1.1% to 2.7%</b>	<b>2770</b>	<b>4910</b>
<span style="color: red;">▼</span> Transportation and warehousing	2005	-1.0% to -0.1%	2200	3280
<span style="color: red;">▼</span> Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	1760	-3.8% to -0.9%	1450	2640
<span style="color: yellow;">▬</span> Public administration	1735	-0.2% to 3.1%	1930	3470
<span style="color: red;">▼</span> Other services (except public administration)	1645	-3.9% to -1.8%	1210	2240
<span style="color: red;">▼</span> Professional, scientific and technical services	1605	-1.4% to -1.3%	1470	2270
<span style="color: yellow;">▬</span> Manufacturing	1510	-4.4% to 0.8%	1440	2700
<span style="color: yellow;">▬</span> Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	1155	-1.4% to 4.5%	1870	2760
<span style="color: red;">▼</span> Wholesale trade	910	-1.6% to -0.5%	850	1260
<span style="color: red;">▼</span> Real estate and rental and leasing	535	-3.3% to -3.1%	340	610
<span style="color: red;">▼</span> Finance and insurance	510	-5.7% to -0.9%	370	770
<span style="color: green;">▲</span> <b>Arts, entertainment and recreation</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>0.2% to 3.5%</b>	<b>580</b>	<b>1060</b>
<span style="color: green;">▲</span> <b>Utilities</b>	<b>490</b>	<b>1.1% to 1.5%</b>	<b>640</b>	<b>1040</b>
<span style="color: red;">▼</span> Information and cultural industries	235	-4.1% to -2.2%	160	300
<span style="color: red;">▼</span> Management of companies and enterprises	10	-6.7% to -3.3%	0	10

# Policies



## Vision

The RGS vision statement describes the desired long-term future for the PRRD and sets the basic direction for planning, policies and action over the next 20 years.

The vision statement started with an existing vision from the PRRD's Strategic Plan from 2023. Revisions were made based on feedback from residents through two surveys and community outreach and engagement that were carried out as part of the project.

*“The Peace River Regional District is comprised of distinct and unique urban and rural communities. The region is shaped by its roots in agriculture and its culture of independence, resilience and compassion for others.*

*With a strong regional economy, residents enjoy a high quality of life with a broad array of effective and responsive regional services.*

*Moving forward, we will continue to build strong collaborative relationships with all residents and First Nations in our region. And we will engage and involve all residents and communities as we move towards a bright, prosperous and healthy future.”*

# Goals

The RGS is organized around nine policy goals, which were developed through community engagement and outreach and in consultation with PRRD member municipalities and the RGS Steering Committee. Each of the policy goals is, in turn, supported by a series of related policy objectives.

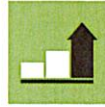
At the core of this RGS is a commitment to broad-based, long-term sustainable development. The balancing of social, economic and environmental dimensions of this commitment is clearly expressed in the nine core policy goals. It is important to recognize that the goals are all interconnected, highlighting both the complexities and challenges that come with regional planning but also the potential to strengthen and enrich regional relationships through collaboration and coordinated action.



## 1. Community Building

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Support compact, complete urban communities, maintain rural character and offer choice and affordability in housing.



## 2. Economic Strength

---

Encourage a diverse, resilient and prosperous economy that builds on regional strengths.



## 3. Agriculture and Food

---

Support agriculture and protect farmlands in the PRRD.



## 4. Living Well

---

Foster safe, healthy communities that support a high quality of life for all.



## 5. Infrastructure and Services

---

Provide efficient, cost-effective services that contribute to regional wellbeing and health.



## 6. Ecosystem Health

---

Protect the air, water and lands on which we all depend.



## 7. Transportation and Mobility

---

Collaborate with partners to provide an accessible, safe and efficient transportation system for people and goods.



## 8. Climate Resilience

---

Adapt and ensure the PRRD is prepared for a changing climate.



## 9. Regional Collaboration

---

Coordinate and collaborate with residents, PRRD member municipalities, rural communities, other levels of government and First Nations to achieve shared goals and address common issues.

# 1. COMMUNITY BUILDING



**GOAL:** *Support compact and complete urban communities, maintain rural character and offer choice and affordability in housing.*

The PRRD is composed of diverse and distinct communities that range in size from small, rural settlements to larger urban centres like Fort St. John and Dawson Creek. Over the next 20 years, the PRRD is expected to accommodate an additional 19,000 residents. It is expected that about 90% of this growth will occur within larger communities, with most in Fort St. John and Dawson Creek and smaller amounts in Taylor, Tumbler Ridge, Chetwynd, Hudson's Hope and Pouce Coupe. The remaining growth is expected to occur in the PRRD's rural areas and unincorporated communities.

Encouraging the development of compact and complete communities, whether urban or rural, will help reduce our impact on the surrounding natural environment, improve access to economic and social opportunities and enable more efficient distribution of services, such as utilities and water, that benefit residents of all ages.

Like most regions across the province, the PRRD is facing the challenges of rising housing costs, limited rental stocks and increasing homelessness. Larger communities like Fort St. John and Dawson Creek are particularly affected, but in general, affordability issues are a concern for most communities in the region, including rural areas.

Housing is a key determinant for many aspects of health, wellbeing and economic prosperity. As a core land use planning issue, housing is an area where more coordinated planning across the region could have a significant impact.

One important sign of a healthy community is housing diversity that meets the needs of all residents, regardless of their age, income, or ability. Planning for a wide range of housing now will ensure the demand for accessible, affordable and adaptable housing will be met in the future.

## 1. Encourage and support growth in urban centres.

- a) Recognize the City of Fort St. John and the City of Dawson Creek as the PRRD's main urban centres with their established services and identified growth capacity.
- b) Support growth in smaller urban centres (District of Chetwynd, District of Tumbler Ridge, District of Hudson's Hope, District of Taylor, Village of Pouce Coupe) that is within their Official Community Plans' established development capacities.
- c) Work collaboratively with member municipalities on fringe area planning through PRRD OCP updates.
- d) Encourage appropriately located accessible commercial, institutional, light and heavy industrial development in urban centres.

## 2. Protect the character of rural areas.

- a) Identify and engage with rural communities throughout the region which could be designated as rural settlement centres and accommodate higher levels of development than other rural communities.
- b) Ensure that potential rural settlement centres consider future servicing needs and associated development costs and financing.
- c) Work with the Prespatou Planning Committee on identifying current and future growth needs for the community.
- d) Discourage rezoning of large rural land parcels to smaller parcel sizes in rural areas outside of designated rural settlement centres.
- e) Identify areas where updating the zoning bylaw to require larger minimum lot sizes is necessary to protect agricultural uses and/or rural character.



**3. Collaborate across the PRRD to support affordable and accessible housing.**

- a) Work with member municipalities, regional housing providers and residents to implement recommendations from the PPRD Housing Needs Implementation Framework where they are consistent with municipal Housing Needs Reports.
- b) Collaborate with all PRRD member municipalities to jointly undertake provincially required Housing Needs Report updates by 2028 and continue to work together collectively to update the Report on the required five-year report update cycle.
- c) Consider working with PRRD member municipalities, non-profit housing providers, other housing and development partners and residents to develop a Regional Housing Plan.
- d) Consider hosting a forum on actions to address housing issues for PRRD communities and northern communities with neighbouring local governments, including Northern Rockies Regional Municipality, Fraser-Fort George Regional District and Saddle Hills County in Alberta, to identify opportunities to share learning.

**4. Strengthen senior's housing and supports for others in need of housing.**

- a) Work with PRRD member municipalities, community organizations, Northern Health and other provincial agencies to expand existing supports for aging in place and identify new opportunities or programs to keep seniors in their homes and healthy for as long as possible.
- b) Advocate to BC Housing, CMHC and other senior government agencies for additional housing supports, including seniors housing and housing for low-income households.
- c) Encourage supportive housing opportunities that are appropriate for smaller and more rural communities within the PRRD.

## 5. Address workforce housing.

- a) Work with the natural resource sector to identify opportunities to minimize the impacts of industry on housing issues in the PRRD.
- b) Advocate for senior government (B.C., Canada) resources to pilot and support new initiatives for workforce housing.
- c) Work with PRRD member municipalities and the natural resource sector to quantify the impact of the shadow workforce<sup>2</sup> and develop solutions in partnership with industry to alleviate housing market pressure build-up.

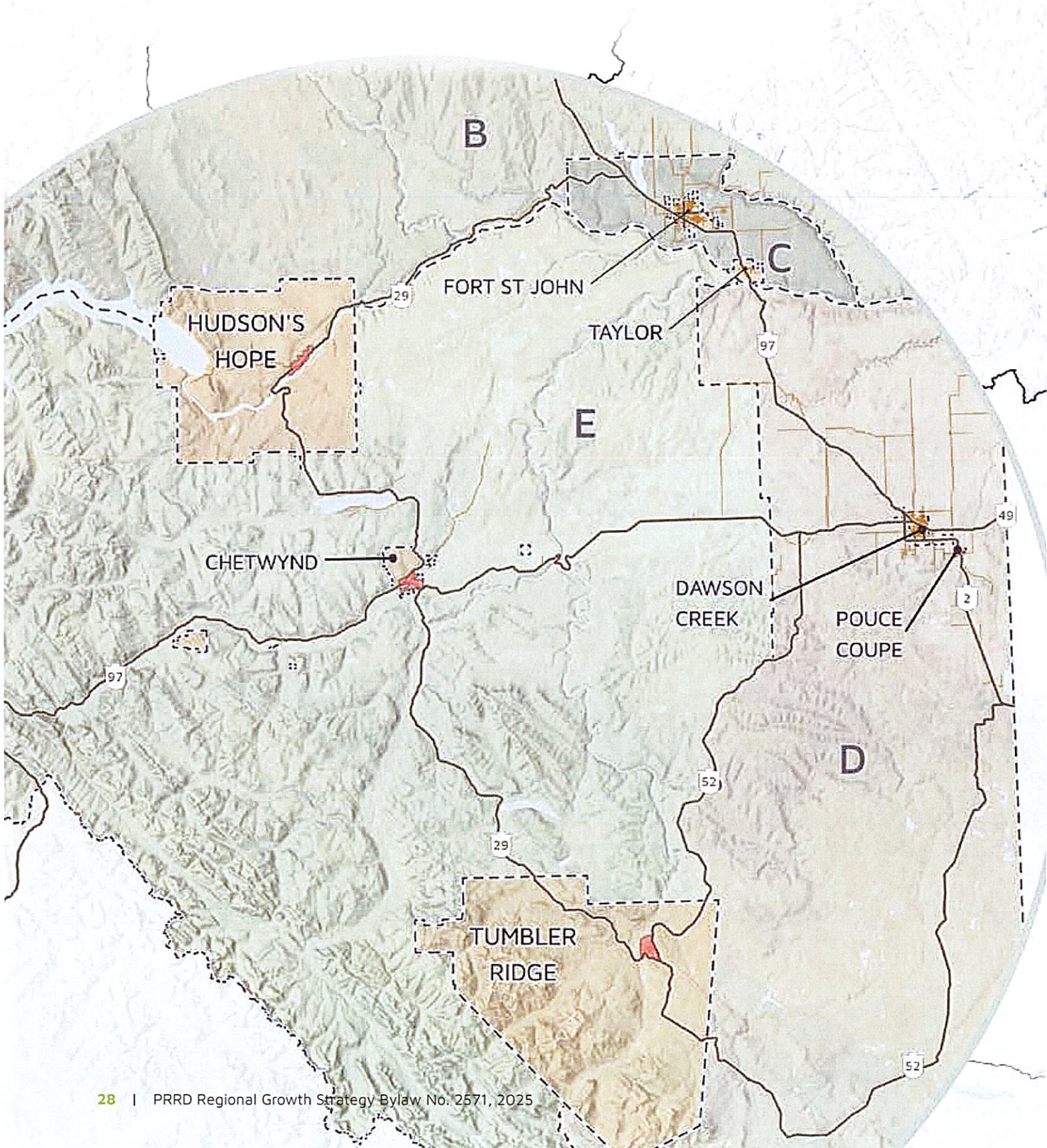
<sup>2</sup> Industry in the PRRD is largely influenced by the cyclical nature of the natural resource economy which has developed a strong mobile “shadow population” due to seasonal and project-oriented work in the region. A significant shadow population exists of individuals who work in the region but live permanently elsewhere. As a result of the shadow population, there is increased pressure on housing, infrastructure, transportation, and services for health, education and community support.

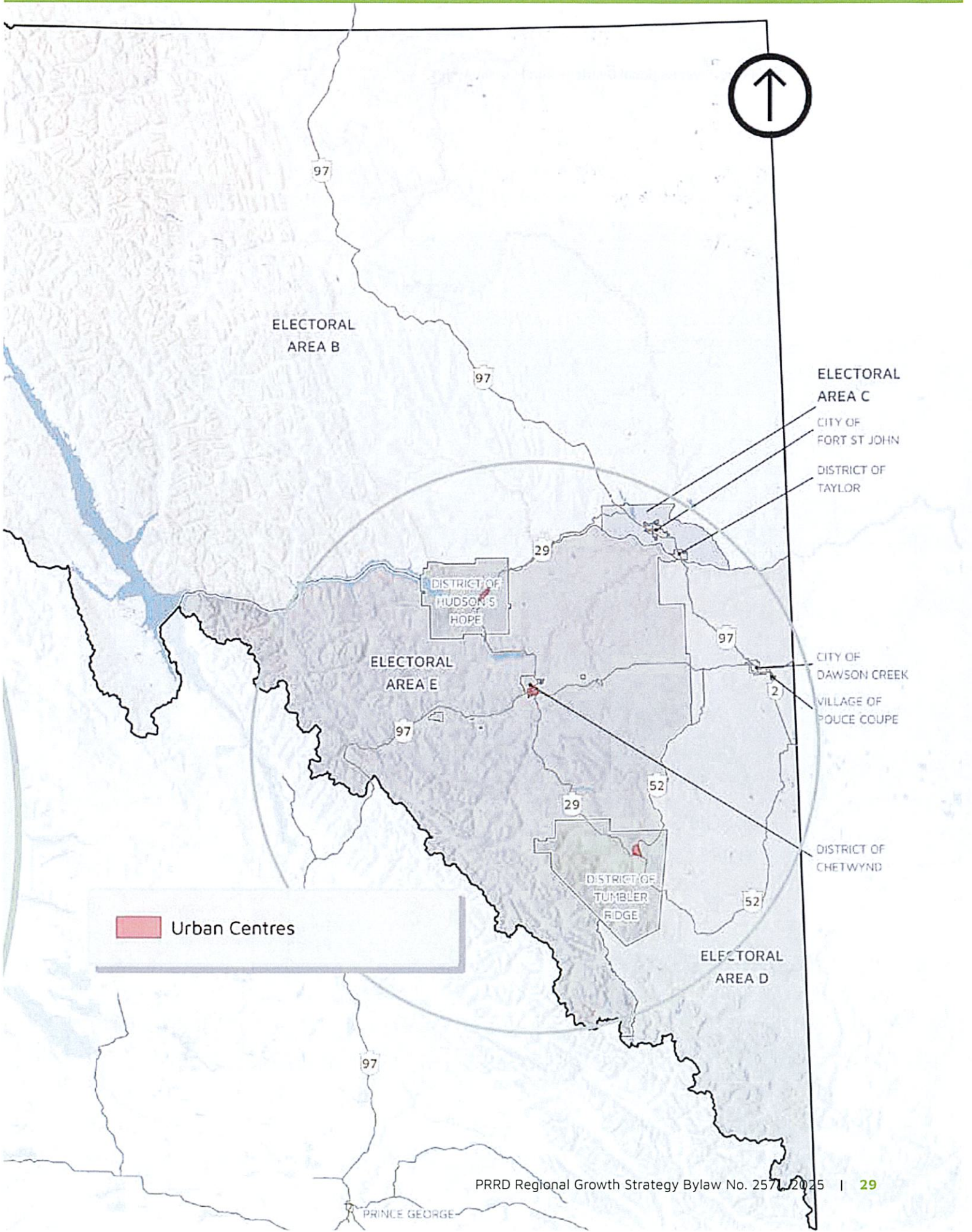


Photo: Dawson Creek, Northern BC Tourism/6ix Sigma Productions

**MAP 3: Peace River Regional District – Urban Centres**

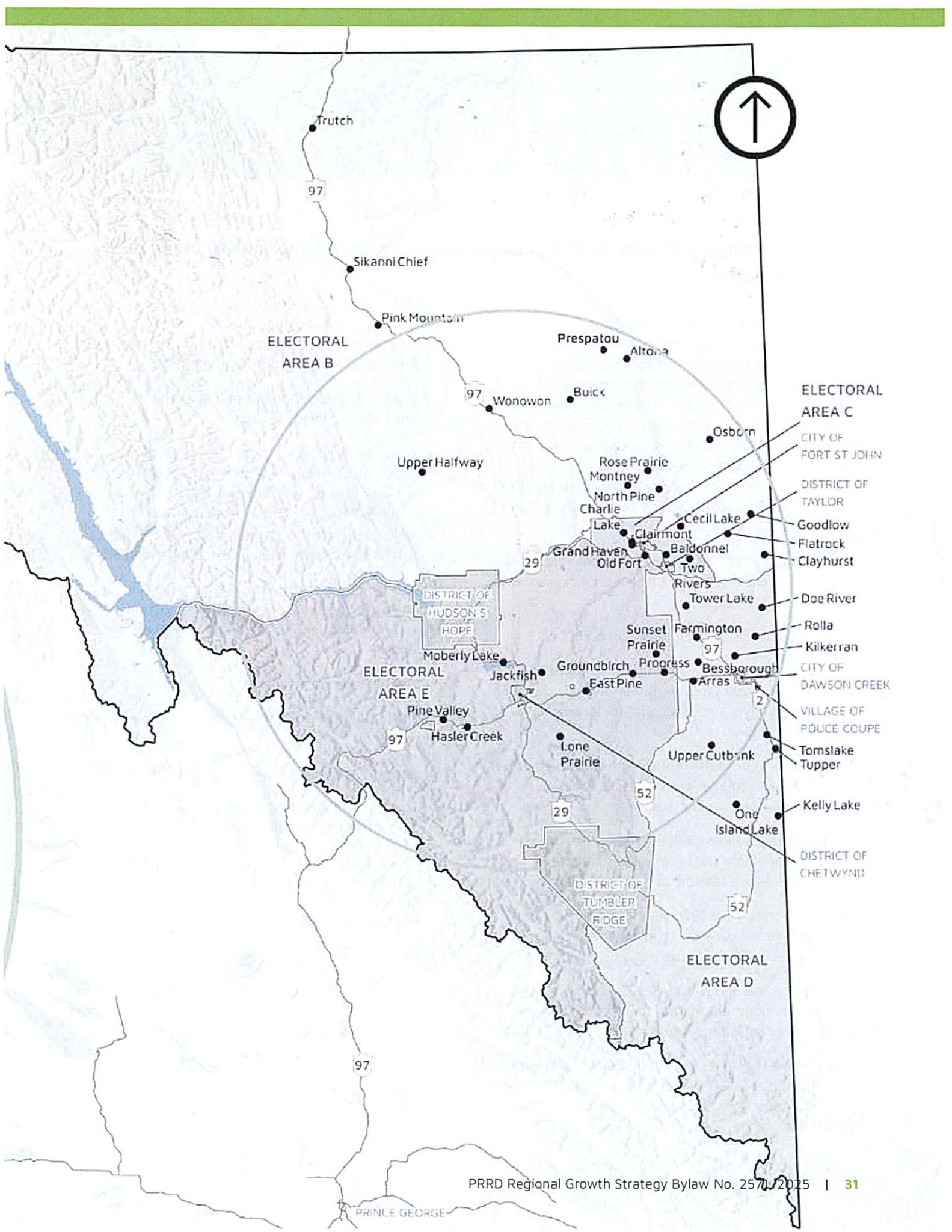
The pink areas in map 3 highlight the approximate boundaries of urban density land use designations (residential, commercial, mixed-use) and future growth areas in larger district municipalities (Hudson's Hope, Tumbler Ridge, Chetwynd).





**MAP 4:** Peace River Regional District – Rural Communities





PRINCE GEORGE

## 2. ECONOMIC STRENGTH



**GOAL:** *Encourage a diverse, resilient and prosperous economy that builds on regional strengths.*

A healthy, diverse regional economy is one of the cornerstones of more sustainable, resilient communities. As a region, the PRRD has some economic diversity, with employment generated by multiple sectors. Outside of the oil and gas sector, public sector employment is significant, with government, health and education services clustered in Fort St. John and Dawson Creek. Agriculture is a major contributor, while forestry and tourism are other key sectors. Fort St. John and Dawson Creek are the regional employment centres.

Public consultation carried out through the RGS process identified the local economy as the number one area of importance to the region.

### 1. Support a diversified regional economy.

- a) Encourage economic development that builds on the strengths and character of PRRD member municipalities and urban and rural communities in the PRRD.
- b) Encourage business retention, expansion and attraction activities with a special focus on region-serving businesses.
- c) Support secondary value-added processing and manufacturing in agricultural and resource sectors where feasible and appropriate.
- d) Collaborate with PRRD member municipalities and regional partners to attract high-tech, knowledge-based industries.
- e) Support the agricultural sector and encourage the development of local food production and processing facilities where practical and feasible.
- f) Support the development of a targeted regional workforce attraction program in collaboration with educational institutions operating in the PRRD.

- g) Explore economic opportunities and collaboration on projects of mutual interest and benefit with First Nations in the PRRD.
- h) Explore the development of a Regional Employment Lands Strategy.
- i) Consider the development of a Regional Economic Development Strategy through a collaborative process involving PRRD member municipalities, economic development stakeholders, industry groups and First Nations in the PRRD who may be interested in participating.
- j) Recognize the North Peace Regional Airport as a key driver of the regional economy and advocate for improved service and additional direct flight options.
- k) Direct industrial uses to existing industrial areas.

### 2. Support and promote tourism and tourism-related activities.

- a) Support regional tourism marketing efforts.
- b) Support and encourage regional recreational tourism initiatives and projects.
- c) Work with PRRD member municipalities and stakeholder groups to continue implementing recommendations from the Regional Parks and Trails Master Plan.

### 3. Address workforce housing.

- a) Work with the natural resource sector to identify opportunities to minimize the impacts of industry on housing issues.
- b) Advocate for senior government resources to pilot and support new initiatives for workforce housing.

### 3. AGRICULTURE AND FOOD



#### **GOAL:** *Support agriculture and protect farmlands in the PRRD.*

Agriculture and farming have played a central role in the regional economy, its recent history and the larger identity of the region. Grain, forage crops, canola and cattle have long been the foundation of this agricultural region, and the sector has remained a reliable mainstay of the region's economy through resource boom and bust cycles and other economic challenges. As shown in Map 5, the ALR makes up 11% of all land in the region. With over 1.3 million hectares of ALR land, the PRRD is home to 27% of the province's ALR land.

#### **1. Support local agriculture and related businesses.**

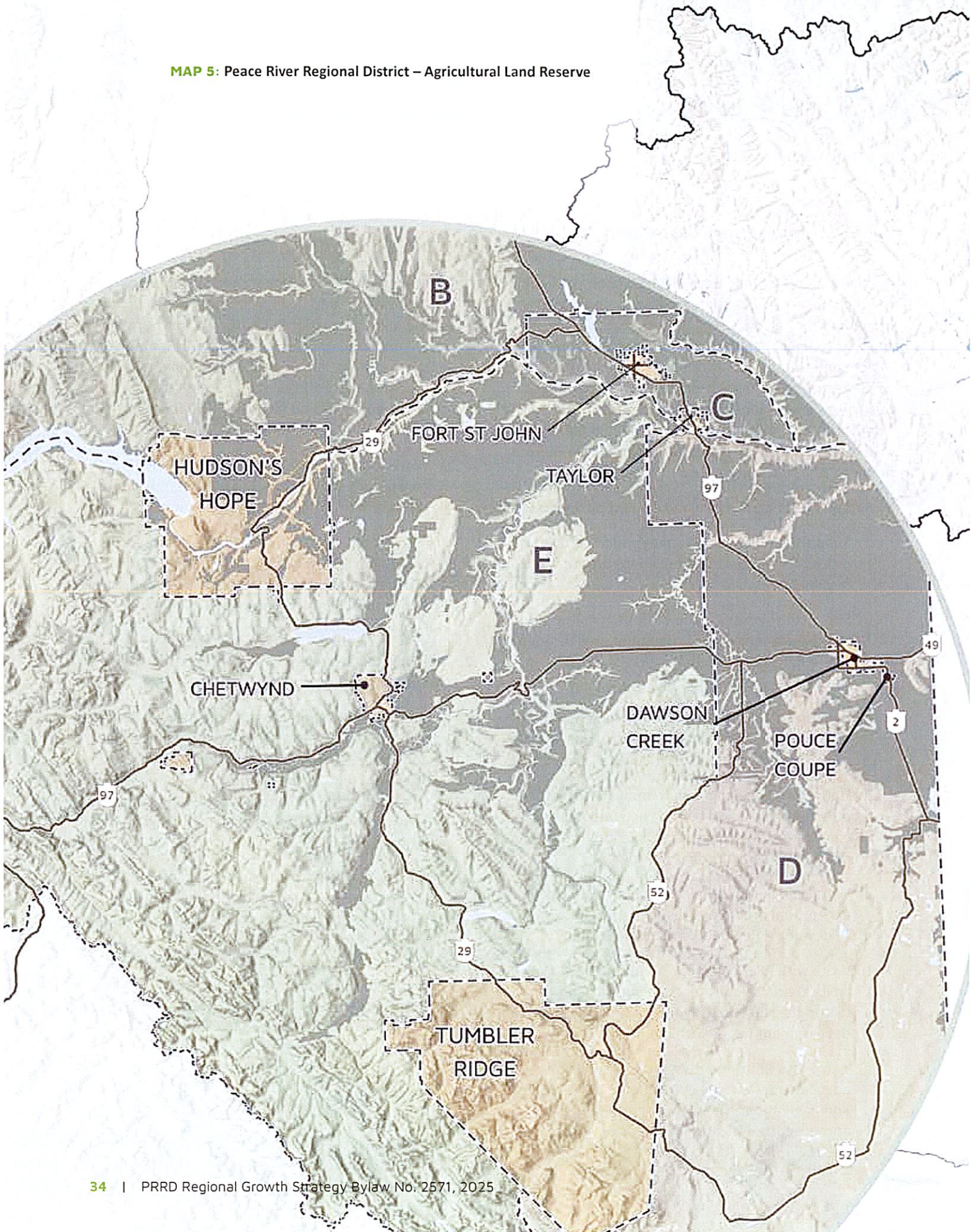
- a) Support and encourage value-added agricultural processing and production where practical and feasible.
- b) Support the preservation of the Agricultural Land Reserve for long-term agricultural uses through the update and implementation of official community plans in the region.
- c) Support maintenance and improvements to the regional transportation network, including rail, to support the transport of agricultural products.
- d) Undertake edge planning to mitigate the impacts of non-farm uses on farming activities when considering development adjacent to the ALR and designated agricultural properties.
- e) Work collaboratively with member municipalities, agricultural producers, residents and First Nations to develop a Regional Agriculture Strategy.
- f) Work with PRRD member municipalities to advocate for and protect agricultural land within the rural areas while recognizing urban development needs within municipalities.
- g) Work with PRRD member municipalities to advocate for land use exemptions to the ALC Act and Regulations that allow for greater flexibility and support of the unique needs of farmers in this region.

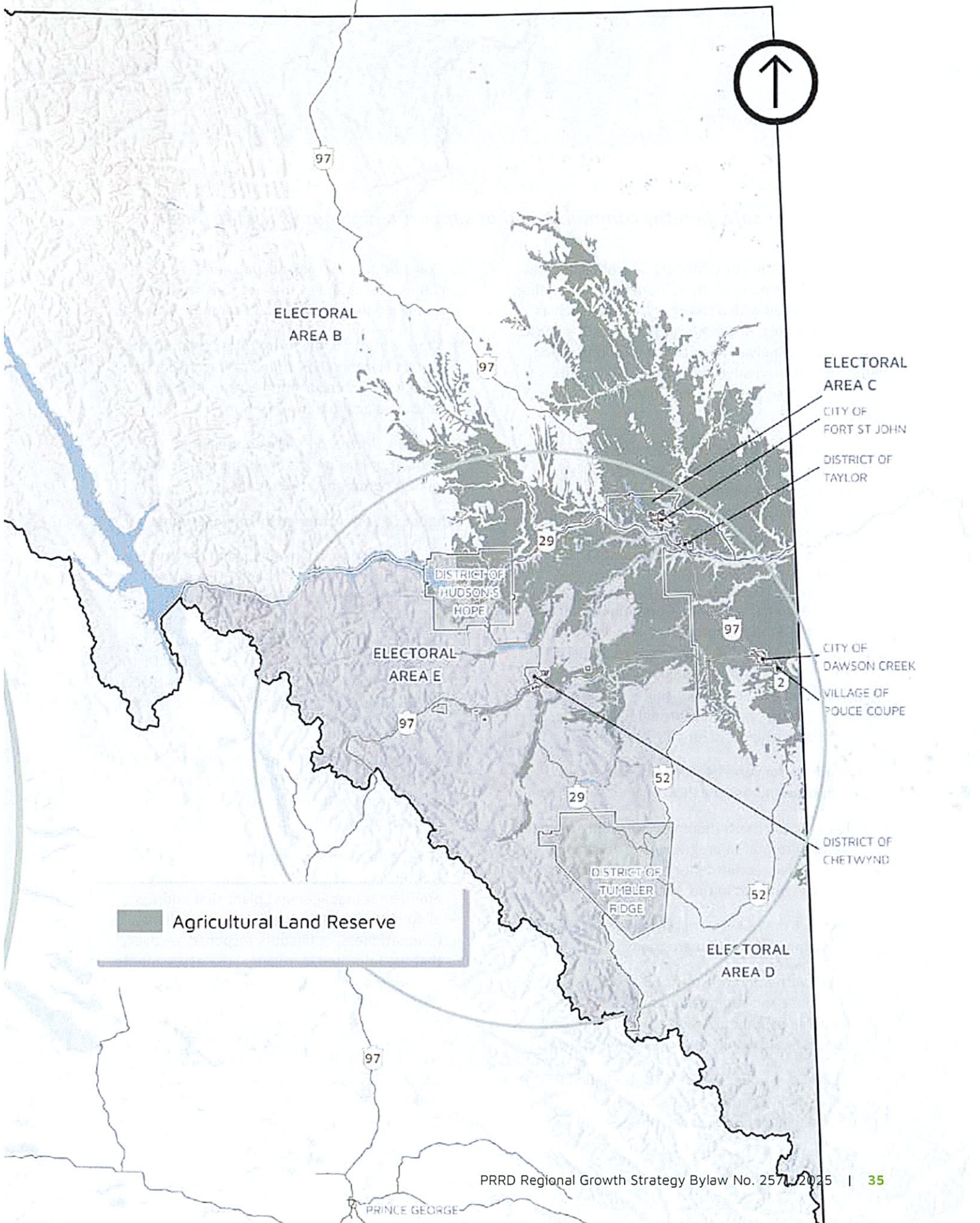
- h) Work with PRRD member municipalities to advocate for and build provincial awareness of the unique situation that exists in northern B.C. as compared to other agricultural areas in the province (e.g., larger parcel sizes, longer winters, lack of rail access) that may necessitate more and larger buildings and facilities, including additional farm residences.
- i) Work with the agricultural partners and collaborators in the PRRD to attract and support younger farming families in the region.
- j) Support agricultural partners and collaborators working in the PRRD (B.C. Agriculture Council, Northern Development Initiative Trust, B.C. Peace Agricultural Fund) to ensure a sustainable food supply for the region.


#### **2. Collaborate with regional partners on addressing climate impacts on agriculture in the PRRD.**

- a) Work with PRRD member municipalities, First Nations, the Province (Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship) and the regional agricultural sector to help plan for and ensure sustainable access to water for agriculture in increasingly warmer and drier climate.
- b) Work with PRRD member municipalities, First Nations, the Province (Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship) and the regional agricultural sector to explore an integrated water resource management approach to watershed planning at the PRRD level to help better coordinate more holistic and collaborative regional water management strategies.
- c) Identify opportunities to improve climate resilience for agriculture through land use policies.

**MAP 5:** Peace River Regional District – Agricultural Land Reserve





 Agricultural Land Reserve

- ELECTORAL AREA C
- CITY OF FORT ST JOHN
- DISTRICT OF TAYLOR
- CITY OF DAWSON CREEK
- VILLAGE OF POUCE COUPE
- DISTRICT OF CHETWYND

PRINCE GEORGE

## 4. LIVING WELL



**GOAL:** *Foster safe, healthy communities that support a high quality of life for all.*

The residents of the PRRD face significant challenges in health and are particularly vulnerable to increasing threats associated with a changing climate, such as wildfires, droughts, floods and geohazards. The PRRD plays an increasingly important role in coordinating regional efforts and advocating for public health, emergency management and preparedness within the region.

The PRRD falls within the northeast health service area under the jurisdiction of the Northern Health Authority (Northern Health). The health authority covers over 605,000 square kilometres, making it the largest geographic health region in the province, serving municipalities and rural and remote communities across the area.

Northern Health has a Healthy Communities team that works with the PRRD, communities and community organizations in the PRRD and others to influence conditions – like transportation, food systems, neighbourhood design and housing – that promote wellbeing. They support this through facilitation, building relationships and funding programs.

### 1. Collaborate for safe, healthy and active communities across the PRRD.

- a) Support Northern Health in expanding regional health promotion programs and advancing a proactive recruitment program to increase medical services in the PRRD.
- b) Support the RCMP in raising awareness for crime watch and prevention programs.
- c) Work with School Districts 59 and 60 to recognize and support school facilities as valuable neighbourhood resources that can support community activities and initiatives.
- d) Continue working with the PRRD Regional Accessibility Committee to improve the accessibility of public spaces.

- e) Collaborate with regional partners to ensure public spaces and events are consistent with changing demographics and community needs.
- f) Work with the Ministry of Transportation and Transit and member municipalities to create a Regional Transportation Master Plan that considers active transportation.
- g) Support Northern Health and regional agricultural producers in enhancing local food security programs and initiatives.

### 2. Enhance regional emergency management.

- a) Support emergency planning and networking of response services in the PRRD and inter-regionally (Northern Rockies Regional Municipality, Fraser-Fort George Regional District) and with neighbouring counties and municipal districts in Alberta (Municipal District of Greenview, County of Grande Prairie No. 1, Saddle Hills County, Clear Hills County, Northern Lights County).
- b) Work with regional partners to prepare regional risk assessments for all potential hazards as required by the *Emergency and Disaster Management Act*.
- c) Work with member municipalities, First Nations and residents to prepare enhanced emergency management plans that address all four phases of emergency management (preparedness, mitigation, response, recovery) that are informed by regional risk assessments as required by the *Emergency and Disaster Management Act*.
- d) Develop a PRRD business continuity plan to ensure the PRRD's continued function and provision of essential services during an emergency as required by the *Emergency and Disaster Management Act*.

- e) Prioritize the strengthening of regional fire safety through the recruitment, training and retention of qualified fire inspectors and investigators.
- f) Advocate to the Office of the Fire Commissioner to ensure regional considerations are taken into account when developing provincial fire safety standards, mutual aid agreements and best practices.
- g) Explore opportunities to support the development of new or existing fire departments in rural settlement centres.
- h) Explore opportunities for new or enhanced mutual aid agreements with Northern Rockies Regional Municipality, Fraser-Fort George Regional District, the Municipal District of Greenview, County of Grande Prairie No. 1, Saddle Hills County, Clear Hills County and Northern Lights County in Alberta.

### 3. Enhance community wellbeing.

- a) Support economic opportunities that attract and retain young families.
- b) Encourage new housing to provide accessibility features.
- c) Collaborate with PRRD member municipalities to enhance housing diversity and ensure the availability of accessible and affordable housing.

- d) Work with Northern Health and PRRD member municipalities to support accessible and affordable long-term care facilities.
- e) Consider working with PRRD member municipalities, non-profit housing providers, other housing and development partners and residents to develop a Regional Housing Plan.
- f) Collaborate with Northern Health and community groups to coordinate and deliver more accessible and affordable services for rural and senior residents to age in place.
- g) Advocate for increased provincial resources to support individuals experiencing homelessness, including increased mental health and substance use supports.
- h) Coordinate with Northern Health and BC Housing to identify opportunities to expand existing mental health and substance use supports in the PRRD.
- i) Advocate to the province, North Central Local Government Association and Union of BC Municipalities for action on mental health and substance use and the need for additional supports in the PRRD.
- j) Support and encourage community arts, culture and heritage programs, and community events and celebrations.



Photo: Tumblir Ridge, Destination BC/Jesaja Class

## 5. INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES



**GOAL:** *Provide efficient, sustainable and cost-effective services that contribute to regional wellbeing and health.*

Well-planned infrastructure services are important to the overall health, safety and livability of communities. More dispersed settlement patterns require servicing infrastructure extensions, which are expensive to build, operate and maintain and can produce greater environmental impacts than development in existing serviced areas.

The delivery of services such as water, wastewater and sewer, and solid waste are core functions of the PRRD, as with other regional districts across the province. The PRRD provides a range of services across the region for electoral area residents and member municipalities. In general, areas closest to municipalities have access to more services, including some water and sewer services provided through neighbouring municipalities. Expanding and extending this infrastructure is often an essential component of planning for growth, as it is necessary to consider the capacity, costs and needs associated with those services.

### 1. Reduce solid and liquid waste.

- a) Continue to implement and monitor the PRRD Regional Solid Waste Management Plan.
- b) Continue to support and promote public waste reduction and education programs as outlined in the PRRD Regional Solid Waste Management Plan.
- c) Identify ways to improve the recycling and composting programs for municipalities and electoral areas.
- d) Explore the use of treated effluent water for industrial use where feasible and appropriate.
- e) Consider establishing a development trigger (e.g., number of lots) for the creation of

new community sewer systems in any new designated rural settlement centre.

- f) Collaborate with PRRD member municipalities on exploring the development of more specific plans for improving rural water and sewer systems, particularly in areas near urban growth centres, which would enhance inter-municipal service efficiency.
- g) Collaborate with industry to promote wastewater reuse programs to reduce water use and improve water conservation.

### 2. Minimize environmental impacts of PRRD infrastructure and services.

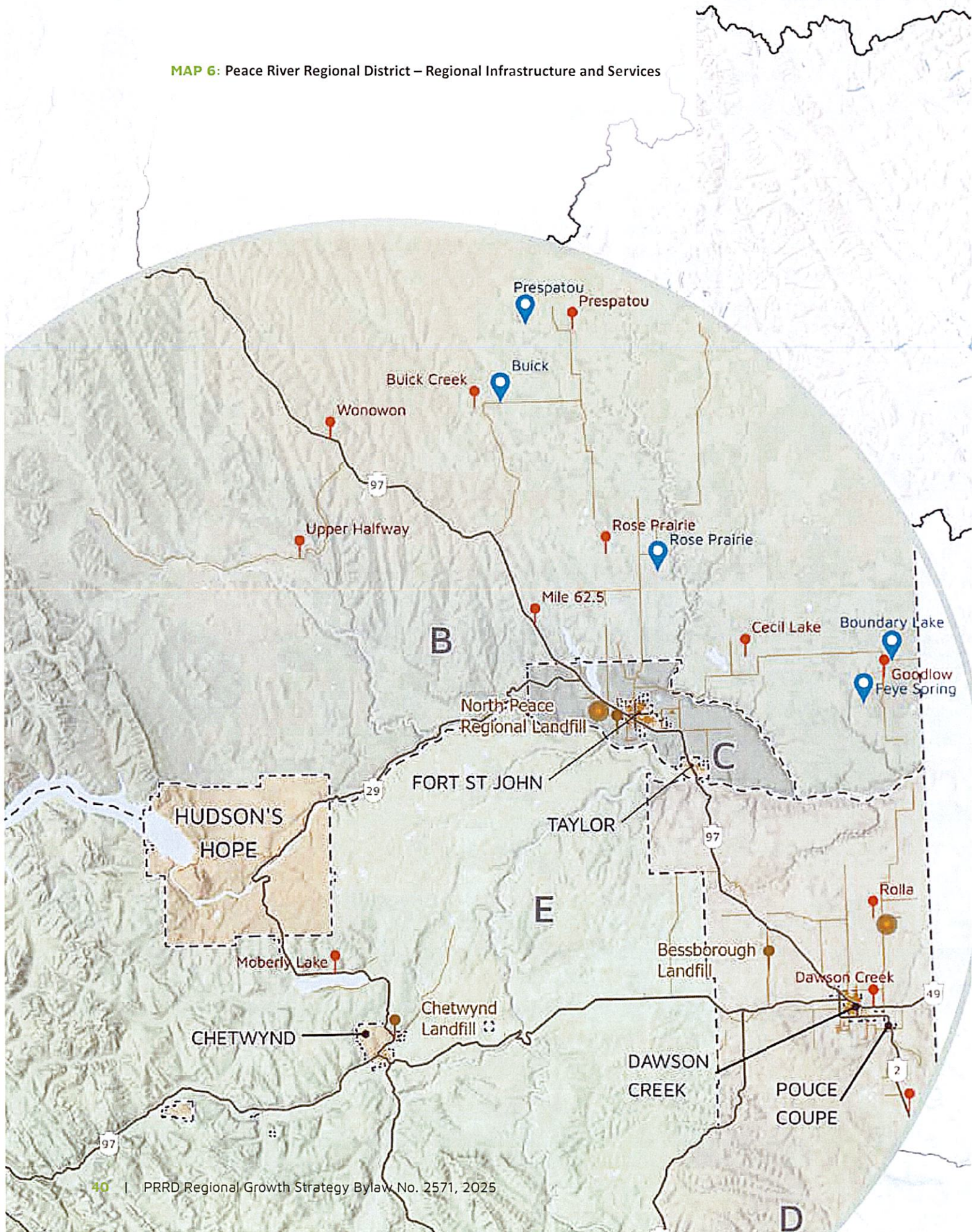
- a) Support projects to improve water resource management, including water conservation and reuse, groundwater management and stormwater management.
- b) Update the Subdivision and Development Servicing Bylaw to include regulations on stormwater management for new development.
- c) Minimize regional infrastructure development impacts by avoiding hazard areas and environmentally sensitive areas.
- d) Work with Northern Health to address water quality concerns associated with contamination and impacts from other uses, such as the oil and gas industry, Site C Dam, forestry and agriculture.
- e) Consider collaborating with provincial partners (Ministry of Environment and Parks) to undertake a regional natural asset mapping and inventory to support sustainable planning, conservation, and climate resilience.

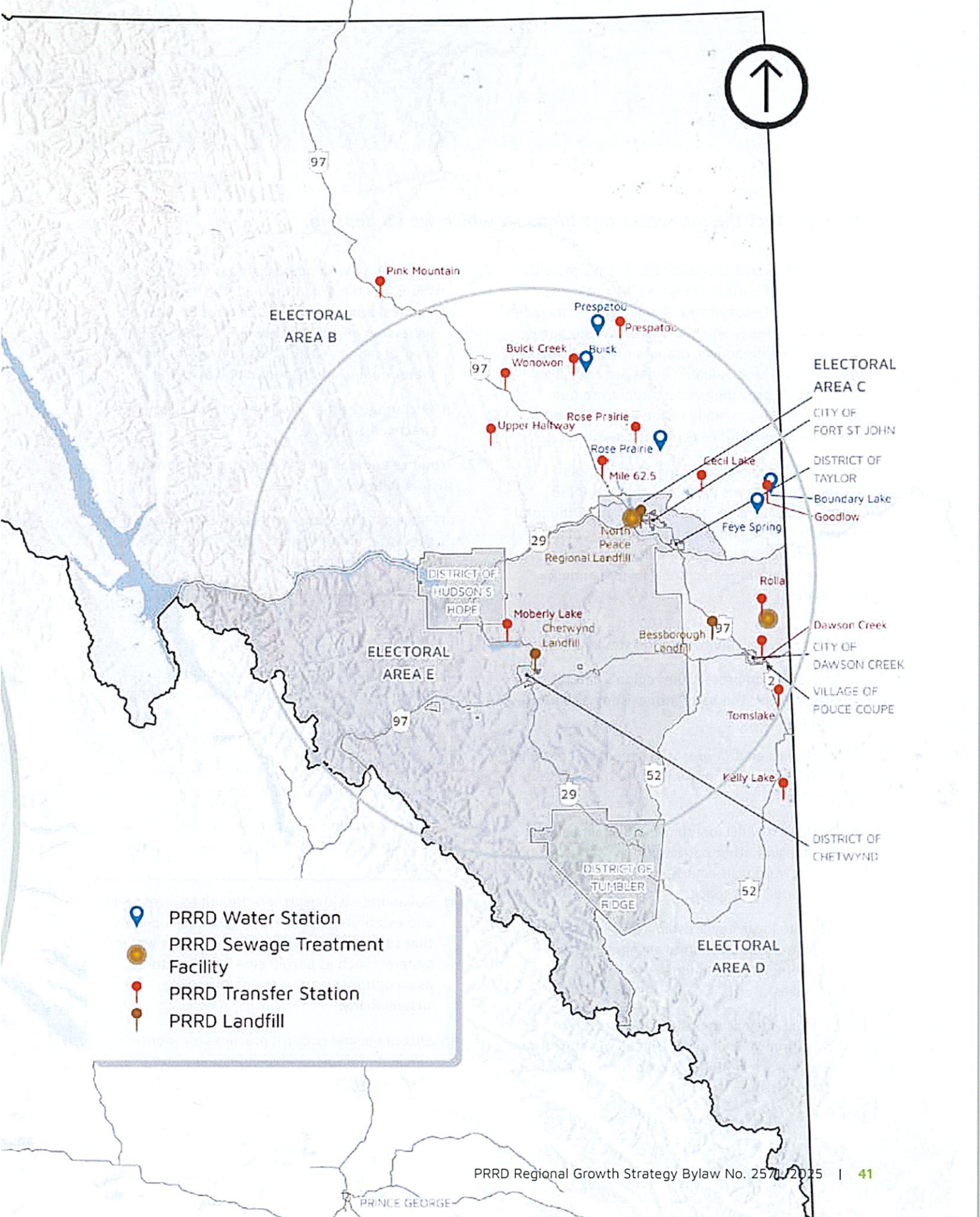
### 3. Improve PRRD asset management.





- a) Continue to implement the Asset Management Policy and Asset Management Financial Strategy.
- b) Explore undertaking a Regional Natural Hazard and Climate Risk Assessment for all PRRD-owned assets to identify potential climate change hazards and risks and outline mitigation strategies to reduce them.
- c) Direct and encourage new development to serviced areas to provide more cost-effective infrastructure, facilities and services.



MAP 6: Peace River Regional District – Regional Infrastructure and Services





-  PRRD Water Station
-  PRRD Sewage Treatment Facility
-  PRRD Transfer Station
-  PRRD Landfill

## 6. ECOSYSTEM HEALTH



### **GOAL:** *Protect the air, water and lands on which we all depend.*

The PRRD is the largest regional district in size, with a vast expanse of natural areas and host to many different types of ecosystems. The land cover includes young and old forests and many lakes, watercourses, wetlands, alpine meadows, mountain vistas, canyons and waterfalls. These valuable areas are critical as wildlife habitat, providing water supplies to our communities, and providing residents with diverse recreational opportunities across the seasons.

There are 49 provincial parks, protected areas and ecological reserves located within the PRRD, encompassing approximately ten percent of the total land area for the region. The sizes range from over 130,000 hectares (Kwadacha Wilderness Provincial Park) to less than three hectares (Taylor Landing Provincial Park).

#### **1. Support regional environmental stewardship.**

- a) Conserve and protect the region's natural resources for the benefit of existing and future generations.
- b) Work with environmental partners on continued coordination of conservation and stewardship initiatives.
- c) Work with PRRD member municipalities, First Nations and other partners to conserve, protect and steward watersheds, wetlands, riparian areas and open spaces.
- d) Promote local stewardship and develop options for increased community engagement and involvement in community-led conservation initiatives.
- e) Develop policies to protect the natural environment, including updated development permit areas in PRRD OCPs to protect sensitive ecosystems.
- f) Collaborate with provincial agencies, member municipalities, First Nations, Northern Health and residents to explore the development of watershed management plans across the PRRD, incorporating a health lens to protect drinking water quality and community well-being.
- g) Encourage best environmental management practices on farms.

#### **2. Promote and enhance water conservation and sustainability.**

- a) Protect and enhance the quality and quantity of the water in the region's lakes, rivers, streams, and groundwater sources.
- b) Promote conservation and sustainability of watershed ecosystems, wetlands and riparian areas.
- c) Work with PRRD member municipalities, First Nations and other partners to maintain environmental flows that support ecological functions and groundwater recharge.
- d) Support the provision of adequate water resources for the agriculture sector.
- e) Address and improve permitting and management of water dugouts on agricultural properties.
- f) Collaborate with Northern Health to investigate and establish guidelines for new development that support incorporating non-potable water systems, such as purple pipe infrastructure, as an optional feature to enhance water sustainability.
- g) Encourage and support practices for more efficient and sustainable industrial water use, particularly for fracking.

- h) Ensure the updated PRRD Official Community Plans include lakeshore development guidelines that are consistent with relevant provincial regulations and guidelines (e.g., septic setbacks).

**3. Expand and improve the regional park system.**

- a) Work with PRRD member municipalities, First Nations and other partners to review and update the PRRD Regional Parks and Trails Master Plan.
- b) Work with PRRD member municipalities, First Nations and other partners to identify potential

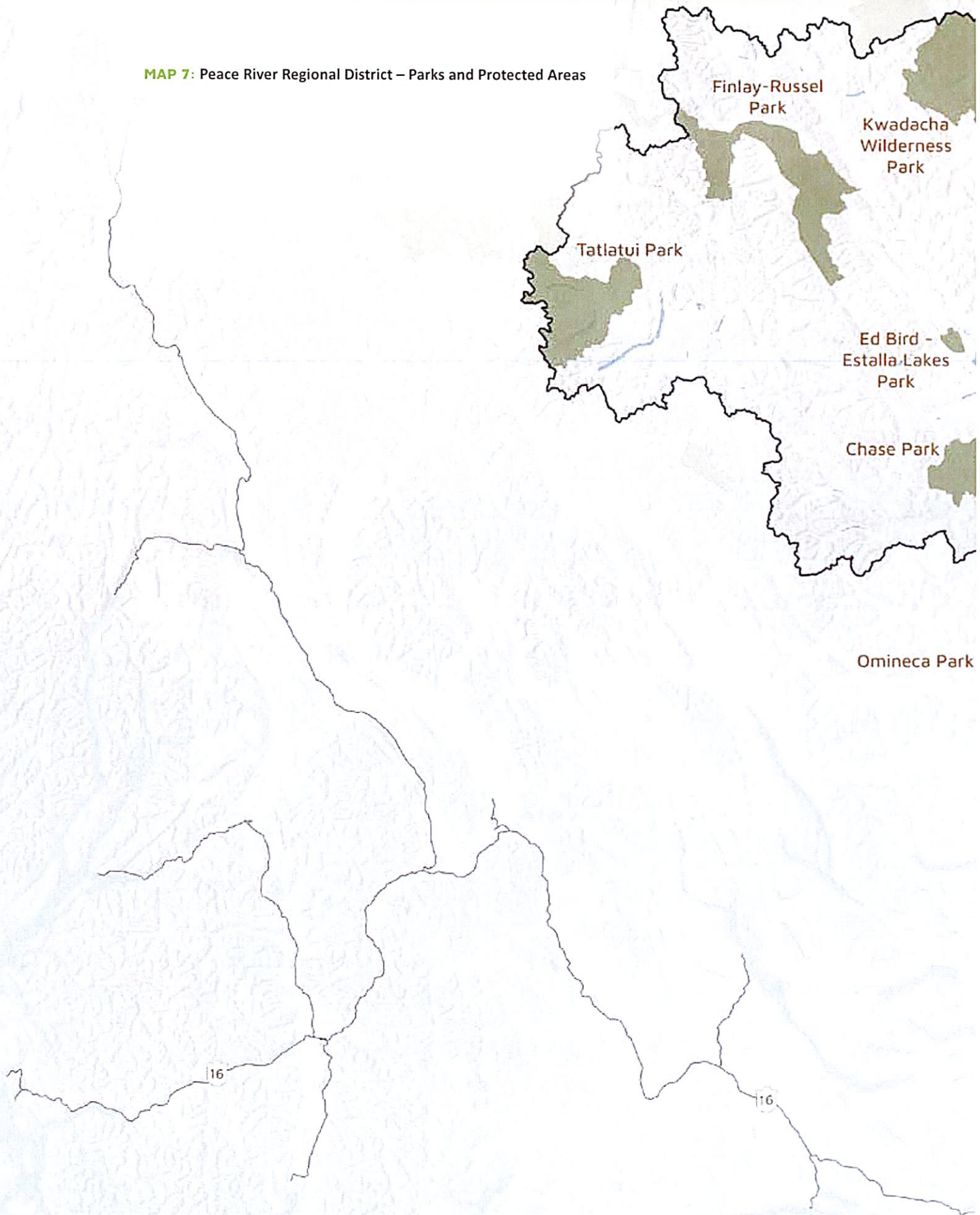
future regional park sites and trail network opportunities.

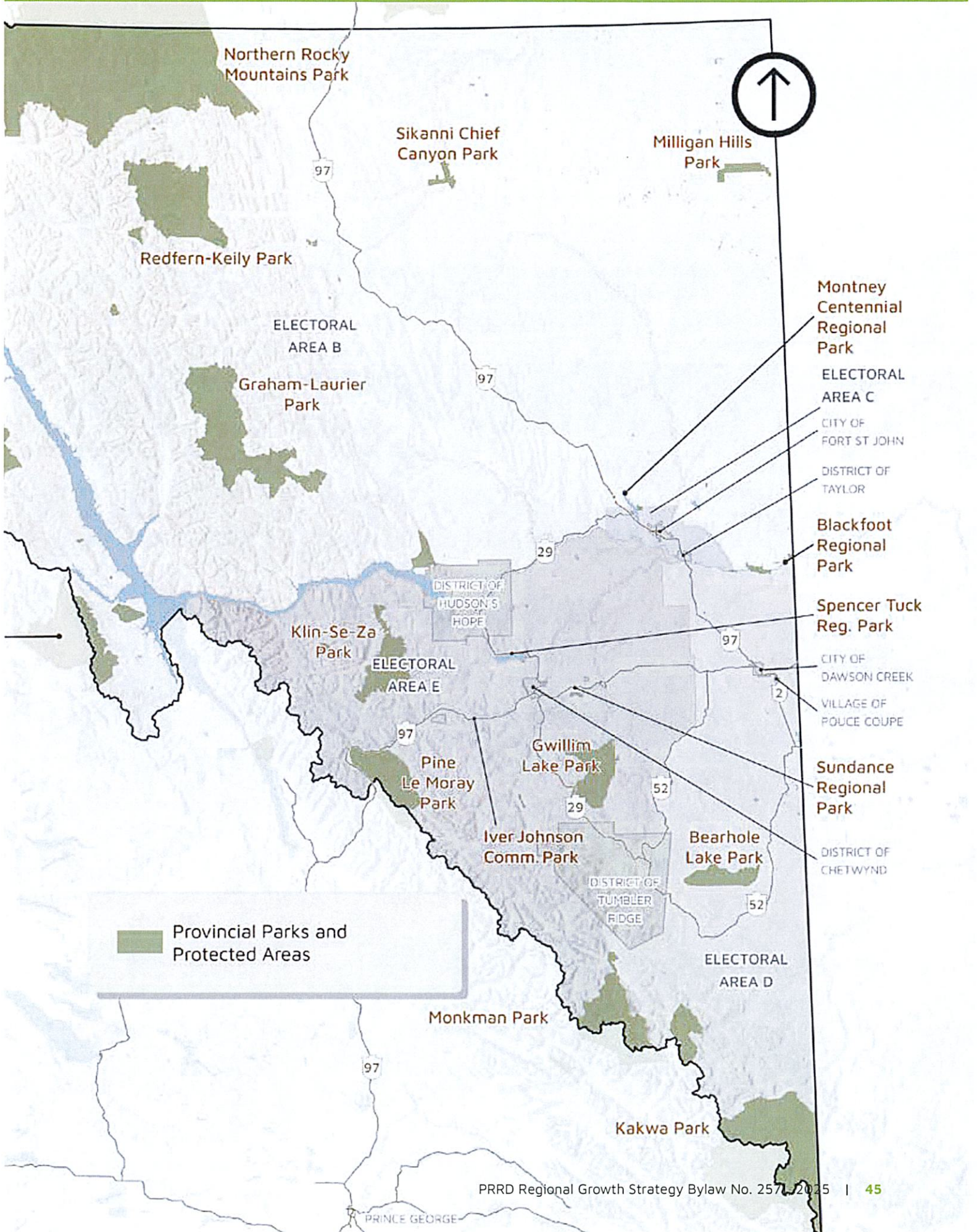
- c) Develop a clear parkland classification system and establish transparent service levels for each classification.
- d) Consider linking parkland acquisition to regional biodiversity stewardship.
- e) Develop a PRRD parkland acquisition policy that is better aligned with parkland acquisition requirements in the LGA and to help ensure future park acquisitions are sustainable and adequately resourced.



Photo: Tumbler Ridge, Destination BC/Mike Seehager

**MAP 7:** Peace River Regional District – Parks and Protected Areas





Northern Rocky Mountains Park

Sikanni Chief Canyon Park

Milligan Hills Park

Redfern-Keily Park

ELECTORAL AREA B

Graham-Laurier Park

Montney Centennial Regional Park

ELECTORAL AREA C

CITY OF FORT ST JOHN

DISTRICT OF TAYLOR

Blackfoot Regional Park

Spencer Tuck Reg. Park

CITY OF DAWSON CREEK

VILLAGE OF POUCE COUPE

Sundance Regional Park

DISTRICT OF CHETWYND

Klin-Se-Za Park

ELECTORAL AREA E

DISTRICT OF HUDSON'S HOPE

Pine Le Moray Park

Gwillim Lake Park

Iver Johnson Comm. Park

Bearhole Lake Park

DISTRICT OF TUMBLER RIDGE

Provincial Parks and Protected Areas

ELECTORAL AREA D

Monkman Park

Kakwa Park



BC Hydro - British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority

Photo: BC Hydro

# 7. TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY



**GOAL:** *Collaborate with partners to provide an accessible, safe and efficient transportation system for people and goods.*

PRRD residents depend on a municipal and provincial transportation network for work, recreation and day-to-day travel, and the regional economy depends on the network for safe and efficient goods movement. While most residents rely on private vehicles to move around the region, the City of Fort St. John and BC Transit operate a local bus system.

Except for roads within municipal boundaries, the road network in the region is under the jurisdiction of the province and the Ministry of Transportation and Transit.

## 1. Improve transportation networks, infrastructure and capacity in the PRRD.

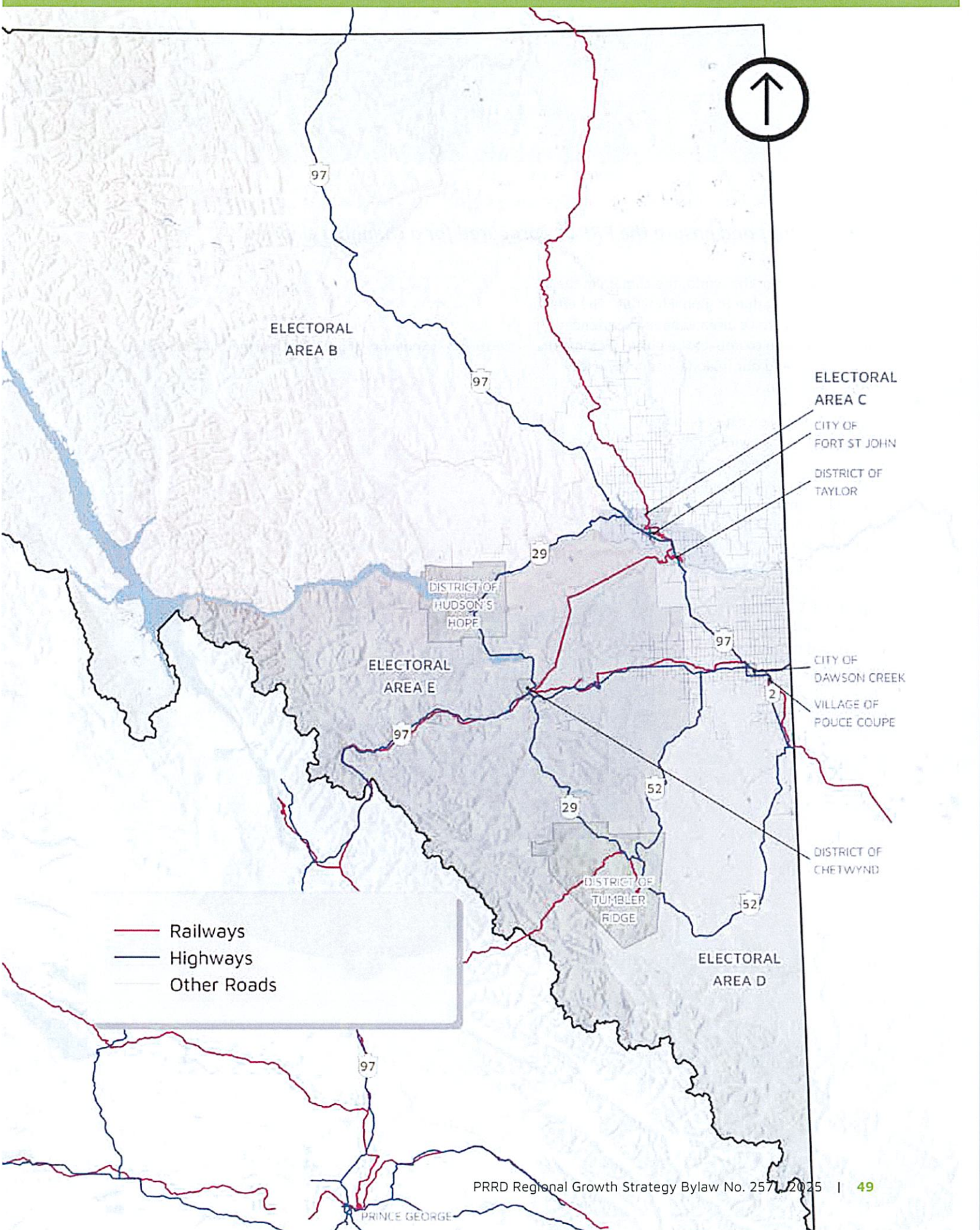
- a) Work with the Ministry of Transportation and Transit and PRRD member municipalities to ensure transportation infrastructure supports the economic functions of the PRRD.
- b) Explore the creation of a Regional Transportation Plan with member municipalities, residents, businesses, First Nations and the Ministry of Transportation and Transit.
- c) Work with the Ministry of Transportation and Transit to identify and prioritize road network improvements.
- d) Work with the Ministry of Transportation and Transit to improve the maintenance and safety of important industrial and agricultural transportation connections in the region.
- e) Advocate for and support improved rail service to support the resource and agricultural sectors.

## 2. Expand safe, accessible, efficient transit, cycling and walking where practical.

- a) Work with BC Transit, Ministry of Transportation and Transit and PRRD member municipalities to explore the expansion of public transportation in the area, including a potential regional connection between Fort St. John and Dawson Creek.
- b) Support the creation of compact, walkable neighbourhoods in urban communities with pedestrian and cycling connections and linkages.
- c) Support the creation of traffic-separated walking and cycling paths in rural settlement areas, particularly around schools and other community facilities.

**MAP 8:** Peace River Regional District – Major Transportation Network





- Railways
- Highways
- Other Roads

**ELECTORAL AREA C**  
 CITY OF FORT ST JOHN  
 DISTRICT OF TAYLOR

CITY OF DAWSON CREEK  
 VILLAGE OF POUCE COUPE

DISTRICT OF CHETWYND

# 8. CLIMATE RESILIENCE

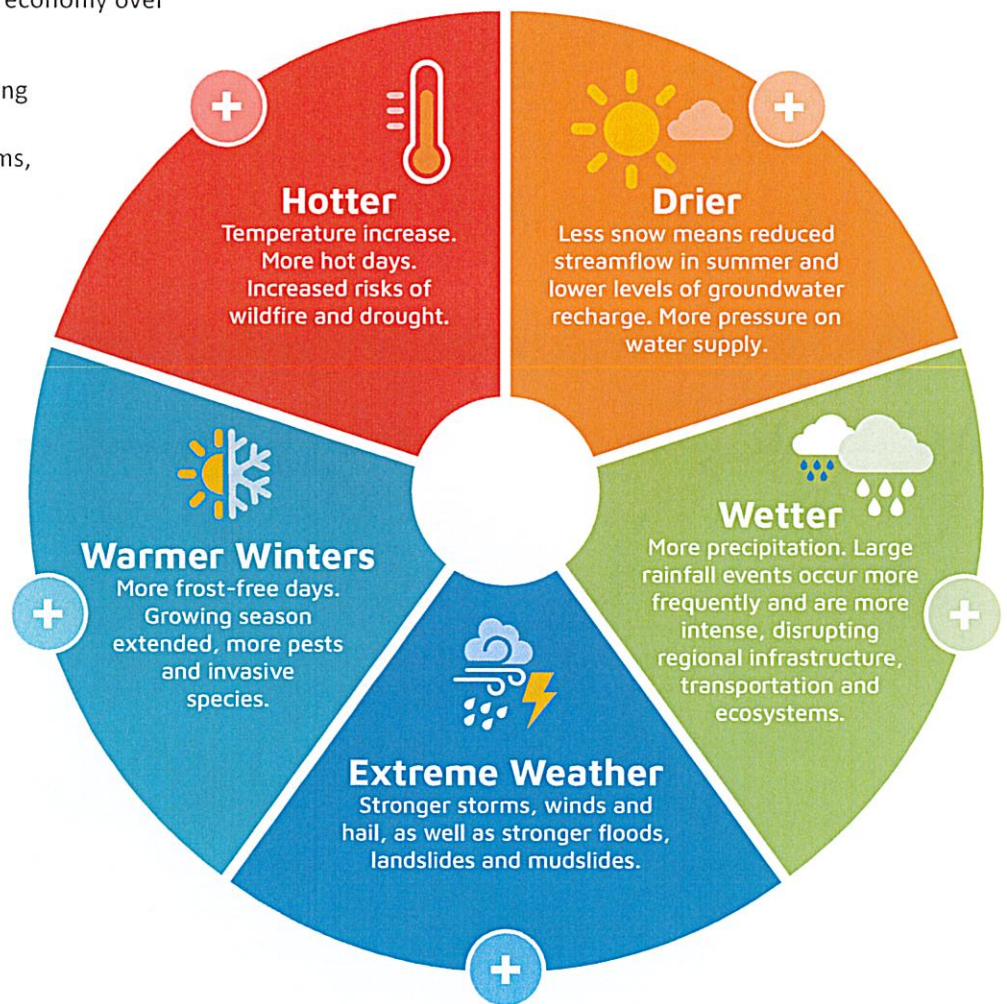


**GOAL:** Adapt and ensure the PRRD is prepared for a changing climate.

As with the rest of the world, the climate in the PRRD is changing due to global heating. The effects of this warming have already been experienced and will continue to impact the entire region, our communities and our regional economy over the coming years.

**FIGURE 13:** Summary of projected regional climate impacts

The PRRD has been experiencing a changing climate with more extreme weather events, storms, flooding, heat and drought. These changes drive other hazards, including increased wildfire activity, notably the 2023 Donnie Creek fire, which became the largest in BC's history. The 619,000-hectare fire burned through the winter of 2023 into the summer of 2024.



**1. Support climate resilience programs and initiatives in the PRRD.**

- a) Support implementation of the Regional Climate Resiliency Strategy.
- b) Work with PRRD member municipalities, Northern Health, the Province, First Nations in the PRRD and others on regional climate adaptation initiatives, including green infrastructure programs, floodplain management and resilient regional water and wastewater infrastructure.
- c) Work with PRRD member municipalities, Northern Health, the province, First Nations in the PRRD and others to raise awareness of climate impacts on health and wellbeing.
- d) Advocate for provincial support to carry out a regional project that builds on outputs of the 2024 PRRD Geohazards Workshop to improve understanding of the existing vulnerabilities and reduce the risk of disasters over the longer term<sup>3</sup>.
- e) Support ongoing public engagement and awareness of climate hazards in the PRRD and what the PRRD and member municipalities are doing to address current and likely future climate change impacts.
- f) Support municipal members (Fort St. John, Dawson Creek, Tumbler Ridge, Chetwynd) in implementing actions from climate change vulnerability assessments completed through the Northeast Climate Resilience Network.
- g) Develop PRRD staff and technical capacity to measure and report community-wide emissions data.
- h) Support member municipalities with provincial requirements for minimum provincial Step Code targets.

**2. Support improved regional emergency response for climate-related events.**

- a) Work with member municipalities, regional First Nations and other partners on developing a permanent space for emergency operations in the region<sup>4</sup>.
- b) Work with member municipalities, regional First Nations and other partners to identify and secure the necessary resources (human resources, staffing, equipment) for effective emergency response and create protocols for future events.
- c) Encourage local government staff across the region to complete emergency management training.
- d) Consider developing a PRRD emergency/hazard response plan that incorporates knowledge and experience gained by local emergency personnel and residents in recent emergencies.

<sup>3</sup> In November 2023, the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George received \$1 million for a similar project.

<sup>4</sup> As recommended in a 2023 wildfire response report.

## 9. REGIONAL COLLABORATION



**GOAL:** *Coordinate and collaborate with residents, PRRD member municipalities, rural communities, other levels of government and First Nations to achieve shared goals and address common issues.*

Ongoing coordination, collaboration and communication with PRRD member municipalities, rural communities, other levels of government and First Nations are critical to RGS implementation and more effective region-wide planning. This includes Working together on shared issues and challenges will improve outcomes at a regional level.

As identified in the 2023-2026 Board Strategic Plan, the PRRD will strive to meet the following commitments to fulfill our obligations and responsibilities as a regional government:

- **Communicate and engage** with our residents and stakeholders.
- **Collaborate and cooperate** with our partners.
- **Be consistent** in the application of our policies and decisions.

Furthermore, collaboration and cooperation with First Nations was specifically identified as a strategic focus area in the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan, including pursuing opportunities for partnerships and governance participation.

The PRRD is situated on the traditional territory of the Dane-zaa (Beaver), signatories of Treaty 8, and the Métis Nation BC Region 7. There are nine First Nations communities within the PRRD. They include Doig River First Nation, Blueberry River First Nation, Halfway River First Nation, West Moberly First Nation, McLeod Lake Indian Band, Sauleau First Nation, Tsay Keh Dene Nation, Kwadacha Nation and Kelly Lake Cree Nation.

First Nations in the PRRD are continuing to expand their land management authorities, capacities and opportunities. Some First Nations are also expanding

their land through the B.C. Treaty process or have purchased properties intending to add these newly acquired lands to their reserve lands. While these Nations are not represented on the PRRD Board, the regional district values the significant contributions of Indigenous peoples who have lived and worked on the land for time immemorial.

The PRRD also follows a cultural safety mission statement that is based on the concept of cultural safety and seeks to understand other cultures and worldviews to enhance inclusion, trust and relationships.

### 1. Enhance regional-local government partnerships.

- a) Facilitate dialogue between electoral areas, PRRD member municipalities and other organizations for cost sharing, delivery of services, capacity building and development.
- b) Continue to foster dialogue between communities around shared goals while recognizing and supporting unique community goals.
- c) Advocate to ensure that when the province transfers responsibilities to local governments that the transfers are matched with adequate resources for local governments to manage the additional responsibility.
- d) Encourage the development of a formalized framework to support smaller PRRD member municipalities in joint planning efforts, particularly for shared infrastructure and services.

**2. Continue relationship-building with regional First Nations and Métis.**

- a) Develop protocol agreements with First Nations and Métis communities in the PRRD regarding service delivery, joint services and joint capacity-building initiatives.
- b) Support the development of a cultural awareness program for the PRRD and PRRD member municipalities.
- c) Further PRRD relationships with First Nations in the PRRD and pursue opportunities for partnerships and governance participation.

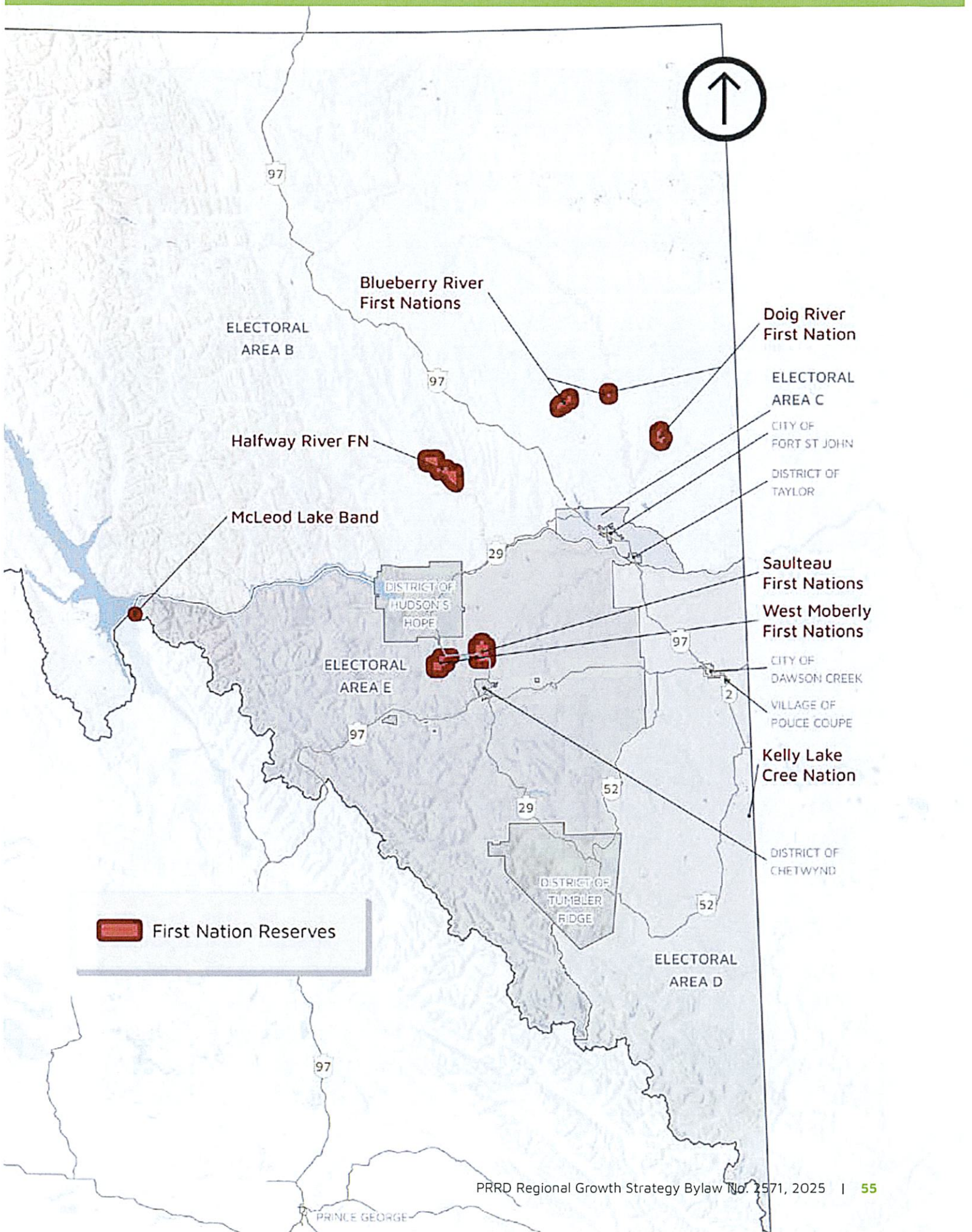
**3. Facilitate public participation and engagement in PRRD projects and governance.**

- a) Facilitate community engagement by providing enhanced public information on local governance, including opportunities for involvement on committees and community planning meetings and events.
- b) Continue to enhance regional governance transparency and accessibility.
- c) Measure progress toward achieving RGS goals and implementation of policies through an annual report on RGS indicators and a more comprehensive five-year evaluation.

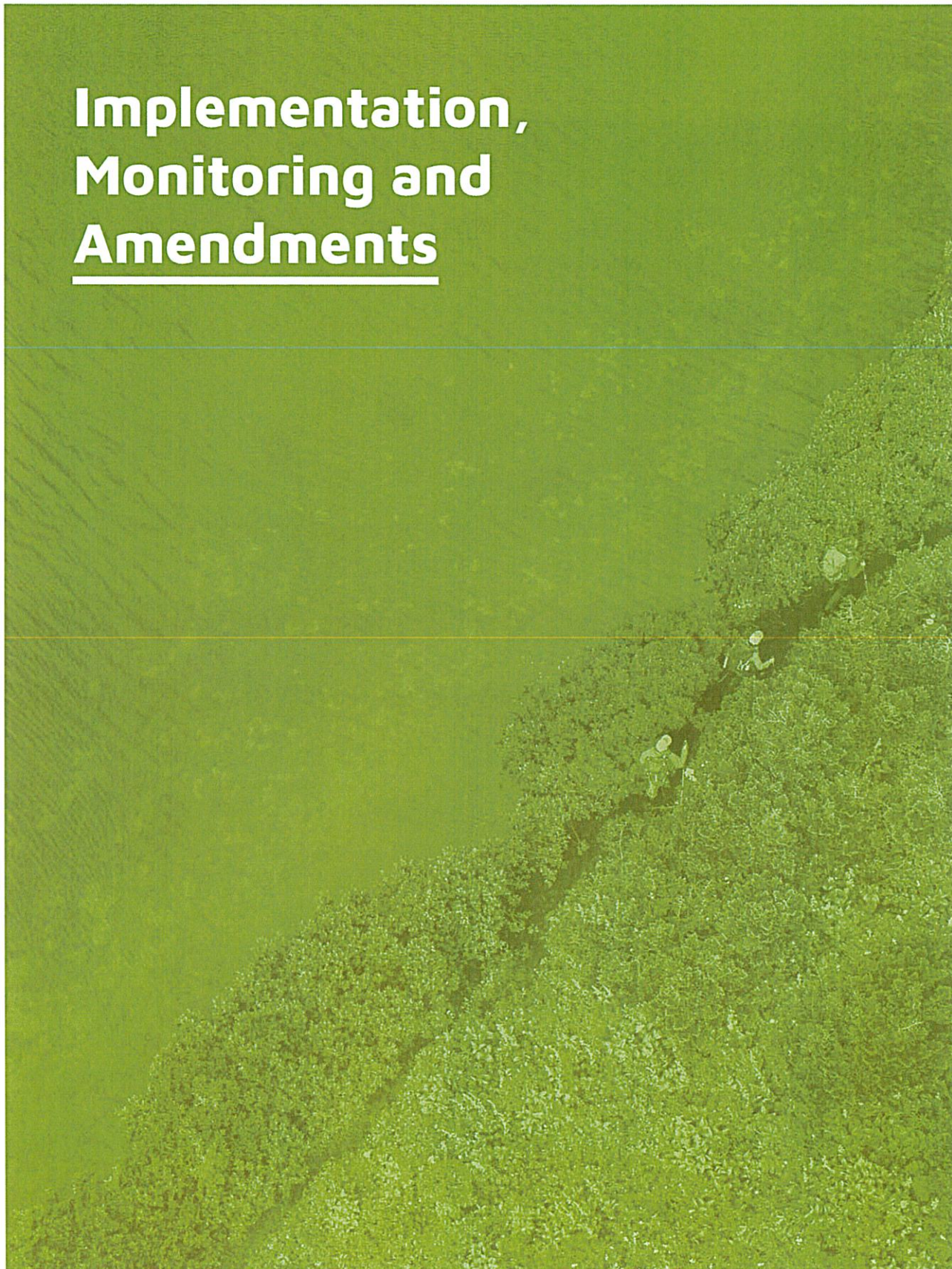


**MAP 9: Peace River Regional District – First Nations**





# Implementation, Monitoring and Amendments



## Regional Context Statements

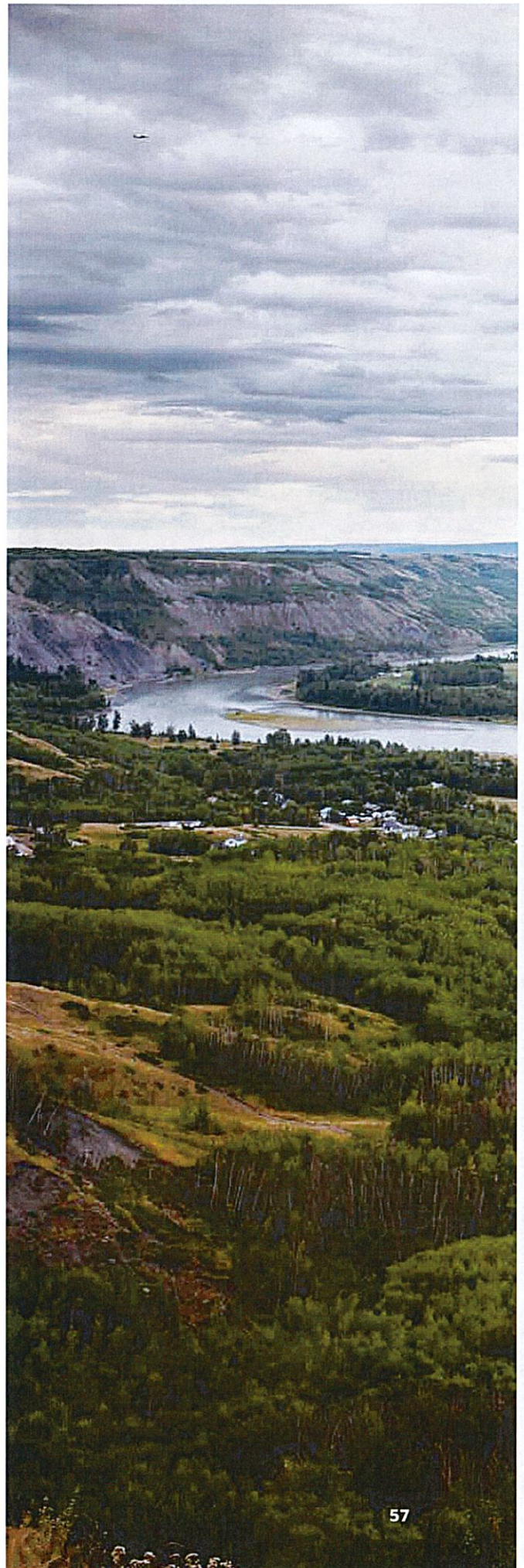
A regional context statement identifies the relationship between this RGS and PRRD municipal OCPs. Section 447 of the *Local Government Act* (LGA) outlines the procedure and requirements to ensure consistency between an RGS and a municipal OCP.

Each PRRD member municipality is required to prepare an updated OCP with a regional context Statement within two years of PRRD's RGS adoption. PRRD electoral area (Fringe Area) OCPs may also include a regional context statement, but the LGA does not require it.

In accordance with Section 448(1) of the LGA, PRRD member municipalities must submit their regional context Statements to the PRRD board for review. Regional context statements must also be reviewed every five years.

Regional context statements must clearly outline the relationship between the municipal OCP and the PRRD RGS, as specified and how the OCP will be aligned with the PRRD RGS over time, if necessary.

How this information is conveyed is up to the discretion of PRRD member municipalities. The scope and detail may vary across municipal OCPs in the PRRD.





## Implementation

The RGS identified eleven actions (plans, programs, activities) to consider undertaking over the shorter-term (one to five years) and longer-term (five to 10+ years). These potential implementation actions include:

- PRRD Subdivision and Development Servicing Bylaw Update
- Updated Development Permit Areas - Lakeshore Development
- PRRD Parkland Acquisition Policy
- Rural Settlement Centre Study
- PRRD Regional Natural Hazard and Climate Assessment
- PRRD Regional Parks and Trails Master Plan Update
- PRRD Regional Employment Lands Strategy
- PRRD Regional Housing Plan
- PRRD Regional Transportation Plan
- PRRD Regional Agriculture Strategy
- PRRD Regional Economic Development Strategy

A separate, internal implementation framework has been developed to support the alignment of the RGS with other long-range plans and strategic initiatives across the PRRD, including member municipal plans and strategies. The Coordinated Implementation Framework summarizes RGS actions implementation, including timing and phasing, responsibilities and key planning considerations.

# Monitoring

Section 452 of the *Local Government Act* requires a regional district to measure its progress on their RGS through a monitoring and evaluation program. Performance indicators selected for the RGS will allow the PRRD to monitor its implementation and progress towards the vision articulated by the community.

A set of indicators was developed as part of the RGS based on the nine RGS goal areas. Data for all the indicators are available freely from trusted sources (including internal regional district processes) and with data refresh cycles of at least every two years. To maximize their effectiveness, the selected indicators were reviewed based on the following criteria:

- **Relevant:** Is the indicator clear and easily understood by a wide audience without requiring specialized knowledge?
- **Comprehensive:** Does the indicator offer a well-rounded view of various aspects of the target policy goal?






- **Verifiable:** Is the indicator derived from established methods, with accessible and checkable data?
- **Timely:** Is the data updated regularly, enabling the detection of changes over time?
- **Data-driven:** Is the data being used of the highest quality and directly related to the parameter being measured?





The indicators will be used as regular reporting on progress towards RGS goals. A state of the region ‘Snapshot’ will be prepared annually to communicate trends and findings on regional progress towards the nine Policy Goals.

With the monitoring program, the PRRD and its member municipalities will have added insight into what is working and where improvements can be made, allowing them to update RGS actions and policies accordingly.



**FIGURE 14:** RGS Indicators and Measures

Policy Area/Goal	Indicator	Measure and Rationale	Data Source
Context	Population growth	Total and % change in annual population estimates / projections.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BC Stats (Annual Population Estimates)</li> </ul>
 <b>1. Community Building</b>	Housing Starts	<p>Total number and type of dwelling units beginning construction each year in the PRRD, with a focus on multi-family starts.</p> <p>Helps identify shorter-term development trends.</p> <p>Can be supplemented by 5-year Housing Needs Reports.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BC Housing (Monthly New Homes Registry Reports)</li> </ul>
 <b>2. Economic Strength and Resiliency</b>	Unemployment Rate	<p>Tracks annual employment rate as a % of the total labour force.</p> <p>Helps understand how PRRD employment strength tracks in relation to provincial averages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BC Labour Force Survey &amp; Work</li> <li>BC Labour Market Statistics (3-month moving average)</li> </ul>
 <b>3. Agriculture and Food</b>	Total change to ALR area (ha)	Tracks land that has been added or removed from the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) annually.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) mapping (annual)</li> </ul>
	Regional Drought Conditions	<p>Regional drought conditions are determined by measuring externally tracked indices to better understand regional wildfire risk and water security.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Also applicable under <i>Goal 6: Ecosystem Health</i>, and <i>Goal 8: Climate Resilience</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BC Drought Portal (provided weekly during core drought season May through October)</li> </ul>
 <b>4. Living Well</b>	Community safety	Annual offence counts (criminal code, violent, property).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional District Crime Trends (annual) (RCMP – Detachment Level)</li> </ul>
	Physicians per capita	Number of physicians and nurse practitioners per 1,000 people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Canadian Institute for Health Information - Scott's Medical Database metadata</li> <li>Northern Health</li> </ul>
	Particulate Matter	<p>Average particulate matter concentration (PM2.5) across all Provincial Air Quality Stations located within the PRRD.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Also applicable under <i>Goal 8: Climate Resilience</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BC Ministry of Environment: Multi Station Report</li> </ul>
 <b>5. Transportation and Mobility</b>	Road Safety	<p>Vehicle accidents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tracked as a proxy for general road safety and maintenance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ICBC Reported Crashes (North Central - Crash Count)</li> </ul>

Policy Area/Goal	Indicator	Measure and Rationale	Data Source
 <b>6. Ecosystem Health</b>	Regional Drought Conditions	<p>Regional drought conditions are determined by measuring externally tracked indices to better understand regional wildfire risk and water security.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Also applicable under <i>Goal 3: Agriculture and Food</i>, and <i>Goal 8: Climate Resilience</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BC Drought Portal (provided weekly during core drought season May through October)</li> </ul>
	Area protected as a provincial park or conservation area	Total land protected as provincial park or designated conservation area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BC NGO Conservation Areas Database Technical Working Group (Annual BC Conservation Areas Summary Reports)</li> </ul>
 <b>7. Infrastructure and Services</b>	Waste Diversion Rates	<p>Average tons of waste diverted from PRRD landfills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding changes in diversion rates can assist in gauging the success of waste reduction programs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PRRD (Regional Solid Waste Management Plan Tracking)</li> </ul>
 <b>8. Climate Resilience</b>	Particulate Matter	<p>Average particulate matter concentration (PM2.5) across all Provincial Air Quality Stations located within the PRRD.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Also applicable under <i>Goal 4: Living Well</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BC Ministry of Environment: Multi Station Report</li> </ul>
	Regional Drought Conditions	<p>Regional drought conditions are determined by measuring externally tracked indices to better understand regional wildfire risk and water security.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Also applicable under <i>Goal 3: Agriculture and Food</i>, and <i>Goal 6: Ecosystem Health</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BC Drought Portal (provided weekly during core drought season May through October)</li> </ul>
	Completed Regional Risk Assessments	Helps track emergency preparedness through completion of work under the new provincial <i>Emergency and Disaster Management Act</i> (Regional risk assessments, enhanced emergency management plans, PRRD business continuity plan).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peace River Regional District (internal) &amp; member municipalities</li> </ul>
 <b>9. Regional Collaboration</b>	Measure of Activity	Number of service agreements, protocol agreements, or other joint planning activities between First Nations in the PRRD and/or the PRRD and member municipalities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PRRD and member municipalities</li> </ul>
	Measure of Activity	Number of joint planning activities between PRRD and member municipalities, including RGS implementation actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PRRD</li> </ul>

# Amendments

There are two types of amendments to an RGS: minor and major. Both must follow the process set out in Part 13 (Division 3) of the *Local Government Act*.

## MINOR AMENDMENTS

Recognizing that the RGS requires some flexibility to respond to changing conditions in the PRRD, the minor amendment process provides a process for minor changes while ensuring that amendments which substantially change the vision and direction of the strategy remain subject to acceptance by all affected local governments.

The *Local Government Act* enables minor amendments pursuant to section 437 (3) in accordance with the following:

- The board must give notice, including notice that the proposed amendment may be determined to be a minor amendment and the date, time and place of the board meeting at which the amending bylaw is to be considered for first reading, to each affected local government at least 30 days before the meeting.
- Before first reading of the amending bylaw, the board must allow an affected local government that is not represented on the board an opportunity to make representations to the board.
- If, at first reading, the amending bylaw receives an affirmative vote of all board members attending the meeting, the bylaw may be adopted in accordance with the procedures that apply to the adoption of a regional growth strategy bylaw under Division 3 [Voting and Voting Rights] of Part 6 [Regional Districts: Governance and Procedures] and the board's procedure bylaw.
- If, at first reading, the amending bylaw does not receive an affirmative vote of all board members attending the meeting, the bylaw may be adopted only in accordance with the procedure established by section 436 [acceptance by affected local governments required].

Criteria under which a proposed amendment to the RGS may be considered a minor amendment include the following:

- Where a land use or development proposal is inconsistent with the Regional Growth Strategy and, in the opinion of the PRRD Board:
  - Is not to be of regional significance in terms of scale, impacts or precedence; and
  - Contributes to achieving the goals and objectives set out in the policies section of this RGS.
- Text and map amendments that are not directly related to enabling specific proposed developments may be considered minor if, in the opinion of the Board, the amendment is not of regional significance.
- Any proposal that does not meet the criteria set out above would be considered a major amendment and will be required to follow the regular process as outlined in the *Local Government Act*, Part 13.

## MAJOR AMENDMENTS

A major amendment to the RGS is required when proposals substantially change the vision and direction of the original RGS. Major amendment approvals are subject to the acceptance of all affected local governments.

