



FORT ST JAMES

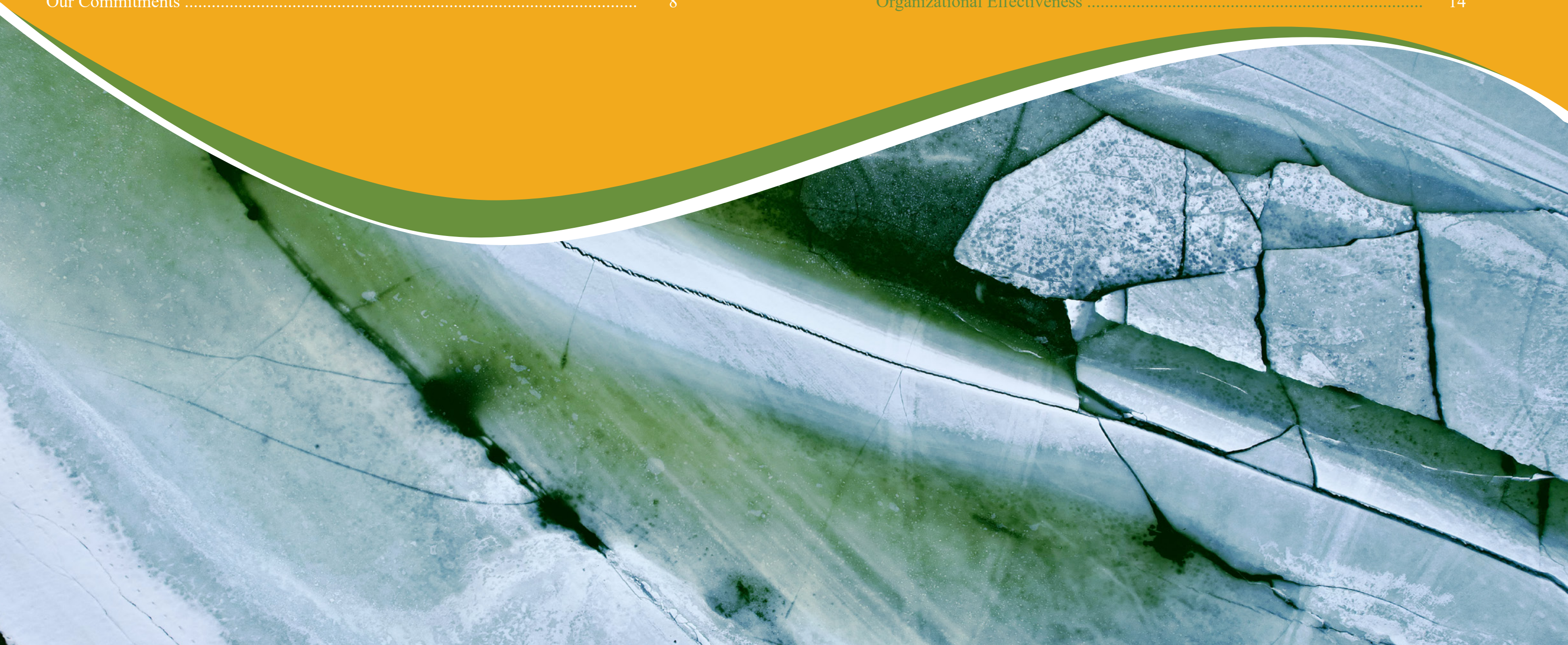
DISTRICT

2023 - 2026 Strategic Plan



Table of Contents

Message from the Mayor	1	Purpose of the Strategic Plan	9
Introduction	3	Strategic Focus Areas	10
Our Community	5	Managing our Assets	11
Our Future	6	Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation	12
Our Role	7	Adapting to a Changing Climate	13
Our Commitments	8	Organizational Effectiveness	14



Message from the Mayor

The District of Fort St. James is a bustling community, located on the shores of Stuart Lake. We are blessed to have an outstanding quality of life, where we can enjoy Mother Nature at a moment's notice with our closest family, friends and neighbors. We have a strong connection with the First Nations community of Nak'azdli Whuten and the four neighboring First Nations communities. The diversity of our friendly, welcoming community has attracted numerous people who have come to enjoy the area and now call it home.

Progress within the District and surrounding Electoral Area are becoming noticeable with the new RCMP detachment, seniors independent living complex, expansion of the local Perison Airport and the upgraded Stuart Lake Hospital. We are not without our challenges as experienced in most northern BC communities and these include the downturn in the forest industry, housing

affordability and aging municipal infrastructure. This Strategic Plan was developed by the Mayor and Council along with District Staff. The plan is a reference to ensure that all decisions, policies and activities align with our vision for the community and our goals and objectives. It also serves as a communication tool that ensures our residents and partners are aware of Council's vision and direction.

Mayor Martin Elphee



Introduction

This draft strategic plan was developed through a facilitated process in July of 2023, which involved the completion of a pre-workshop questionnaire, a half-day workshop with senior staff, followed by a one and a half-day, interactive workshop with members of Council.

The workshop with senior staff provided an opportunity for staff to provide their perspectives and input to the process, which were shared with Council during their workshop. It also identified any staff capacity or organizational deficiencies that may need to be considered in the strategic plan, or that could impact the advancement of the strategic plan.

The one and a half-day interactive Council workshop initially focused on establishing a common understanding of the future aspirations for the community (vision); the role and expectations of Council (mission); and the commitments by which the Council and the organization will

serve the constituents and undertake the work of the District of Fort St. James (values). The balance of the workshop engaged the participants in identifying and prioritizing the important opportunities and critical challenges currently facing the District of Fort St. James. This provided the basis for developing practical, achievable goals and strategies for the term of office.

Our Community

Fort St. James, located on the south shore of Stuart Lake, is a municipality of 1400 residents and occupies lands that have been home of the Nak'azdli Whut'en people since time immemorial. The community is defined by the welcoming character and fun spirit of the people who live here as well as the beauty of the surrounding waters landscapes, and natural environments. Fort St. James is a true 'community' that is affordable, provides a range of services and offers a slower pace of life. There is an abundance of 4-season outdoor activities and a strong tradition of youth sports that contribute to a high quality of life for all who call the community home.



Our Future

As we look to the future, we envision a growing community that is culturally integrated, with a diverse and vibrant economy that provides employment opportunities for our citizens. The community has embraced a common theme, creating a strong 'sense of place' that is a catalyst for growth and new investment in services sectors and tourism. The municipal infrastructure that serves our citizens is stable, resilient and sustainable and the community has access to robust and reliable internet connectivity that supports businesses and virtual work. The community is increasingly self-sufficient with access to locally grown food, adequate housing options for all citizens, and resilience and preparedness in response to a changing climate and resulting natural emergencies and events.



Our Role

As an elected Council, we are responsible and accountable for making decisions that benefit of our citizens, today, and into the future. We are proactive and forward thinking as we establish policies that effectively plan for and manage growth, manage our infrastructure and deliver services that meet the needs of our citizens. We are ambassadors for our community, ensuring that information is communicated to, and from our citizens and we advocate to other levels of government and agencies in the interest of our community.



As we fulfill our roles and responsibilities as a municipal Council, we will strive to:

- Represent our residents and constituents in a fair and professional manner;
- Work closely with First Nation, community groups and senior government partners to achieve our goals;
- Consider and be respectful of other viewpoints when making decisions;
- Be fiscally responsible stewards of the taxpayer’s money;
- Strive to function as an effective team;
- Communicate openly and with candor; and
- Act with integrity

Our Commitments



Purpose for Strategic Plan

The purpose of a strategic plan is to create a common understanding of the issues facing our community and establish strategic priority areas to address these challenges and opportunities. The strategic plan establishes a clear vision for the future, guides the allocation of financial and human resources, and helps to align decision-making with strategic goals. The strategic plan is a tool to track and measure our progress as a local government while focusing the resources of the municipality to address key issues.



The following strategic focus areas address the most important opportunities and challenges facing the community, and were established with a recognition that the financial resources and capacity of the district have limits.

Strategic Focus Areas



Strategic Focus Areas

1. *Managing our Assets*

Goal:

To undertake a systematic and proactive approach to developing, maintaining and replacing our assets and infrastructure.

Why:

The District has a significant investment in assets and infrastructure that provide essential services to our community. We have a responsibility to plan and manage our assets effectively to ensure continuity of service and to mitigate future costs to our citizens.

Objectives:

- 1.1 Implement an asset management software platform to guide and support financial planning and asset management activities across the organization.
- 1.2 Develop sound financial policies and strategies for funding future asset repair and replacement.

2. *Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation*

Goal

To explore and advance opportunities to work together with Indigenous governments on mutual goals and priorities for the benefit of our respective communities.

Why?

We are stronger as a community when we work together and building strong and respectful relationships through sharing, learning and understanding.

Objectives

- 2.1 Advance Council to Council engagement sessions to share and discuss respective goals and objectives and identify opportunities for cooperation and collaboration on areas of mutual interest.
- 2.2 Continue negotiations with Nak’azdli Whut’en Chief and Council regarding shared municipal water and wastewater systems.

Strategic Focus Areas



Strategic Focus Areas

3. *Adapting to a Changing Climate*

Goal:

To understand the impacts of climate change on our community and take appropriate measures to protect our citizens and infrastructure.

Why:

Our community and many of our assets are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. We must be proactive and plan ahead in order to protect our citizens, prevent service disruptions and avoid future costs.

Objectives:

- 3.1 Complete a hazard vulnerability risk assessment to inform future emergency mitigation and response planning.
- 3.2 Undertake approved fuel management initiatives adjacent to the community to mitigate impacts from wildfires.
- 3.3 Investigate water distribution line extensions to provide fire flows for un-serviced properties.
- 3.4 Undertake the development of a carbon action plan to guide the District's efforts to address climate change.

4. *Organizational Effectiveness*

Goal:

To provide quality governance and service delivery for our community.

Why:

We want to be effective in our service to the community, and our citizens to have confidence in their local government.

Objectives:

- 4.1 Undertake an organizational assessment to evaluate the performance of key functions within the municipal operations and identify and mitigate any risks associated with organizational performance.
- 4.2 Investigate and deliver ongoing training workshops for Council to develop and enhance governance competencies and processes.

Strategic Focus Areas

