



GPAZ LOCATES ITS FIRST AIR MONITOR IN EAST REGINA

The Great Plains Air Zone has located its first air monitoring station in East Regina. As GPAZ is now in its second year of operation, the Ministry has loaned this Airpointer to the air zone to allow GPAZ to begin collecting air quality data in one of the locations the Science Committee has identified as a priority for air monitoring within the zone.



Airpointer located in East Regina

THE GREAT PLAINS AIR ZONE HAS LOCATED ITS FIRST AIR QUALITY MONITOR IN EAST REGINA

The Great Plains Air Zone now has its first air monitoring location in operation. Although the instrument was in place in late July at its location in East Regina, the monitor required an underground power cable of considerable length. As many of you may know, it usually takes an extended waiting period for an electrician to make a service call, especially when he needs to trench approximately 30 metres. Being the middle of summer, vacation time also was a factor. Fortunately, all went well and the Airpointer began gathering data on September 3, 2015.

The monitor is collecting real time air quality data that can be observed on our website at www.gpaz.org. The pollutants being monitored include sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, ozone, fine particulate matter, wind direction, wind speed, air pressure, temperature, humidity and precipitation. The Air Quality Index (AQI) is also reported as a single numeric value from the above mentioned pollutants. For a better explanation of the AQI, please refer to our last newsletter. Our first full month of data is also published on the website in an easy to read graphic format. Check it out!

Great Plains Air Zone Meetings

The Board and GPAZ members met on October 21, 2015. The Science Committee met on July 29, September 9, October 6 and November 19, 2015. A few highlights of the October general meeting:

- Bob Scotten, Ex. Director of the West Central Airshed Association in Alberta presented principles of Alberta airsheds and information on instrumentation and data gathering.
- Motion was made to purchase another air monitoring system.
- Funding from municipalities was discussed.
- Date set for an annual general meeting – January 13, 2016.

Science Committee Meetings

- Siting and installation of the East Regina air monitor.
- Discuss quotes for air instrumentation and future monitoring site.
- Review and award service contract for East Regina station.
- Discussion of data storage for GPAZ and other air zones.

“We all have a share in quality air”

UPDATE TO MEETINGS

GPAZ has now placed its first air monitoring station in East Regina. We are now in the planning stage for the next site. The Science committee has looked at instrumentation costs and thought that having a more mobile system may better serve the GPAZ region in the future. Therefore, GPAZ is looking at the possibility of leasing a mobile trailer, with a service contract and data service. Another option would be having a company outfit a mobile trailer for GPAZ with the required instrumentation needed to monitor the pollutants that would provide the Air Quality Index. Depending on the time necessary to outfit a mobile trailer, we hope another site could be in operation in late summer, 2016. Look for an update in our next newsletter or check our website at www.gpaz.org.

The Ministry of Environment located the Saskatchewan Air Monitoring Lab (SAML) in Yorkton for some preliminary air monitoring this fall. A limited amount of data was gathered before the weather turned too cold for continued operation. GPAZ is hopeful the SAML may be available for use in 2016 to aid in gathering air quality information in other areas of the zone that have not had any previous air monitoring conducted. This will help our Science Committee prioritize representative air monitoring sites for GPAZ.

EDMONTON AIR QUALITY – WORSE THAN TORONTO?

In the spring of 2015, A group of physicians cautioned that Edmonton's air quality is worse than that of other larger centres such as Toronto, a fact they blamed in part on coal-fired electrical generating plants. The Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE) has examined a decade's worth of air quality data, which group member Dr. Joe Vipond says showed a troubling trend in Edmonton.

Although only about one-fifth the size of greater Toronto in terms of population, Edmonton has significantly higher levels of fine particulate matter in the air, the group's findings suggest. At a time when most Canadian cities are reducing dependence on coal-fired electrical generation, Edmonton's rose 13 per cent last year. "This fine particulate matter has been dropping steadily over the last 10 years in Ontario ... as their coal phase-out has occurred," he said. "Overall, the trend is going up (in Edmonton)." Dr. Vipond began looking into the air quality numbers himself, first examining the smog alerts issued for Toronto by Air Quality Ontario. Next, the team of physicians looked at air quality data produced by CAPE and Air Quality Ontario comparing Edmonton and Toronto. We made some graphs and we noticed that one graph was going up and one graph was going down and about four years ago those lines crossed." Dr. Vipond said.

It is noted the presence of particulates in the air cannot be pinned on coal alone. Bob Myrick with the Alberta Environmental Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Agency agrees. "Part of it is automobiles, home heating, the domestic sources — and then the industry sources including the power plants, the refineries east of Edmonton and northeast of Edmonton, they all contribute to the air quality issue that we have," he said.

Regardless of the source, one troubling fact remains. While most Canadian cities have seen a reduction in airborne particulates over the past decade, Edmonton is a rare exception. "Basically, it looks like over time we've definitely seen an improvement in air quality in Toronto, and over that same time, air quality in Edmonton has certainly not improved," said Michael Brauer, a professor in School of Population and Public Health at the University of British Columbia. "And there's some indication that in recent years it may be getting worse."

Late in November, 2015 the Government of Alberta announced that by 2030, Alberta will have shuttered the 18 coal-fired power plants that currently generate around 55 percent of the province's electricity, with two-thirds of that power replaced by renewable sources. The stunning move was announced as part of Alberta's climate change policy framework.

