

To: Fraser Valley Regional District Board
From: Micha Gutmanis, Environmental Services Coordinator

Date: 2018-03-13
File No: 9050-20

Subject: Air Quality Education Program

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) continue to offer the 'Love Our Air' school air quality education program in the 2018/2019 school year for a cost of not more than \$25,000 to be funded out of the existing air quality operations budget.

STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS

Support Environmental Stewardship
Support Healthy & Sustainable Community

PRIORITIES

Priority #2 Air & Water Quality

BACKGROUND

One of the objectives of the Fraser Valley Regional District's air quality portfolio is to increase public education and awareness of air quality topics in the region. It is through a better understanding of air quality that individuals can change their behaviour, fostering further emission reductions and thereby improve air quality in the region.

In 2014, the FVRD created a teacher resource guide on air quality with support from the Fraser Basin Council (FBC). This project was based on an air quality curriculum developed for the Prince George Air Improvement Roundtable and implemented in schools in that city. Lesson plans previously developed were modified to reflect current air quality information and conditions in the Fraser Valley.

Within the last few years, the BC Ministry of Education has set new education standards for students in grades K-12. This year (2017-2018) is a transition period for most schools to try out the new curriculum, and by 2019/2020, all BC schools will use the new curriculum. According to the Ministry of Education, a key goal in modernizing the education system is to provide students with an education that is still rigorous, but also flexible and innovative, one from which they gain the knowledge, skills, and abilities they need to succeed in today's modern world.

The FVRD saw this curriculum change as an opportunity to increase air quality education in classrooms while teachers searched for a way to align their lessons with the new curriculum. The FVRD hired an education consultant, Skye Consulting Ltd., to help refine the existing resource package and deliver in-classroom presentations in schools.

The lessons within the new "Love our Air" teacher resource, introduces students to issues of air quality in the region. The lessons are designed for grades 5 and 10 Science classrooms and linked to the BC Curriculum. The lessons include hands-on activities while teaching students the relevance of air quality in their own lives, in their community and in the wider world. Students learn to identify types of air pollutants, their sources and impacts, as well as possible actions and solutions they can take as individuals, or with their community.

DISCUSSION

The main objectives of teaching Air Quality in grades 5 and 10 are to develop students' personal and social awareness of their roles and responsibilities with respect to the environment, and their ability to make decisions about ways to reduce pollution through their everyday actions. The grades were chosen carefully by the education consultant, with a strong rationale for how they fit in with the new BC curriculum.

The FVRD decided to pilot the education program in Abbotsford, Chilliwack, and Mission (mainly due to lower transportation costs) for the first year, and if successful, will expand the program to reach other municipalities and electoral areas in the following year. The plan for the 2017/2018 school year was to deliver a maximum of 40 in-class presentations (20 elementary and 20 secondary). The elementary school workshops booked so quickly that a waitlist was created, which bodes well for the continuation of the program into the following year. The attached progress report from Skye Consulting Ltd. outlines which schools the program was delivered to, how many were delivered to date, and includes comments collected from teacher surveys.

Based on teacher feedback and the high wait list, the 'Love Our Air' education program has been successful to date. Other local governments have also mentioned they would be interested in replicating this program in their region.

COST

The total budget for the Love Clean Air Pilot Program, which included the development of the resource package, the presentation development, the 40 in-classroom presentations, and the follow-up audit, was \$26,232 and was paid for within the existing air quality operational budget. Continuing this program again in the 2018/2019 school year would cost approximately \$25,000.

Grant opportunities to help fund this air quality education program and potentially develop practical learning tools to aid the workshops will be explored.

CONCLUSION

Inclusion of Air Quality education in the school curriculum will further promote place-based knowledge of the natural world and the local areas. Through the 'Love Our Air' program, students will understand the relevance of air quality in their own lives, in their community and in the wider world.

COMMENT BY:

Barclay Pitkethly, Director of Regional Programs

Reviewed and supported.

Mike Veenbaas, Director of Financial Services

Reviewed and supported. Sufficient funding exists within the Air Quality Service to fund this program if grant funding is not secured.

Paul Gipps, Chief Administrative Officer

Reviewed and supported