Dawson Creek

Dawson Creek is a city in northeastern British Columbia , Canada . The municipality of 24 @.@ 37 square kilometres (9 @.@ 41 sq mi) had a population of 11 @,@ 583 in 2011 . Dawson Creek derives its name from the creek of the same name that runs through the community . The creek was named after George Mercer Dawson by a member of his land survey team when they passed through the area in August 1879 . Once a small farming community , Dawson Creek became a regional centre when the western terminus of the Northern Alberta Railways was extended there in 1932 . The community grew rapidly in 1942 as the US Army used the rail terminus as a transshipment point during construction of the Alaska Highway . In the 1950s , the city was connected to the interior of British Columbia via a highway and railway through the Rocky Mountains . Since the 1960s , growth has slowed .

Dawson Creek is located in the dry and windy prairie land of the Peace River Country . As the seat of the Peace River Regional District and a service centre for the rural areas south of the Peace River , the city has been called the " Capital of the Peace " . It is also known as the " Mile 0 City " , referring to its location at the southern end of the Alaska Highway . It also has a heritage interpretation village , an art gallery , and a museum . Annual events include a fall fair and rodeo .

History

Dawson Creek is named after the watercourse of the same name , itself named after George Mercer Dawson who led a surveying team through the area in August 1879 ; a member of the team labelled the creek with Dawson 's name . The community that formed by the creek was one of many farming communities established by European @-@ Canadian settlers moving west through the Peace River Country . When the Canadian government began issuing homestead grants to settlers in 1912 , the pace of migration increased . With the opening of a few stores and hotels in 1919 and the incorporation of the Dawson Creek Co @-@ operative Union on 28 May 1921 , Dawson Creek became a dominant business centre in the area . After much speculation by land owners and investors , the Northern Alberta Railways built its western terminus 3 km (2 mi) from Dawson Creek . The golden spike was driven on 29 December 1930 , and the first passenger train arrived on 15 January 1931 . The arrival of the railway and the construction of grain elevators attracted more settlers and business to the settlement . The need to provide services for the rapidly growing community led Dawson Creek to incorporate as a village in May 1936 . A small wave of refugees from the Sudetenland settled in the area in 1939 as World War II was beginning . The community exceeded 500 people in 1941 .

Upon entering the war , the United States decided to build a transportation corridor to connect the US mainland to Alaska . In 1942 , thousands of US Army personnel , engineers , and contractors poured into the city ? the terminal of rail transport ? to construct the Alaska Highway . The highway was completed in less than a year ; even after the workers involved in its construction departed , population and economic growth continued . In February 1943 , a major fire and explosion in a livery barn , packed with road @-@ building supplies including dynamite , caused serious damage to the center of town ; five people were killed and 150 injured .

By 1951 , Dawson Creek had more than 3 @,@ 500 residents . In 1952 , the John Hart Highway linked the town to the rest of the British Columbia Interior and Lower Mainland through the Rocky Mountains ; a new southbound route , known locally as Tupper Highway , made the town a crossroads with neighbouring Alberta . The next year , western Canada 's largest propane gas plant was built and federal government offices were established in town . In 1958 , the extension of the Pacific Great Eastern Railway to the Peace from Prince George was completed , and the village was re @-@ incorporated as a city . Between 1951 and 1961 , the population of Dawson Creek more than tripled .

Growth slowed in the 1960s , with the population reaching its all @-@ time high in 1966 . In the 1970s , the provincial government moved its regional offices from Pouce Coupe to the city , Northern Lights College opened a Dawson Creek campus , and the Dawson Creek Mall was

constructed . Several modern grain elevators were built , and the town 's five wooden grain elevators , nicknamed " Elevator Row " , were taken out of service . Only one of the historic elevators remains , converted to an art gallery . Since the 1970s , with the nearby town of Fort St. John attracting much of the area 's industrial development and Grande Prairie becoming a commercial hub , the town 's population and economy have not significantly increased .

Since 1992 , the city has undergone several boundary expansions . One expansion incorporated undeveloped land in the southeast for an industrial park and a Louisiana @-@ Pacific Canada veneer factory . The city extended sewer and water lines to the location ; however , the area was not developed and with the factory only half @-@ built , L @-@ P Canada abandoned its plans . A business making manufactured homes bought the factory and completed its development in 2005 . Another expansion incorporated the existing oriented strand board factory in the northwest corner of the city , while further incorporations have included undeveloped land to the south and north .

= = Demographics = =

The 1941 census , the first to include Dawson Creek as a defined subdivision , counted 518 residents . Its growth spurred by the construction of the Alaska Highway , the town recorded a sevenfold increase to 3 @,@ 589 residents in the 1951 census . Within five years , the population doubled to 7 @,@ 531 . New transport links with southern British Columbia and Alberta spurred continued growth into the next decade . The population peaked in 1966 at 12 @,@ 392 , then declined throughout the 1970s , rising again briefly during the construction of the nearby town of Tumbler Ridge in the early 1980s . Dawson Creek 's population has remained relatively stable since then . Between 2005 and 2009 , the population rose from 10 @,@ 869 to 11 @,@ 514 , per provincial estimates .

According to the 2006 Canadian census , there were 10 @,@ 994 people living in 4 @,@ 650 households within the city (the official provincial estimate was 11 @,@ 093 people) . Of the federally surveyed households , 33 % were one @-@ person households , slightly above the 28 % average provincewide ; households consisting of couples with children , at 26 % , were very close to the provincial average ; and households of couples without children , at 24 % , were below the provincial average of 30 % . Among its 3 @,@ 000 census families , Dawson Creek had a smaller proportion of married couples than the province , 62 % compared to 73 % , but the same average number of persons per family , 2 @.@ 9 . With 92 % of Dawson Creek residents being Canadian @-@ born , and 93 % speaking only English , the city has few visible minorities . Only 17 % of residents aged 35 ? 64 had a university certificate or diploma , compared to the provincewide rate of 29 % . Among those aged 25 ? 64 , 20 % did not have a high school certificate or equivalent , much higher than the 12 % provincewide rate .

In 2005 , the 22 @-@ officer Dawson Creek Royal Canadian Mounted Police municipal detachment reported 2 @,@ 561 Criminal Code offences . This translated into a crime rate of 225 Criminal Code offences per 1 @,@ 000 people , down from the previous year 's rate of 231 , but still much higher than the provincial average of 125 . In 2004 , per 1 @,@ 000 people , the city had higher crime rates compared to the provincial averages on all Criminal Code offences except theft from motor vehicles (19 @.@ 8 city , 20 @.@ 2 province) , heroin @-@ related offences (0 city , 0 @.@ 13 province) , and murder (0 city , 0 @.@ 03 province) . The city had slightly higher but comparable levels of offensive weapons charges , cannabis @-@ related offences , robbery , and motor vehicle thefts . Per 1 @,@ 000 people , the city had much higher levels of shoplifting (13 @.@ 8 city , 4 @.@ 2 province) , cocaine @-@ related offences (7 @.@ 8 city , 1 @.@ 4 province) , commercial break @-@ and @-@ enters (11 @.@ 2 city , 4 @.@ 2 province) , residential break @-@ and @-@ enters (13 @.@ 9 city , 6 @.@ 0 province) , and non @-@ sexual assaults (26 @.@ 2 city , 9 @.@ 9 province) .

= = Geography and climate = =

At the foot of Bear Mountain ridge , the city developed around the Dawson Creek watercourse

which flows eastward into the Pouce Coupe River . The city is located on the Pouce Coupe Prairie in the southwestern part of the Peace River Country , 72 km (44 @.@ 7 mi) southeast of Fort St. John , and 134 km (83 @.@ 3 mi) northwest of Grande Prairie , Alberta . According to the Canada Land Inventory , the city is on soil that has moderate limitations , due to an adverse climate , that restrict the range of crops or require moderate conservation practices . The land is flat , but slopes upwards in the northeastern corner elevating a residential area over the rest of the city .

The city is in the British Columbia Peace Lowland ecosection of the Canadian Boreal Plains ecozone on the continental Interior Platform . Located in the Cordillera Climatic Region , it lies at the southern end of a subarctic climate (Köppen Dfc) . In the summer , the city is often dusty and arid ; temperatures during the day are warm , but cool at night , typically falling below 10 ° C (50 ° F) . Highs reaching 30 ° C (86 ° F) occur only twice per year on average . Heavy rain showers are sporadic , lasting only a few minutes . In the winter , the city can get bitterly cold and dry , with 17 to 18 days of ? 30 ° C (? 22 ° F) lows per year . It is subject to very strong winds year round . Unlike most of the province , the city and its region use Mountain Standard Time (UTC ? 07 : 00) all year round , since the area already has long daylight hours in the summer and short daylight hours in the winter . In other words , residents of the region never change their clocks - they use Pacific Daylight Time during the spring and summer , and Mountain Standard Time during the fall and winter .

= = Economy = =

The economy of Dawson Creek is based on four major industries : agriculture , retail , tourism , and oil and gas . Agriculture has historically been the most important industry to Dawson Creek , as the city is the regional transshipment point for agricultural commodities . The city is surrounded by the Agricultural Land Reserve , where the soil can support livestock and produces consistently good yields of quality grain and grass crops , such as canola , hay , oats , alfalfa , wheat , and sweet clover . The service and retail sector caters to the city 's inhabitants , smaller nearby towns , and rural communities . However , there is significant retail leakage to Grande Prairie , the closest major Alberta city , where there is no provincial tax on retail purchases , while British Columbia charges 7 % . In 2006 , the BC government rejected a proposal to lower the sales tax in the province 's border communities to 4 % . The problem of leakage has been exacerbated in recent years by the introduction of large @-@ format retail stores into the small city . Residents still cross the border for high @-@ priced items but now also purchase medium- and low @-@ priced items from foreign @-@ owned large @-@ format chain stores .

Dawson Creek has a large tourism industry as Mile " 0 " of the Alaska Highway . Thousands of people drive on the highway every year , starting in Dawson Creek and ending in Fairbanks , Alaska . The trek is often made with recreational vehicles , sometimes in convoys which gather in the city . In the winter , the hospitality industry caters to workers from the oil patches . Discoveries south of Dawson Creek and higher energy prices have spurred oil and gas activities , which have in turn driven the nearby Fort St. John economy to spill over to the Dawson Creek economy . British Columbia 's first wind farm , Bear Mountain Wind Park , was constructed southwest of the city in 2009 .

= = Transportation and infrastructure = =

Dawson Creek 's road network was laid out in the mid @-@ 20th century as the town rapidly expanded . The city maintains 88 km (55 mi) of paved and 11 km (7 mi) of unpaved roads . The primary roads generally follow a grid pattern around large blocks of land . Because the grid contains many internal intersections with stops signs , traffic is forced onto two arterial roads : 8 Street going north ? south and Alaska Avenue going southeast ? northwest . These two roads meet at a traffic circle where a metal statue marks the beginning of the Alaska Highway . Officially designated British Columbia Highway 97 , it runs north from Dawson Creek to Fort St. John and the Yukon ? where it becomes Highway 1 ? before reaching Alaska . The other highways emanating from Dawson Creek are the John Hart Highway , also 97 (southwest to Chetwynd and Prince George) , Highway 2 (

south to Grande Prairie and southern Alberta) , and Highway 49 (east to Peace River and northern Alberta) . A road with few intersections along the southern and western borders of the city , incorporating a stretch of Highway 2 , is designated as a " dangerous goods route " for heavy trucks so that they can avoid traveling through the city . However , Highway 49 has no direct access to such a ring road , so many trucks bound to or from the east use the city arterials , slowing traffic and damaging roads .

Dawson Creek is a regional node for air , rail , and bus services . The Dawson Creek Airport , which services commercial flights by Central Mountain Air , was built in 1963 ; its 1 @,@ 524 m (5 @,@ 000 ft) runway was paved in 1966 . There are larger airports in Fort St. John and Grande Prairie that maintain more comprehensive flight schedules . Passenger rail service was available in Dawson Creek between 1931 and 1974 . Service began when the Northern Alberta Railways (NAR) built its northwest terminus in the town and was extended in 1958 to Vancouver with a rail line through the Rocky Mountains . Passenger rail service ended as commodity shipments of grains , oil and gas by @-@ products , and forestry products became more important in the resource @-@ based economy . Greyhound Lines maintains a bus station in Dawson Creek which connects the city to Vancouver , Edmonton (via Grande Prairie) , and Whitehorse (via Fort Nelson) .

The city draws its water supply from the Kiskatinaw River , 18 km (11 mi) west of town . Before reaching the city , the water is pumped through a settling pond , two storage ponds , and a treatment plant where it is flocculated , filtered , and chlorinated . The city also provides drinking water for Pouce Coupe and rural residents . Sewage is processed by a lagoon system east of town and released into the Pouce Coupe River .

= = Education = =

Dawson Creek is located in School District 59 Peace River South which maintains four elementary schools (Tremblay , Frank Ross , Crescent Park , and Canalta elementary schools) , and one high school (Dawson Creek Secondary School) .

Mountain Christian School , and Ron Pettigrew Christian School are K @-@ 12 private schools located in the city.There is also Notre Dame which is a K @-@ 7 Catholic school .

Established in 1975 , Northern Lights College has a campus in Dawson Creek that houses its Regional Administration and two Centres of Excellence . At Northern Lights College , students can earn a one @-@ year certificate , a two @-@ year diploma or associate degree , or complete upgrading courses to get their high school diploma .

= = Culture and recreation = =

The cultural identity of Dawson Creek rests on its designation as Mile " 0 " of the Alaska Highway . The Mile " 0 " post , depicted in the city flag , is located in the historic downtown area , one block south of the Northern Alberta Railways Park . This four @-@ acre (1 @.@ 6 ha) , mostly paved park is the gathering point for travellers . The park includes the Dawson Creek Art Gallery , which exhibits work by local artists and craftsmen . The Station Museum , connected to the art gallery , displays artifacts and exhibits associated with the construction of the NAR railway and the Alaska Highway . Other parks in Dawson Creek include the Mile Zero Rotary Park and the Walter Wright Pioneer Village . Annual events in the city include the Dawson Creek Symphonette and Choir performance , the Dawson Creek Art Gallery auction , the Dawson Creek Spring Rodeo , and the Peace Country Blue Grass Festival . The largest event , held annually since 1953 , is the Dawson Creek Fall Fair & Exhibition ? a five @-@ day professional rodeo , with a parade , fairgrounds , and exhibitions .

City recreation facilities include two ice hockey arenas , a curling rink , an indoor swimming pool , an outdoor ice rink , and a speed skating oval . The South Peace Community Multiplex , a new facility completed in 2010 , boasts a pool , indoor rodeo grounds and ice rink . Voters approved building the Multiplex in a 2004 referendum which projected its cost at C $ 21 @.@ 6 million . The project became controversial when construction began and the cost projection was raised to $ 35

million . The facility is located close to the city 's exhibition grounds , away from residential uses . It features an indoor rodeo arena and a 4 @,@ 000 @-@ seat convention centre / ice arena with skyboxes . Nearby Bear Mountain , located south of the city , provides over 20 km (12 mi) of snowshoeing and cross @-@ country skiing trails , as well as areas for downhill skiing and about 500 km (300 mi) of trails for snowmobiles , mountain bikes , and all @-@ terrain vehicles . The city was once home to a North American Hockey League team , the Dawson Creek Rage , beginning in the 2010 ? 11 season until it ceased operations in 2012 due to financial difficulties .

= = Media = =

 Dawson Creek is served by several regional newspapers . The Dawson Creek Daily News (formerly Peace River Block Daily News) and Fort St. John 's Alaska Highway News , both part of the Glacier Ventures chain of local papers , are dailies available in the city . The Vault Magazine is a free alternative newspaper available in the city bi @-@ weekly . The Northeast News , a free weekly published in Fort St. John , has a sub @-@ office in Dawson Creek . The only radio station broadcasting from the city is 890 CJDC AM , which first went on air in 1947 . Originating in Chetwynd , 94 @.@ 5 Peace FM (CHET) is rebroadcast in Dawson Creek on CHAD @-@ FM 104 @.@ 1 . The Fort St. John stations 95 @.@ 1 Energy FM (CHRX) , 101 @.@ 5 The Bear FM (CKNL) , and 101 @.@ 1 The Moose FM (CKFU) also reach the city . Also available locally is CBKQ @-@ FM 89 @.@ 7 , repeating CBC Radio One station CBYG @-@ FM from Prince George ; and CBUF @-@ FM @-@ 7 93 @.@ 7 FM , repeating Première Chaîne station CBUF @-@ FM from Vancouver .
 CJDC @-@ TV , an affiliate of CBC Television , has been broadcasting from Dawson Creek since 1959 . A local community group , the Cable 10 Society , operates a community television station . Dawson Creek is also served by local repeater CFSN @-@ TV channel 8 , owned locally by Dawson Creek Hypervista Communications and repeating CTV station CFRN @-@ DT Edmonton in analogue .

= = Government and politics = =

 The City of Dawson Creek has a council @-@ manager form of municipal government . A six @-@ member council , along with one mayor , is elected at @-@ large every four years . Dale Bumstead was elected mayor in a byelection to replace Mike Bernier who had been elected MLA in 2013 . Bumstead was elected by acclamation to a four @-@ year term as mayor in the 2014 general municipal election . Previous mayors of the city have included Calvin Kruk (2005 @-@ 2008) , Wayne Dahlen (2001 @-@ 2005) , and Blair Lekstrom (1996 @-@ 2001) . Council appoints one person , usually the mayor , to serve as a board director with the Peace River Regional District . Concurrent with municipal elections , residents also elect two school board trustees to School District 59 which consists of seven trustees .
 The city government administered a 2015 operating budget of approximately $ 36 million which predominantly went towards fire and police protection , recreational facilities and services , water treatment and distribution , sewage collection and treatment , road maintenance , snow removal , library services , parks , public transportation , and the airport . For creating its Community Energy Plan , which involved the installation of low @-@ voltage street lights and solar @-@ powered hot water heaters , the city was awarded the Federation of Canadian Municipalities ' 2007 Sustainable Community Award .
 Dawson Creek is situated in the Peace River South provincial electoral district and is represented by Mike Bernier of the British Columbia Liberal Party in the provincial assembly . Bernier served as mayor of Dawson Creek between 2008 and 2013 . His predecessor , Blair Lekstrom , also served as mayor of Dawson Creek , between 1996 and 2001 , before being elected as the MLA for the BC Liberals . Bernier became a Member of the Legislative Assembly in the 2013 provincial election with 46 % support . Before Bernier and Lekstrom , Peace River South was represented by Dawson Creek resident Jack Weisgerber . Weisgerber was first elected in 1986 as a member of the Social

Credit Party and served as the province 's Minister of Energy , Mines and Petroleum Resources and Minister of Native Affairs . While the Social Credit Party lost power in 1991 , Weisgerber was re @-@ elected and served as interim party leader . He joined the Reform Party of British Columbia in 1994 and won re @-@ election in 1996 as party leader , even though Dawson Creek polls put him in third place behind the BC Liberal Party and New Democratic Party candidates .

Federally , Dawson Creek is located in the Prince George ? Peace River riding . The riding is represented in the Canadian House of Commons by Conservative Bob Zimmer . Bob Zimmer was elected to this seat in 2011 after Jay Hill retired . Before Hill , who was first elected in 1993 , the riding was represented by Progressive Conservative Frank Oberle . Oberle served as its Member of Parliament for 20 years .