



*“A healthy environment and a healthy economy are essential to the social, cultural, material, physical and spiritual well-being of British Columbians. Furthermore, the Province recognizes its obligation to protect, manage and use its resources and environment to fulfil its responsibility to global well-being. Finally, the Province shall ensure that present-day decisions do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own environmental and economic needs.”*

- Finding Common Ground : A Shared Vision for Land Use in British Columbia, Commission on Resources and the Environment, 1994.

Under the Local Government Act the purposes of a local governments are:

- providing good government for its community
- providing the services and other things that the local government considers necessary or desirable for all or part of its community
- providing stewardship of the public assets of its community
- fostering the current and future economic, social and environmental well-being of its community (Local Government Act, S.2)

## Policy and Planning

### The Emerging Context for Sustainability

British Columbians are increasingly concerned about the ecological, economic, and human costs of unsustainable urban development. BC public policies and programs have evolved in response to this concern. Generally, these policies state that all citizens have a right to clean water, fresh air, and affordable housing; that communities should be designed to reduce reliance upon the automobile; and that communities should foster a high quality of life for all residents. They also state that our streams and ecologically sensitive areas should be protected, both for their intrinsic value and for their value to present and future citizens.<sup>1</sup>

Yet while such policies promise solutions to a number of linked problems, each new policy solution often gives rise to new policy challenges. For instance, increasing density and creating compact communities is a very laudable goal and has a positive impact on transportation, land-use efficiency, and the affordability of housing. But increasing the number of houses on any particular piece of land might very well lead to increased damage to streams and groundwater resources. To make matters even more complex, responsibility for managing the integrated health of the urban landscape is fractured among different and often competing geographic jurisdictions, different levels of government, and different agencies within government. One or more agencies are responsible for deciding how many houses to place on a parcel, while a different set of agencies is responsible for protecting water resources.

However, policy makers, urban planners, and designers are now increasingly alarmed by the unforeseen social, economic, and environmental consequences that this jurisdictional separation has produced. In response, government representatives have produced policies and policy tools to reintegrate the various systems within the urban landscape and to plan them in a more coordinated manner. The section that follows charts our collective progress towards achieving this goal.

### Planning Framework

Over 90% of the land in British Columbia is owned by the “Crown” (i.e., it is publicly owned). Of the remainder, about half falls within the Agricultural Land Reserve (i.e., lands restricted from uses other than agriculture). Thus, only 5% of all lands in British Columbia are available for urbanization. The majority of this developable land is located in the southwestern portions of the province, such as the southern Central Interior Okanagan. Our focus is on these landscapes — landscapes within which the vast majority of British Columbian citizens now live and where most of the next four million new British Columbian residents must find a home.

The administrative and legislative context for local land use planning is undertaken by the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women’s Services (formerly the Ministry of Municipal Affairs) through the British Columbia Local Government Act (formerly the Municipal Act). The Local Government Act officially grants community and neighbourhood planning power to municipalities and regional districts. Since 1997 extensive changes to the Local Government Act have given local and regional governments greater flexibility and more options for regulating land uses — especially land uses that might affect the environmental, social, and economic quality of their communities.<sup>2</sup>

A host of other provincial and federal ministries and agencies also have an important role in local land-use planning and intersect at different points and through different legislative and policy tools. Understanding how these levels of planning interrelate provides insight into the regulatory environment that shapes land use today (see facing page).

At the local level, the three types of plans that have the most immediate influence on site and community design are: regional growth strategies, official community plans (OCPs), and site development engineering and subdivision requirements. Conceptually, this framework functions as a hierarchy, whereby higher-order regional growth strategies (which should directly reflect provincial planning goals) provide the context for OCPs, which, in turn, provide the context for how specific requirements for site development and land-use control (e.g., zoning and land-use plans) are to be carried out.

It is also important to emphasize that the shaping of provincial policy is directly linked to federal program priorities, goals, and policies, a number of which have been ratified through international agreements and accords for sustainability. Internationally, by 1997 Canada had signed

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The enlarged context for policy and planning for sustainable land use is provided by the several national and international treaties, agreements, and accords that have been ratified over the past decade and a half. Many such international agreements have direct relevance to how environmental and land-use decisions are made at the site level.

Regional district plans, community plans, and site development engineering and subdivision requirements have the greatest immediate influence on site and community design. However, the scale of the watershed is increasingly used as a unit by which to assess and monitor environmental and community health and to establish priorities for the long-term management and protection of ecosystems. Organized according to natural systems (as opposed to political boundaries), watershed planning occurs at all scales, from the backyard or park to the entire river basin.

# Scales of Urban Land Use Policy and Planning

## National/International Scale

Several important international agreements, treaties, and accords provide the broad context for national and provincial land-use policy and programs. These include: the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992); the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992); Agenda 21 (1992); and the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1997). Flowing from these broad directives are several federal environmental policies - including the Fisheries Act (1985), the National Policy for the Management of Fish Habitat (1992), and the national climate change process (1998). In many cases these policies provide the context for setting quantifiable targets and thresholds for meeting sustainability goals at the local level.

## Provincial Scale

Legislation, Policy, and Services

Provincial policies and legislation provide the context for local land-use planning. The **Local Government Act**, administered through the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal, and Women's Services (formerly the Ministry of Municipal Affairs) is the primary legislation governing settlement planning in British Columbia.

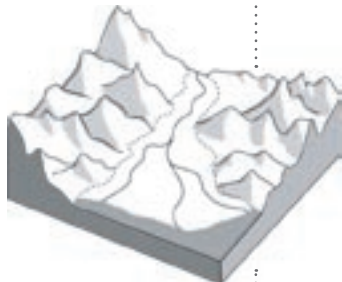
## Regional Scale

Regional Growth Strategies  
Systems and Servicing plans

Section 25 of the Local Government Act requires the province's twenty-eight regional districts to prepare **Regional Growth Strategies** that address a district's common social, environmental, and economic objectives. Regional Growth Strategies are implemented through regional context statements and implementation agreements (see p. 20).

## Watershed Scale

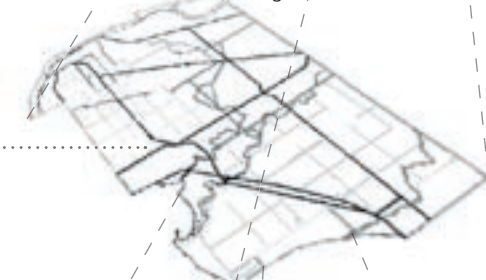
Watershed-based planning means that resource, land-use, and community design decisions are made with an eye towards their potential effects on the watershed/drainage basin and the natural systems contained therein. Therefore, what happens at the scale of the individual parcel and street affects what happens at the scale of the watershed. Governance models such as the Fraser Basin Council and the Georgia Basin Ecosystem Initiative are two recent efforts to acknowledge the watershed as a critical unit of planning.



## Community/Municipal Scale

Official Community Plans  
Local Area Plans/ Neighbourhood Concept Plans  
Service Plans and Programs

An **Official Community Plan (OCP)** is a bylaw adopted by a city council outlining specific land-use designations (including form and character of development) that determines servicing requirements for areas of growth within the community. OCPs establish a vision for a community that is consistent with its regional growth strategy and which is implemented by land-use by-laws and other control tools (such as municipal capital improvement plans, infrastructure plans, and local area or neighbourhood plans).

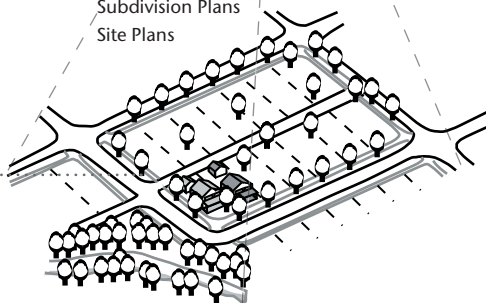


## Site Development Scale

Subdivision Plans  
Site Plans

The subdivision of private land into parcels is regulated by statute under the **Local Government Act**, **Land Title Act**, and **Strata Property Act**. Existing by-laws, the development goals of the community (as outlined in the OCP), and the need for new or expanded services are factors taken into account when subdivision applications are reviewed by the approving officer.

Designating Development Permit Areas (DPAs) is one tool that allows local governments to protect environmentally sensitive areas and to achieve sustainable development objectives.



over 230 international agreements aimed at improving global environmental performance, many of which have relevance to how site and community design are carried out.

At the federal level, policies such as the Fisheries Act and the National Policy for the Management of Fish Habitat provide the context for provincial fish and habitat protection policy initiatives such as the Provincial Fish Protection Act, 1997, and the Streamside Protection Regulation (a 2001 amendment to the Fish Protection Act, discussed in greater detail below). These, in addition to many other recent provincial and joint federal/provincial efforts, create an enlarged scope for achieving sustainability goals at a more local level.

### A Provincial Growth Strategy: A Brief History

During the past fifty years, public sentiment for increasing government control over urban land-use has waxed and waned. The formation of regional districts in the mid-1960s was a first step towards an integrated approach to managing urban growth, especially in the rapidly urbanizing regions of the Georgia Basin.<sup>3</sup> Amendments made to the Municipal Act in 1965 allowed the formation of regional districts. Originally, the province empowered regional districts to facilitate inter-municipal coordination, to provide municipal services to unincorporated rural areas, and to provide joint services — such as regional drainage, hospitals, and sewer and water systems — where efficient. While their implied function was to provide regional planning with direction, regional districts were “not conceived as a fourth level of government, but as a functional rather than a political amalgamation.”<sup>4</sup>

Since its inception, the regional district model has come under scrutiny for several reasons. These include: lack of a clear mandate to manage regional environmental, social, and economic development issues; and competition and conflict arising when powers of jurisdic-

tion are left ambiguous.<sup>5</sup>

The province commissioned two extensive reviews — one in 1978 and one in 1986 — aimed at clarifying the purpose and role of regional districts. The 1986 review was particularly important as it followed on the heels of a highly publicized 1983 dispute over whether the privately owned Spetifore farms could be protected from development under the regional plan put forward by the GVRD. This conflict eventually provoked the provincial legislature to strip regional districts of all regulatory regional planning authority — a move that would leave the future of regional districts uncertain at best.<sup>6</sup>

The 1986 review recommended several changes to the structure and purpose of regional districts. The most significant of these included: granting statutory powers to regional districts, thereby giving them more independence from the province; enabling more support and guidance from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs; and allowing greater rural representation.<sup>7</sup> While still awaiting legislation that would actually implement these recommendations in addition to returning planning powers to regional districts, municipalities in the GVRD entered into voluntary “service agreements” with the regional district board in order to maintain a cooperative regional/local planning perspective. Over the next decade, this proactive approach to regional planning led the GVRD to develop the Livable Region Strategy (1976) and Creating Our Future (1990). These were visionary blueprints for the landmark Livable Region Strategic Plan (adopted in 1996) and were created despite the absence of any direct legislative authority to undertake planning at a regional scale.

### *The Agricultural Land Reserve (1973)*

At the same time as the power of regional districts was being debated, concern over the province’s disappearing agricultural land base was on the rise. The Agricultural Land Commission

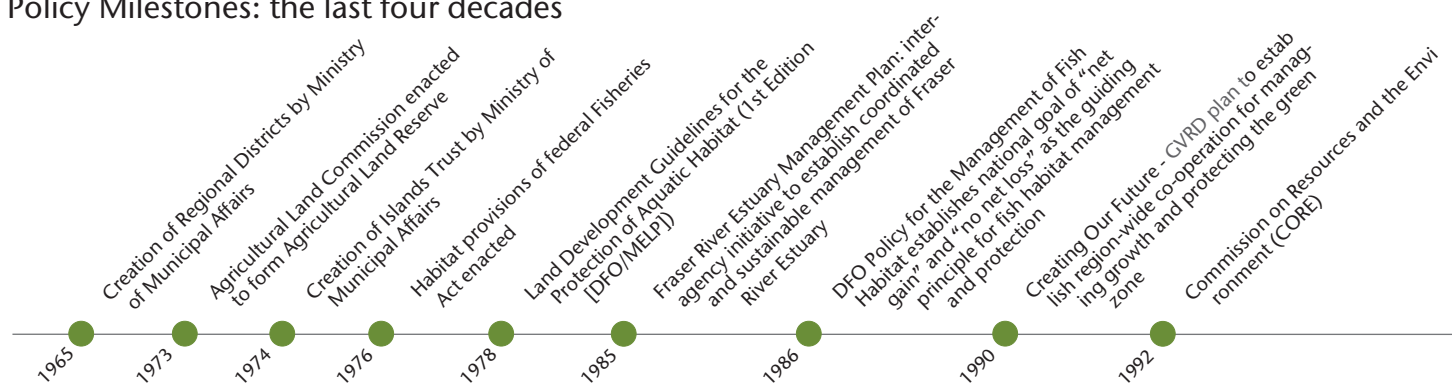
Act, 1973, was enacted in order to stop agricultural land from being urbanized. Prior to the introduction of the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), 6,000 hectares (15,000 acres) of BC agricultural land was lost to urban growth each year.<sup>8</sup> In essence, the act forbade the transfer of any active farmland in the province to urban uses. It did this through a blanket prohibition on subdividing large agricultural tracts into smaller parcels. The ALR thus established an urban growth boundary around many communities (particularly the fast-growing communities in the Lower Mainland) and provided a definite edge beyond which urban expansion could not go. In doing so, the provincial government protected half of all developable private lands from future urban development. Despite the promise of long-term protection, rapid population expansion between 1970 and 1990 resulted in the loss of over 750 hectares of agricultural land within the Georgia Basin to urban uses (this amounted to approximately 8.5% of the Georgia Basin’s agricultural land).<sup>9</sup> This alarming trend was one of many through the 1980s and 1990s that prompted a closer look at regional sustainability and growth management issues.

### *The Commission on Resources and the Environment (CORE) and the Georgia Basin Initiative (1993)*

Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s a series of province-wide initiatives were mounted to develop more sustainable — and, by definition, more integrated and consensus-based — approaches to provincial land and resource management. The provincial Commission on Resources and the Environment (CORE) Act, and its subsequent stakeholder process, provided the consummate summation of this emerging trend. The commission was established to develop “for public and government consideration a British Columbia-wide strategy for land use.”<sup>10</sup>

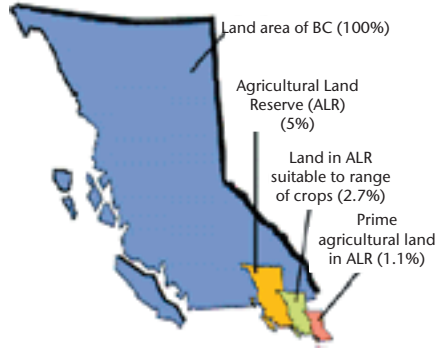
Under its mandate, CORE published *Finding Common Ground: A Shared Vision*

## Policy Milestones: the last four decades

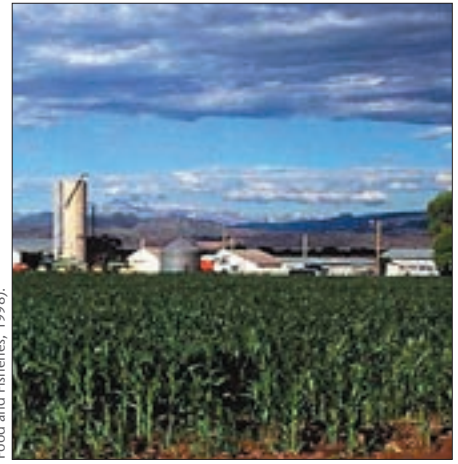


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Growth management policies recognize the importance of maintaining a productive and sustainable land base for the future. Yet agricultural land is scarce in BC. Today, 5% of the Provincial land base is protected for agricultural purposes under the Agricultural Land Reserve Act. Of this, approximately 1/5 is considered prime agricultural land. Prior to the creation of the Agricultural Land Reserve in 1973, it is estimated that 6,000 hectares (15,000 acres) of prime agricultural land was lost to urban development each year.



Source: Quayle, Stakes in the Ground: Provincial Interest in the Agricultural Commission Act (Victoria, BC: Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, 1998).



for *Land Use in British Columbia (1994)*. This groundbreaking report provided a framework for integrating principles of sustainability into multi-sectoral land-use planning and management decisions on a province-wide scale (for both private and public lands), and recommended ways of integrating these principles at regional, sub-regional, and local scales.

Prior to the CORE process, the British Columbia Round Table on the Environment and the Economy (formed in 1990) was also establishing sustainable development and management objectives for the province. In 1992 the round table committee was given a new mandate “to provide advice to government on how to manage the Georgia Basin.”<sup>11</sup> One immediate result of this new mandate was the Georgia Basin Initiative, out of which came the report entitled *Georgia Basin Initiative: Creating a Sustainable Future (1993)*. This report provided recommendations that encompassed a wide spectrum of issues in the Georgia Basin, including governance, complete communities, environmental protection and economic development and energy use. Among those recommendations focusing on governance were: that a process be undertaken to develop new models of planning and governance for sustainability in the Georgia Basin; that this process involve all levels of government (local, regional,

provincial, federal, Aboriginal); that it be an efficient governance model; and that transportation and comprehensive land-use planning be integrated at a regional scale.

The CORE process and the Georgia Basin Initiative were among the key precedents that provided the conceptual basis for the Growth Strategies Amendment Act.

**The Growth Strategies Amendment Act (1995)**

The Growth Strategies Amendment Act was enacted in 1995<sup>12</sup> and constitutes Part 25 of the Local Government Act. This legislation has the potential to be one of the most powerful policy tools available for influencing sustainable land use throughout the urbanizing regions of British Columbia.<sup>13</sup> It enables regional districts and their member municipalities to achieve greater land-use coordination and integration through three important written agreements: regional growth strategies, regional context statements, and implementation agreements (see p. 20).<sup>14</sup>

A regional growth strategy must cover a period of at least twenty years and propose ways of addressing the common social, economic, and environmental objectives of member municipalities in relation to the regional vision. The strategy must include population and

employment projections for the period covered by the growth strategy, and it must propose strategies for accommodating these projections in the areas of housing, transportation, regional district services, parks and natural areas, and economic development.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to these requirements, regional districts are encouraged to incorporate a host of planning goals into their growth strategies. Summarized, these goals are:

1. *Avoid urban sprawl by using existing services*
2. *Minimize use of automobiles and encourage walking, bicycling, and efficient use of public transit*
3. *Move goods and services efficiently*
4. *Protect environmentally sensitive areas*
5. *Protect and secure a productive resource base*
6. *Promote economic development to support communities*
7. *Reduce and prevent air, land, and water pollution*
8. *Provide adequate affordable and appropriate housing*
9. *Ensure adequate inventory of suitable land for settlement*
10. *Protect quality and quantity of ground and surface water*



## REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGIES

Four regional growth strategies have been approved in the Greater Vancouver Regional District (1996), the Regional District of Nanaimo (1997), the Thompson Nicola Regional District (2000), and the Regional District of Central Okanagan (2000). Two additional growth strategies are nearing completion for the Capital Regional District and for the Fraser Valley Regional District. Once completed, over 75% of British Columbia's population will live in an area covered by a regional growth strategy.

*A Regional Growth Strategy is a regional vision that spans a time frame of at least twenty years and that reflects a region's common social, economic, and environmental objectives.*

*Regional Context Statements are completed by each municipality in a region. They describe the local policies, principles, and programs that support the regional growth strategy.*

*An Implementation Agreement is a written understanding between the regional district and local and other governments. It spells out the details of how certain aspects of a regional growth strategy will be carried out.*

### **Right – Integrated Land-Use and Transportation Planning**

Integrated land-use and transportation policies provide the housing, employment, and service mix essential to supporting a regional transit system. They also promote a community configuration that encourages walking and cycling instead of driving (e.g., through integrated streets). Transportation demand management (TDM) includes approaches to transportation that curb reliance on single-occupancy vehicle use, provide travel alternatives, and shorten travel distances. Regional growth strategies, regional transportation plans, and OCPs are among the planning tools available to help us implement transit-oriented development.

11. *Support settlement patterns that minimize risks of natural hazards*
12. *Preserve, create, and link urban and rural open spaces*
13. *Promote the efficient use and conservation of energy*
14. *Provide responsible heritage stewardship*<sup>16</sup>

It is worth noting that, as per Section 875 of the Local Government Act, municipalities are encouraged to work towards the purpose and goals of regional growth strategies in their OCPs.

### **Supporting Growth Strategies: More Comprehensive Policies**

The picture of a more sustainable BC landscape is becoming clearer as policy, particularly at higher strategic planning levels, is beginning to integrate directives for improving air, water, and land resources in ways that are socially, ecologically, and economically sound. Legislation such as the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Act, 1998; the Fish Protection Act, 1997; and ongoing reforms to the Local Government Act point towards more comprehensive governance and planning for BC communities. Collectively, this legislation considers the important relationship between transportation and land use and enables us to find more effective tools for the protection and management of environmental, economic, and cultural resources at the local level.

### **Air Quality: Travel Behaviour and GHG Emissions**

Dramatic increases in GHG emissions are a primary factor contributing to global climate change. In 1997 Canada

was among 160 nations that negotiated the Kyoto Protocol under which industrialized countries will collectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 5.2%. When ratified, this agreement will commit Canada to reduce GHG emissions to 6% below 1990 levels by 2012. The single largest source of GHG emissions in the province is transportation (41% of total emissions).<sup>17</sup> Alternative transportation policies that focus on curbing reliance upon the single-occupancy vehicle, reducing distances between destinations, and lowering total emissions per vehicle, will have a significant effect on British Columbia's GHG emissions.

Among the strongest policy tools available to local governments for reducing transportation-related GHGs are integrated land use policies and transportation demand management strategies, both of which can be operationalized through regional growth strategies and OCPs.

The regional growth strategy for the District of Nanaimo (1997) includes policies for promoting concentrated growth through an urban growth containment boundary and the development of urban nodes. In addition, the growth strategy includes policies for enhancing mobility, where access by foot, bicycle, and transit is given priority over cars.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, the Regional District of Central Okanagan's regional growth strategy (2000) includes policies for encouraging more compact, mixed-use forms of development, investing in transit and other transportation demand management (TDM) programs, and providing safe and convenient places to walk and cycle. However, while these policies point in the right direction, in municipalities such as Nanaimo, the development of conventional suburbs still dominates. Nanaimo's transit use comprises only 3% of the total modal



split for work trips, compared to 23.7% in Vancouver.<sup>19</sup> In Kelowna, the transit share is even lower, at 2%.

Within the GVRD, coordinated land use and transportation planning has been institutionalized through the formation of a regional transportation authority. In 1998, the provincial government passed the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority (GVTA) Act, which effectively realigned the management of Greater Vancouver's transit system, major roads, and bridges. Rather than being managed by separate agencies (with a varying degree of coordination between them), they are now managed by a single agency known as Translink. Under its mandate, Translink has taken on responsibility for the management of transportation-related servicing and infrastructure (with an additional focus on demand management and air quality) in order to meet the GVRD's regional growth strategy, the *Greater Vancouver Livable Region Strategic Plan* (LRSP). The LRSP policies address four primary goals:

1. *Protect the Green Zone*
2. *Build Complete Communities*
3. *Achieve a Compact Metropolitan Region*
4. *Increase Transportation Choice*

In early 2000, Translink produced its *Strategic Transportation Plan*,<sup>20</sup> which presents a blueprint for how, over the next five years, regional transportation will support regional growth strategy goals. TDM policies outlined in the plan include increasing transit investment, improving regional and local bicycle and walking networks, implementing a parking tax, and imposing vehicle charges (i.e., based on pollutant level of vehicle).<sup>21</sup>

### **Fish Protection and Water Quality**

The rising concern over the future of BC water-based resources has resulted in significant changes to the legislation covering the planning, management, and conservation of aquatic systems. Over the past decade, a number of core policies have emerged that address the comprehensive protection, management, and enhancement of freshwater aquatic systems, focusing upon both water quality and quantity.

*The Freshwater Strategy for British Columbia* was released in draft form in 1993 and was developed over several years of consultation with agencies and stakeholders involved in water resource planning and decision making. The strategy was released in 1999 and, together with the Freshwater Action Plan, forms a framework for the development and implementation of freshwater-related legislation in British Columbia. Administered by the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection (formerly the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks), the strategy and action plans are guided by the seven *Provincial Freshwater Strategy Principles*:

1. *Ecosystem Integrity*
2. *Sustainability*
3. *Stewardship*
4. *User Pays*
5. *Precautionary Principle*
6. *Pollution Prevention*
7. *Public Awareness and Education*

The strategy and action plans also focus on the following three primary goals:

1. *Healthy Aquatic Ecosystems*
2. *Assured Human Health and Safety*
3. *Sustainable Social, Economic and Recreational Benefits of Water*

Certain key policies and programs are of particular significance to this manual as they focus specifically upon reducing the effect of urban settlement on the ecological integrity of sensitive stream systems and upon protecting the quality and quantity of groundwater resources.<sup>22</sup>

### **Fish Protection Act**

The Fish Protection Act (FPA) and the more recent Streamside Protection Regulation (SPR) (which comes under Section 12 of the FPA) are two of the most important recent legislative tools for protecting the ecological integrity of streams and fish habitat.

Passed in 1997, the FPA now forms a key component of both the BC Freshwater Strategy and the BC Fisheries Strategy. The FPA provides legislative authority for considering the impacts on fish and fish habitat before approving new water licences, amendments to licences, or work in or near streams areas.

In early 2001 the provincial legislature enacted the SPR, which creates a mechanism for protecting streamside areas from the impacts of residential, commercial, and industrial development.<sup>23</sup> It recognizes the essential role that streamside areas play in protecting fish stocks, and it requires local governments to take a proactive approach to habitat protection. It builds on the guidelines found in the Land Development Guidelines for the Protection of the Aquatic Environment (1992).<sup>24</sup> While not directly addressing stream hydrology and water quality objectives, the SPR is intended as a companion to other initiatives under the Freshwater Strategy that are aimed at reducing the impacts of urbanization on stream hydrology.<sup>25</sup>



### **Left – Streamside Protection**

The BC Provincial Stream Protection Regulation (SPR) Streamside Protection Policy Directives (2001) are part of the BC Fisheries Strategy and Freshwater Strategy. The SPR sets new standards for the protection of streamside areas that are vital to supporting fish stocks.

### Water Quality

Priorities for improving water quality under the Freshwater Strategy include reducing and preventing pollution of groundwater, both from point sources (such as industrial sites and sewage treatment and discharge) and from non-point sources (such as agriculture and urban development). New requirements for designing and implementing regional liquid waste management plans (LWMPs) and the provincial Non-point Source Pollution Action Plan (1999) are just two initiatives that provide direction for addressing these growing threats to water quality.

### Environmental Protection and Enhancement: New Directions in Local Governance

In 1997 the province began an extensive review of the Municipal Act, which was officially renamed the Local Government Act in 2000. Part 26 of the Act deals with planning and land-use management. It now gives local and regional governments greater flexibility with regard to regulating land-uses that might affect the environmental, social, and economic quality of their communities. More specifically, it provides improved tools for regulating new land-use and development as well as for managing human activities.<sup>26</sup> In this vein, local governments concerned with regional watershed protection can now limit the maximum percentage of an area of land that can be covered by impervious surfaces as well as regulate the management of runoff from developed sites.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to more general OCPs, municipalities are recognizing how local- and neighbourhood level plans can be important tools for guiding growth in ways that support municipal, regional, and provincial goals. The OCP for the City of Surrey, for example, includes guidelines and requirements for the preparation of Neighbourhood Concept Plans for Surrey's emerging urban areas (i.e., those areas outside the central core). This measure is meant to ensure that future growth can occur in a coordinated and efficient manner that is consistent with the GVRD's regional growth strategy.

### Vision versus Reality

The scores of higher-order legislative changes that have occurred over the past twenty-five years support regional and basin-wide goals for sustainability. As a result, municipalities and regions across the province are increasingly integrating environmental protection and growth management objectives into their regional

growth strategies, OCPs, and other local planning frameworks.

Within the Lower Mainland Region, the inter-governmental Georgia Basin Ecosystem Initiative, the Fraser Basin Council, and emerging watershed-based planning initiatives reflect a rising consciousness and concern over how to manage the important and necessary relationships between the social, ecological, and economic health of watersheds and the corresponding health of local communities. Over the past five years, GVRD strategies coupled with federal, provincial, municipal, and non-government initiatives have resulted in increased dialogue on the need to apply sustainable development principles and practices to growth management and service programs. Outside the regulatory regime, community-based stewardship groups together with province-wide non-governmental organization (NGO) initiatives (such as Smart Growth BC), are building a shared awareness of urban sustainability issues among citizens and policy makers. Indeed, these efforts mark a shift towards more coordinated and acceptable approaches to meeting the challenges of sustainable urban development.

Yet despite the growing awareness, progressive changes to local level land-use, road, and subdivision by-laws (along with methods of financing them) have been slow to emerge. These changes are critical. Without them, regional, provincial, and even national goals may never be achieved.

Changing local bylaws and standards is especially challenging because many of them have been institutionalized as "best professional practice." Changing these standards, however logical, creates new stresses on institutions and unevenly distributes risk for agents of change, particularly for developers and municipal staff. We must find ways to share and distribute these risks. We must also find ways to overcome the conflict that seems to characterize our regulatory process in direct proportion to the stakes involved.

In the section that follows, we describe one particularly effective model for overcoming institutional barriers, regulatory gaps, and unequally shared risks.

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> British Columbia, Growth Strategies Amendment Act, 1995 (Part 25 of the Local Government Act, 1995); British Columbia, Bill 26 (otherwise known as the Local Government Statutes Amendment Act, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> British Columbia, Bill 26.

<sup>3</sup> Support for the concept of coordinated regional planning began with the formation of the Regional Planning Division of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs in 1947. The following year, amendments to the Town Planning Act officially recognized regional planning boards.

<sup>4</sup> British Columbia, Department of Municipal Affairs. *Regional Districts in British Columbia, 1971: General Review* (Victoria: Department of Municipal Affairs, 1971).

<sup>5</sup> Regional District Review Committee, Report of the Committee (Victoria: Ministry of Municipal Affairs, 1978), 13.

<sup>6</sup> Patrick J. Smith, "Regional Governance in British Columbia," *Planning and Administration* 13, 2 (1986): 7-20.

<sup>7</sup> Dan Campbell, *Summary Report of the Regional District Survey Committee* (Victoria: Ministry of Municipal Affairs, 1986).

<sup>8</sup> British Columbia Agricultural Land Commission, *Agricultural Land Reserve Statistics* (Burnaby, BC: Province of British Columbia, 1997).

<sup>9</sup> British Columbia, Ministry of Environment Lands and Parks, *State of the Environment Report for British Columbia* (Victoria: Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, 1993), v.

<sup>10</sup> British Columbia, Commission on Resources and Environment Act, 1992, s. 4 (1).

<sup>11</sup> British Columbia, Growth Strategies Amendment Act, 1995.

<sup>12</sup> The strength of GSAs are not fully understood, especially as they relate to areas outside the rapidly urbanizing Lower Mainland, southern Vancouver Island, and southern Interior regions of British Columbia, where issues of growth are not as much of a concern as are issues of economic diversification and resource management. See Chris Gawronski, "Regional District Renewal: Reforming Regional Government in British Columbia" (MA Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1999).

<sup>13</sup> For a detailed discussion of these procedures, please see *Reaching Agreement on Growth Strategies* (c. 1998), which is available on-line on the Ministry of Municipal Affairs web site: <<http://www.marh.gov.bc.ca/GROWTH/PUBLICATIONS/Index.htm>>.

<sup>14</sup> Growth Strategies Amendment Act, s. 850 (1).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, s. 849 (2).

<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, *Environmental Trends in British Columbia 2000* (Victoria: Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, 2000), 27.

<sup>17</sup> Regional District of Nanaimo, *Growth Management Plan* (Nanaimo, BC: Regional District of Nanaimo, 1997).

<sup>18</sup> Don Alexander and Ray Tomalty, *The BC Sprawl Report 2001* (Vancouver: Smart Growth BC, 2001), 25.

<sup>19</sup> The responsibility of Translink, as established by the GVTA Act, is to provide a regional transportation system that moves people and goods efficiently, that supports the regional growth strategy, and that supports the air quality objectives and economic development of the region. See Translink. *Strategic Transportation Plan: 2000-2005* (Vancouver: Translink, 2000).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>21</sup> A complete description of the Freshwater Strategy and Action Plan is available at <<http://www.elp.gov.bc.ca/wat/wrs/freshwater/FSforBC.doc>>

<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Environment, Lands, and Parks, *Regulatory Impact Statement in Support of the Streamside Protection Policy Directives Developed under Section 12 of the Fish Protection Act* (Victoria: Province of British Columbia, 2001).

<sup>23</sup> Barry Chilibeck, Geoff Chislet, and Gary Norris, *Land Development Guidelines for the Protection of Aquatic Habitat* (Victoria: Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans [Pacific Region and Habitat Management Division] and BC Environment Integrated Management Branch, 1992).

<sup>24</sup> See Barry Chilibeck and Megan Sterling, *Urban Stormwater Guidelines and Best Management Practices for Protection of Fish and Fish Habitat* (Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Vancouver, 2000).

<sup>25</sup> British Columbia, Local Government Statutes Amendment Act, 1997. For a summary of tools for increased environmental protection, see the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services (Municipal Affairs) web site: <<http://www.marh.gov.bc.ca/GROWTH/PUBLICATIONS/BILL26/intro3.html>>

<sup>26</sup> Local Government Act, s. 907.

<sup>27</sup> City of Surrey Corporate Report, 24 November 1998.

<sup>28</sup> City of Surrey Corporate Report, 24 November 1998.

## Policies at a Glance\*

	Goal	Regulating Agency	Tools
Air	GHG Emission Reduction	Translink BC Transit Greater Victoria Transportation Commission	Transit Priority Measures Transportation Demand Management <i>Trip Reduction Services</i> <i>Parking Taxes</i> <i>Road Charges and Fees</i> Air-pollution By-laws Bicycle Facilities and Regional Cycling Policies Air Care Traffic Calming
		Municipalities	Road-side Transit Infrastructure Investment Parking By-laws OCP Policies (e.g., priority for transit, pedestrian and bicycle movement and priority for infrastructure investment)
		Regional Districts	Regional Growth Strategies <i>Integrated Land-use Policies</i> <i>Air Quality Management Plans</i>
	Compact Land Use and Complete Communities	Municipalities	OCP Policies <i>Zoning by-laws</i> <i>Development Permit Areas</i> <i>Secondary suite allowance</i>
		Regional Districts	Regional Growth Strategies <i>Urban Containment Boundary</i> <i>Growth Concentration Area</i> <i>Transportation Demand Management</i>
Water	Water Quality and Stream Protection	DFO Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection (WLAP)	Fisheries Act Fish Protection Act Streamside Protection Regulation (Policy Directives) Sensitive Stream Designation
		Municipalities	ESA inventories and DPA designation for environmental protection
	Stormwater Management	Municipalities	OCP policies indicating degree of imperviousness threshold for new development Watercourse Protection By-law Drainage By-laws Engineering BMPs
		Regional Districts	Liquid Waste Management Plans Watershed Health Classification System BMPs and By-laws
	Protection of Environmentally Sensitive Areas	Municipalities	OCP Policies Tree Protection By-law ESA inventories and DPA designation for environmental protection Conservation Covenants Municipal or Regional Parks Designation
	Creation of Parks/Greenways	Regional Districts	Regional Growth Strategies <i>Urban Containment Boundary</i>
		Municipalities	Municipal or Regional Parks Designation Dedication of publicly owned land Donation or Dedication upon Subdivision Development Cost Charges
	People Complete and Compact Communities	Regional Districts	Regional Growth Strategies <i>Growth Concentration Area</i> <i>Regional Housing Projections</i> <i>Complete Community Policies</i>
Municipalities		OCP policies (land use and housing mix targets) <i>Zoning By-laws (e.g., small lot zoning)</i> <i>Development Permit Areas</i> <i>Comprehensive Development Zone</i> <i>Heritage By-laws</i> Development Cost Charges Servicing Requirements Alternative Design Standards and Guidelines Agricultural Land Reserve	

\*The above table provides a cursory overview of policies and tools to influence more sustainable development in BC. For a more thorough overview and discussion of the regulatory tools available to local governments, please see:

Curran, *Environmental Stewardship and Complete Communities: A Report on Municipal Environmental Initiatives in British Columbia*.

Nolan et al., *The Smart Growth Guide to Local Government Law and Advocacy*; and Curran, *Environmental Stewardship and Complete Communities: A Report on Municipal Environmental Initiatives in British Columbia*.