

# HOUSING PROFILE

Oil and gas industry activities are vital to the provincial economy. Since 2000, industry investment has increased 151%, to an estimated \$4.5 billion in 2004. In the same year, 11,400 people were directly employed by oil and gas activities, up 45% since 2001.

The BC government supports industry’s investments through initiatives to encourage further expansion and create more year-round well-paying community jobs and benefits. The Summer Drilling Royalty Program, together with new technologies and all-weather access roads, has played a major role in transitioning activity in Northeast BC from “winter only” to year-round. Unemployment dropped from 11.9% in June 2002 to 4.4% in October 2005.

Rapid job growth and year-round activity, while welcomed, bring new challenges for Northeast communities. Housing ranks high among these challenges.

## Housing Consultations

This profile is a starting point for the 2006 Housing Consultations. It contains basic information about housing in Pouce Coupe, identifies issues and provides a brief commentary on how other communities, facing similar challenges, have responded.

## Pouce Coupe’s Economy

Pouce Coupe is situated only 10 km from Dawson Creek. Oil and gas, as well as agriculture, are the main economic sectors in the area.

## Housing Type, 2001

The housing stock had a total of 275 units in 2001, the majority in single detached housing. The number of houses in Pouce Coupe has more or less remained constant between 1996 and 2001, with few net additions to the housing stock during this period.

- 75% single detached (205)
- 4% duplexes/townhouses (10)
- 7% apartments (20)
- 15% mobile homes (40)

## Housing Starts, 2000-2005

During the past five years, there were four residential building permits for new single detached homes in Pouce Coupe. There were no new mobile or modular homes brought into the community during this period.

## Temporary Housing, 2006

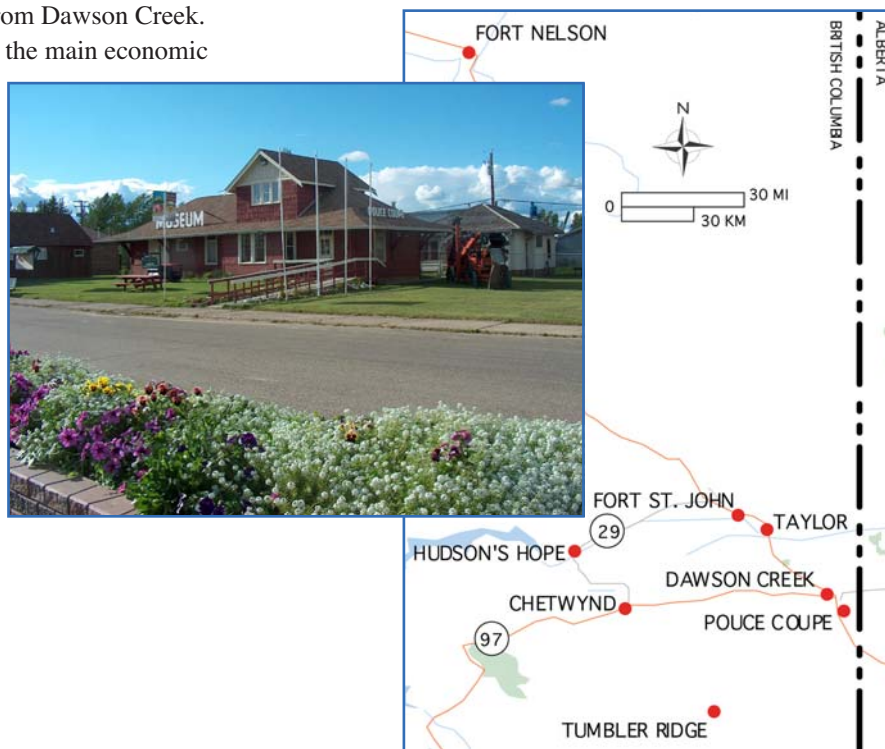
There are approximately 80 units of temporary accommodation, including seasonal accommodation such as campsites, in Pouce Coupe. There are currently no bed and breakfast units or cabins in the Village.

- 41 hotel and motel rooms
- 23 campsites
- 18 RV sites

## Non-Market Housing

Pouce Coupe has 75 units of non-market housing.

- 7 units of low-income housing - single detached and duplex (BC Native Housing Society)
- 8 seniors’ housing units (Tremblay House)
- Approximately 60 federal-led subsidized care beds in the Peace River Haven facility. This facility is scheduled to be closed down.



## Housing Prices, 2006

The accompanying real estate sales statistics are for Zone 60 of the Northern Real Estate Board, which covers the majority of the Northeast communities.

Northeast Real Estate Listings				
Year	Units Listed	Units Sold	Absorption Rate	Average Price
2002	1,132	604	53%	\$130,282
2003	1,148	697	61%	\$136,675
2004	1,212	814	67%	\$139,104
2005	1,401	931	66%	\$171,861

Source: Northern Lights Real Estate Board, Zone 60

Although comparable statistics were not available specifically for Pouce Coupe, a local realtor reports that the inventory of available homes is very small and that list prices have increased significantly over the past few years. House prices are marginally lower than Dawson Creek. According to BC Assessment, a typical 3-bedroom house (1,100 to 1,150 sf) on a standard lot is assessed at approximately \$230,000, indicating above average house prices for the Northeast.

## Rental Housing, 2006

Historical rents and vacancy rates were not available for Pouce Coupe. There are few apartments or purpose-built rental units in the Village. People rent their homes privately, and secondary suites are generally not permitted.

## Population, 2001-2005

The total population in Pouce Coupe declined by 9% between 1996 and 2001. BC Stats estimates that the population has been growing since 2001 at a low annual rate of 0.4%.

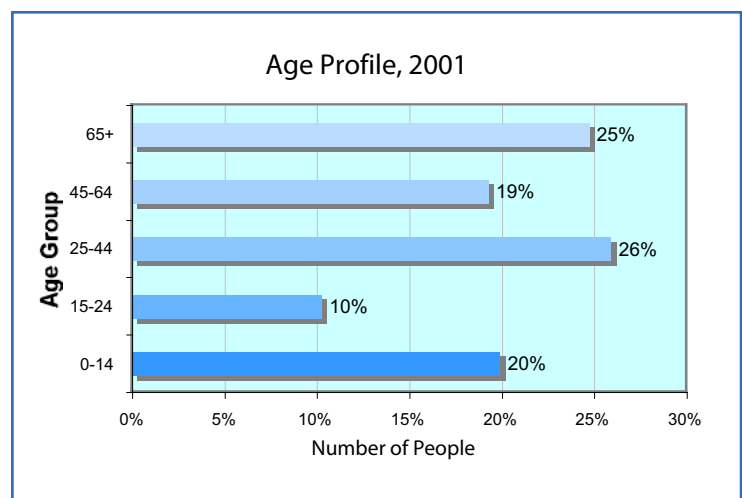
Population Estimates		
	Number	% Change
2001	869	
2002	862	-0.8%
2003	862	0.0%
2004	864	0.2%
2005	887	2.7%
Change 2001-2005	18	2.1%

Source: BC Stats

## Age Groups

Compared to the rest of the province, Pouce Coupe has a slightly greater proportion of children, with 20% of the Village's population 14 years of age or younger. Home ownership that is suitable for families with young children is likely to remain a priority.

Pouce Coupe also has a disproportionately large share of the population who are seniors, with a quarter of the population over the age of 65. This can in part be attributed to the presence of a 60-unit residential care facility in the Village, which has been housing elderly seniors from Pouce Coupe as well as surrounding areas.



Data Source: Statistics Canada, 2001

## Migration, 2000-2004

Migration data specific to Pouce Coupe was not available.

Between 2000 and 2004, there was a net loss of almost 1,200 individuals to the Peace River Regional District. Only in the 18 to 24 age group was there a net gain of movers to the region. While there was a net gain of migrants from within BC during this period, the losses were mostly due to young families moving to other provinces, namely Alberta.

The median income of individuals who moved to the region between 2002 and 2003 increased by 11%.

## School Enrollment

Pouce Coupe has one elementary school. Total school enrollment decreased from by 33% from 148 in the 2001/02 school year to 99 in 2005/06.

## Incomes, 2003

A family's income level has a significant impact on their ability to maintain a home. In Pouce Coupe, single parents and non-family persons (individuals who are not living with other family members) have the lowest income levels.

\$62,300 – median income of couple families

\$26,400 – median income of lone parent families

\$17,500 – median income of non-family persons

## Housing Issues in Pouce Coupe

- *Low inventory of houses on the market and high levels of interest from local and outside buyers*
- *An aging housing stock exists and there has been very limited construction of new homes in recent years*
- *Young families have limited choice within the current home ownership market*
- *Region dealing with serious labour shortages of home builders and construction trades*
- *The proposed closure of the Peace River Haven care facility would have a significant impact on seniors' demands for supporting housing and residential care from within the community and surrounding areas*

## Housing Affordability

The following calculations represent estimates of what typical households would be able to afford. Given current list prices in the region (see Housing Prices on page 2), most families with a downpayment would be able to enter the housing market. Many single parent families and individuals living alone have incomes that are below the threshold needed to make the monthly payments.

Maximum Monthly Shelter Cost @ 30% of Income by Household Type, 2003				Maximum Purchase Price @ 30% of Income by Household Type, 2003	
	Median Income	30% of Median Income	Maximum Monthly	@ 10% Down Payment	@ 25% Down Payment
Couple Families	\$62,300	\$18,690	\$1,558	\$243,000	\$288,000
Lone Parent Families	\$26,400	\$7,920	\$660	\$103,000	\$122,000
Non-Family Persons	\$17,500	\$5,250	\$438	\$68,000	\$81,000

Data Source: CitySpaces Consulting calculations – Statistics Canada 2003 Small Area Data

# OTHER EXPERIENCES

In resource communities where the economy is expanding rapidly, unemployment is negligible, and shelter costs are high, service sector and “key workers” find difficulty in securing adequate, affordable housing. This has negative effects on individuals, families, the community and the economy. Research indicates that resource-based communities in the US and Canada have been actively tackling housing issues. The following are some examples.

## Oil and Gas Communities

Given the volatility of the energy sector, oil and gas companies have been reluctant to make long term investments in community infrastructure. Camp-style housing or motel accommodation may be provided for Fly In/Fly-Out (FIFO) workers. RV campgrounds are a growing alternative, operated by private businesses. Fort McMurray is considering zoning for “short term accommodation” (e.g., motel, modular). In some cases, employers assist senior personnel through providing company-owned housing or through a housing allowance.

## Resort Communities

Typically, major destination resort employers provide some or all seasonal employee housing. These are often similar to college residences with small self-contained rooms and shared facilities.

In larger resort destinations, where a community already exists, or is growing in tandem with the resort, municipalities have a “linkage program” whereby commercial developers/employers are assessed a housing charge. The funds are used by a non-market authority to build/buy housing to rent or sell. Most Colorado and California resorts use this approach. In Canada, Whistler has pioneered a linkage program.

## Mining Communities

World wide, mining companies are typically involved in providing housing and, sometimes, community infrastructure. Sometimes, these are transitioned to local authorities if a long-term community is established. In Canada, recent patterns suggest that new mines work on a FIFO basis. Companies provide transportation and camp-style housing.

Some communities have experimented with innovative home ownership. For example, Wood Buffalo Housing and Development Corporation and the Chamber of Commerce have a program for lower income small business employees. The employer pays the down payment. The corporation provides a second mortgage, repayable at a favourable interest rate.

## Alternative Housing Suppliers

Two businesses near Calgary buy homes slated for demolition or that are no longer in use, refurbish and move them to a new location. One firm recently moved 18 homes from the former company town of Seebe. The homes appeal to retirees, first-time home buyers and companies for staff housing. Some are used in resort communities. The estimated cost to move a 2-3 bedroom bungalow from Stavely, Alberta to Fort St. John is \$50,000. Distance is less of an obstacle than the regulatory environment (e.g., highway restrictions on height and width limits).

## The Katrina Response

In New Orleans, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, many businesses remain closed or minimally functioning because there is no place for workers to live. Even signing bonuses and inflated wages are insufficient incentive to lure employees back to the city. Frustration with the government response has led to privatized employer-based solutions, including trailer communities, floating homes, “loaned” land for temporary housing, renting and equipping apartment buildings / hotels, and providing rent subsidies.

### Your Notes and Questions: