

MEDIA RELEASE

City of Williams Lake



For Immediate Release

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450 Mart Street
Williams Lake, BC
V2G 1N3

Air Quality Monitors Installed at Strategic City Locations

Williams Lake City Hall is one of 10 strategic locations selected to host new air monitoring stations in the community.

The project is being undertaken by Scout Island Nature Centre with the support of the Ministry of Environment, along with Pinnacle Pellet and Atlantic Power, who are purchasing 10 new PurpleAir Monitors. The goal is to model variability of air quality in the airshed to improve the community's air quality in the future.

Currently, seven of the new air monitoring devices have been installed at key locations including: Scout Island Nature Centre at the Nature House, City Hall, South Lakeside Drive, Westridge Drive, North Lakeside Drive, Commodore Crescent and near the Williams Lake Golf and Tennis Club.

The three proposed future areas that will receive monitors include the Williams Lake Fire Hall, Glendale North and at Columneetza Secondary School, to compare data with a currently existing air quality monitoring station.

Martin Kruus, the Education Coordinator with Scout Island Nature Centre who has been tasked with installing and monitoring the devices, said the goal is to collect data over the course of an entire year. The data is intended to encompass all four seasons and measure climate and human activity effects like wind, dust, inversions or forest fires, to name a few, to paint a picture of what's happening in the Williams Lake airshed.

The monitors measure particulate matter PM 2.5, continually collecting data to upload in real time. The air quality data is uploaded to a website map (cyclone.unbc.ca/agmap) developed by a masters student at the University of Northern British Columbia, Brayden Nilson.

"PM 2.5 means the particles are 2.5 micrometres across, so just beyond human sight," Kruus said. "A simple way to think about it is say you get a face full of dust from a passing car. Sometimes your eyes can get itchy and your nose runs, so your upper respiratory system is catching those bigger particles. But the stuff that's a little finer can get down into your lungs and possibly do human harm, and that's what we're monitoring for."

Kruus noted the PurpleAir Monitors will not be used to measure Air Quality Health Index Warnings, nor to regulate industry.

"We want to do it in a way so the community trusts the data," Kruus said. "Anyone can check the data on the map and can trust the data is accurate and untouched."

The PurpleAir Monitors cost roughly \$300 each. Kruus hopes to have all 10 monitors installed by early to mid-November.

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