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THURSDAY, March 6, 2025

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Clearing out Moccasin Flats

The last full-time resident of the encampment has received a formal eviction notice

TED CLARKE
Citizen Staff

The City of Prince George has served an eviction notice to the last registered occupant of the Lower Patricia Boulevard encampment, known as Moccasin Flats.

The notice, served Thursday (Feb. 27), gives him 21 days to respond to the civil claim.

The court filing also applies to two to four other people, whose identities are unknown to the city, who were previously camped at the site on the eastern edge of downtown.

The 59-year-old, referred to as Bel in this story, said he knew the day was coming when he'd have to pack up his belongings and leave a site he's occupied for nearly three years.

He has no plans to fight the eviction and is resigned to the fact he will soon need to find a new place to call home for himself, his dog, and his two cats.



CITIZEN PHOTO BY CHUCK NISBETT

Marvin (left), Pat and Chad discuss what can still be salvaged from Moccasin Flats on Monday.

"I'll just do whatever the judge says. Basically, I'm not that kind of person to get in the way. In the eyes of progress, it's got to go forward, right?" said Bel.

He's hopeful he'll be given enough time to pack up all his belongings, including a wood stove that's been his lifeline this winter.

He's gotten to know city staff and bylaw officers and is reasonably sure they will work with him to give him the time he needs to vacate his campsite. He hopes to be out by mid-April.

"It'll take me at least a month because I don't want to leave the city with the (cleanup) bill," he said.

"I'm not in a state of panic or anything. I'm just trying to figure out what I can do next and see where I can go without being bothered. I can't be cooped up like those folks in (the Third Avenue temporary housing facility 100 metres north of his camp). The rooms are too small and people can't bring their stuff with them.

"Even at the North Star (Inn) they're having problems. People are breaking into rooms and staff doesn't do anything about it. They don't feel safe there. It's a locked door, and doors get kicked in and it's not being dealt with."

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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Dan McLaren
President



Fire and fear: Last resident ready to move on from Flats

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Bel has thought about leaving the Flats at least every other day in recent months, fearing for his own safety.

This winter has been especially hard for Bel, who was good friends with Hank Hayden, known around the camp as the “voice of the homeless.” Hayden was a well-respected advocate who volunteered as the camp medic and lived close to Bel’s camp until he was found dead in his tent on Dec. 8.

“I’ll stand up for the rights of homeless people, but I’m not going to continue living here. It’s too chaotic,” said Bel. “I need to move on with my own personal life. At some point, I was (fearful), but not too much anymore. Who knows?”

Nighttime was usually the worst in the Flats, when stabbings, shootings, and rapes were more likely to occur under the cover of darkness. Most of the residents would stay awake through the night, believing they had a better chance of avoiding harm if they slept during the day.

Bel is the last remaining Moccasin Flats resident of the 45 who were there on May 13, 2024, when the province’s Encampment Response Teams conducted a count of how many people were living there.

The eviction notice notes that Bel has been offered shelter and housing numerous times by BC Housing and its non-profit partner organizations and has indicated he’s not interested in accepting options presented to him for indoor shelter, supportive housing, or rent supplements.

The other 44 residents have either found alternative housing from BC Housing or have left the area.

But the problems that lead to encampments are not going away, and Bel sees the pending closure of Moccasin Flats as a band-aid solution for the city.

“It’s not going to last because the population of homeless people is getting bigger and bigger and younger and younger,” said Bel. “People 15 or 16 are coming here because their parents



Terra Tyle, 40, sits by a painted reminder of her cat Shay while visiting Moccasin Flats Monday. Tyle no longer stays at the encampment but has no fixed address.

CITIZEN PHOTO BY CHUCK NISBETT

lose their place and then they’re all homeless. It’s crazy. A lot of them are couch-surfing and they’re unseen. They’re trying to keep their image up or whatever, but in reality, they’re still homeless.”

“There are still people who show up here at night. They don’t feel safe at the warming centre (at the St. Vincent de Paul Drop-in Centre). People are still getting robbed of their belongings. People just need a place to go. That’s all they need.”

Originally from Dease Lake, Bel moved to Prince George for a construction job after working in Quesnel building the West Fraser Centre arena. He had steady employment and was renting an apartment until 2021, when he lost his job as a handyman working for Pace Realty during the lockdowns when tenant concerns about the second wave of COVID-19 infections stopped him from doing his work.

With no income and the price of rent unaffordable, Bel set up camp on the north side of the Nechako River until he was forced to move the following spring on the order of a bylaw enforcement officer, who suggested he could move to the strip of city-owned land along Patricia Boulevard.

Bel’s willingness to help others get settled earned him a positive reputation in the homeless community. When the city closed the Millennium Park encampment in September 2023,



CITIZEN PHOTO BY CHUCK NISBETT

A lone crow explores the almost-empty Moccasin Flats on Monday.

residents were directed to Moccasin Flats, and he became the go-to person for newcomers wondering where to set up camp.

He wants to get back to work as a carpenter and has been applying for jobs but hasn’t had any success yet.

“I just need a permanent address. It’s kind of a catch-22,” he said. “I don’t need much, basically just a roof over my head. I need to start paying rent so I can make my own decisions. I was thinking

if they have space over at Lombardi (Trailer Court) I could go there. It’s just a matter of going back to work and stuff.”

At its height in the summer of 2022, there were close to 100 residents sheltering at Moccasin Flats. Most were drug users, and that attracted drug dealers, thieves, arsonists, and violent offenders who took out personal vendettas against some of the encampment occupants.

On Jan. 1, 2024, a man was shot in the face at the warming centre adjacent to the encampment and later died of his injuries in hospital. There have been numerous fires in the shelters, especially in the 17 tiny homes brought to the site through donations, and many of them were purposely burned, allegedly by dealers fighting over control of the illicit drug trade in the camp.

Early on the day he received his eviction notice, one of the tiny homes next to Bel’s site burned down.

That happened only a few days after another fire at the west end of the camp destroyed another tiny home. There are now only a few occupied campsites.

The city had made attempts to permanently shut down Moccasin Flats and prevent people from using the area as a permanent encampment until a precedent-setting court ruling obtained by Bel and two other unnamed residents in October 2021 forced the city to back off on its eviction plans.

Bel is no publicity seeker, and his reason for putting his name on the court challenge was his belief that Moccasin Flats could eventually become its own orderly community where people would feel safe and protected, not living in lawlessness in a place with no running water or toilets, poor sanitation, and dangerous people.

“That (court order) was a big deal, and it still is,” he said. “It’s just that other people squandered that and made it so hard to actually get anything started here. (About the suspicious fires) there was nothing done about it.

“It still could be a good place. It just needs some structure, helped by the city, to have rules and regulations.”

Buses burned, vandalized outside community centre

COLIN SLARK

Citizen Staff

Four vehicles used to transport kids for the daycare inside the Columbus Community Centre were damaged overnight on Monday, March 3, including a bus almost completely disintegrated by fire.

In a statement sent by email, Prince George Fire Rescue Chief Cliff Warner said five firefighters from one fire hall responded to the blaze just before midnight.

“On scene they found a 24-passenger bus on fire,” Warner said. “Crews quickly extinguished the fire, however, there was some heat damage to the building on the adjacent property and a smaller 15-passenger van parked nearby.

“Due to the extent of the fire to the bus, the cause of the fire is deemed undetermined, however suspicious, as there was no obvious reason for the fire to start.”

Around 12:30 a.m. on March 3, Columbus Community Centre facility manager Dawna Varley said she was called by firefighters letting her know that one of the centre’s buses had caught fire in the parking lot.

When she arrived, she told *The Citizen*, firefighters were using infrared devices to search for remaining hot spots.

The bus was parked on the opposite side of the lot from the front doors, next to the fence separating the lot from an adjacent housing complex.

As things stood later in the morning, after sunrise, the top half of the bus was either completely reduced to ashes except for some thin strips of siding and roofing that wilted under the heat and sagged onto the ground.

All that was left of the passenger seats inside the bus were the metal frames. A 10-passenger van parked next to the burnt bus sustained some minor damage from the plastic housing of a headlight and a rear-view mirror partially melting.

Parts of the fence were blackened by the flames and some of the siding on the house walls facing where the fire took



CITIZEN PHOTO BY COLIN SLARK

A burned-out bus is seen at the Columbus Community Centre in College Heights early Monday morning. There were no injuries reported. Damage to the siding of the adjacent building can also be seen. The cause of the fire is under investigation.

place were visibly warped by the heat.

That bus had been shut down for the winter, Varley said, with its fuel tank empty and its doors chained closed. After previous instances of fuel tanks being punctured, she said the centre has learned to empty them when a vehicle is left unused and the fuel level stays at a quarter-tank or below for those in active use.

Thankfully, she said, the bus was still insured.

Varley said before she went home around 4 a.m., she and RCMP officers who came to the scene went around the building to check for any additional damage but didn’t find any.

Unfortunately, when a driver for the Teeter Tots Early Learning Centre that operates out of the building came in around 7:30 a.m. to get ready to drive kids to school, he discovered damage to two more buses.

One bus, parked up against the side of the building, had its hood pried open somehow.

The emergency escape hatch on the top of the bus was open, however Varley said she thought the intruders had gained access through somehow

lowering the driver’s side window.

Another bus was locked inside a small fenced compound, but intruders still managed to gain access.

A wooden pallet had been leaned up against a metal storage container. Varley said she thinks the intruders used the pallet to climb on top of the container and down into the area containing the bus, thereby going around the barbed wire that surrounded the rest of the compound.

She showed *The Citizen* the inside of this bus, which had items tossed around the cabin and the contents of its fuse box torn apart.

“I don’t know what they’re looking for,” Varley said. “They’re obviously looking for something.”

Though she had yet to test whether the two buses that hadn’t burned still worked, Varley said it would make picking up kids for the daycare’s after-school program more difficult if they were out of commission.

However, she said, the kids they look after are not in danger as these events have taken place after hours.

Though the centre has security cameras, Varley said they were taken down

late last year to accommodate painting work and were scheduled to go back up on March 4. Even if they had been up, she said people carrying out these acts tend to wear hoodies.

“I’ve been here 23 years and I think I have in the last two years ... seven ICBC claims for vandalism up here,” Varley said. “We’ve called the RCMP several times. There’s not much they can do. Everything we own is locked up.”

She added that these events were rare before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Other incidents in recent years include graffiti, fires set on top of the building, the theft of a lawnmower and helium tank from a shed and a 20-foot light standard in the parking lot getting knocked over, Varley said.

These have caused the building’s insurance deductible to double from \$500 to \$1,000.

“I have no idea what the solution is,” she said. “I mean, we can build an eight-foot fence around this place and it wouldn’t help. We’ve got barbed wire on the spots we think they can get up to. We’re in the process right now of building an outdoor ceremony site and I am seriously considering not doing it.”

Tidewater hailing province's new diesel regulations

COLIN SLARK
Citizen Staff

The BC government announced Thursday, Feb. 27, that it is immediately expanding the required renewable portion of diesel sold in the province to eight per cent from four per cent, and will require that renewable diesel come from Canadian sources, effective April 1. These moves are being celebrated by the operator of a Prince George-based refinery.

The announcement was made in Victoria just after noon by Energy Minister Adrian Dix, who said it was in response to challenges raised by BC-based producers about their inability to compete with heavily subsidized American renewable diesel.

The five per cent renewable requirement for gasoline sold in BC must also come from BC sources, effective Jan. 1, 2026.

“Our approach is designed to support the entire industry and create a balanced, competitive marketplace,” Dix said.

“This is about building a cleaner, stronger, and more self-reliant BC. It’s about seizing the opportunity to lead on biofuels while supporting families through good-paying jobs that strengthen local economies, especially in this case, in Prince George.”

Dix also noted that the move comes at a time when trade relations with the United States “— and this is an understatement — are not stable.”

The move is a departure from the solution proposed by Prince George-Mackenzie Conservative MLA Kiel Giddens, who introduced a private member’s bill on Feb. 26 to reduce the subsidies American producers receive in BC. by the same amount they receive in the U.S.

Tidewater Renewables, which operates a renewable diesel refinery in Prince George, warned late last year that it would have to shutter its operations by March unless the uneven playing field was addressed.

When Dix and Premier David Eby visited Prince George for the B.C. Natural Resources Forum in January, they said



CITIZEN FILE PHOTO

Tidewater Renewables former chair and CEO Rob Colcleugh, BC Premier David Eby and Prince George Mayor Simon Yu, speak at the grand opening of Tidewater Renewables’ renewable diesel refinery and hydrogen plant in Prince George in 2023.

they met with Tidewater representatives to discuss their concerns.

Joining Dix to address reporters was Tidewater chief financial officer Ian Quartly, who said his company welcomed the move.

“Tidewater Renewables welcomes the proposed changes to the Low Carbon Fuels Act that Minister Dix announced today, specifically the increase in the renewable fuel requirement for diesel from four per cent to eight per cent and the requirement that the renewable content of diesel be produced in Canada,” Quartly said.

“These changes provide a positive first step toward supporting an economically viable domestic renewable fuels industry. We will continue to work collaboratively with the government on further changes needed to strengthen the demand for locally produced

renewable fuels.”

However, Quartly also said U.S. renewables would continue to enter the B.C. market, which will continue to pose challenges.

Quartly did not provide a direct answer when asked if the changes would prevent the Prince George refinery from closing.

Speaking to *The Citizen* after the announcement, Tidewater CEO Jeremy Baines said the company would have to evaluate the impact of the changes before deciding whether its Prince George refinery was viable enough to continue operations. However, he was “cautiously optimistic” that the changes would address the trade imbalance.

He said that of the two diesel-related aspects of the announcement, the requirement that the mandatory portion of renewable diesel come from

Canadian sources was the more important part for his company.

Last year, Baines said a rough estimate indicated that the percentage of diesel sold in BC. as renewable was high, with the majority of the renewable product coming from the U.S.

“This is helpful, but I’m not sure it’s enough to fix the unlevel playing field and ensure our ability to compete in a fair trade environment,” Baines said.

Tidewater is continuing to pursue a trade case against the U.S. to try to get import levies placed on American renewable diesel and is also working with the federal government for other actions, though Baines said the prorogued Parliament was impeding progress on that front.

He said it would be a “good outcome” if Giddens’ bill were still passed, as he’s concerned the NDP’s solution doesn’t mandate a high-enough amount of Canadian product.

Commenting on why the province didn’t go the route suggested by Giddens, Dix said part of the problem stems from subsidies introduced in the Inflation Reduction Act passed under the Biden administration.

By increasing the size of the BC market through expanding the renewable diesel content, Dix said it gives space to Tidewater and other companies to enter the market without taking on risks, should the Biden-era policies be removed under the current administration.

Another factor is that, as an opposition MLA, Dix said Giddens is limited to using private member’s bills to advance his goals, whereas Dix has a different set of tools available as minister.

“I appreciate Kiel’s contribution,” Dix said. “We’ve talked about it, and well, I don’t agree. We’re not using the same measures as him because we don’t think those measures would be effective in this moment. What he’s trying to do is what we’re trying to do — which is address climate change, support jobs in BC, and support jobs in Prince George.”

SEE ‘MLA GIDDENS’ ON NEXT PAGE

Minerals North conference to be held in Prince George

CITIZEN STAFF

The 34th annual Minerals North Conference will be held in the city from April 30 to May 2 at the Prince George Conference and Civic Centre.

The event, which attracts industry professionals and community leaders from across northern British Columbia, is being organized by C3 Alliance.

It's a gathering for those involved in the mining and exploration sectors of northern BC.

Attendees will have the opportunity to engage in discussions on the future of resource development, as well as explore the latest trends and

advancements in the industry, C3 Alliance has stated. It's also an opportunity for community leaders to learn about economic and policy issues affecting the mining sector while allowing industry representatives to hear directly from local stakeholders about community goals and concerns.

Specific details about the conference programming and guest speakers have yet to be announced.

The Minerals North Conference is one of the largest mining events in Western Canada, rotating among different Northern BC communities each year.

Prince George last hosted the conference in 2017.

MLA Giddens on hand as province levels playing field

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Giddens attended Dix's press conference and was thanked for his advocacy on the issue.

Reached by phone from Victoria later in the day, Giddens said he was trying to use his position in opposition to raise attention to this particular issue because Prince George families were at risk of losing their jobs, and it was a good day because it was being addressed.

"I'm glad that finally, after pushing this, we were able to get some action because this is important for Prince George, both from a jobs perspective and also for energy security for BC as a whole."

Despite the announcement, Giddens said his bill will remain on the order paper for the current legislative session, which started earlier this month.

He said he would be receiving a briefing from the Ministry of Energy's low-carbon fuels branch later that day to ensure the problem was adequately addressed. He also said he had spoken with Tidewater to get their perspective.

Should he feel the problem has been addressed, Giddens said he could choose not to call the bill for second reading. If not, he can still bring it up for debate.

Going forward, he said he wants to make BC an easier place to do business in, as he believes current regulations, permitting processes, and taxes make it difficult. In the upcoming provincial budget, he said he's looking for measures that will advance that file.

He also wants to see capital funding laid out for the acute care tower expansion at the University Hospital of Northern BC, as only funding for the parkade has been allocated so far.

On the health-care front, Giddens said he also wants to address hospital closures in Mackenzie, which he raised in the legislature on Thursday, Feb. 27.

In the last month, he said he was able to open his Prince George constituency office at 1023 Central St., in the space previously occupied by his predecessor, Mike Morris, though signs have yet to be put on the building. Those wishing to speak with his office can call 250-612-4194.

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Finance committee approves latest tax rate increase

Council agreed in January on a 2025 budget that will require a 6.21% increase in tax levies

COLIN SLARK
Citizen Staff

Prince George's Standing Committee on Audit and Finance recommended how the city should distribute this year's tax increase across various property taxes during its meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 26, the first of 2025.

Kris Dalio, director of finance and IT services, explained that during budget discussions in January, council agreed on a 2025 budget that requires a 6.21 per cent increase in tax levies, amounting to an additional \$10,847,385 compared to the 2024 budget.

What remained to be decided was how those additional taxes would be collected from the different property classes in Prince George: residential, utility, major industry, light industry, business, and farm.

Dalio compared Prince George to other BC communities, including Chilliwack, Kamloops, the Township of Langley, Maple Ridge, Nanaimo, Saanich and Victoria. He noted that Prince George has by far the highest tax rate per \$100,000 of assessed value but the lowest average assessed value for its properties in 2024.

Prince George also had the lowest population, according to the 2021 census, and the second-lowest total residential taxes at \$4,127, behind only Chilliwack at \$3,818.

"It's just math, unfortunately," Dalio said. "If you have a city with generally lower assessed values — and we do have pretty low assessed values compared to, say, Kelowna, Vancouver, or Toronto, where you'll find single-bedroom apartments costing millions of dollars — you can have an actual full-fledged single-family home here for about half a million. When we calculate tax rates, we're just making the math



CITIZEN PHOTO BY COLIN SLARK

Chair Cori Ramsay asks a question of KPMG representative Corey Naphtali at the Wednesday, Feb. 25 meeting of Prince George's Standing Committee on Finance and Audit at City Hall.

work."

Dalio referred to the value of a representative home in each municipality, as set by the Province of BC. He said Prince George's representative home value is lower than almost all of its peers.

The representative home in Prince George was valued at \$453,777. In 2024, the owner of a home valued at that amount would have paid \$5,367 in property taxes and charges: \$868 for School District 57, \$2,718 in general municipal taxes, \$190 to the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George, \$335 to the Fraser-Fort George Regional Hospital District, \$16 to BC Assessment, and \$1,401 in residential user fees.

Dalio presented a chart to the committee showing the percentage of Prince George's total property assessment and total tax levy that each class represents.

In 2024, for example, residential properties made up 80.4 per cent of the city's total assessment value and 54.2 per cent

of its annual tax levies.

That same year, utility properties accounted for just 0.3 per cent of the total assessment and 1.2 per cent of the total levy.

Major industry properties were 2 per cent of the total assessment and 14.1 per cent of the levy. Light industry represented 1 per cent of the assessment and 3.7 per cent of the levy. Business properties made up 16.2 per cent of the assessment and 26.7 per cent of the levy.

Other property classes, such as managed forest, recreation, non-profit, and farm properties, were noted in the staff's report but accounted for less than 0.1 per cent of the city's total assessment, so no specific tables were created for them.

Regarding tax exemptions for non-profits, Dalio said the organization must own the land it occupies.

The committee was presented with three potential starting points for

setting the 2025 tax rates, though Dalio said there was flexibility to modify them.

The first option would set the tax rate for the representative home at 6.21 per cent, with the remaining tax revenue obtained by equally increasing the tax rate for the other property classes.

According to the staff report, this option would increase the tax rate for a home valued at the representative amount from \$2,718 to \$2,887, including an assessment increase for 2025. It would also keep the utility tax rate unchanged and reduce the tax rates for business, major industrial, light industrial, and farm properties by 0.86 per cent each.

The second option would set the business tax increase at a ratio of 2.5-to-one compared to the residential rate, with the remainder of the tax revenues coming from major industrial, light industrial, and farm tax rates.

The staff report indicated that this option would keep the utility tax rate the same, decrease the tax rates for major industrial, light industrial, and farm properties by 11.95 per cent, and increase the business tax rate by 6.48 per cent.

The third option would increase the tax rates for business properties at a ratio of 2.5-to-one compared to residential properties, the light industrial rate at a ratio of four-to-one, and the remaining tax revenue would be obtained through major industrial and farm tax rates. According to the staff report, this would keep the utility tax rate unchanged, decrease the tax rates for major industrial and farm properties by 9.21 per cent, decrease the light industrial tax rate by 21.82 per cent, and increase the business tax rate by 6.48 per cent.

The committee unanimously approved the first option, which will now be referred back to city council. The bylaw setting the 2025 tax rates must be adopted by May 15.

The committee also passed a motion to invite representatives from BC Assessment to a future meeting to answer questions about how they calculate assessment values and property

Guay Road rezoning passes third reading after delays

COLIN SLARK

Citizen Staff

After three previous failed attempts to pass zoning and Official Community Plan (OCP) changes for a development at 880 Guay Rd., Prince George city council finally approved the third reading of the bylaws at its meeting on Monday, Feb. 24.

However, following passionate appeals from nearby residents, two council members voted against the bylaws, while another councillor stated they would wait for the results of a traffic impact study before casting a final vote at a future meeting.

L&M Engineering, representing Eastway Sand & Gravel, is seeking zoning and OCP changes to facilitate the relocation of Tyrod Industrial to the property near the Prince George Regional Correctional Centre, with plans for future expansion.

The first attempt to hold a public hearing in late 2024 was cancelled after city staff expressed concerns that proper notice had not been issued due to the ongoing Canada Post strike.

The second attempt, scheduled for early 2025, was cancelled when city staff determined that the applicant had failed to update signage on the property to reflect the new hearing date.

The public hearing was finally held at the Feb. 3 council meeting but was cut short when Mayor Simon Yu noted a small overlap between a restrictive covenant preventing construction and an area in the OCP designated for future light industrial use.

Staff requested the hearing be ended, as amendments cannot be made after a hearing has started. The hearing was rescheduled for the Feb. 24 meeting.

Changes to resolve the overlap were made before the Feb. 25 hearing began.

With those amendments, the zoning changes will reclassify a 22.7-hectare portion of the 48-hectare property from AG (Greenbelt) and P6 (Special Institutional) to M2 (General Industrial). An additional 3.3 hectares of land will be rezoned from AF (Agriculture and Forestry) and P6 (Special Institutional) to

AG (Greenbelt) to create a buffer zone of trees to reduce noise from the site.

The OCP land uses were also amended to include 22.6 hectares of rural resource land re-designated to light industrial, 8.7 hectares re-designated from light industrial to rural resource, and 1.7 hectares re-designated from rural resource to utility.

With these changes, the OCP and zoning align.

During the first public hearing, Megan Hickey and Terry Fjellstrom of L&M gave a presentation on the project, while nearby resident Sam Broadfoot of 616 Guay Rd. voiced her objections.

Before the second public hearing, council voted to amend the proposed bylaws to correct a mapping error.

At the second hearing, Hickey and Fjellstrom reiterated their presentation, explaining that Tyrod has not generated noise or operational complaints at its current location over the past 10 years due to the indoor nature of its work.

Fjellstrom noted that L&M submitted a traffic summary letter on Dec. 10, 2024, showing that the maximum traffic volume generated by the development during peak hours would not exceed the threshold requiring further traffic analysis.

He also stated that the intersection of Highway 16 and Guay Road meets BC Ministry of Transportation specifications and that the existing water main is sufficient to service the property.

It should be noted that the city's original report on the bylaws, dated Sept. 24, 2024, mentioned that a traffic impact study, geotechnical report, and servicing review were still in progress and recommended council withhold final approval until these were submitted to the administration's satisfaction.

According to Fjellstrom, the servicing brief will be submitted "within the next few weeks."

Another resident of 616 Guay Road, Greg Heck, voiced similar concerns about the proximity of an industrial facility to residential properties, fearing

it would decrease property values over time.

"There isn't another area in the city with residential properties mixed with a municipal park — L.C. Gunn Park — a very busy snow dump, and a proposed general industrial facility," Heck said. "I estimate that this continuous interaction will push away any potential buyers for properties on Guay Road."

He also raised concerns about noise, light pollution, and the road infrastructure, noting that while the west side of Guay Road was built to accommodate traffic to the snow dump, the east side—where traffic to the industrial project would flow — was not.

Heck pointed out that the road outside his property is 4.5 metres wide, below the BC regulation minimum for a single-lane road of 5 metres. Given the potential for future growth of the company, he argued that these issues could worsen over time.

He also criticized the city for not

enforcing its bylaws, as the company appeared to have already begun using the property for its intended purpose, despite the zoning and OCP changes not yet being approved.

Coun. Cori Ramsay agreed with Frizzell about the feedback and the need for the traffic impact study but noted that concerns related to property values were not directly relevant to land use and would not affect her vote.

Coun. Brian Skakun stated that the concerns raised during the hearing were significant enough that he would not support the bylaws.

Skakun and Yu were the only council members to vote against the bylaws.

After the votes, Yu brought forward a motion, which passed, referring the matter of Highway 16 safety and improvements to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs.

"Whew, that was intense," the mayor said before moving on to the next agenda item.

BOOKS & CO

OPINION

Open, clear communication vs. rumour, misinformation

KENNEDY GORDON

Citizen Managing Editor

The debate over supportive housing in Prince George has sparked more tension, this time in College Heights.

Many of the people living nearby are grappling with the idea of a new facility planned for McGill Crescent. The 10-unit complex care facility, intended to support individuals with mental health and developmental disabilities, has become the latest local target for opposition.

A good-sized chunk of the opposition is rooted in misinformation and social media rumours. Many people believed the facility would be an addiction recovery home. This misconception was partly fueled by early communications, including a reference to “complex-care housing” in a media release.

The province has been criticized for its lack of clear communication. However, following an open house on Feb. 26, representatives from BC Housing, Northern Health, and Community Living BC clarified that the facility will not focus on addiction treatment. Instead, it is designed to provide support for adults with mental health and developmental disabilities, two vulnerable populations that often require specialized care.

While the open house helped clear up these misconceptions, the underlying issue remains: too many people form opinions based on rumours and limited information circulating in the community.

One nearby resident told *The Citizen*



BC HOUSING

An open house on Feb. 26 focused on the plans for a new supportive housing facility planned for McGill Crescent. BC Housing, Northern Health and Community Living BC clarified that the facility will not focus on addiction treatment.

her initial fears about the facility being an addiction treatment centre were based on a Facebook group and unverified internet searches. She learned the truth only after attending the open house.

She also noted that it would have been helpful if this critical information had been communicated more clearly from the outset, and she was right.

The issue of misinformation is not unique to this case. In Prince George and other cities, NIMBY (not in my backyard) often comes out of incomplete or inaccurate information circulating through social media and

word-of-mouth. People frequently jump to conclusions without knowing all the facts, leading to fear and opposition to good projects.

For its part, the city and the project's partners haven't done enough to communicate the details of this facility. One valid reason for this is that communications were suspended during last fall's provincial election campaign. Still, more could have been done to communicate proactively, particularly when the facility was first announced last August.

While the open house was an excellent attempt to engage the public and address concerns, the communication

channels for such projects must be better organized and more consistent.

Neighbours of the McGill Crescent project had good reason to feel that information was not readily available. The lack of clarity about which organization will operate the facility only added to the uncertainty.

Events like this open house are valuable for addressing immediate concerns, but there should be a sustained effort to engage with the community throughout the planning process.

More engagement, more detailed information, and more reassurance about the safety and design of the facility could help reduce the fears stoked by misinformation. It is also in everyone's best interest — neighbours, residents, and project partners alike — to ensure these developments are understood within their proper context.

Supporting individuals with mental health and developmental challenges ensures that the most vulnerable members of our community are given the support and care they need to lead dignified lives.

Moving forward, the real challenge is overcoming the barrier of misinformation that often fuels NIMBYism. Everyone involved must commit to ongoing, open dialogue and clear communication.

Only then can we ensure projects like the McGill Crescent facility are truly understood and integrated into the community.

Have your say with a letter to the editor: editor@pgcitizen.ca.

PRINCE GEORGE
CITIZEN
NEWS Lower Mainland - Cowichan Peninsula

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Letters to the editor are welcome. The maximum length is 300 words. Letters may be subject to editing for length, clarity, grammar, spelling and legibility prior to publication. Please include your daytime contact information.

OPINION

Trade agreements must benefit Prince George and BC

ALBERT KOEHLER

Guest Columnist

Any tariff on Canadian goods will certainly affect Prince George and the Central Interior.

Our forestry industry would be devastated and face even more challenges in recovering.

No doubt, this is concerning for the region, and the negative impact is difficult to assess at this time. Are there alternatives to free trade between our two countries?

Yes, although these alternatives would need to be explored, such as an “economic union” between Canada and the U.S.

A good example is the European Union, where there are no borders between member countries, allowing goods, people, capital, and investments to flow freely.

Europeans fought many wars over the past 150 years, but eventually concluded that working together benefits all.

Cool heads and experienced leaders made this possible, and many beneficial agreements have since been reached, providing a model for other countries, including Canada and the United States.



CITIZEN FILE PHOTO

An economic union between Canada and the U.S. could benefit Prince George and the rest of BC, Albert Koehler writes today.

Evaluating all possible scenarios, I am certainly not advocating for Canada to become the 51st state of the U.S. We immigrated to Canada 40 years ago because it is Canada, and nothing else. It is the best place I can imagine, and I experience that every day.

An “economic union” could greatly benefit our Central Interior, where unlimited opportunities remain to be

seized, requiring investment and people to move here.

The issue is not just revitalizing our forestry industry, but also opening and developing several mines that offer much sought-after minerals to be sold worldwide.

At the same time, an economic union could likely contribute to the growth of Prince George and the regional districts

of the Central Interior.

Surveys have shown that Canada does not want a “political union,” something I would also oppose.

However, in an economic union, member states typically maintain their own laws and political structures.

A “monetary union” is not necessarily required, but it would likely enhance business. In that case, a common currency, such as the “Euro” used in EU member states, would need to be considered.

The current situation calls for thinking outside the box.

A country can agree to form an economic union with any other country. For example, “Canada and Europe” could negotiate and agree on an economic union, which would likely make the U.S. nervous.

Recent surveys have shown interest in strengthening the economic relationship between Canada and Europe, driven by an increasing awareness of the benefits of market diversification.

One way or another, we need experienced and wise leaders to reach agreements that are acceptable on both sides of the border and that benefit all of us.

Albert Koehler, P.Eng., is a former Prince George city councillor.

Recycling in the Robson Valley is worse than before the ‘fix’

To the Fraser-Fort George Regional District chair and board of directors:

I have been a taxpayer in this regional district for more than 50 years.

Though I seldom use them, I don’t mind being taxed to support the arena and gym in McBride, local schools, or TV services.

However, I do mind being taxed for a recycling service that we no longer have access to.

Recycling in the Robson Valley was started by a local non-profit in the late ‘80s, Valley Recycling. Eventually it was taken over by the regional district and that was a good thing.

I certainly didn’t mind paying for the service. Recycling collection was

LETTERS to the EDITOR

centralized in McBride, Valemount and Dunster and the variety of materials collected was increased, also good.

However, now most recycling collection in the Valley is centralized in Valemount.

It’s good that the categories acceptable there have significantly increased to include Styrofoam, small batteries, and others. However, that’s quite a drive from McBride or Dunster or even further west; a two-hour round trip or more.

The drive is quite costly in time, fuel expense, and carbon footprint, which does not justify the small good done by recycling efforts.

It creates a mindset of “why bother, just throw it in the trash or burn it.”

The situation has become worse than the short-term inconvenience promised by the RDFFG and must be fixed.

Please fix this!

Roy Howard

Dunster

There’s no proof seized drugs came from safe supply

Your Feb. 28 editorial on diverted safe supply medications (“Drug dealers are easily outplaying the province”) claims that “700 suspected safe supply pharmaceuticals” were recently seized by the RCMP outside a local pharmacy in Prince George, yet there’s nothing in the article that

would indicate these drugs were diverted from safe supply programs, which would be very difficult to establish given that hydromorphone pill prescribed for safe supply is identical to a hydromorphone pill prescribed for pain.

Given that safe supply accounts for just three per cent of opioid prescriptions in BC, declaring that these pharmaceuticals have been diverted from safe supply programs is pure unfounded and wildly irresponsible speculation.

In solidarity,

Dylan Griffith

Co-founder, Kootenay Insurrection for Safe Supply, Kootenay Independent Safe Supply Society

OPINION

“ Prince George nurses join Vancouver rally to call for better working conditions



Hard workers are just fed up. Those that want to work just want a fair shake. People off work for long periods, for whatever reasons, put too much pressure on those left behind to pick up the pieces.

The threat of violence every day. That has to change. Get people back to work whatever it takes so the rest can take vacations and time off.

Being the suffering silent is no longer an option. Being loud, being heard and fighting back is the last resort.

CC Mail

“ Letter to the editor: Will Northern Health have enough doctors and nurses?

Considering we're already facing so many hospital closures due to staffing shortages throughout the province and have been for close to a year, I fear that these new buildings won't have enough staff to fill them.

Yes, we need bigger facilities to keep up with our growing communities, but already we don't have enough doctors and nurses to care for them all (let's use our walk ins as an example).

It's concerning so much money is going into these new facilities without knowing if we'll have the staff.

BIJ

“ Prince George over budget for snow control

I've experienced the same as many other posters here, city crews plowing our road when it hasn't snowed in over a week and our road is already cleared down to the bare pavement.

If it had been summer, the sparks kicking up from the grader blades would have been a forest fire danger.

Unbelievable how the 2024 year, when we had the lowest snow year in anyone's memory, can be over budget, and what looks to be the highest cost spent in the last five years.

PG Rocks!



“ Prince George over budget for snow control

What would they do if they actually got a real snow season?

The last two winters have seen been very little snow compared to most.

Does this department need a new manager? Is the budget non-realistic?

Keep things fair

“ James Steidle: Sawmill turncoats handing industry over to the U.S.



Its not totally simple. One issue you didn't mention was that the NDP decided forestry was not a significant contributor to the economy and made it difficult for mills to access timber for their mills.

Canfor and others said if you don't want us we will go. They went to the US who welcomed them as they were expanding their industry.

Some First Nations do see the benefits of participating in forestry. They see that areas harvested are growing healthy young forests. Animals are ok with that. Removal of old forests helps reduce wildfire risk. They are included in planning and operations.

Also, there are socioeconomic benefits, like health, education, and other service to all communities.

Karen la Pointe

“ Save a life: Free naloxone training available in Prince George

In my opinion I think if you're a parent just go grab a naloxone kit and throw it in your glove box...

Shredder

“ Save a life: Free naloxone training available in Prince George

That's a good mom doing a good thing because she is right, addiction can happen to anyone in any socio-economic class.

Addiction has no boundaries.

Good for her for doing something good.

BGeez

“ Editorial: Drug dealers are easily outplaying the province

The news media constantly saying "Canada accounts for less than one per cent of drugs found at the border compared to Mexico." They're lying through omission, as usual.

How many kilograms of drugs go through undetected? We already know they don't do their job of protecting the border, so why would we expect them to busy drug deals?

The leftists' strategy so far has to been to call everyone a "conspiracy theorist" who calls out the disastrous results of their policies ... then weeks or months later they pay lip service to the problem, and implement measures made just for appearances sake.

The BC NDP is a drug dealers best friend!

DD22

Share your
views on
our stories at
pgcitizen.ca



City grants 2-year permit for Pinewood housing plan

Mayor called out for 'inappropriate' comments during council's discussion

COLIN SLARK

Citizen Staff

Prince George city council voted 6-2 in favour of granting a Christian-focused supportive housing facility a two-year temporary use permit at its meeting on Monday, Feb. 24 despite a recommendation from administration to reject the application.

Set Free Recovery, run by Richard and Angie Korkowski, sought the permit to operate supportive housing and services for men struggling with substance abuse at 3809 Pinewood Ave. The facility would serve up to 11 clients and one live-in staff member.

Ahead of the meeting, Richard told *The Citizen* they aimed to follow the same Christian-based programming they previously ran in the Abbotsford and Chilliwack areas.

The application included a petition signed by 21 people, including six residents of Pinewood Avenue, as well as 17 letters of support, though two of those letters were from the same individual.

Administration recommended rejection, noting that 12 residents would be nearly double the allowed capacity for a community care facility under current zoning.

Deanna Wasnik, director of planning and development, noted during the meeting that 18 items of correspondence were included in the handout for councillors, 12 of which were in support and six in opposition.

Wasnik also pointed out that other similar facilities in the city are located along collector and arterial roads, whereas this one is situated within an established two-unit residential neighbourhood on a corner lot bounded by local roads.

"Administration struggles to support the supportive housing use at this location, as the intensity of the operation



GOOGLE STREET VIEW IMAGE

The house at 3809 Pinewood Avenue as seen on Google Street View in July 2024. At the Monday, Feb. 24, 2025 Prince George city council meeting, a supportive housing operation was given a temporary use permit for this address.

may cause negative land use impacts on the surrounding area related to noise, parking, and traffic," Wasnik said.

Coun. Susan Scott, who visited the site, expressed support for the facility.

"I believe strongly not only in what their intent is, but also the location that they are in and the degree to which they have reached out to neighbours and engaged people directly," Scott said. "There is no indication from their previous location that there has been any sort of issue."

Scott added that the applicants appeared to be making efforts to be good neighbours and that the building was well-suited to residents' needs.

Mayor Simon Yu asked if Wasnik was advocating for rejection without having visited the site. She confirmed she hadn't, prompting a shrug from the mayor.

Coun. Kyle Sampson raised a point of order, calling the mayor's remark inappropriate. Sampson stated he did not believe the facility was an appropriate land use for the property.

Coun. Trudy Klassen, though she had not visited the property, expressed support based on the information from her colleagues and the success

of the applicants' previous venture in Abbotsford.

"Hopefully we get a service that is much, much needed," Klassen said.

Coun. Garth Frizzell thanked Wasnik for thoroughly weighing the application against city regulations. However, he expressed support for the two-year temporary use permit based on his own visit to the site and the letters of support, including one from Northern Health.

Manager of legislative services Ethan Anderson informed council that the author of the letter from Northern Health had requested it be retracted, but this had not been reflected in the handout package. Anderson advised council not to consider the letter in their decision.

Coun. Ron Polillo pointed out that the applicants' letter of intent stated that the location chosen for the facility wasn't ideal.

Considering council's previous rejection of a similar project, Polillo said he respected the applicants' intention but could not support the current application, as he felt the location was unsuitable.

Yu referenced the council's earlier

denial of a similar application but did not specify the project. Last September, council rejected a temporary use permit for Integrity Recovery Society to run a residential substance treatment centre on Rochester Crescent.

Coun. Tim Bennett agreed that the location was not ideal but said he would propose a one-year temporary use permit. He was open to compromising for the two-year permit suggested by Frizzell.

The two-year temporary use permit was approved, with Sampson and Polillo voting against.

Now that the application is approved, Set Free must either apply for another temporary use permit after the two years or seek a rezoning of the property. If another TUP is issued, it cannot be renewed a second time, and the applicants would have to either move or apply for permanent rezoning.

Following the vote, Yu apologized for his earlier remarks but emphasized the importance of visiting properties like this when the opportunity arises.

Sampson once again raised a point of order, calling Yu's comments inappropriate. Yu responded that he prefers to deal with matters directly.



DEVELOPMENT OF A PEST MANAGEMENT PLAN

Reference renewal: FBCG - 25/30, FBCE - 25/30, FBCW - 25/30

As per the Integrated Pest Management Regulation of British Columbia, Section 6800 this is Public Notification that:

FortisBC Inc. and FortisBC Energy Inc. (collectively referred to as FortisBC) is renewing their Gas Facilities and Right of Way, Electric Facilities and Right of Way and Wood Structure Maintenance Integrated Pest Management Plans (IPMPs). Under these regulations, these plans are required to be updated every 5 years (the proposed term of the IPMP is five years from June 5, 2025 to June 4, 2030).

The purpose of this renewal is to support an integrated approach to managing and controlling pests and/or vegetation associated with gas and electrical facilities, rights of way, wood structures (poles) and related operating infrastructure. The overarching goal of the program is to support the safety and reliability of FortisBC's gas and electric infrastructure. These IPMPs will cover FortisBC's service and operating areas in British Columbia. Gas operations include communities on Vancouver Island, Greater Vancouver, Sunshine Coast, Whistler, Fraser Valley, Okanagan, Similkameen, Thompson-Nicola, Columbia-Shuswap, Kootenays, Cariboo, Prince George, Chetwynd, Hudson Hope, Mackenzie and Fort Nelson. Electrical operations include communities within north and south-east BC, including the Okanagan, Similkameen and Kootenays.

Using the principles of integrated pest management (IPM), the pest management methods proposed for use may include, but not be limited to, tree felling, cutting, brushing, growing, shearing, manual hand tools, seeding, revegetation, biological control, and the use of pesticides by ground application (backpack selective plant, and/or handgun roller). The use of pesticides is intended within the area to which the IPMP applies.

Trade names and active ingredients of the pesticides proposed for use under these plans may include:

- Pesticides Proposed for use in facilities and right of ways: 2,4-D Amine, Nertex VM, Rinsler, Toler XP, Kerb SC, VP450, Gardex XRT, Arsenal Powerline, Esplanade SC, Clearview, Milestone, Torpedo EZ, Detail, Oestem XL, Torden 22K, Lontrol 360 (Active ingredients: Dinethylaniline Salt (2,4-D), Aminocyclopyrachlor, Florypyrachlor-benzyl, Chlorsulfuron, Propyzamide, Glyphosate, Trifluralin, Imazapyr, Indaziflam, Atrazine, Metazachlor-methyl, Pyraclostrobin, Flumicazolin, Sulfentrazone, Fluoroglycy, Picloram, Clopyralid)
- Pesticides proposed for wood pole maintenance: Cobra Wrap Gel, Can-Bor, Car-Bor, Cobra Rod, Cobra Wrap, Chempen Technical, Solvable, Timbor, Genies Pestguard (Active ingredients: Copper naphthenate & sodium fluoride or borax, Copper hydroxide, Sodium tetraborate decahydrate, Carbocymethyl cellulose, Glucosic acid, Sodium gluconate, Zinc naphthenate, Disodium octaborate tetrahydrate, Anhydrous disodium octaborate, Sodium tetraborate decahydrate with copper hydroxide, copper salt & 2-aminoethanol)

Draft copies of these IPMP documents are available at:
<https://www.fortisbc.com/pubs/pest-manag-plan>

Maps are available upon request.

For more information, please contact:

FortisBC
 Attn: Vegetation Management Department
 Address: 750 Vaughan Avenue, Kelowna, BC V1Y 7E4
 Phone Number: 1.855.436.7847
 Email: pest-manag-plan@fortisbc.ca

A person wishing to contribute information about a proposed treatment site, relevant to the development of this Pest Management Plan may send copies of the information to the email address above within 30 days of the publication of this notice.



CITIZEN FILE PHOTO

A teacher from D.P. Todd Secondary School has been suspended after a video of him using a racial slur was made public.

Teacher suspended after racial slur caught on video

MATTHEW HILLIER

Citizen Staff

A teacher caught using a racial slur in a video recently posted to Facebook has been suspended.

The video, which *The Citizen* has seen, shows a D.P. Todd Secondary School teacher using the n-word in front of students. The student who filmed the incident alleges the teacher used the slur multiple times before he began recording.

The video shows the teacher and student discussing the incident with faculty members, during which the teacher uses the slur again to explain his actions.

The post has attracted attention from local residents, many of whom are calling for the teacher's dismissal, with some claiming that similar incidents have occurred in the past.

"It really is unfortunate that it happened," said Jameel Aziz, School District 57's superintendent of schools. "Our district takes any incidents of misconduct very seriously."

SD57's human resources department has placed the teacher on suspension while an investigation is underway. His name was not released.

Aziz told *The Citizen* that the

investigation into the teacher's conduct was expected to be completed by the end of last week, and that an appropriate response will be based on the findings.

Aziz also addressed the potential impact of the incident on students and the school board's response.

"Our students are more savvy than sometimes we give them credit for," said Aziz. "Especially at the high school level. We live in a society that has racism in it, and so sometimes our schools, as microcosms of society, will experience these kinds of incidents. Typically, they're student-to-student, not staff-engaged. We work hard to teach our students about what safe and welcoming places should look like, about diversity, equity, inclusion, and racial acceptance. While this is an upsetting incident, we see it as a teachable moment."

Despite the incident, Aziz emphasized that the district remains committed to making schools in Prince George a welcoming space for everyone.

"We strive to ensure that our schools are safe, welcoming, and inclusive for all students," Aziz said. "We don't ignore these things when they occur. It's important to continue our dialogue, and we will respond appropriately and move forward."

Son's unpaid bar tab leads to court appearance for dad

BOB MACKIN

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A Prince George provincial court judge said a father's spontaneous attempt to resolve his son's unpaid bar bill was a minor offence, except for causing danger to a Prince George RCMP officer.

Lester Michael Chingee, 69, pleaded guilty on Friday, Feb. 28 to willfully resisting or obstructing a peace officer during the Aug. 5, 2023 incident at a city eatery.

Judge David Simpkin gave Chingee a conditional discharge and ordered him to serve 12 months probation and

perform 10 hours of community service work.

Court heard that a Prince George RCMP officer came to Chingee's Heritage residence after an employee of Moxie's reported that a patron who had been drinking in the establishment left without paying his bill.

The employee provided the licence plate number for a vehicle registered to Chingee. Chingee told the officer that it was his son who had been driving the Honda Civic.

As the officer was investigating, Chingee went into the house and returned with the car keys.

"Unfortunately, you end up getting in the vehicle and trying to reverse off your property and take the vehicle away, despite the officer — who was still in the execution of his duty — telling you not to do that," Simpkin said.

While Chingee appeared to be "trying to do the right thing and going back to Moxie's, trying to pay the bill," he disobeyed the officer, who needed the vehicle for his investigation.

Simpkin adopted the joint sentencing proposal from Crown and defence lawyers, which noted Chingee had nothing on his criminal record except a one-year driving ban in 2008 for failing or refusing

to provide a sample.

That, and Chingee's Indigenous background, were enough for Simpkin to conclude the sentence was appropriate.

Chingee's son, Clayton Michael Chingee, 31, was sentenced in December to a conditional discharge, 12 months probation, 12 months driving ban and \$500 fine.

He pleaded guilty to driving while prohibited/licence suspended, wilfully resisting or obstructing a peace officer and theft under \$5,000.

A person sentenced to a conditional discharge will have no criminal record after complying with a judge's orders.

CRIME NOTES



HARVEY HENKELMANN PHOTO

This is an example of a Nathan M5 Airchime train horn. One such horn was stolen from a train at the Central BC Railway and Forestry Museum in Prince George.

Police seek tips on antique train horn stolen from museum

Prince George RCMP are now asking for help in tracking down the M5 Airchime railway horn that was stolen from Central B.C. Railway and Forestry Museum during the night of Feb 22, 2025.

"The theft occurred during the night and was noticed the next morning when employees returned to the museum. This is a unique piece of machinery and was not a crime of opportunity, such as we would see if a car was broken into, but likely was planned in advance," states Cpl. Jennifer Cooper, media relations officer for the Prince George RCMP.

Police investigators are asking people to keep an eye on local online marketplaces and especially websites where

such items might be resold.

If you see this item or another one similar to it please contact the Prince George RCMP non-emergency line at 250-561-3300.

'Prolific offender' arrested by RCMP after foot chase

Prince George RCMP arrested a prolific offender on Sunday night, March 2, 2025, following a report of a fight in the city.

The investigation began just after 4 p.m. when officers responded to a complaint of two men fighting near Freeman Street and Eighth Avenue. Witnesses told police they had seen a man entering backyards in the area and confronted him, leading to a verbal altercation.

"When police arrived, the suspect fled on foot," said Cpl. Jennifer Cooper, media relations officer for the Prince George RCMP. "He was located again in the 600 block of Douglas Street and taken into custody after initially refusing to comply with officers' instructions."

The suspect, known to police, was found in possession of approximately 17 grams of suspected illicit drugs and was found to be violating court-ordered conditions. He remains in custody and will appear in court at a later date.

The investigation is ongoing.

IIO probing Feb. 24 crash of vehicle fleeing from police

The Independent Investigations Office of BC (IIO) is investigating a crash that

happened Monday, Feb. 24 in Prince George.

RCMP attempted to stop a red Chevrolet pickup truck near 10th Avenue and Irwin Street around 10:20 p.m.

The driver of the truck allegedly fled from police and was later involved in a collision with another vehicle near 15th Avenue and Highway 97.

Police arrested the truck's driver at the scene.

Three people were injured and taken to hospital.

The IIO, a civilian agency that investigates incidents involving police that result in serious injury or death, was notified of the incident shortly after it occurred and has since launched an investigation.

The IIO is asking anyone who witnessed the collision or has video footage to contact the Witness Line toll-free at 1-855-446-8477 or via the contact form on the iibc.ca website.

Man wanted on three counts of violating probation

The Prince George RCMP is asking for the public's assistance in locating



John

23-year-old Jayden Rapheal Robert John, who is wanted on two unendorsed warrants related to multiple probation violations.

Specifically, he is facing three

counts of failing to comply with a probation order.

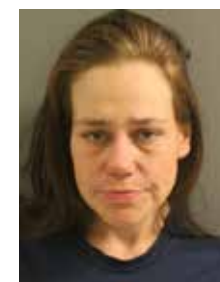
He is described as an Indigenous male, standing 5'9" (175 centimetres) tall and weighing 201 lbs (91 kilograms). John has black hair, brown eyes and distinct tattoos, including the word "ruthless" on his right forearm and the name "Victoria" on his neck.

RCMP consider John dangerous and advise the public not to approach him.

Anyone with information on his whereabouts is urged to call the Prince George RCMP at 250-561-3300. To remain anonymous, tipsters can contact Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477 (TIPS).

Prince George RCMP looking for woman wanted on theft charges

Prince George RCMP are looking for Crystal Amber Marie Merasty, 36.



Merasty

Merasty is wanted on two unendorsed warrants for two counts of theft under \$5,000.

She is described as an Indigenous female, 5'7" (170 centimetres), 157 pounds (71 kilograms), with brown hair and brown eyes.

Police advise the public that she is considered dangerous and should not be approached. Anyone seeing her should contact Prince George RCMP at 250-561-3300 or call Crimestoppers.

Province moves to seize man's pickup truck

BOB MACKIN

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

BC's Civil Forfeiture Office has applied to take ownership of a pickup truck seized last summer from a man who is accused of breaking into a Prince George cell tower.

In a Feb. 24 filing in BC Supreme Court in Victoria, a lawyer for the director of civil forfeiture claims Patrick Ryan Baker used the 2007 GMC Sierra 3500 to commit a crime on July 23, 2024 at McBride Timber Road South.

Baker is the registered owner of the vehicle. His father, Brian Patrick Baker, is also named as a defendant in the civil action and has an unregistered interest in the truck that Prince George RCMP seized last Aug. 1.

The director began administrative forfeiture proceedings, but the Bakers filed notices to dispute on Jan. 27. The allegations have not been tested in court and the Bakers have yet to file a response.

"The vehicle is an instrument of unlawful activity," said the lawsuit. "The vehicle has been used by (Patrick) Baker to engage in unlawful activities which variously resulted in, or were likely to result in, the acquisition of property or an interest in property, or caused, or could have resulted in serious bodily harm."

Baker has been previously convicted of mischief under \$5,000; failure to comply with an order; break and enter and theft; possession of property obtained by crime under \$5,000; theft under \$5,000; fraud under \$5,000; possession of a firearm knowing its possession is unauthorized; failure to comply with conditions of an undertaking; and driving while prohibited.

The online court file shows that Patrick Baker, 37, faces a July 30, 2024 break and enter charge and an Aug. 1, 2024 possession of stolen property under \$5,000 charge.

His next appearance in Prince George provincial court is March 4.

Road rage at mall lands driver in court

BOB MACKIN

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A provincial court judge in Prince George sentenced a personal trainer to a 12-month conditional discharge on Tuesday, Feb. 25 for a road rage incident more than two years ago.

Stefan Jordan Cloutier, 34, had pleaded guilty Dec. 18 to one count of assault causing bodily harm for the incident outside Spruceland Mall.

"Frankly, this would be a case where an absolute discharge would be appropriate, given I do not see the need for any terms necessary to protect the public or to rehabilitate Mr. Cloutier," Judge Cassandra Malfair said.

"However, given that level of fear expressed by (the victim), I find a conditional discharge with protective conditions to be appropriate to provide her with peace of mind."

Court heard that while Cloutier was waiting for a driver towing a gooseneck trailer to pass so he could enter the mall parking lot on Oct. 5, 2022, another driver honked, gave him the middle finger and yelled profanities. After parking, Cloutier walked toward the woman, who threw a cup of coffee that struck him in the face.

"Mr. Cloutier then threw a punch at (her), striking her in the cheek and shoved her onto the ground. He then left. (The victim) suffered a bruise on her cheekbones, had an abrasion on her knee and an abrasion on her shoulder from the fall," Malfair said.

Additionally, the woman was frightened, traumatized, suffered



CITIZEN FILE PHOTO

An encounter outside Spruceland Mall in 2022 turned violent, court heard before one of the people involved received a conditional discharge.

post-traumatic stress disorder and had to change gyms, court heard.

Malfair said Cloutier is generally of good character with no history of violence and no criminal record. He was in poor mental health at the time, under treatment from a psychiatrist and psychologist.

"Had Mr. Cloutier reached for his phone and called the police instead of throwing a punch, the outcome may have been very different," Malfair said.

Malfair said a psychological assessment found Cloutier a low risk to reoffend. Prior to pleading guilty, he took steps to rehabilitate himself.

"I agree that it is important for the courts to denounce acts of road rage, which all too often are catalysts for violence amongst otherwise peaceable members of the public," Malfair said. "However, again, it was (the victim) who

was the instigator of the road rage, first by honking her horn to chastise Mr. Cloutier for being a safe, conscientious driver. Then, secondly, by assaulting him without provocation."

Earlier, Cloutier told the court that he regretted the incident. He said he was at the lowest point of his life, but has since "put all my effort into building myself back to a productive member of society again."

"Now I help people live happier, healthier lives for a living and want to be able to continue to pursue these endeavours," Cloutier said.

A conditional discharge means Cloutier will not have a criminal record if he follows the judge's order to have no contact or communication with the victim. He must leave immediately if he finds himself in her presence, except while he is working at the gym.

\$4,500 worth of sunglasses go missing

MATTHEW HILLIER

Citizen Staff

Prince George RCMP are asking for the public's help in identifying a suspect in the theft of shades from a local store. It happened Dec. 15.

"The suspect stole approximately \$4,500 in sunglasses from a retail location at Pine Centre Mall," stated Cpl.

Jennifer Cooper, media relations officer with the Prince George RCMP. "We recently received enhanced surveillance footage and are hoping a member of the public will be able to help identify the suspect from the still image."

The suspect is described as a Caucasian male, about 5'7" with a slender build and brown hair.

Call police at 250-561-3300 with tips.



RCMP PHOTO

Police released this image of a suspect in the theft of \$4,500 in sunglasses.

Man acquitted after run-in with teens in College Heights

BOB MACKIN

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A provincial court judge ruled a 51-year-old man was not guilty of uttering a threat and possessing a weapon for a dangerous purpose.

Judge Robert Brown, in his Wednesday, Feb. 26 oral judgment, decided the Crown had not proven the charges against Neil Arthur Horning McKay beyond a reasonable doubt.

"I find I do not know who to believe, with respect to the events that occurred between the accused and the teenagers," Brown said.

The charges date back to October 2023, when Prince George RCMP arrested McKay after an incident in College Heights.

He testified that he had been out for a walk for 10 minutes when he observed three teenagers appearing to wrestle each other.

When he walked by the group, he suggested the larger two "watch out for the little guy."

One of the three told him to shut his mouth or he would regret it, but McKay testified that he said "I'm an adult, I'll say what I want."

He told the court in his defence that

two of the teens taunted him and followed him for 20 to 30 metres. He then threatened to kick them in the testicles if they continued.

They eventually retreated, but one of them called a relative and alleged he had been threatened by a man with a knife.

That person called police, but the officer that arrived and arrested McKay did not find a knife in his possession.

Brown said the object could instead have been a pencil-shaped vaping device with a golden-colour top. The accused testified that he had such a device in his hand, which measured

three-to-five inches in length, although Brown said the evidence was unclear about when he held that device.

The most aggressive of the three complainants, whose identities are covered by a publication ban, denied taunting the accused or challenging him to a fight.

Brown said that the accused's words "if you keep following me, I'll kick you in the testicles," were a declaration that he would defend himself if attacked.

Court heard testimony from five witnesses and the accused during a trial that took place Feb. 11-12 and 14 in Prince George.

No bail for PG airport carjacking suspect

BOB MACKIN

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The man arrested after a carjacking outside Prince George Airport last summer will remain in custody as he awaits trial.

BC Supreme Court Justice Marguerite Church denied Tanner Jordan Meier's bail application on Friday, Feb. 28, ruling that even releasing Meier to a residential treatment facility "would undoubtedly shake the confidence of the public" in the justice system.

"Despite the fact that — through his counsel at both the initial bail hearing and today — Mr. Meier apparently acknowledges his involvement in these events, he is still presumed innocent," Church said in an oral decision. "Regardless of the gravity of the offences, the strength of the prosecution's case, or the possibility of a lengthy term of imprisonment."

Meier was charged, after the Aug. 24, 2024 incident that began at YXS, with robbery, dangerous operation of a conveyance causing bodily harm, assault and driving while prohibited. The elderly victims suffered serious injuries.

Meier, 29 years old when charged, was originally ordered to remain in custody last Oct. 3 by Provincial Court Judge Peter McDermick. McDermick deemed detention necessary because of



CITIZEN FILE PHOTO

The suspect in a violent carjacking outside the Prince George International Airport on Aug. 24 will stay in custody as he awaits trial.

substantial likelihood that the accused would commit a criminal offence and because detention was necessary to maintain the public's confidence in the administration of justice.

Meier, who has elected to be tried in BC Supreme Court, is scheduled for trial beginning Nov. 17.

At the 90-day detention review hearing, Church said there had been no developments with Meier's bail plan.

"He is essentially proposing that he be released on the exact same bail plan that was before the provincial court judge in October 2024," Church said. "Defence counsel submits, however, that Mr. Meier has been able to detox while in custody since his arrest, and

he is in a romantic relationship such that he is very motivated to comply with court orders and attend residential treatment at [a] facility until his trial."

During the hearing, orange-clad Meier frequently turned from his seat in the prisoner's dock to smile and make eye contact with a lone woman seated in the back of the gallery.

Church said Meier's record supports McDermick's conclusion, because he has a history of disobeying court orders.

"There are simply no release conditions that would reduce the bail risk to an acceptable level in terms of the potential public harm that might occur," Church said.

Probation for man who spit on store guard

BOB MACKIN

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A provincial court judge in Prince George gave a man a suspended sentence and 12 months probation for spitting at a grocery store security guard.

Ashlee Pobbloe Joseph, 47, pleaded guilty Feb. 26 to assaulting a loss prevention officer on Aug. 15, 2024 at Buy-Low Foods in Parkwood Place.

Court heard that the loss prevention officer called RCMP after 8 p.m. following his unsuccessful request for Joseph, who appeared heavily intoxicated, to leave the store. Joseph had been sitting near the exit door, where he said he was waiting for family.

While the man was on the phone with RCMP, Joseph spat at him and ran away.

Court heard Joseph's saliva landed on the loss prevention officer's pants, not his face, eyes or mouth. While the victim did not feel unsafe, he said he felt disrespected and had to launder his clothes.

Judge Peter McDermick's conditions for Joseph include apologizing to the loss prevention officer.



CITIZEN FILE PHOTO

Two skiers descended the south face of Mount Robson, seen in the middle of this photo, after planning the expedition for 10 years.

History made with ski down Mt. Robson's south face

ABIGAIL POPPLE

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Robson Valley residents are familiar with the sight of Mount Robson towering over the parking lot to the Berg Lake Trail.

That iconic view is what greeted skiers Christina Lustenberger and Guillaume Pierrel earlier this month before the pair made history as the first people to ski down the mountain's south face.

The plan to conquer the south face was about 10 years in the making, Lustenberger told *The Goat*. A world-class skier from B.C. who has many first ascents and descents on her list, Mount Robson appealed to her because of its technical terrain and its iconic status as the tallest peak in the Canadian Rockies, she said.

"It's a line that, visually, everyone can share. Tourists and children, families can see it," Lustenberger said of the mountain's south face. "To me, it was the pinnacle of ski alpinism in Canada."

She added that the mountain's

challenging terrain pushes athletes to their limits.

"It is an incredibly demanding line, one that is extremely dangerous as well, because it is essentially almost a 3,000-metre ski descent," Lustenberger said. "It's engaging mentally and physically not only to climb it, but to stay that attentive to everything for hours, and hours, and hours."

Lustenberger says a successful expedition requires a reliable, supportive partner — which she found in Pierrel, a French ski guide who met her through their mutual sponsorships with The North Face.

After first meeting Lustenberger in Chamonix, a resort town in the French Alps, Pierrel decided to try skiing in New Zealand with her, where they were mutually impressed with each other's skills.

"I can't really underline enough how important it is to have a partner that pushes you and allows you to lead, and to follow, and to communicate, but also to see the same vision," Lustenberger said.

"When you're doing these things that are at the pinnacle of your sport, there's very few people that you're interested in spending that experience with, and you have to really be aligned with what you're both trying to do."

Likewise, Pierrel recalls feeling a connection with Lustenberger's aspirations.

"Her vision and everything was amazing, and matched the way I wanted to be in the mountains," he said.

"When I saw for the first time Mount Robson from the parking lot (years ago), I was really impressed. It put me on fire. I was like, 'Okay, that's really something serious, it's going to be a serious job.'"

While the pair is uniquely suited to the ski-mountaineering skills needed to complete the expedition, it did not come without its challenges. During their first attempt on February 11th through 12th, they climbed within 200 metres of the summit and set up a temporary camp, only to have their hopes dashed by poor visibility and extremely cold temperatures, Lustenberger said.

"We retreated, skied the line, and then came back into Valemount for two days where we recharged our batteries and our bodies and minds," she said.

By the 16th, Lustenberger and Pierrel were ready to make another attempt — and this time, they were successful in skiing and rappelling down the slope.

"It pushes you and tests you as a skier and a mountain athlete," Lustenberger said of the south face. "You're not (only) a climber or a skier — you have to be everything."

The pair also credits Valemount locals for their support throughout their expedition. Both said they appreciated the encouragement and local knowledge provided by people they met at local businesses such as Peak Physio and Vale Coffee.

"It's just such a beautiful town," Lustenberger said. "We felt very lucky to have spent so much time there, going back and forth between (Mount) Robson and Valemount."

This article originally appeared in The Rocky Mountain Goat.

Province urged to save Williams Lake biomass plant

ANDIE MOLLINS
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The North Central Local Government Association (NCLGA) is calling on the BC government to secure a stable electricity supply by enhancing support for independent power producers.

In a Feb. 21 letter to Adrian Dix, the provincial minister of energy and climate solutions, NCLGA gave two recommendations to support a sustainable and diversified power supply in B.C.

The first recommendation, described as a short-term measure, is to adjust rates for BC Hydro to better reflect current market conditions.

The second recommendation, characterized as a long-term solution, is to increase provincial support in a way which would improve access to wood fibre supply.

The organization’s letter emphasizes



ANDIE MOLLINS, LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER
The Atlantic Power biomass plant is located in Williams Lake.

the need to support independent power producers, especially those relying on wood fibre whose operation costs are growing in the face of a diminishing wood supply.

Among these producers is Atlantic Power, which announced one year ago

it would close its Williams Lake location in 2025 as operations were no longer profitable under its current contract with BC Hydro.

“For the past year, the city has worked with the Province to find a workable solution,” said Surinderpal

Rathor, mayor of Williams Lake.

“The NCLGA’s support highlights the importance of this issue not just for Williams Lake but for all of Northern BC.”

On Feb. 18, Dix called for talks between Atlantic Power and BC Hydro, though this has yet to produce any outcomes.

Atlantic Power is the largest single taxpayer in Williams Lake, employing about 30 full-time personnel directly and through contractors.

NCLGA represents more than 240 elected officials from 42 local First Nations governments across North Central BC.

The organization joins a growing number of organizations and government officials supporting advocating for the plant’s continued operation including the Cariboo Regional District, the Williams Lake and District Chamber of Commerce and Williams Lake First Nation.

Campaign launched to encourage people to move to Blue River

ABIGAIL POPPLE
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Thompson-Nicola Regional District (TNRD) has launched a new video and web page promoting Blue River in an effort to get more families to move to the area.

The Blue River Elementary School currently has four students enrolled, and the Regional District has been working with School District 73 on efforts to boost enrolment.

Funded by a grant from the Economic Trust of the Southern Interior, the “Where Community Meets Adventure” webpage and accompanying video feature cinematic shots of mountain landscapes and waterfront properties, along with local organizations like Sled Blue River and Mike Wiegele Helicopter Skiing.

The idea behind the initiative is that employers and residents will have

accessible material to send to people looking to move to Blue River, says Electoral Area B Director Lee Onslow.

“This video is now being advertised down in the Lower Mainland and in the Okanagan, with the intention of showing people that living in a rural and remote community can be a really cool opportunity for families,” Onslow told *The Goat*.

“I hope that the exposure of it really does draw a couple of families to move to our town with some kids.”

Beyond just being a way to encourage young families to move to Blue River, the video can be used to recruit staff for local services like the BC Ambulance Service, Onslow added.

Employers can send the video to potential hires who are on the fence about moving to a small, rural community.

This article originally appeared in The Rocky Mounaain Goat.

Mental Health & Stress



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What's happening in PG

Sprocket, an Enchanting Evening of Poetry & Music goes Thursday, March 6 at Omineca Arts Centre, 369 Victoria St., featuring Al Rempel and Raghu Lokanathan. There will be music, poetry, retro snacks and beverages and more. No cover charge but donations for the musician will be gratefully accepted.

Cirque du Soleil Crystal goes Thursday, March 6, Friday, March 7 and Saturday, March 8 at 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. and Sunday, March 9 at 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. at CN Centre. This unique production pushes boundaries of performance by combining stunning skating and acrobatic feats that defy the imagination. Get tickets at <https://ticketsnorth.venue.net/events/CIRQUE>.

YINTAH three-part event with Sleydo Molly Wickham & Jennifer Wickham goes Friday, March 7 at 3:30 p.m. at UNBC First Nations Centre in 7-238. This event is presented by Inspiring Women Among Us and is a reception and free screening of YINTAH, a powerful film by Sleydo Molly Wickham and Jennifer Wickham, hosted by the Office of Indigenous Initiatives, Weaving Words, NRESi and others. From 3:30-4:30 NRESi talk with Sleydo and Jennifer Wickham in 7-238 then from 4:45-5:30 reception and then from 5:45-8 p.m. YINTAH film screening. These events are free and everyone is welcome thanks to The Office of Indigenous Initiatives, Inspiring Women Among Us and Weaving Words.

Chris Goodwin Band goes Friday, March 7 at 7 p.m. at the Oakroom Grill, 1023 Central St. W. This is a dynamic four-piece country band including Goodwin, lead vocals and rhythm guitar, Patrick Michaud, lead guitar, Steve Smith, bass, and Chester Hewkin on drums.

An Evening in India goes Saturday, March 8 from 6 p.m. to 1 a.m. at the Prince George Civic Centre, 808 Canada Games Way. Dinner is at 7 p.m. Step into a world of vibrant colours, delicious flavours, and enchanting sounds at An Evening in India. This exclusive fundraising event for Spirit of the North



SUBMITTED PHOTO

PGSO Grieg Piano Concerto featuring world renowned pianist David Fung goes Sunday, March 9 at 2 p.m.

Healthcare Foundation's Cardiac Care in the North promises an unforgettable experience filled with entertainment, culture, and community. For all the details and tickets visit www.zeffy.com/en-CA/ticketing/an-evening-in-india.

PEAK Boulder Competition goes Saturday, March 8 from 8:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. at 2601 Recplace Drive. OVERhang is hosting this annual event for all climbers. There are two levels of competition – recreational or competitive and spectators are welcome. For more information visit www.overhang.ca/climbing-gym/peak-2025.

Let's Hear It BC Tour goes Saturday, March 8 at 6:30 p.m. at Knox Performance Centre. This is a series of live music events showcasing some of the province's most exciting artists, including Garret T. Willie and Desirée Dawson. This is a free event and is first come first served. Registration is recommended but does not

guarantee entry www.eventbrite.com/e/prince-george-lets-hear-it-bc-tour-tickets.

International Women's Day Vinyl Night goes Saturday, March 8 at 7:30 p.m. at Deadfall Brewing, 1733 Nicholson St. S. Larry from 2nd Thoughts will be spinning all women artists all night long and also has some vinyl for sale. Deadfall will release their brand new Pink Boots brew, the Belgian IPA.

The Cher Show presented by Bonnie Kilroe's Celebrity Imposters goes Saturday, March 8 at 8 p.m. at the Legion, 1116 Sixth Ave. Entertainer Bonnie Kilroe creates the perfect blend of authenticity, humour and audience interaction as she brings Cher's greatest hits to life with her own unique flair. In typical Cher fashion there will be 7 glamorous costume changes throughout the 2 hour show. There is Cher trivia for prizes and audience members are invited to don a Cher wig and strut onstage vying for the title of Ultimate Cher fan for prizes.

Tickets are \$30 for Legion members, \$35 in advance at the Legion or \$40 at the door. For online tickets visit www.brownpapertickets.com/CherShow.

PGSO Grieg Piano Concerto featuring world renowned pianist David Fung goes Sunday, March 9 at 2 p.m. at Vanier Hall. Grieg's thunderous opening is only the start the one of the greatest Romantic piano concertos. Along with Fung's performance enjoy some lovely music from Jean Sibelius and British Columbian composer Leslie Opatril. The concert ends with Dvorak's infectious Czech Suite! For tickets visit <https://www.pgso.com/concerts/Grieg-Piano-Concerto>

Harmonic Vibrations Cellular Healing Session goes Sunday, March 9 from 2 to 3 p.m. at the Spruce Capital Seniors Recreation Centre, 3701 Rainbow Drive. Let the vibrations guide you to tranquility. Bring a yoga mat or foamie, pillow and blanket. Please arrive 15 minutes early. Doors locked when session starts. Cost is \$40. Preregistration required as there are limited spots by visiting www.harmonicvibrations.ca.

Golden Age Social goes Monday, March 10 from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Prince George Conference and Civic Centre, 808 Canada Games Way. Prince George Council of Seniors and the City of Prince George is inviting all seniors to this event. This is a wonderful way to end the snowy winter and welcome spring. Spend the afternoon with friends, enjoying great local entertainment, light refreshments and wonderful conversation. This free drop in event is open to all seniors.

Naloxone Training goes Tuesday, March 11 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at the Prince George Public Library main branch and Thursday, April 24 at the Prince George Public Library Nechako Branch. Join harm reduction staff from Northern Health and learn how to use Naloxone correctly. Kits will be available to take after the training. These sessions are geared for adults. Free drop in.

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Anything Goes! presented by UNBC Musical Productions goes Thursday, March 13 to Sunday, March 16 and Thursday, March 20 to 23 at 7 p.m. with Saturday matinees at 1 p.m. at Knox Performance Centre, 1448 Fifth Ave. This is a 1930s musical comedy following an ocean liner bound from New York to London. With secret stowaways, deceptive disguises, and a risky plot to break up an engagement, this story follows the antics of the misfits and megastars travelling across the Atlantic. Accompanied by seductive nightclub performances, engaging tap numbers, and the big band style music of Cole Porter. Tickets are \$20 for the general public and \$10 for students at www.knoxcentre.ca/event-anything-goes-unbc-musical.

Live Pro Wrestling presented by **Primetime Entertainment** goes Friday, March 14 and Saturday, March 15 from 5:45 to 9:30 p.m. at the Prince George Civic Centre. This is a fundraiser for Duchess Park Dry Grad. VIP doors open at 5:45 and starts at 6 p.m. General doors open at 6:30 p.m. and bell at 7 sharp. General tickets are \$20 in advance and \$25 at the door. VIP tickets are \$25 in advance and \$30 at the door. VIP limited to 100 tickets. Tickets can be purchased in advance at the Scrapbook Zone on 18th Ave, J&A Stereo +, or online at www.ticketseller.ca/tickets/event/live-pro-wrestling.

Child of the Violin: Anna Maria and Maestro Vivaldi goes Saturday, March 15 at 11:30 a.m. at the Prince George Public Library main branch and at 3 p.m. at the Prince George Conservatory of Music, 3555 Fifth Ave. Join the PG Symphony Youth Orchestra for a family-friendly concert that brings 17th century Venice to life through music, sound effects, narration, and illustrates through music the journey of a young orphan child who hears in a unique way and becomes one of the most important female musicians of her time. This short concert will showcase all the players of the PGSYO, and features soloists Hannah Yin and Maggie Corbett. Admission



DESIREE DAWSON/FACEBOOK

Desirée Dawson performs at the Let's Hear It BC Tour Saturday, March 8 at 6:30 p.m. at Knox Performance Centre.

by donation - any donations received will support the youth orchestra's upcoming tour.

Shamrocks & Shenanigans St. Patrick's Day Party goes Saturday, March 15 from 7 p.m. to midnight at the Roll-A-Dome, 2588 Rec Place Drive. This event is presented by Farmhouse Catering and is a dinner dance. Guinness Stew & Pachos for dinner, entertainment from Rhythm & Sound DJ, beer pong tables with prizes to be won and a dance. Door open at 6:30. For tickets visit <https://www.farmhousecatering.ca/event-details/shamrock-shenanigans>.

Shamrocks & Metal Rock goes Saturday, March 15 at 7 p.m. at Omineca Arts Centre, 369 Victoria St. The Shiels Brothers Band with supporting acts Madbomb and Smog City Syndicate will

perform. Tickets are \$30 at the door or in advance at Black Sheep Gifts at Pine Centre Mall for \$20.

Saturday Dance with Long Rider goes Saturday, March 15 at the Prince George Seniors Activity Centre, 425 Brunswick St. Doors open at 7, music at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$20 at the door. Cash bar and 50/50 draw. Everyone 19+ is welcome to attend.

Prince George Cougars vs Victoria Royals goes Friday, March 21 at 7 p.m. and Saturday, March 22 at 6 p.m. at CN Centre. Tickets at <https://ticketsnorth.venue.net/events/CSG>.

Steel Magnolias by Robert Harling is presented at Theatre NorthWest, #36-556 North Nechako Road, until Wednesday, March 5. Step into the charming beauty salon of Truvy

Jones in a poignant production where laughter and tears intertwine like the Southern women at the salon. Set against the backdrop of a small Louisiana town, this timeless play showcases the enduring friendships and resilient spirit of a close-knit group of women. With wit, wisdom, and a healthy helping of Southern charm, *Steel Magnolias* promises an emotional journey that will leave you both touched and inspired. Content Warning: Please be advised that this production features dated language around mental health topics and body image. There are also references that are offensive and outdated with regards to racial stereotypes. There is mention of death and dying babies that may trigger reactions and be upsetting to some viewers. The show starts at 7 p.m. and there are weekend matinees at 2 p.m. For tickets visit <https://tickets.theatrenorthwest.com/SteelMagnolias>.

Prince George Mixed 55+ Slopitch League 2025 with practice every Tuesday and Thursday from 10 a.m. to noon from about May 13 to Aug. 12. A group of players is looking to put together a team for the 55+ BC Games this year. Format is seven men and at least three women 55+. Registration is April 28, 29 & 30 at the Prince George Golf & Curling Club from 1 to 4 p.m. \$75 per player, cash only. For more information call Jackie Burns at 250-962-9230.

BC Old Time Fiddlers' Jams and Lessons go every Tuesday from 7 to 9 p.m. at the First Baptist Church, 483 Gillett St. Everyone is welcome to attend. Drop-in fee is \$5 at the door.

Games Night goes every Thursday at 7 p.m. at Spruce Capital Seniors Centre, 3701 Rainbow Drive. Come on down and join in a game of backgammon, checkers, crib or better yet try out the pool table or dart board, please bring your own darts. Open to everyone for a \$5 drop in fee.

If you've got an event coming up email us at news@pgcitizen.ca to offer details including name of the event, the date, time and location, ticket price and where to get them and a little bit about what's happening, too. LOCF

When the cupboard is bare, Grocery Angels deliver

CHRISTINE DALGLEISH
Citizen Staff

It all started when one friend told another about an elderly couple who shared a bowl of Cheerios each day to keep from starving because that was all they could afford.

Rose Halsall couldn't stand by and do nothing. She asked her friends to come together to provide groceries to seniors in need so that would never happen again.

"And that's when we got connected to this angel," Halsall said about Terry Runions, Better at Home coordinator for the Prince George Council of Seniors, who named the group the Grocery Angels.

In the last 10 months, 87 Grocery Angels food deliveries have been made, bringing the total to 115 since the group's inception in July 2023.

In 2023, about 25 people donated a sustainable amount of money every three months to help fund the effort. Now, 50 donors are helping seniors in need get the groceries they require. Runions makes the calls to seniors to gather their grocery lists. That list is then passed along to the Grocery Angels shopping team, who purchase the items and deliver them to those in need.

"Every cent that comes in for Grocery Angels goes to the cause because every-one volunteers," Runions said.

The program has grown, with sponsors making significant contributions. NC Ron's Towing has been very generous, supporting the Grocery Angels in 2024 and 2025 with monthly donations, along with another generous donation in December 2024.

Load 'Em Up Contracting made a \$3,500 donation in December, and the Elks, Real Canadian Superstore, and others have conducted food drives during the holiday season. These items have been directed not only to Grocery Angels clients but also to the Kindness Nook, where seniors in need can access much-needed necessities like adult diapers, nutritional shakes, or non-perishables to keep their cupboards from



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Some of the Prince George Council of Seniors Grocery Angels are seen at a holiday celebration. The Grocery Angels donate funds to provide groceries to seniors in need in Prince George. The whole project is driven by volunteers being bare.

Clients come from the many programs under the umbrella of the Prince George Council of Seniors, which include Better at Home, Meals on Wheels, Housing & Community Resources, Family & Friends Caregiver Support, Christmas Hampers, Friendly Visits, and Friendly Phone Calls.

"Sometimes we've helped caregivers or a grandmother who takes care of her four grandchildren, or a grandmother who gets visits from an adult grandchild with special needs," Halsall said. "And just recently, we accessed the hamper list from last Christmas to see if there are people in need."

"The Grocery Angels came up with this idea of going through the hamper list, and what a great idea it was because they're all low-income and they're all 65+," Runions said.

As a result of food drive donations during the holidays, some items were plentiful, Halsall said. So, those

non-perishable items can be donated to those who will use them.

"This month is the first time we've reached out to those on the hamper list. We delivered to 13 people, as well as two people from the list Terry has," Halsall explained.

The items on those lists vary from person to person, but there are common requests.

"This month, so many people needed bread, carrots, and potatoes," Halsall said. "Very basic requests. Through this experience, we certainly see a different level of need. There is one lady we've delivered to four or five times over the last year and a half, and every time her fridge is literally empty. That's how we know she's still struggling. Other people might just need a top-up. There was one lady we offered some extra Chef Boyardee to, and she said, 'Oh yes, it makes me feel like a little kid when I eat that!' She was so happy to have it. We gave her two cans."

Halsall often shares one particular story that touches her heart.

"There is one lady who always just got the bare necessities because she was on a fixed income. There were no treats, no special indulgences, but one day Runions asked her if there was a wish-list item for her. A Hawaiian pizza was the prompt answer. Runions put it on her grocery list, and when the Grocery Angels delivered the treat along with the basics, it was met with delight."

"The lady hugged the pizza and thanked us so many times for the treat," Halsall recalled. "I'll always remember that look on her face when she realized the delivery included a frozen pizza with pineapple on it. She hadn't had it for two years."

That experience touched Halsall so deeply that she decided to share it with those who donate to the Grocery Angels.

"I send out a monthly newsletter so that donors can see where their money is going," Halsall said. "I try to tell a story about each delivery — sometimes they're funny, sometimes they're sad."

"And people are always so grateful," Carolyn Shannon, another Grocery Angel, said.

"We tell them that we get so much enjoyment out of it when they get overwhelmed. Some even say they don't deserve it, and of course, they do. They're seniors who have worked hard all their lives."

And it's not just about the groceries. It's about who delivers them, Runions added.

"It's also about the friendly visits that go with the deliveries," Runions said. "It's that human interaction and knowing they are cared about."

"And that experience is just as important to us," Halsall said.

To find out how you can donate to the Grocery Angels or contribute items to the Prince George Council of Seniors Kindness Nook — where personal hygiene products, non-perishable food items, and meal replacement drinks can be donated — email betterathome@pgcos.ca or visit the Seniors Resource Centre at 1330 Fifth Avenue.

Lifeline for Ricki's, but Bootlegger's fate still uncertain

MATTHEW HILLIER
Citizen Staff

The Pine Centre location of Ricki's will stay open while the fate of the mall's Bootlegger store remains uncertain.

Ricki's and Bootlegger announced last month that their parent company, Comark Holdings Inc., had entered a period of creditor protection.

However, the struggling retail chains may have just been given a lifeline by Putman Investments Inc., the company behind Toys "R" Us, HMV, and Sunrise Records.

An Ontario court has recently approved the sale of the brands to Putman Investments. The purchase, valued at approximately \$12.8 million, includes Ricki's inventory, furnishings, intellectual property, trademarks, and select store leases.

This acquisition aligns with Putman Investments' business model, as the company has frequently purchased struggling retail brands like Sunrise Records and Toys "R" Us, with the aim of turning them into more profitable ventures.

Some store closures may still occur, as the court ruling suggests that Putman Investments will be "reducing its footprint."

However, the Ricki's location at Pine Centre will be spared from downsizing. An employee told *The Citizen* that since



CITIZEN PHOTO BY MATTHEW HILLIER

The Ricki's store at Pine Centre, once slated for closure, has had its lease renewed under new corporate ownership.

Putman Investments took over the chain, the store has renewed its lease and will not face closure.

Putman Investments has not yet decided whether to purchase the Bootlegger brand, which has one location at Pine Centre. Comark Holdings is now exploring other options to sell the clothing brand.

Currently, Warehouse One has emerged as a potential buyer, with a stalking horse bid. This means Warehouse One has set the initial bid for any competing offers.

Interested parties have until Thursday to submit competing bids. If no other offers are made, Comark will seek court approval to sell Bootlegger to

Warehouse One.

Warehouse One plans to maintain only 25 of Bootlegger's 53 stores, leaving the future of the Prince George location uncertain until a final decision is made.

An employee of Bootlegger told *The Citizen* that a decision on store closures and the sale of the chain will be made within the next month.

Work being done on local trails

MATTHEW HILLIER
Citizen Staff

The City of Prince George recently announced that the western portion of Ferguson Lake Nature Reserve will be receiving some TLC.

The trail will close on Monday, March 3, and remain closed into the summer.

Parts of the trail where construction is not taking place will remain open. However, walkers will be unable to complete the loop until work is finished.

Crews will be removing and replacing

old support posts and boardwalks to improve the safety of the trail system.

The Ferguson Lake Nature Reserve is owned by the Nature Trust of B.C. but managed by the City of Prince George.

The project has a budget of \$276,000, with partial funding from the Canada Community Building Fund (\$220,000). The remaining \$56,000 will come from the General Infrastructure Reinvestment Fund.

Residents are asked to avoid trespassing into construction areas on the west side of the trail and to pay attention to signage.



Peters to perform in PG

Comedian Russell Peters is returning to Prince George on Thursday, Nov. 6 at the CN Centre as part of his Relax *It's Not That Serious tour. Tickets are on sale at TicketNorth.ca or at www.russellpeters.com.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

CNC hosts Aboriginal History Week March 10 to 14

CHRISTINE DALGLEISH
Citizen Staff

Aboriginal History Week will be celebrated at the College of New Caledonia (CNC) from Monday, March 10 to Friday, March 14, offering an opportunity to learn from Elders and knowledge holders while experiencing the traditions and ways of Indigenous culture.

Everyone is welcome to attend the events at CNC.

To kick things off, there will be a Flip-Cup Painting Workshop on Monday, March 10 from 10 a.m. to noon at the Aboriginal Resource Centre, Room 1-773.

Lauren Aldred, a land-based healer, wellness coach, and talented artist, will lead the workshop, teaching a fun and easy acrylic pour technique suitable for all skill levels. The workshop is limited to 12 participants. To register, contact Elder Darlene McIntosh by emailing arcelder@cnc.bc.ca or visit the Aboriginal Resource Centre at CNC.

During Aboriginal History Week, Marlene Erickson, senior policy advisor to the CNC president on Indigenous relations, will speak on Monday, March 10 from 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. in Room 1-306.

Marlene Erickson is a member of the Yinka Dene/Dakelh Nation from Nak'azdli and the Lusilyu (Frog) Clan. She holds a BA in anthropology and a Master of Education.

Dedicated to preserving the oral history of Yinka Dene, she teaches oral history at CNC and throughout the community, focusing on the potlatch, clan structure, the roles of women and children in traditional society and the education of children.

During this speaking engagement, the master storyteller will bring the cultural traditions of the First Nations people to life.

On Aboriginal History Day, Tuesday, March 11 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Gathering Place, CNC invites everyone to experience historical exhibits and enjoy live performances by drummers, singers, and dancers. There will be



CITIZEN STAFF PHOTO

Violet Prince, Nak'azdli Elder, will be at CNC's Gathering Place with other featured presenters during Aboriginal History Day, Tuesday, March 11, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., sharing traditional medicines with those in attendance.

bannock and popcorn as treats.

Featured presenters include:

- Michael Antoine (Saik'us) – Pipe carrier, Sun Dancer, holistic student support, drummer, and singer
- Tracy Peters (ts'kw'aylaxw First Nation) – Jingle dress dancer (powwow style), beader, sewer, singer, and Sun Dancer
- Roy and Terry Nooski (Nadleh Whut'en Elders) – Sharing traditional medicines
- Julie Jacque (Takla Elder) – Showcasing cultural crafts
- Violet Prince and Maggie Morris (Nak'azdli Elders) – Sharing traditional medicines
- Genny Pierre (Tl'azt'en Elder) – Showcasing traditional cultural crafts
- Marie Desjarlais (Cree Métis Elder) – Showcasing traditional cultural crafts
- Joyce Roberts (Métis Elder) – Métis exhibit
- Crystal Behn (Dene) – Manitobah Mukluks artist and exceptional beader
- UNBC First Nations Centre & IMSS – Supporting diversity at the college

On Wednesday, March 12 from 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. in Room 1-306, T'soh Dih Pete Erickson, a member of the Yinka Dene/Dakelh Nation from Nak'azdli and the Ts'umusyoo (Beaver) Clan, will speak. After serving 28 years as a constable and corporal with the RCMP, he now leads the Salmon Hatchery. As a Denezah Clan leader, Pete Erickson is deeply engaged in the traditional

governance system and represents Nak'azdli Whut'en on provincial and federal committees.

As a respected knowledge holder, he shares the rich cultural traditions of First Nations people by weaving captivating stories.

A Beaded Earring Workshop will be held on Wednesday, March 12 from 10 to 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 to 3 p.m. at the Aboriginal Resource Centre, Room 1-773. Stephanie Jack and Jaelyn Fulton will provide instruction on creating beautiful, handcrafted earrings. This workshop is open to all, with no registration required.

A screening of Sugarcane will take place on Wednesday, March 12 from noon to 3 p.m. in the Lecture Theatre, Room 1-306. Sugarcane is a critically acclaimed documentary that delves deeply into the tragic history of First Nations people who attended the former St. Joseph's Mission residential school. The film explores the ongoing impact on survivors and their descendants.

Directed by Secwepemc artist Julian Brave NoiseCat and journalist Emily Kassie, the film has received widespread acclaim since its premiere at the Sundance Film Festival, including a 100 per cent rating on Rotten Tomatoes and a nomination for Best Documentary at the 97th Academy Awards.

The documentary highlights the profound injustices endured by Indigenous communities in Canada and serves as a call to action for a more just future. This documentary is rated R.

A How to Make a Dream Catcher workshop will be held on Friday, March 14 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Aboriginal Resource Centre, Room 1-772. Michael Antoine, a holistic student supporter, will share the story of the dream catcher and guide participants in making their own. The workshop is limited to 12 participants.

To register, contact Elder Darlene McIntosh by emailing arcelder@cnc.bc.ca or visit the centre.

For more information about Aboriginal History Week, visit www.cnc.bc.ca/aboriginal-history-week.

Cirque du Soleil on ice: Crystal comes to CN Centre

CHRISTINE DALGLEISH

Citizen Staff

Over the years, Prince George has hosted some incredible Cirque du Soleil shows, and this year, we get to experience one on ice.

Cirque du Soleil Crystal opens Thursday, March 6 and runs until Sunday, March 9, with two additional weekend matinees.

This production pushes performance boundaries, featuring stunning skating and acrobatic feats that defy the imagination.

Cirque du Soleil Crystal tells the story of a young misfit who struggles to find her place in the world. While skating on a frozen pond, she plunges through the ice and into an upside-down world born of her imagination.

In this surreal and dreamlike world, Crystal meets her reflection — a guide who helps her unlock her creativity and embrace her true self. Through daring acrobatics, graceful ice skating, and stunning visuals, her journey of self-discovery unfolds in a world that challenges reality. Crystal is an empowering tale of finding strength and celebrating individuality.

Isabel Franco, head of wardrobe for Crystal for the past three years, has been with Cirque du Soleil for the last 10 years.

"I went to performing arts school in Barcelona and specialized in costumes," Franco explained.

Afterward, Franco joined a team that managed wardrobe on the road for various shows. "That's how I ended up with Crystal," Franco added.

During the show, the skating acrobats wear costumes with hoods, and no matter if they are upright or upside-down, the hood stays in place.

"We use a very old costume trick for the hood," Franco said. "We use Velcro. We also use things like clothes pins, hooks, and silicone elastic to hold the costumes in place."

Crystal's wig is also designed to stay put, and Franco said it's hair clips that lock it in place.

"We have to make sure, especially when Crystal is upside-down, that her



CIRQUE DU SOLEIL PHOTO

Cirque du Soleil Crystal comes to the CN Centre from March 6 to 9, and includes matinee and evening performance

wig stays in place," Franco said.

Franco explained that two important aspects make each costume successful.

"First, there's the design, which is always amazing, and then there's the technical features," Franco said. "It all starts with the development of new fabrics and textiles, always keeping in mind they must be resistant to the cold, ice, and water, while ensuring the actors and acrobats can move freely and safely during the show."

Crystal has a team of 45 cast members and four wardrobe specialists who travel with the show. Three local people are also invited to help maintain the costumes in perfect working condition, Franco added.

"We keep the costumes, wigs, and shoes in top condition," Franco said. "It takes a lot of work and skill. Our team is very professional and has received the proper training because that's what it takes to make Crystal so wonderful."

Franco said she loves the show.

"Crystal is very special," Franco said. "It combines two different disciplines — ice skating and acrobatics. When they

are combined, it's amazing to see. The story is also great because it's about finding yourself in the world, despite all the difficulties. It's a very fresh show from a young person's perspective."

Roberto Larroude, senior publicist for Crystal, said it's a beautiful show.

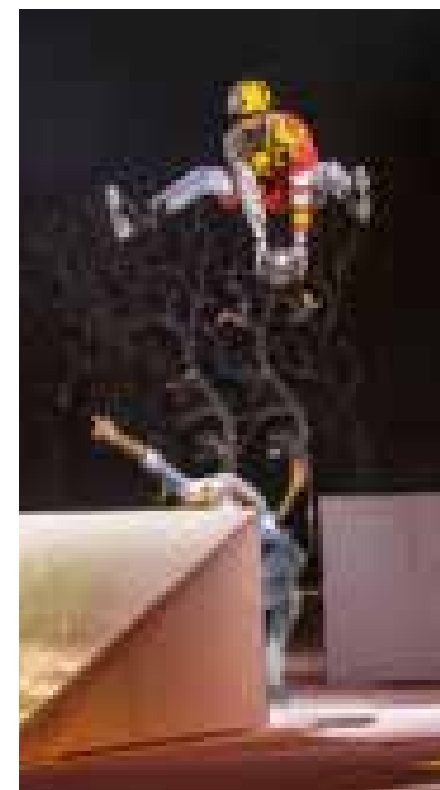
"From the storyline to the costumes, the music, and the combination of skaters and acrobats, it's powerful," Larroude said.

Larroude added that 28 projectors are used on the ice to help map out the story.

"All of that combined makes this a very unique show," Larroude said. "We know audiences of all ages will love it."

Cirque du Soleil Crystal runs Thursday, March 6, Friday, March 7, and Saturday, March 8 at 3 p.m. and 7 p.m., and Sunday, March 9 at 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. at the CN Centre.

This unique production pushes performance boundaries by combining stunning skating and acrobatic feats that defy the imagination. Get tickets at <https://ticketsnorth.venue.net/events/CIRQUE>.



CIRQUE DU SOLEIL PHOTO

The show features daring acrobatics, graceful skating, motocross stunts and other stunning visuals.

Open house offers clear look at College Heights

Neighbours say more details help ease some concerns

COLIN SLARK

Citizen Staff

Visitors to a Wednesday, Feb. 27 open house for a complex care facility on McGill Crescent in College Heights expressed relief that the facility won't treat addictions but voiced concerns about communication and a desire for more certainty from the project's partners.

First announced last August, the 10-unit facility at 3177 McGill Crescent is a joint venture between Northern Health, Community Living BC (CLBC), and BC Housing.

Representatives from all three organizations were present inside a ballroom at the downtown Ramada hotel to display poster boards outlining details of the project and answer visitors' questions.

A petition created by a neighbourhood resident opposed to the project has garnered 518 signatures since Aug. 24.

The petition's text stated that while the project is needed in the city, "building it in the middle of a neighbourhood with many small children and next to a park is clearly not a good choice. The huge potential for increased crime and human conflict is also too great and therefore must not happen."

Signatories expressed concern that the facility would bring drug- and mental health-related issues to a neighbourhood with young families. Others cited its proximity to École College Heights Elementary School, about 1.1 kilometres to the east.

The posters indicated that tenants of the facility would be individuals 19 years or older, of any gender, dealing with both mental health issues and developmental disabilities — but not addiction.

They also stated the location was chosen by BC Housing and Northern



BC HOUSING

This artist's rendering shows the intended design of a complex care facility for people with both mental health issues and developmental disabilities that will be built at 3177 McGill Cres.

Health, in consultation with the City of Prince George, because it is within walking distance to amenities, has access to bus services and is near greenspaces.

Heidi Hartman, associate vice-president of supportive housing and homelessness at BC Housing, said her organization's role is to guide the facility's design and later find a non-profit operator to manage its day-to-day operations.

"Great progress has been made," Hartman said of the project's development. "We're in the design stage. We're sharing some details today, including information on the trees that will be cut and remain as stumps to ensure the ground has good rainwater dispersal."

She described the facility as a "unique Prince George response."

"It's not a cookie-cutter 'this is how we did it in Vancouver' response," Hartman said.

"This project was identified as a need for Prince George, and we're excited to respond specifically to what the needs of Prince George are."

Discussing the location, Hartman said project partners are working to ensure tenants have everything they need for safety, both for themselves and the surrounding community.

Hartman acknowledged that a communications blackout during last fall's provincial election had limited responsiveness, though she noted that beyond the open house, a smaller dialogue event had been held the previous evening.

While Hartman did not confirm whether more public engagement would take place, she said further opportunities would be explored once the facility's operator is chosen.

Jody Stewart, CLBC's director of regional operations for northern and Thompson-Cariboo regions, noted that no facility in Prince George combines developmental disability and mental health supports with semi-independent living under one roof.

"If it's successful," she said, "this model could be tried in other B.C. communities."

CLBC will provide funding for developmental disability services, though

it won't provide direct services. This funding is ongoing with no time limit.

While tenants could eventually transition to other housing, there is no set length of stay.



Stewart

"They could live here for a lifetime if they want to," Stewart said.

Stewart said many open house visitors were concerned the facility would cater to people with addictions.

"Our goal is not to have people living with addiction in this program," she said. "Sometimes addictions develop or re-emerge, but this is not a program designed to support people with addictions. We have other services in the community for that."

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

supportive housing plan

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If addiction issues arise with tenants, she said they would be referred to other services.

Graham Hall, executive lead for mental health and substance use at Northern Health, confirmed the facility will not treat addictions.

"Individuals at this location will be eligible for CLBC services, so they'll meet their criteria and will have a diagnosed mental health concern," Hall said.

He added that individuals with intellectual or learning disabilities and co-occurring mental health issues require a unique approach.

Unlike CLBC, Northern Health will send clinical staff to work at the facility.

Hall also said the facility would be the first of its kind in the province.

Success in this facility, Hall explained, would be determined by the individual.

"I can see successes where clients develop independent living skills and transition to market rentals, with a lower level of support," he said. "We also see success in clients who remain in the program but form good community relationships, develop skills, and achieve successes that wouldn't have been possible without this support."

With staff on-site 24/7, Hall said the facility will be responsive to clients' issues, not just reactive, and communication channels will be set up to



Mackenzie

address community concerns.

Brittany, a McGill Crescent resident who asked that her last name not be published, said the open house had addressed most of her concerns.

She first learned of the project through a Facebook group and word of mouth and said the information available online was vague. Her biggest concern was that the facility would treat addictions.

"I wish the information had been made clear from the start, rather than leaving us to rely on our own research," she said.

Bill Mackenzie, another nearby resident, said he only learned of the open house 30 minutes before it began, from a neighbour handing out pamphlets.

"It was a total surprise to me that we were even having a meeting tonight," he said. "It just didn't feel very well shared."

Mackenzie said he would have preferred a town hall format to allow for group questions and answers. He also said he would feel more confident about the facility's focus if the operator was already chosen.

"I don't think anyone's against



BC HOUSING

This map shows the proposed location of a complex care housing facility planned for 3177 McGill Crescent. The 10-unit facility is for people dealing with both mental health issues and developmental disabilities.

housing for people who need it," he said. "We all have family who may need support. It's about what we're introducing into the neighbourhood."

Peter Hills, another area resident, expressed concerns about how the project partners have communicated with the community.

Hills noted that at a town hall-style meeting last fall, BC Housing did not send a representative, and a Northern Health representative was evasive about how clinical staff would be recruited.

When the facility was first announced, the accompanying media release referred to similar facilities on First Avenue, Ontario Street and Queensway, leading Hills to believe the facility would cater to people with addictions.

"There is one reference to addiction in that Aug. 7 release, in a quote from former mental health and addictions minister Jennifer Whiteside," Hills said. She had said that complex-care housing is "designed to help people with complex mental health and addiction challenges and housing instability."

While the shift toward focusing on developmental disabilities and mental health has addressed his concern, Hills said he's "at the point where I don't necessarily trust everything that's being fed to us now because they still haven't engaged the community."

He said he would like to see another engagement session with decision-makers from all project partners present.

Hartman said updates on the project would be available online at letstalkhousingbc.ca/prince-george-3177-mcgill-crescent.

The page includes answers to frequently asked questions and copies of the poster boards from the Feb. 26 open house.



CITIZEN PHOTO BY COLIN SLARK

Representatives of Northern Health, Community Living BC and BC Housing chat with neighbourhood residents about a complex care facility planned for 3177 McGill Cres. during an open house at the Prince George Ramada hotel on Wednesday, Feb. 26.

Learning to save a life with free naloxone training

CHRISTINE DALGLEISH

Citizen Staff

Grieving mother Michelle Miller continues to raise awareness about toxic drug poisoning, urging parents in Prince George to educate themselves.

Toxic drug poisoning is not just a problem on the streets of Prince George.

Miller lost her son, Tanner, in 2019 when his drug of choice, methamphetamine, was laced with a fatal dose of fentanyl.

Since then, Miller, a registered nurse, has been on a mission to eliminate the stigma and help spread the word that being prepared for toxic drug poisoning, including being trained to use naloxone, is just as essential as taking precautionary measures like having a fire extinguisher at home.

"It's always good to be prepared," Miller said, referencing Moms Stop the Harm and the Heartbreak of Fentanyl support group.

"If you suspect your child is using substances, I strongly suggest having a kit in your home," Miller said. "It could save your child's life or their friend's life."

Training sessions on how to use naloxone are held monthly by Northern Health nurses for anyone concerned. The next session will take place at the main branch of the Prince George Public Library on Thursday, March 11, at 6 p.m.

Miller noted several signs to watch for in teens, including a loss of interest in activities they once enjoyed, replacing old friends with a new group, acting despondent, aggressive or angry, sleeping more than usual, breaking rules, and showing physical changes like sudden weight loss, frequent nosebleeds, bloodshot or watery eyes, and shakes or tremors.

"These are some of the things parents need to be watching for," Miller said.

Miller encourages everyone to be aware of the signs of an opioid overdose or poisoning, which include difficulty walking, talking or staying awake; blue, purple or grey lips or nails; very small pupils; cold, clammy skin; dizziness or



CITIZEN FILE PHOTO

Michelle Miller from Moms Stop the Harm speaks to the crowd about her son Tanner at the International Overdose Awareness Day held at Veterans Plaza in August 2022. There are naloxone training sessions offered for free in Prince George at the local library.

confusion; extreme drowsiness; choking, gurgling, or snoring sounds; slow or absent breathing.

"Every parent's nightmare is finding their child slumped over their computer, in their bed, on their bedroom floor, locked behind a bathroom door or even dropped off on their front lawn because their friends panicked," Miller said.

"The breath of life is the first thing you do because, within three minutes without oxygen, vital organs begin to shut down, and within five minutes, your heart stops."

Accidental toxic drug poisoning can affect all family members, including toddlers or children who ingest prescription opioids their parents take, such as Tylenol with codeine, dilaudid (hydromorphone), morphine, fentanyl patches, lollipops, lozenges, sprays or tablets, and cough syrups containing codeine.

"I can't stress enough the importance of locking up medications and disposing of unused medicine by returning it to

local pharmacies," Miller said. "Children can also access illicit substances containing opioids, like fentanyl and carfentanyl, from their parents, caregivers, or siblings."

Even grandparents can be accidentally poisoned by their own opioid medications.

"Many older people are on arthritis or cancer medications that contain opioids, and they can accidentally take too much," Miller explained. "They may forget they took their medicine and take a second dose an hour later — or even a third dose. So, they are at risk of an opioid overdose, and having the kit on hand could save their life."

According to Canada.ca, naloxone can begin to take effect within two minutes.

If no response is seen after the initial dose, additional doses can safely be administered.

Naloxone works by displacing opioids from receptors in the brain and binding to those receptors, reversing or blocking the effects of opioids on the body. Naloxone is effective only if opioids are

present in the system.

While naloxone is active for 30 to 120 minutes, the effects of most opioids last longer. As a result, naloxone may wear off before the opioids are out of the system, leading to a return of breathing issues. In such cases, naloxone may need to be administered again, and medical attention should be sought. Naloxone is safe for all ages and cannot be misused.

All pharmacies in Prince George offer free injectable naloxone kits, and nasal naloxone kits are available for First Nations people at no cost.

Naloxone training is free, drop-in, and designed for adults. After the training, kits will be available for take-home use. The first training session will be held on Tuesday, March 11, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at the Bob Harkins branch of the Prince George Public Library. A second session is scheduled for Thursday, April 24, at the Nechako branch in the Hart from 6 to 7:30 p.m.

For more information, email Miller at michellettmiller65@gmail.com.

\$790,000 in grants for Prince George, Northern BC

MATTHEW HILLIER

Citizen Staff

The Prince George Community Foundation has received \$790,000 from the Community Prosperity Fund,

This fund is part of a \$25-million investment by the Government of British Columbia.

The goal of this funding is to help reduce poverty and increase social inclusion across the province.

"In the current economic environment, the work of the nonprofit and social services sector is more important than ever," said Rae-Ann Noonan, executive director of the Prince George Community Foundation. "The prosperity fund allowed organizations to apply for funding needed for projects or ongoing operations, providing them with much-needed stability."

The money will be distributed by the Prince George and Region Prosperity Fund.

This fund aims to support essential nonprofits serving communities across Northern BC. Funded organizations will play a critical role as partners in delivering services to vulnerable populations throughout the province.

This is the first time this fund has been granted to the North.

Funds have been donated to 33 nonprofits from 100 Mile House to Prince George, and everywhere in between.

Noonan told *The Citizen* that organizations in Northern BC applied for funding through the Prince George Community Foundation. A grants committee was established to ensure local decision-makers were involved in determining the areas of greatest need.

Here is a list of the nonprofits funded through the Prince George & Region Prosperity Fund:

- \$25,000 to the Canadian Mental Health Association – South Cariboo Branch to support the Seniors' Poverty Reduction program
- \$20,000 to Cariboo Elders Building & Recreational Society for improvements to facilities
- \$25,000 to the Bella Coola



PRINCE GEORGE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION/FACEBOOK

The Prince George Community Foundation will help distribute \$790,000 in provincial funding.

- Community Support Society for the Horses Are Medicine project
- \$15,000 to Tamitilk Status of Women Association for general operating support
- \$4,500 to the 100 Mile Pride Society to help fund Pride 2025
- \$45,000 to Stewart Community Connections Society for administrative and operations support
- \$20,000 to Lakes District Family Enrichment Society for the Emergency Hamper Support Program
- \$50,000 to Lakes District Family Enrichment Society (The Link) for operating and programming support
- \$56,000 to Autumn Services Society for Senior Support for operating expenses
- \$15,000 to Neighbourhood Link Vanderhoof Society for the Neighbourhood Vanderhoof project
- \$33,000 to the PG Brain Injured Group for all-inclusive programming—education, supportive, and social connections
- \$30,000 to St. Michael and All Angels Anglican Church for project delivery support for the food redistribution program
- \$10,000 to the PG Council of Seniors for operating support for the Senior Resource Centre
- \$25,000 to the Northern Community Counselling Centre Society for general operating support
- \$6,000 to the PG Therapeutic Riding Association to hire an administration person
- \$50,000 to YMCA BC for its YMCA Youth Supports, Northern B.C. program in Prince George
- \$10,500 to the Prince George Conservatory of Music for programming for low-income students
- \$18,595 to the Caledonia Nordic Ski Club for the development of an outdoor Indigenous education centre
- \$10,000 to the Prince George Humane Society for affordable access to veterinary care
- \$5,000 to the Carney Hill Neighbourhood Centre for the Hadih House Community Kitchen
- \$10,000 to the Spruce Capital Senior Citizens Recreation Society for operating support of their lunch program and custodial

service

- \$10,000 to 1st Chilco Northern Lights (Girl Guides) for the multi-branch neurodiverse Girl Guide unit
- \$30,000 to the Hart Highlands Winter Club for operating support in Prince George
- \$20,000 to the PG Downtown Business Improvement Association for their Downtown Clean & Safe Program
- \$25,000 to the Prince George Share Hope Society for operational funding for Share Housing in Prince George
- \$10,000 to the Prince George and District Senior Citizens Activity Centre Society for operating support
- \$15,000 to the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation for the Returning to the Land project
- \$20,000 to Our Saviour's Lutheran Church for project funding for the Queer Youth Group
- \$10,000 to the Elder Citizens' Recreation Association for operating support
- \$25,000 to Island Mountain Arts for Island Mountain AIR support
- \$17,610 to the Dunster Community Association for the Dunster Strategic Plan & Community Empowerment Program
- \$40,000 to the Williams Lake Central Business Improvement Area Association for the Downtown Williams Lake Clean Team
- \$83,795 to the Social Planning Council of Williams Lake & Area for the Revive Thrive Initiative, operating costs, and core funding

Recipients can use these funds for up to three years.

"Over the past few years, British Columbians have continued to showcase resilience, innovation, and tenacity as they face new challenges. Community service groups across the province are playing a pivotal role in supporting communities," said Parliamentary Secretary for Community Development and Non-profits Megan Dykeman.

Cardio drummers keeping the beat for better health

CHRISTINE DALGLEISH

Citizen Staff

Beating an exercise ball with drumsticks stuck in a laundry basket sounds like something you'd do to keep a toddler occupied, but believe it or not, this activity can improve strength, mobility, and increase your range of motion.

There's a certain glow on the faces of those in the Cardio Drumming class that instructor Shirley Morin hosts at the Spruce Capital Seniors Centre every Monday and Thursday morning.

It started with six enthusiastic participants and, most recently, has grown to as many as 24 people packed into the workout room at the centre.

In their 60s, 70s, 80s, and even 90s, drummers rock out with Shirley as best they can.

"I never knew it would grow into what it has, and it gives me so much joy sharing with everyone," said Shirley, who is also manager of the Spruce Capital Seniors Centre.

"Drumming is great for seniors because it not only helps their mobility and strength, but it also includes brain fitness because of the patterns and rhythms we use while drumming. Because of that, it increases their memory and keeps their minds active."

As the centre manager, Shirley said she was often approached by members who talked about how intimidating the thought of going to a gym or working with a fitness trainer was for them.

"The cardio drumming is great because the seniors get to work out at their own speed," Shirley said. "It's so great to see older adults, middle-aged people, and everyone come together and drum with one another. It's become a really social atmosphere. When I see all the seniors drumming with me, and there's improved balance, muscle strength, and a glow, you just have to roll all that up, and that is the joy you see on my face when I'm drumming. Watching the ladies and one gentleman improve and come to life. They're actually working out, and they love it — and so do I."



CITIZEN STAFF PHOTO

Cardio drumming is a popular class at Spruce Capital Seniors Centre in Prince George. Drummers gather Monday and Thursday mornings each week.

Patricia Kemble has been part of cardio drumming since it first began at the Spruce Capital Seniors Centre two years ago.

"Shirley, the instructor, told me I had to come, so I did," Patricia said. "And I've been coming ever since. Shirley's a lot of fun, so I felt very comfortable during the class. We have a lot of laughs, and if we goof up, it doesn't matter because we just have a lot of fun with it. The biggest thing I've noticed is the freedom of movement. Things are so much easier for me now because when you're old like I am, you stiffen up, and the whole bit, you know? And now it's this range of motion I have — I can turn, I can raise my arms in the air — I can do all these things."

The enthusiasm for cardio drumming comes with some surprises every now and then.

"People get excited when they're doing this, and sometimes when we're drumming, those sticks go flying across the room," Patricia laughed.

"It's just a great time, and you feel so good — you feel awake and alive. I would recommend it to anybody because it's not hard, it doesn't hurt, and it's fun. There aren't very many exercise classes

you can go to that are fun."

And she's going to keep coming back.

"I wouldn't miss it for the world."

Pat Husberg, past president of the Spruce Capital Seniors Centre, has been attending the cardio drumming class for the last two years.

"I enjoy it so much," said Pat, who took a bad fall that resulted in a T9 fracture in her back and finds the drumming has helped her recover.

"With Shirley getting us going with so many different moves, I just love it."

Pat said she's happy more people have discovered cardio drumming because she likes to see active seniors in the community. The other half of the cardio drumming benefits is the social aspect when there's a room full of people coming together to improve their health.

"When there's a group of people, it makes it more fun," Pat smiled. "And the class goes by fast. We just get started, and before you know it, the 45 minutes has passed."

Pat said that once people get out of the house, they find more activities they enjoy at the Spruce Capital Seniors Centre, and the whole goal is to get people off their couches and out the door.

Lana Suelzen just joined the class at the beginning of the year and said she's already hooked.

"I really enjoy it," Lana said. "It's been really fun. It's easy enough for me to do and then continue on with my day afterward."

Lana said she broke her neck 30 years ago and had some major surgeries, including three fusions of her spine.

"So, this enables me to move," Lana said. "I feel better getting out, having interactions with others, and it is so much fun. The energy is amazing."

And for those looking to try something new?

"Just try it once, because once you try it, you'll be hooked," Lana smiled.

"The people here are so much fun, and it doesn't matter what skill level you have, and you don't have to be coordinated because it's all in good fun."

People are invited to drop in Mondays at 11 a.m. and Thursdays at 10 a.m. at 3701 Rainbow Drive. The drop-in fee is \$2.

For more information about the Spruce Capital Seniors Centre, visit www.sprucecapitalseniorcentre.ca or their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/SpruceCapitalSeniors.

Provincial dressage champion is from Prince George

It's often considered the highest expression of horse training

CHRISTINE DALGLEISH

Citizen Staff

Prince George horseback rider Azlyn Ryan, 16, reached dressage greatness last season.

Coached by Susie Palley, Azlyn won the BC Rising Stars Youth Dressage competition riding Hey Mickey.

The duo was also the overall gold medalists in dressage at the 2024 BC Summer Games in Maple Ridge.

According to Equestrian Canada, dressage is often considered the highest expression of horse training.

During competition dressage sees horse and rider perform a series of compulsory movements at the walk, trot and canter in a pre-set pattern, except in the freestyle category in which a special program can be used where the rider can exhibit their personal style and artistry by choreographing required elements to music.

Azlyn started riding horses when she was five years old and found her way to Palley when she was nine. Azlyn said she first tried show jumping but eventually realized that dressage was more her thing.

"There's a lot of competition down south so it was quite surprising and exciting when I found out I was named Rising Star," the Prince George Secondary School student said about earning top spot.

The Rising Star is determined by a riding test.

Highest score wins. She won with 88.2 per cent.

"I chose dressage because it's about training and riding and really showing your skills," Azlyn said.

Azlyn said as her coach Palley is very supportive.

"Susie is really amazing," Azlyn said.

Part of dressage is the freestyle program and Azlyn said Jodie Kennedy helped her with a routine.

"It shows very specific skills and you

put the routine to music and Jodie loves to do that stuff and so we put together a really fun test," Azlyn said.

Eleonore Elstone is also a coach who Azlyn works with.

"She is so great and I ride with her when I am at the shows down south," Azlyn said.

Heather Sanford, Azlyn's mom, said that Jodie and her mom Bonnie Kennedy do a lot of volunteer work through the Northern BC CADORA Dressage Club.

"They are the ones that put on the shows and clinics here in Prince George and that's how the kids get an opportunity to compete locally," Sanford said.

"It's only because of Jodie and Bonnie's efforts that we get proper formal shows where the judges are brought in that kids get a chance to compete, learn and develop skills needed to show so well provincially."

Sanford also wanted to point out that the Agriplex, a city-owned facility, offers residents a rare opportunity to try horseback riding indoors in the middle of town through the Prince George Horse Society and Susie's schooling horse program that has seen hundreds of people learn to ride without ever having to own a horse.

"Because of Susie's lesson plans here at the Agriplex we didn't buy a horse until two years ago. You don't have to own a horse to learn to ride. Azlyn got to ride a lot of different horses and train for years and this facility is so important for that."

Soon it will be time for the family to bid farewell to Prince George and Azlyn's beloved horse Hey Mickey who was bred and raised by Elly Foote of Southbank Francois Lake.

There's a big move happening at the end of the school year for Azlyn's family.

They are moving back to Prince Edward Island.

After the family settles back into life in their home province, Azlyn is looking forward to resuming her dressage excellence.

"We'll see how it goes," Azlyn said.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Azlyn Ryan, 16, is seen here with her loyal horse Hey Mickey. The duo are the BC dressage champions.

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UNBC professors given career achievement awards

MATTHEW HILLIER
Citizen Staff

Professors Philip Owens and Ellen Petticrew are the Forest Renewal BC endowed research co-chairs in landscape ecology at the University of Northern British Columbia.

The two professors recently received the Paz Buttedahl Career Achievement Award from the Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia. They were recognized for their decades-long contributions to sediment dynamics and aquatic ecosystems.

Owens teaches in the environmental science program, while Petticrew teaches in the geography program. Both are key figures in the UNBC Landscape Ecology Research Group.

The professors are known in their fields for their contributions to environmental conservation and management.

Their work includes research into the effects of the 2014 Mount Polley mine disaster on local aquatic and environmental systems. To date, Mount Polley remains Canada's largest mining catastrophe and the second-largest mining disaster in the world.

The incident occurred when a four-square-kilometre pond full of copper and gold mining waste breached, spilling an estimated 25 billion litres of contaminated material into Polley Lake, Hazeltine Creek, and Quesnel Lake. These water bodies serve as sources of drinking water for surrounding communities and are major spawning grounds for sockeye salmon.

"The material went into the lake and lay on a watershed," said Petticrew. "We didn't know what the impacts would be on the aquatic life, aquatic functioning, or on the community members who live in the area and rely on the outdoors and water for drinking. Over the decades, we've been able to study the processes involved in the movement of that material, how it settled in different components of the lake system, and how it moved upriver, downriver, and into organisms in the food web."

Their decade-long research



PHOTO PROVIDED BY ELLEN PETTICREW AND PHIL OWENS

Ellen Petticrew and Phil Owens carry out field work in the Quesnel watershed in this file photo.

significantly contributed to the submission of formal charges under the federal Fisheries Act.

"We've been focusing on aspects of the spill that perhaps other groups, like the local ministry, the provincial ministry, and the mine itself, have not looked at as much," said Owens. "The data we've collected over 10 years contributed to the charges reported against the company. Our research was, to some degree, independent from both the company and the consultants who do most of the monitoring for the mine, as well as the ministry, which is often stretched and has limited capacity. Because we have the UNBC research station right on the lake, along with students and boats, we've been able to collect more data than the ministry could, or at least complement their work."

Their research also helped secure \$1.5 million in funding from various sources, including the Government of Canada's Environmental Damages Fund, to continue their work investigating the impacts on the Quesnel Lake ecosystem after the disaster.

Owens told *The Citizen* that the ecosystem will likely continue to feel the effects in the coming years.

"The work we've done over the last 10 years shows that the system is still recovering," said Owens. "We're still seeing contaminated sediments moving around the lake and downstream in the river, with high metal levels in some of the organisms. While things are getting better, the story is far from over. Continued monitoring and assessment are needed to ensure that nothing particularly adverse happens."

While continuing their research into

the effects of the Polley Mine disaster, the two professors are also expanding their focus to examine the effects of climate change on local salmon populations.

"We're currently working on a major project related to climate change and its impact on salmon habitat," said Petticrew. "We're focusing on the Quesnel watershed, and we're adding a new research lab and teaching building there through a grant. The building will be completed by 2026. Once it's done, we hope to host more events focused on climate change, salmon, and water resources for Northern BC."

The professors thanked the Landscape Ecology Research Group and their students for their hard work, as well as the Canadian Federation of University Faculty Associations and the university for their support.

Throwback Thursday: Week of March 6

L.O.C.F.

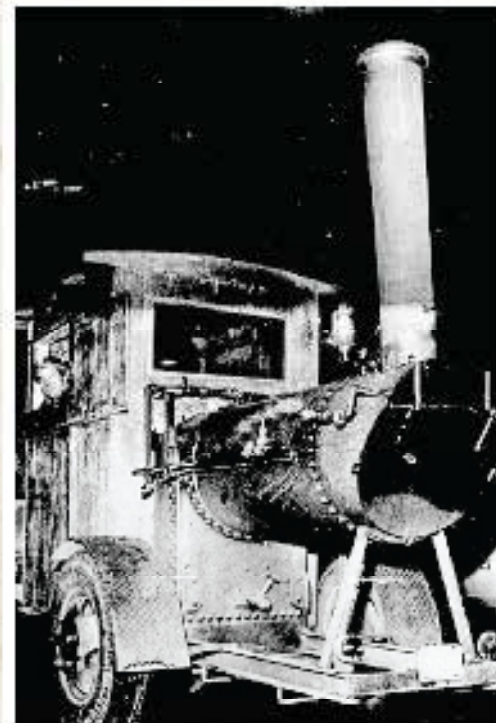


March 7, 1983: Van Bie students (from left) Shauna Davidson, Jeannine Walberg, Jennifer Taylor and Corrina Taylor rebuild the past with popsicle sticks as a Grade 5 social studies project. Forts like this were made of sturdier stuff around 1860 and the type this one was modelled on would have been home to about 20 people. CITIZEN FILE PHOTO BY BROCK GABLE



March 7, 2000: Students at D.P. Todd cheer during a pep rally for the two Trojans basketball teams headed to the provincial double-A championships. Players like Justin Kozjak, pictured, were given a rousing sendoff in the school gym. CITIZEN FILE PHOTO BY DAVE MILNE

March 6, 1969: On the city's 54th birthday, city employee Joe Barna waves from the cab of the steam engine the city used to use to thaw ice-choked drains. It began life as a steamroller in Vernon, back when only about 1,000 people lived in Prince George. CITIZEN FILE PHOTO BY DAVE MILNE



March 7, 2014: The Lac Des Bois Senior Choir is adjudicated by Kimberly Denis during the 63rd Annual Prince George and District Music Festival. CITIZEN FILE PHOTO BY BRENT BRAATEN



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Special Content

From Isolation to Connection: Navigating Burnout as a Rural Caregiver



Caring for a loved one can be one of life's most rewarding experiences, but for many rural caregivers in communities like Prince George, it also comes with unique challenges. The long distances, limited support networks and the emotional toll of constant responsibility can lead to burnout. Yet amidst these struggles, there are ways to move from isolation to connection and find balance in the caregiving journey.

The Reality of Rural Caregiving

In Prince George and surrounding areas, many caregivers look after aging parents, spouses or family members with chronic illnesses. Unlike in urban centers with more resources, rural caregivers often have fewer options for professional respite care, support groups and medical specialists. This can lead to overwhelming stress and feelings of being alone in their responsibilities. Burnout manifests in different ways — exhaustion, frustration, guilt and even physical health issues. Without proper support, caregivers may find themselves unable to provide the care their loved ones need.

Breaking the Cycle of Isolation

One of the biggest hurdles rural caregivers face is the feeling of isolation. With long distances between homes, fewer in-person support services, and demanding schedules, it's easy to withdraw. However, connection is a powerful antidote to burnout.

• **Local Resources:** Prince George has organizations like the Prince George Council of Seniors, Caregivers Network for East Kootenay Seniors, and Northern Health programs that offer caregiver support. These resources provide not only practical help but also emotional reassurance.

• **Find Online Communities:** While in-person support may be limited, many caregivers have found comfort in virtual support groups. Organizations like Family Caregivers of British Columbia offer online forums and resources tailored to those in rural areas.

• **Reach Out to Friends and Family:** It's easy to assume that others won't understand, but opening up about your struggles can lead to unexpected support. Even a regular phone call with a friend can make a difference.

Practical Steps to Prevent Burnout

Beyond finding emotional support, caregivers can take proactive steps to maintain their well-being:

• **Schedule Breaks:** Even short breaks throughout the day can help prevent mental and physical exhaustion. Respite care services, even if infrequent, can provide much-needed relief.

• **Prioritize Self-Care:** Exercise, proper nutrition, and sleep often take a backseat to caregiving. However, taking care of yourself allows you to better care for others.

• **Set Boundaries:** It's okay to say no to additional responsibilities that add unnecessary stress. Setting realistic expectations helps protect your mental health.

• **Seek Professional Help When Needed:** Whether it's counseling, a support group, or medical advice, professional guidance can be invaluable.

You're Not Alone

While caregiving in a rural setting like Prince George comes with unique challenges, it's important to remember that help and connection are within reach. By acknowledging burnout and taking steps to prioritize self-care and support, caregivers can move from isolation to a more sustainable and fulfilling caregiving experience.

If you or someone you know is struggling with caregiver burnout, consider reaching out to local support networks. Connection is the first step toward relief and balance.



Family Caregivers
of British Columbia

To learn more, visit the Family Caregivers of BC Resource Centre at familycaregiversbc.ca or contact the BC Caregiver Support Line at 1-877-520-3267



NORTHERN HEALTH PHOTO

Akash is one of the volunteers welcoming people to Terrace's new hospital.

Meet the greeters at new Ksyen Regional Hospital

NANCY SHELFORD

Northern Health

As Northern Health proudly opens the doors to the new hospital in Terrace, we are thrilled to welcome volunteers who will help guide and support the public.

Volunteer greeters are stationed at the entrance doors of the new state-of-the-art Ksyen Regional Hospital, ready to welcome people and help them find their way.

Where's the lab? Where do you go for your ultrasound appointment? What floor is the Birthing Unit on? Our volunteers help by answering questions like these, and more!

Justin DeMedeiros, the manager of this exciting program, says, "This volunteer program will support and strengthen the services we provide our patients and visitors."

New volunteer Akash has already become a familiar face in the lobby, answering questions, helping people find their way, and creating a friendly space.

"By giving back to the community, we strengthen the bonds that hold us together and help address the

challenges we face as a society," says Akash. "Volunteering is a chance to use my time and skills to help others."

Are you a friendly and outgoing individual with a passion for helping others? We're delighted to announce that we are recruiting more volunteer greeters. By joining our team, you'll have the opportunity to brighten someone's day and provide comfort and support to patients and their families during challenging times.

If you're ready to make a meaningful difference at Ksyen Regional Hospital in Terrace, we invite you to apply as a volunteer greeter. Together, we can create a welcoming and supportive environment for everyone who walks through our doors.

"By volunteering with Northern Health, you can gain valuable knowledge and skills, and be part of a team to help Terrace and area residents," says Carly de Medeiros, volunteer resources engagement lead for the Northwest. "I'm located in Terrace and am happy to discuss volunteer opportunities in the Northwest or answer any questions."

To sign up as a volunteer, please contact carly.demedeiros@northernhealth.ca or apply online.

Northern ERs seeing physician shortage start to ease

RADHA AGARWAL

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Patients in Northwest B.C. are experiencing a refreshing shift as emergency room (ER) doors remain open in local hospitals.

Although by February 2025, Northern Health (NH) hospitals are still facing a 20.17 per cent vacancy gap in their baseline healthcare positions, the staffing situation has shown incremental improvement.

The ERs in Prince Rupert, Masset and Kitimat experienced a high rate of interruptions in the first half of 2024, but showed a significant drop in closures from August 2024 to Jan. 31, 2025.

In Masset (northern Haida Gwaii), the ER faced around 33 closures between Feb. 1 and July 31, 2024, but that number dropped to just eight in the following six months. The ER in Daajing Giids saw zero disturbances during the same period.

Kitimat's ER closed on 23 instances in the first half of the year but decreased to 16 closures in the second half.

Meanwhile, Prince Rupert's ER, which was interrupted 16 times between February and July last year, improved to just nine closures from August to Jan. 31 this year.

Northern Health covers 32 communities and 55 First Nations in British Columbia, serving a population of approximately 300,000 with 18 hospitals in total.

Including all the ERs they manage in the north, the last six months have seen 25 per cent fewer closures than the previous six months.

NH's February data indicates it approved 285 employees (40 part-time and 245 full-time) for hiring since last year.

The Northern Health staff shortage appears to have improved compared to April 2024.

In July 2024, the situation was dire as ERs faced numerous closures, lasting from four hours to 18 hours.

While communities in the region continue to face ongoing healthcare challenges, the health authority,



RADHA AGARWHA, LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Like other emergency rooms in Northern BC, the ER at Prince Rupert Regional Hospital has been in a state of crisis for several months.

dabbling with various new resources and initiatives, is instilling some hope.

In May 2024, CEO Ciro Panessa established the Northern Health Emergency Department Stabilization Taskforce to provide strategic leadership in preventing and mitigating emergency department closures. The task force identifies and implements short-, medium- and long-term solutions for the challenges facing northern BC hospital emergency departments.

NH reports it successfully expedited the Rural and Remote Recruitment Incentive, offering up to \$30,000 for qualified hires with a two-year return-of-service agreement.

It has explored virtual and hybrid emergency department service options to establish a pilot project in the north.

The task force has also expanded the use of the healthcare worker support program GoHealthBC, agency, and locum staff to fill vacant shifts. It obtained priority access to several new nurse staffing agencies to help reduce coverage gaps.

Additionally, NH enhanced consultation with emergency department staff for solutions and established regular

communication between its CEO and local municipal and Indigenous leaders to discuss solutions and updates on reducing service interruptions.

Between last summer and now, the Prince Rupert Regional Hospital has recruited three new registered nurses (RNs) and has a fourth hire pending. It took additional support from GoHealthBC staff and agency nurses.

NH told *The Northern View* that three more physicians will join the Prince Rupert ER between March and July this year.

Kitimat General Hospital has been using the heavy support of nurses through GoHealthBC and agency nurses. It also has one new emergency department RN, expected to start in March.

Also, two new physicians will begin practicing in the community soon.

Kitimat's district municipality stepped in by hiring a Health Recruitment Coordinator to complement NH's recruitment efforts in the community.

"While this position is new, Northern Health anticipates it will help attract health care professionals to the community," said Eryn Collins, regional director

of public affairs & media relations at Northern Health.

Regarding filling baseline healthcare worker roles, NH hospitals faced significant shortages between 2022 and 2025, with 2024 being especially challenging. Baseline positions, such as physicians, RNs, specialists, and lab technologists are critical for maintaining safe and effective patient care.

In October 2022, staffing shortages stood at 20.05 per cent unfilled positions, rising to 20.50 per cent by April 2023. The crisis climbed in April 2024 to 22.15 per cent, leading to eventual increased ER closures.

By February 2025, vacancies improved to 20.17 per cent, nearly returning to 2022 levels.

"Northern Health makes every effort to prevent service interruptions and works to limit their duration (right up to and even while they are occurring) and the impact on patient care when they do unfortunately occur," said Arthur Williams, communications advisor, strategy and public affairs at Northern Health.

This article originally appeared in The Northern View.

Distributors look to tackle ongoing drug shortages

CITIZEN STAFF

Amid escalating drug shortages both globally and in Canada, the Canadian Generic Pharmaceutical Association (CGPA) and the Canadian Association for Pharmacy Distribution Management (CAPDM) have partnered to release a report aimed at identifying solutions to the issue.

The report responds to Health Canada's call for greater stakeholder collaboration to enhance the resilience of Canada's pharmaceutical supply chain.

Titled *A Path Forward: Collaborative Solutions to Strengthen Canada's Drug Supply*, the report delves into the complex and multifaceted causes behind ongoing drug shortages.

These include economic pressures, regulatory barriers and strained supply chains.

It also offers concrete recommendations to address these challenges, emphasizing the importance of cooperation between all relevant stakeholders, including drug manufacturers, healthcare professionals, hospital organizations, government bodies, and academic institutions.

"Resilience against drug shortages rests on the strength of partnerships," said Jim Keon, president of the CGPA and its Biosimilars Canada division. "Through continued collaboration and innovative approaches, we can fight



ANNA SHVETS/PEXELS

Drug shortages are caused by economic pressures, regulatory barriers and strained supply chains, according to a new report.

drug shortages and strengthen Canada's pharmaceutical supply chain."

The report outlines five key recommendations to mitigate the factors driving drug shortages in Canada:

- Enhance collaboration by proactively and consistently sharing information to better respond to potential shortages.
- Harmonize and simplify regulatory requirements to improve access to the global drug supply.
- Invest in diversifying the supply chain.
- Create conditions that allow for price increases on medicines critical to preventing shortages.
- Increase buffer stock, with

appropriate compensation and shared risk, to allow time for system-wide responses.

Angelique Berg, president and CEO of CAPDM, stressed the importance of equitable access to medications. "Strategies to address the root causes of shortages must focus on improving physical access across our vast country, ensuring that every Canadian has access to the essential medicines they need for care."

Drug shortages are a growing concern for Canada's healthcare system, which is already under significant strain. Recent data reveals that one in two Canadian adults and one in four children required a prescription in a single

month. Since 2017, between 10 and 15 percent of drugs in Canada have been in shortage at any given time, with over half (55 percent) of all marketed drugs experiencing at least one shortage. In the 2023-2024 period alone, more than 3,000 drug shortages were reported, with an average shortage duration of 93.5 days.

These shortages often occur when demand exceeds supply due to factors such as unexpected demand surges or supply disruptions, and they are typically symptoms of deeper, systemic issues within the supply chain.

The Canadian Generic Pharmaceutical Association represents Canada's generic pharmaceutical industry, which plays a vital role in controlling healthcare costs.

Generic drugs make up over 77 percent of all prescriptions but account for only 22.4 percent of the \$46.3 billion Canadians spend annually on prescription medications. For more information, visit canadiangenerics.ca.

CAPDM is the national trade association representing Canada's healthcare supply chain.

Its members are responsible for delivering over 90 per cent of all retail pharmaceuticals in Canada, ensuring the efficient movement of medicines to more than 12,000 dispensing points across the country. For more information, visit capdm.ca.

Act now: March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

CITIZEN STAFF

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, and the Colorectal Cancer Resource & Action Network (CCRAN) is urging Canadians to take action through screening, spreading awareness and supporting those affected by colorectal cancer (CRC).

Colorectal cancer is the second most common cause of cancer-related deaths in Canada, yet it is also one of the most preventable cancers when detected early.

Early detection is key, as 90 per cent

of those diagnosed with colon cancer at an early stage can be cured. Screening, particularly for those aged 50 and older or with a family history of CRC, plays a crucial role in identifying and removing precancerous polyps before they develop into cancer.

Despite the availability of effective screening options, many Canadians are not being screened as recommended. CCRAN encourages individuals to discuss screening options with their healthcare providers, including stool-based tests (FIT) and colonoscopies. Current guidelines suggest that

individuals aged 50-74 with no symptoms and at average risk for CRC should have a stool test every two years.

In addition, CRC is increasingly being diagnosed in younger individuals, prompting CCRAN to urge those under 50 to remain vigilant for symptoms such as rectal bleeding, unexplained weight loss, fatigue, and persistent changes in bowel habits. If any of these signs arise, CCRAN advises individuals to seek medical attention promptly.

Colorectal cancer patients and their caregivers often face emotional, psychological, and physical challenges. CCRAN

remains committed to offering support, education, and advocacy to improve the lives of those impacted by the disease.

"Raising awareness and advocating for colorectal cancer patients is at the heart of everything we do," said Filomena Servidio-Italiano, president and CEO of CCRAN.

"By participating in these initiatives, we can empower patients, spread knowledge, and ultimately save lives through early detection and prevention."

For more information visit www.ccran.org.

Local Sports



Dick Voneugen's horn is silenced

The community remembers the driving force behind so many local sports success stories

TED CLARKE

Citizen Staff

Nobody seems to know what possessed Dick Voneugen to pick up a truck horn from a heavy hauler and use it to trumpet the start of a race, but it became his signature sound.

For decades, whether it was the Labour Day Run, Prince George Iceman, Prince George Triathlon, Kids' Triathlon or a race involving the Prince George Roadrunners, no starter's pistol was needed, not with Voneugen blowing his horn, which could be heard from blocks away.

A relentless community booster drawn by his love for outdoor sports — especially the kind that pushed athletes to try to beat the clock — Voneugen died Feb. 24 at Jubilee Lodge.

He was 92.

"You can pretty much name any organizational event in Prince George that was community-based, and Dick was involved," said Kathy Lewis, who got to know Voneugen through her own involvement in the Labour Day Classic, Iceman and Ice Oval committees.

"That horn is definitely something everybody remembers, and so many of us tried to use it, but nobody could make it work like Dick did."

"He used to put his climbing spurs on and climb the poles to hang the Labour Day Classic signs. He'd do that early in the morning because he probably wasn't supposed to, but Dick sometimes just did his own thing when he thought it was right."

Voneugen loved events like the BC Seniors Games (he competed in the Games from age 68 to 79).

A reformed smoker, he abruptly changed his life for the better when he ditched his smokes, cut down on drinking, and took up running, becoming



ROBIN DRAPER PHOTO

Dick Voneugen was a hands-on guy whenever there was a call for volunteers to get involved in Prince George sports or in trail-building projects like the Cranbrook Hill Greenway Trail.

super-fit. He encouraged people to look after themselves, stay active past their prime, and test themselves in competition, because that's how he lived his own life.

If you called his house and he wasn't there, his voice on the answering machine would say, "I'm probably out for a ski, a run or a bike ride. Just leave a message, and I'll call you back."

In 1979, Voneugen and Prince George Track and Field Club president Tom Masich organized the Corporate Cup, an adult track and field meet that involved city businesses. For decades, they maintained their collaboration on organizing sporting events.

One of the big ones was the Prince George to Boston Marathon road race, an event that inspired race participant

Terry Fox to attempt his cross-country Marathon of Hope in 1980. Prince George was Fox's first marathon, and he and Rick Hansen (who later completed his Man in Motion world tour in a wheelchair) completed the Prince George course in 1979.

It was renamed the Labour Day Classic when Voneugen and the Roadrunners took it on in 1984, and he remained part of the organizing committee until 1998. In 1981, he organized the first Terry Fox Run to raise money for cancer research and served on that committee until 1998.

"He made a really strong connection to Terry Fox at the PG to Boston Marathon, and even a couple of years ago, Dick and I talked about that connection and how important it was to him to

have met Terry and to have been part of his legacy with the Terry Fox Run," said Bill Masich, Tom's son.

"It was a big deal for Dick. He got to be involved in that at an adult level, and I think it really fuelled him and gave him the wherewithal to say, 'I can contribute, help out, and be active in my community in ways that I haven't before,' and we're a much better, much richer community for that."

Voneugen competed for years in running events put on by the Prince George Roadrunners, a group he helped form in 1978.

He was in his 40s when he started the Dick Voneugen Birthday Fun Run on the Berg Lake trail at Mount Robson.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Retirement gave him even more time for local sports

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

It became an annual event in which he ran one kilometre for every year of his age.

At 60, he started counting backwards, so it was one fewer kilometre in each subsequent year, until his ailing back and hip forced him to stop running.

"For years and years, he organized track and field for the (BC) Seniors Games for Zone 9, and he encouraged lots of people to come out and take part," said Masich. "He did all the organization and all the paperwork, and helped represent our region all over the province in a positive and proactive way."

In 1998, Voneugen joined Lewis in forming the Prince George Ice Oval Society, which has overseen the volunteer operations and fundraising efforts for the city's 400-metre skating oval at its current site at Exhibition Park every year since 2007.

"He was a bit of a bulldog," said Lewis. "When he got his mind around something he wanted to have happen, like the oval, he'd certainly put the pressure on politicians and people who could help with fundraising, but it was always for the best interest of the community. It was never about himself."

"He was exceptionally generous with his time and had a strong interest in being inclusive, making sure anybody who wanted to run, or go for a bike ride or go skating, had the opportunity to do that."

Voneugen was involved in the construction of Otway Nordic Centre in the late 1980s and the Cranbrook Hill Greenway Trail that connects Otway to UNBC and Blue Spruce campground at Highway 16.

He was treasurer of the Greenway committee and organized the buy-a-metre endowment program that funded the construction of the 25-kilometre trail.

"He was an enthusiastic volunteer and always very positive about things—"We can do it." He had that enthusiasm and boundless energy to make things happen, and for a lot of people, it was



CITIZEN FILE PHOTO

Dick Voneugen holds his trademark horn with Tom Masich in 2011. They were the co-organizers of the Terry Fox Run that year.

contagious," said his good friend Robin Draper.

"It was his support and enthusiasm that led to the development of the Cranbrook Hill Greenway. It was in 1995 and 1996 that we started moving on that, and over the next three or four years, towards the year 2000, we had the first Greenway ski loppet."

"He did have a stubborn streak, but sometimes that's what's needed to make things happen."

Voneugen was born July 24, 1932, in Amsterdam, where he lived with his twin sister and younger brother (both deceased). His father developed respiratory problems, so the family moved to the more rural town of Soest, where they lived next to the Dutch royal palace.

In a Seniors Scene column written by Kathy Nadalin in 2014, Voneugen talked about his childhood.

"I was only 13 years old when the war ended. I was sheltered more or less from the worst, except for the hunger. My parents would go on what was called a 'hunger trip,' which meant loading up the bicycle and taking household items to farmers to trade for food. The Germans occasionally stopped people on their return trip and confiscated not only the food but the bike as well. We also had to be very careful because we were sheltering a Jewish family of four for about a year in some hidden spaces

in our house."

"After the war, we all three had the good fortune to go to a special school that was started by Kees Boeke. The school operated similarly to our Montessori schools; we progressed by our own pace, and peer discipline was decided by the students collectively. The concept was phenomenal. We had small mentor groups, and we called the teachers by their first names. The students were also the janitors. We cleaned the school ourselves daily. I can claim that I cleaned toilets alongside Princess Beatrix and her two sisters, the daughters of Queen Juliana. Princess Beatrix eventually became Queen Beatrix and reigned from 1980 to 2013."

After his father died in 1949, Voneugen went back to school to study electronics for four years, then served 18 months of military duty with the army. In April 1956, he and two friends decided to come to Canada, where they lived with his former Dutch neighbours in Port Alberni. He worked as a choker man at a logging site, where he learned how to climb trees using cork boots—a skill that would later serve him well in Prince George.

Voneugen's knowledge of electronics led to him becoming a two-way radio technician working in the woods of Vancouver Island for MacMillan Bloedel. When the company contracted the work to BC Tel, Voneugen switched

jobs and became a field technician for Motorola, based in Victoria.

The company wanted to expand its operations and needed a salesman, so in 1965, Voneugen moved to Prince George, where the pulp mills had just opened.

He eventually became the regional sales manager, overseeing eight branch offices in the Interior. He was married for 10 years, but he and his wife separated.

In 1994, Motorola wanted him to move to Vancouver, but he loved his lifestyle in Prince George. After 30 years with the company, at age 62, he retired, which gave him more time for cross-country skiing, cycling, running, and volunteering for organizations and special events.

Voneugen is the only person selected twice as Prince George Citizen of the Year (1995 and 2007), and in 2003, he was inducted into the Prince George Sports Hall of Fame's builder/administrator category.

"Dick was certainly a builder, and he was so critical to moving forward major projects in our city, things like Otway, the Greenway Trails, or the ice oval," said former Prince George-Valemount MLA Shirley Bond.

"When I think about all those places, I think about his passion for adding capacity and creating opportunities, especially on the sporting side—but not just that alone."

Bond said some of her favourite photos of Dick were taken with her at city hall during the annual tulip planting ceremony commemorating the Canadian Armed Forces' April 1945 liberation of Holland at the end of the Second World War.

"We said thank you to Canadians for all they did for us and for our Dutch families," said Bond. "Dick will be really missed, and I hope people have a sense of the legacy he left, because he was one of the ones who made a huge difference in our community."

His closest relatives were his nieces, one in Detroit and one in Amsterdam.

A celebration of his life is being planned for April at the Exhibition Park ice oval.

PG Cougars pushing for playoff position in final stretch

TED CLARKE
Citizen Staff

The Prince George Cougars scored four unanswered goals to defeat the Kamloops Blazers 4-2 Saturday night in Kamloops.

Koehn Ziemmer's power-play goal at the 9:21 mark of the third period gave the visiting Prince George Cougars the lead and Riley Heidt iced it with an empty-net goal with just two second left.

It was the fourth consecutive victory for the Cougars (35-19-4-2), who remain fourth in the WHL's Western Conference.

The Cats managed just three shots on goal in the second period but scored on two of them.

They tied the game 18:16 into the second period on a breakaway and Jett Lajoie passed to Toronto Maple Leafs prospect Borya Valis, who found the net behind Dylan Ernst for his 30th goal of the season.

The Cougars got on the scoreboard six minutes earlier on a delayed penalty when Terik Parascak scored his 27th.

Cooper Michaluk, the first star, made 31 saves to notch the win in net for the Cougar nets to improve to 6-8-1-1. Outshot 15-3 in the second period, the Cougars gave Michaluk better support in the third period in which they held a 16-8 in shots.

Connor Radke, midway through the first period, and Beau Courtney, early in the second period, were the Kamloops goalscorers.

"Give them credit, they put on a good game tonight," said Cougars associated coach Jim Playfair, in the postgame broadcast.

"I didn't like either one of the goals against but I thought that that first period for us was excellent and I thought we were a little frustrated in the second, we couldn't get ourselves connected to take care of pucks in our zone and it felt like we played on our heels for the majority of the period.

"We got that (goal) late and that kind of gave a little bit of juice and we came out in the third period. Really, if you look at it, our third periods have been

excellent all season. We did a good job, got organized and the power play got a big goal for us and then we got the empty-net goal, certainly from really good defending."

Prince George defenceman Viliam Kmec had three assists and was named the game's third star.

The Cougars headed to Wenatchee on Monday to face the Wild on Wednesday (results not available at press time) and Friday. The Cougars will also play in Everett on Saturday and Vancouver on the following Sunday.

The Cougars remain five points behind the Victoria Royals, who lead the BC Division. Victoria skated to a 4-3 win on home ice Saturday over the Portland Winterhawks.

Earlier in the day the Cougars announced the Toronto Maple Leafs have signed Valis to a three-year entry-level contract. Playfair, a former Calgary Flames head coach, phoned Leafs GM Brad Treliving to recommend Valis and Treliving's special assistant Shane Doan came to Prince George to watch him play, which led to the contract offer.

"I want to thank my family, billet families, coaches, Gold Star Hockey, my teammates, and friends for all of their support and their help throughout my life," said Valis, in a team release. "This is a dream come true."

His goal on Saturday gave him 30 for the season and he has 74 points in 57 games.

A week ago, the Denver, Colo., native became the Cougars' all-time franchise leader for points in a season by an American-born player. In 90 games over his career in Prince George he has 43 goals and 111 points. He was acquired in a trade from the Regina Pats last year close to the trade deadline.

"Val has earned this contract," said Cougars head coach and general manager Mark Lamb. "He came here with a mindset to get better every day and have an open mindset on trusting the process and coaching. He's a great example of what it takes to be a pro. I'm very proud of Val on his accomplishment and I'm excited about what his promising future holds."



CITIZEN PHOTO BY CHUCK NISBETT
Cougars goalie Josh Ravensbergen handles Blazers forward Emmitt Finnie's shot as he streaks across the crease Friday at CN Centre. The Cougars, who wore special jerseys Friday to support the BC Cancer Foundation, played in Kamloops on Saturday and Wenatchee on Monday.



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VAN 4:00 PM	10	11	12	13	WEN 7:00 PM	WEN 8:00 PM
16	17	18	19	20	VIC 7:00 PM	VIC 8:00 PM
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

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Tiger Williams heads to Spruce Kings' awards banquet

Meanwhile, the team is still fighting hard for a playoff spot

TED CLARKE
Citizen Staff

Former NHL enforcer Dave "Tiger" Williams will be keynote speaker at the Prince George Spruce Kings' gala dinner and team awards banquet Friday, March 29 at the Marriott Courtyard Prince George hotel.

Williams, the all-time NHL penalty-minute leader who led the Vancouver Canucks in scoring in 1980-81 with 35 goals and 62 points, also led the league that season with 343 penalty minutes.

The always-entertaining Williams will take the stage with Spruce Kings broadcaster/business manager Kyle Anderson in a hot stove interview.

The Spruce Kings will also hand out their annual individual awards that night. Doors open at 6 p.m. and the dinner is at 6:30.

Tickets are \$75, available at the Spruce Kings office at Kopar Memorial Arena or online.

The following afternoon at Kopar the Spruce Kings Alumni players will pick sides for a game that starts at 2:45 p.m. The call has gone out to former Spruce Kings who can register for the alumni game online.

That game will be followed at 6 p.m. on March 29, by a BC Hockey League game between the Spruce Kings and the Powell River Kings.

The two teams will meet again in a rematch on Sunday, March 30 at 3 p.m.

Playoff race

Meanwhile, the Spruce Kings' three-game roadtrip ended Sunday afternoon with a 3-1 loss to the Salmon Arm Silverbacks.

The Kings came into the rink hoping to gain ground on the Langley Rivermen, the team they need to catch to make it into the BC Hockey League playoffs.

But the Silverbacks were not about to disappoint their fans in the Rogers Rink



SASKATCHEWAN SPORTS HALL OF FAME PHOTO

Dave 'Tiger' Williams will be the featured speaker at the Spruce Kings gala and awards banquet at the Courtyard Marriott Prince George on Friday, March 28.

crowd of 1,120 for the Sunday matinee.

Maddox Martin, in the first period, and Keifer Miller, early in the third period, put the Silverbacks in the driver's seat and it stayed a 2-0 game until Kings defenceman Trent Ledrew scored on a Prince George power play just past the 17-minute mark of the third period.

Silverbacks defenceman Tucker Shedd ended it with an empty-net goal with 25 seconds left.

Both goalies were standouts. First star Daniel Dirracola stopped 23 of 24 Spruce Kings shots to improve his BCHL record to 2-0. Charles-Edward Gravel turned aside 34 shots in a losing effort as the game's third star.

The Spruce Kings went 1-for-2 on the power play and held the Silverbacks without a goal on four power-play chances.

The Kings started their road trip Thursday with a 4-1 loss in Coquitlam. Saturday in Surrey, they rebounded from a 2-0 deficit and beat the Eagles 3-2 in overtime.

That ended a three-game slide for Prince George and kept their vision of a postseason future intact.

Will Moore's second goal of the game, 2:31 into overtime, settled it for the Spruce Kings. Moore also tied the game 13:27 into the third period on a Prince George power play.

The Spruce Kings and their fans know the next two games at Kopar Memorial Arena could well determine the team's playoff future.

All they have to do is find a way to defeat the Langley Rivermen. Two regulation wins for the Spruce Kings Friday and Saturday would allow the Kings to leapfrog Langley into eighth place in the Coastal Conference.

The Spruce Kings (18-24-3-1) and Rivermen (17-20-8-1) each have eight games left.

For the Kings, five of those games are at home and three are on the road. Langley has four remaining home games and four on the road.

UNBC's Bias makes Canada West All-Rookie team

His family surprised him with the news on a video call

TED CLARKE

Citizen Staff

UNBC Timberwolves guard Isaiah Bias got the surprise of his life at noon Wednesday, Feb. 26, just before his afternoon marketing classes at the Cranbrook Hill campus.

Asked to report to TWolves sports information officer Dan O'Connor's office to meet with head coach Todd Jordan, Bias was shown a laptop screen displaying a family gathering of nine in Vancouver, including his parents, sister, grandmother, aunts, nephews, and nieces.

They broke the news: Bias had been selected to the U SPORTS Canada West All-Rookie Team for 2024-25.

O'Connor had texted Bias the day before, saying he wanted him to come to the office to look at a graphic to help plan for next season, keeping the true purpose of the meeting a secret.

"I was still trying to wake up from a nap, and I was for sure shocked. I was just so happy and grateful," said Bias. "My whole family was there. It was really nice, and to have them break it to me is a special feeling."

The five-foot-11, 170-pound Bias played in all but one of the team's 20 games and started 10 of them. The Timberwolves struggled with injury problems, as veteran guard Justin Sunga and forward Josh Gillespie missed most of the season, leading UNBC to a 1-19 record and last place in the conference. Bias stepped up, filling in for point guard Sunga during the second half of the season. He averaged 27.8 minutes per game and made a name for himself in Canada West.

"It means a lot, just to be recognized by the league. Being the second All-Rookie from UNBC (after forward Fareed Shittu was selected in 2023) is an amazing feeling," said Bias.

"The start of the year was pretty rough; I obviously wasn't playing much.



The UNBC Timberwolves' Isaiah Bias turns on the speed as he drives around UBC Okanagan Heat player Jeffrey Tezo Friday, Nov. 22 at the UNBC Northern Sports Centre.

But it was all about growth, trust, and patience with the coaches. Just being able to trust what Coach Jordan says, building off that confidence, and feeding off the team's energy, everything started clicking after Christmas break. I gained a lot more confidence and just started playing freely."

Bias led the Pacific Division in rookie points (145), points per game (7.6), field goals (56), assists (40), steals (20), free throws (24), and assists per game (2.1). He also finished second among Pacific Division rookies in rebounds (58) and free-throw percentage (72.7).

"Isaiah has shown remarkable growth in his first year. Initially, we were going to redshirt him, but he showed early on that he was going to be able to help our team right away with his competitive spirit and ability to create off the dribble," said Jordan.

"Isaiah has stayed the course through the normal ups and downs of being a first-year player. His mental toughness in keeping his head up and learning from his mistakes put him in a position to take off and become our starting point guard once Justin (Sunga) went out with injury.

"It was fun to watch him have a

number of breakout performances in the second half of the year. He has really learned a lot about decision-making, and I'm excited to see where he

takes it from here, as I believe this season was just the start for him."

A graduate of Vancouver College, Bias signed with UNBC after attending the Timberwolves spring camp in April. The 18-year-old reached double digits in points five times, scoring 19 points twice, both in road games.

The lack of wins for a team that had previously won bronze in 2024—becoming the first TWolves team to earn a Canada West medal—was a clear disappointment. However, it was not a lost season, especially for players like Bias, who gained valuable experience on one of the youngest teams in Canada West.

"Even though we didn't get to win, we were able to learn a lot from each other," said Bias.

Bias began playing basketball in Grade 1. His father played men's league hoops in the Philippines before coming to Canada. Both of his parents are Filipino, a heritage he shares with Sunga.

"A lot of people get me and Justin confused sometimes," said Bias. "Even at practice, Todd would call me Justin sometimes."



UNBC Timberwolves guard Isaiah Bias looks at the screen of a laptop showing his family in Vancouver who informed him he is being named to the Canada West All-Rookie team Wednesday, Feb. 26 in the UNBC Timberwolves offices.

CITIZEN PHOTO BY CHUCK NISBETT

Condors' medal moment melts away in loss to Vernon

TED CLARKE
Citizen Staff

The Vernon Panthers conjured bronze medal magic and left the Duchess Park Condors with the fourth-place consolation prize at the BC triple-A girls basketball provincial championship Saturday in Langley.

The Panthers took off on a 9-0 run to gain a healthy advantage in the opening quarter then leaned on the scoring talents of Paige Leahy, Chloe Collins and Chloe Bicknell to build a 20-point halftime lead that paved the way to a 68-57 victory.

The Condors ended the game with 11 unanswered points but it was too little too late for Reid Roberts's senior girls squad.

Leahy collected a game-high 24 points, while Collins contributed 16 for the bronze medalists. As she did throughout the tournament, Zhahra Ngbo led the Condor cause with 13 points, while Devyn Bjorn (12) and Maggie Malfair (10) also hit double figures.

The Condors lost their chance to advance to the championship game with a 56-53 loss to the Sa-Haly Sabres of Kamloops.

Sa-Hali had to settle for silver after a 50-49 loss in the triple-A final Saturday



HANDOUT PHOTO

The North Central zone champion Duchess Park Condors finished fourth at the BC triple-A girls basketball provincial championship after a 68-57 bronze-medal match loss to Vernon Panthers on Saturday, March 1 in Langley.

to Mennonite Educational Institute Eagles of Abbotsford.

The College Heights Cougars lost 70-60 to Mark Isfeld Ice of Courtenay in the fifth-place playoff and finished sixth in the 16-team tournament.

Lorenn Caceres scored 32 points in that game for College Heights. Cougar senior Summer Toor had a 10-point game.

Ngabo and Caceres were named to the tournament second all-star team.

Meanwhile, in the single-A tournament, the Cedars Christian Eagles of Prince George finished on a high note, winning the fifth-place game 70-60.

Paige Kynoch scored 13 points, Mila Johnson hit for 12 and Jasmine Viger had a 10-point effort to pace the Cedars' attack. Johnson was selected a second team all star.

Mariah Jansen (31) and Leah Funk (21) accounted for most of the Thunder scoring.

The Eagles led 29-24 at the half.

The North Central zone-champion Sir Alexander Mackenzie Grizzlies of Hagensborg lost 70-63 in the single-A final to the Pacific Christian Pacers of Victoria.

In other single-A results, the Fort St. James Falcons topped the Southpointe Academy Titans of Delta 56-32 to claim 13th place. The Falcons won the Barry Dearing Fair Play Award.

In other local results, the North Central zone double-A-champion Nechako Valley Vikings finished 15th after posting a 62-54 win over the Hazelton Spartans.

In the double-A final, St. Michael's University School Blue Jags of Victoria defeated Holy Cross Crusaders of Surrey 62-54 in Saturday's final in Langley.

In the quad-A final, the Seaquam Seahawks of North Delta edged Brookswood Bobcats of Langley 68-67.

Rowell on top of his game at World Cup race in Georgia

TED CLARKE
Citizen Staff

You've got to hand it to Gavin Rowell.

His willingness to push himself to the edge of disaster as a World Cup ski cross racer is starting to pay off.

Now in his fifth season racing against the world's best, the 25-year-old Prince George native rose to the challenge Saturday on the slopes in Gudauri, Georgia.

"Definitely my best result this season, and it's feeling good to get in there and battle," Rowell said in an email to *The Citizen*.

"It's a super-cool experience racing in

Georgia. The skiing this year has been aggressive, and it's definitely taken some time to figure it out and get in there. It's been a bit of a slow start to the season, but I have a couple more venues left."

Rowell qualified 28th out of 46 skiers. Only the top 32 advanced to the races Friday and Saturday. Rowell went on to place 24th in Friday's race.

In ski cross, four skiers leave the start gate in each heat, usually in close proximity as they jostle for position on a steep course with jumps and tight corners. Only the top two advance.

Rowell, a former member of the Prince George Alpine Ski Team, started

racing at the NorAm level in 2016.

He posted his best World Cup result a year ago in the season's final race when he won the small final in Idre Fjall, Sweden, and finished fifth. That came three months after he placed seventh in Arosa, Switzerland. He also had a 14th-place finish on Jan. 21, 2023, in Idre Fjall.

The World Cup tour returns to Canada for the next race in Craigleith, Ont., near Collingwood. Qualifying is on March 12, with races scheduled for March 13 and 14.

"I'm excited to get back to Canada for the next one," Rowell said.

Reece Howden of Cultus Lake won Saturday's race to stay close to the top

of the leaderboard in the Crystal Globe standings.

Friday's race winner, Simone Deromedis of Italy, leads the World Cup standings with 799 points, followed by Florian Wilmsmann of Germany in second (700) and Howden (658) in third. Rowell ranks 28th (405).

Canadians occupy the top two positions in the women's World Cup standings. India Sherritt of Cranbrook leads (795), with Marielle Thompson of Whistler in second (744) and Fanny Smith of Switzerland in third (716).

Prince George athletes Meryeta O'Dine, Evan Bichon, and Colby Graham are competing on the tour.

Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



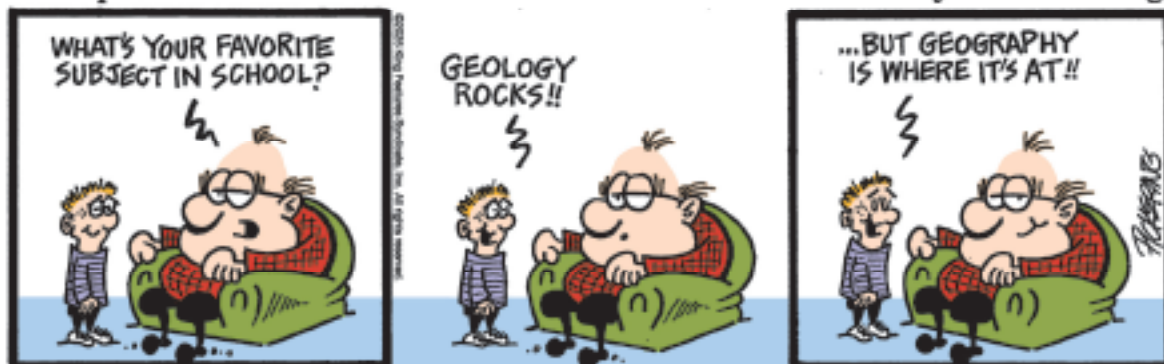
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by Gary Kopervas



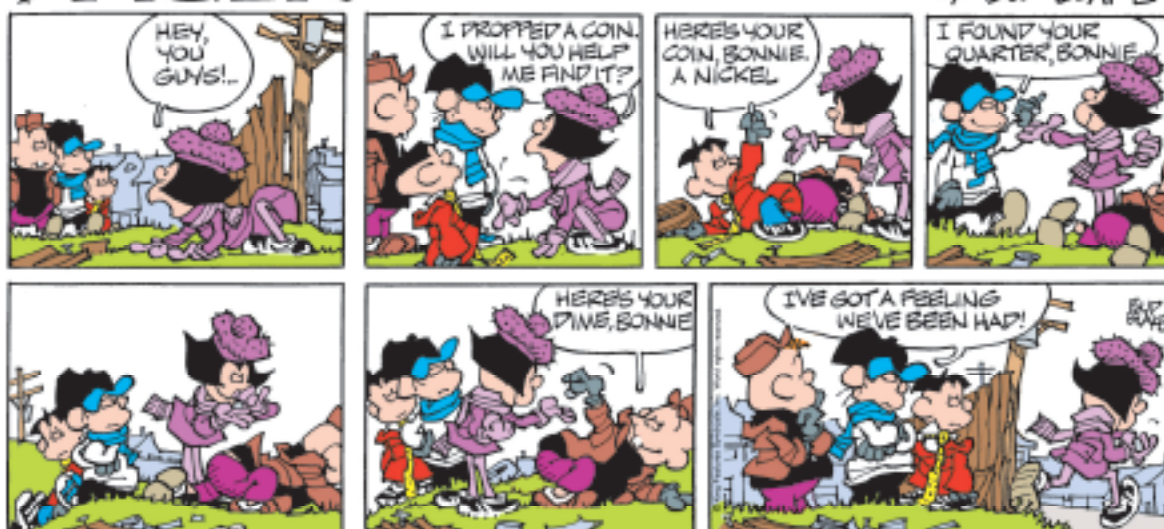
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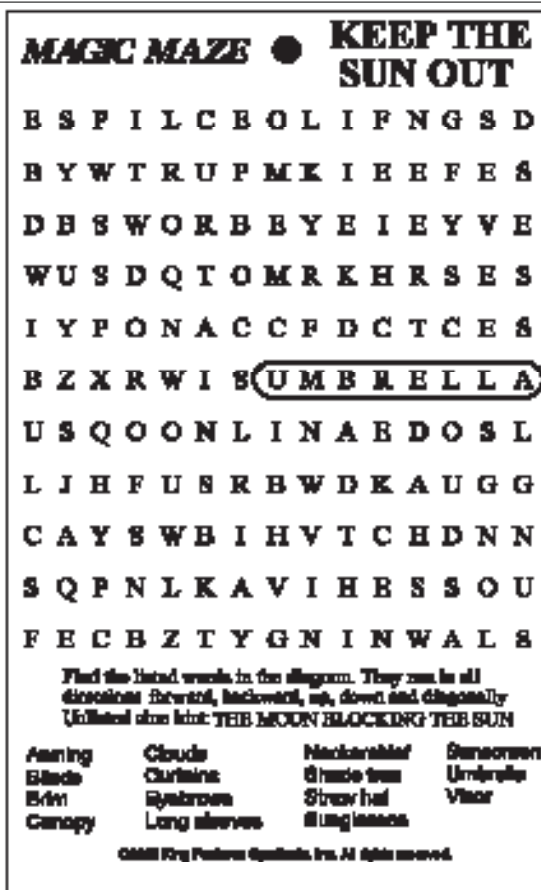
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Life Events



Happy Birthday Larry Stewart

70 years old, but you haven't changed a bit!
Best wishes from the other members of the Four
Fine Sons: Brian, Chris & Mike.



Robert Lorne Sigurdson

May 21, 1939- February 22, 2025

Robert Lorne Sigurdson, born Vancouver
May 21, 1939 passed quickly on February 22, 2025.

Predeceased by his beautiful wife Barbara and leaving
behind his extended family Jane & Scott, Gord & Gloria,
5 loving grand children and 4 great grand children.

Gramps loved to tell stories from his past. As a child
Bob went to work early assisting the millmen on horse
and cart, soon after to take on a lead roll organizing
newspaper delivery. As an adult Bob had natural talent
in numbers and had a successful career as a project
administrator for Standard General and Dillingham.

Gramps & Gran enjoyed time with family,
socializing with friends & travel.

We will miss the cheekiness, the laughter,
and the love we shared



Valentino "Walter" Quarenghi

September 23, 1932 - February 5, 2025

It is with sadness our family announces the peaceful
passing of Valentino "Walter" Quarenghi on
February 5, 2025, in Kelowna, B.C.

Walter is survived by his loving wife Lina of 68 years
and his children Piera, Lorenzo and Michael.
His grandchildren, Natasha, Joshua, Shailen,
Simon, Christopher, Jared and Rya.
Great grandchildren, Lucia and Luisa,
and many nieces and nephews in Italy.

Pre-deceased by his brothers Efreem and Lorenzo.

Walter was born in Ambivere, Bergamo, Italy in 1932
and immigrated to Inuvik in 1959. A very talented
carpenter and skilled tradesman, Walter began to
take advantage of the opportunities that Canada had
to offer. Eventually settling and raising the family in
Prince George, Walter was well known in the local
construction community in the 1970s and 80s.

A wonderful circle of family and friends
made life rich and memorable.

Walter will be fondly remembered as an incredibly
hard-working provider for his family. He was certainly
happiest when he was surrounded by family and
when he had a job to do. Walter and Lina enjoyed
their retirement years in Kelowna and shared many
wonderful memories with family and friends. Walter
always had a great curiosity and enjoyed learning about
different things throughout his life. He loved to engage
in conversations and those who had a chance to chat
with him would certainly remember his feisty nature.

There will be a funeral mass held for Walter on
March 20 at St. Pius Church in Kelowna.



Kurtis Maurice Champagne

January 21, 1988 - February 13, 2025

With heavy hearts, we announce the sudden passing of
Kurtis on February 13th, 2025, at the young age of 37.
A beloved son, skilled craftsman, and free spirit whose
connection to the outdoors defined his brightest days.

Raised in the country, Kurtis's childhood was
filled with adventure and mischief alongside his
older brother and younger sister. Always drawn
to exploration, he spent his early years camping,
fishing, shooting bow and snowmobiling, and as a
teenager he could often be found at the skatepark
or snowboarding. Throughout his life, Kurtis found
peace hiking Fang Mountain and his companions saw
a different side of him - reflective, at ease, connected
to the natural world he deeply appreciated.

Kurtis became an accomplished craftsman, where his
attention to detail and strong work ethic earned him
consistent praise and admiration from colleagues and
supervisors. His pride and ability to transform raw
materials into finished products mirrored his own
desire to build something meaningful in life.

Despite these many gifts and passions, Kurtis battled
alcoholism, a disease that gradually altered the course
of his life. Beginning in 2018, he faced mounting
challenges that pulled him from the vibrant person
he once was. In his final years, those who loved him
witnessed both his struggles and his moments of
clarity, where they saw glimpses of the Kurtis who
loved life, nature, and his longing for connection.

As we remember Kurtis, we choose to honor both his
whole story and the person he truly was beyond his
addiction. We remember the boy who couldn't wait
to explore, the teenager perfecting skateboard tricks,
the young man finding solace on Fang Mountain,
and the skilled craftsman who took pride in his work.
We acknowledge his battle with alcoholism not as
his defining feature, but as one chapter in a life that
contained so much more.

Kurtis is survived by his mother Donna, brother Mike
(Marianne), and sister Cassie (Brennan), who will
carry his memory in their hearts. May he finally find
the peace that eluded him in life, perhaps on some
perfect mountain trail or beside a
quiet fishing stream.

Rest easy, Kurtis. Your adventure continues
elsewhere now.

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the way forward



Moments in time

* On March 17, 1905, future president Franklin Delano Roosevelt married Eleanor Roosevelt, his fifth cousin once removed, in New York. Former President Theodore Roosevelt gave away the bride.

* On March 18, 1911, composer Irving Berlin obtained the copyright

for "Alexander's Ragtime Band," a multimillion-selling hit that helped turn American popular music into a major international phenomenon.

* On March 19, 1957, Elvis Presley arranged to purchase the Colonial mansion on the outskirts of Memphis called Graceland for \$102,500, with a cash deposit of \$1,000. It is still preserved exactly as Elvis left it when he died in 1977 and is one of America's most popular tourist attractions – the second-most-visited house in the nation after the White House.

* On March 20, 1345, according to scholars at the University of Paris, the

Black Death, aka the Plague, was created from "a triple conjunction of Saturn, Jupiter and Mars in the 40th degree of Aquarius," though it was actually carried by fleas that typically traveled on rats. It cut a swath across Europe, the Middle East and Asia during the 14th century, leaving an estimated 25 million dead in its wake, and popped up periodically until the 1700s, but never again reached epidemic proportions.

* On March 21, 1980, President Jimmy Carter announced that the U.S. would boycott the Olympic Games scheduled to take place in Moscow that summer, after the Soviet Union failed to comply

with his Feb. 20, 1980, deadline to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan. Four years later, in retaliation, the Soviet Union boycotted the 1984 Olympic Games held in Los Angeles.

* On March 22, 1983, the Pentagon awarded a production contract worth more than \$1 billion to AM General Corp. for the development of 55,000 high mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicles. Nicknamed the Humvee and designed to transport troops and cargo, the vehicles were used by the American military during the 1989 invasion of Panama and the Persian Gulf War in the early 1990s.

HOROSCOPES



ARIES (March 21 to April 19) It's a good time to reassess important relationships, both personal and professional, to see where problems might exist and how they can be overcome. Keep the lines of communication open.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) It's not easy to bring order to a chaotic situation, whether it's in the workplace or at home. But if anyone can do it, you can! A pleasant surprise awaits you by week's end.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) Be careful that you don't make an upcoming decision solely on the word of those who might have their own reasons for wanting you to act as they suggest. Check things out for yourself.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) A personal relationship that seems to be going nowhere could be restarted once you know why it stalled. An honest discussion could result in some surprising revelations.

LEO (July 23 to August 22) An unexpected attack of self-doubt could be a way of warning yourself to go slow before making a career-changing decision. Take more time to do a closer study of the facts.

VIRGO (August 23 to September 22) A workplace problem needs your attention now before it deteriorates to a point beyond repair. A trusted third party could be helpful in closing the gaps that have opened.

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) A recent family situation could give rise to a new problem. Keep an open mind and avoid making judgments about anyone's motives until all the facts are in.

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 21) Rely on your always-sharp intuition to alert you to potential problems regarding someone's attempt to explain away the circumstances behind a puzzling incident.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) Although you still need to do some snipping off of those lingering loose ends from a past project, you can begin moving on to something else.

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 19) With your self-confidence levels rising, you should feel quite comfortable with taking on a possibly troublesome but potentially well-rewarded situation.

AQUARIUS (January 20 to February 18) Travel is favored, both for business and for fun. The end of the week brings news about an upcoming project that could lead toward a promised career change.

PISCES (February 19 to March 20) You might feel suddenly overwhelmed by a flood of responsibilities. But if you deal with each one in its turn, you'll soon be able to hold your head above water and move on.

Solution time: 25 mins.

V	A	C		R	E	A	M		M	A	M	A
I	L	E		E	L	B	A		I	R	A	N
C	E	R	A	M	I	C	S		N	E	R	D
		E	P	A		S	O	C	I	A	L	S
A	M	B	E	R	S		N	O	V			
C	A	R		K	I	M		B	A	R	N	S
D	R	U	G		X	E	S		N	O	O	K
C	A	M	U	S		H	U	M		M	V	I
			I	T	O		N	O	M	A	A	M
S	T	A	T	U	R	E		T	A	N		
N	O	T	A		E	N	F	O	R	C	E	R
I	G	O	R		O	D	E	R		E	M	U
T	O	M	S		S	O	W	S		R	O	B

Answer

8	6	1	9	2	4	5	3	7
7	9	2	3	5	1	8	4	6
4	5	3	6	7	8	9	1	2
2	3	7	4	8	5	6	9	1
1	4	9	7	3	6	2	5	8
5	8	6	2	1	9	4	7	3
6	1	5	8	9	7	3	2	4
3	7	4	5	6	2	1	8	9
9	2	8	1	4	3	7	6	5

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SOLD IN FEB
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\$649,900

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2435 E. HWY 16,
McBride \$697,700

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\$789,900

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