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Dreamcatcher to film in P.G.

Shooting of Stephen King's novel is expected to pour more than \$5M into economy

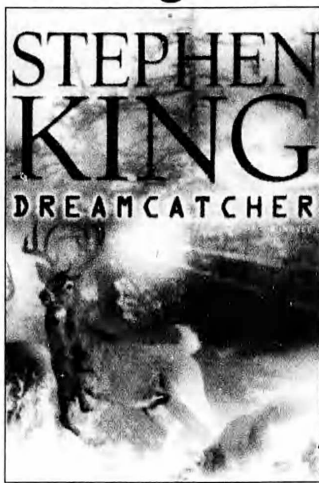
by **BERNICE TRICK**
Citizen staff

Hollywood is coming back to Prince George.

The feature film Dreamcatcher, based on the Stephen King novel, will be filmed here early next year, Prince George Film Commission director Sara Shaak said Monday. The city was selected from a list of several communities in the U.S. and Canada.

Shaak said getting the project is like winning the lottery. "You can't win if you don't play," said Shaak, explaining every request for every possible film project must be responded to and followed up like it could be a winner.

What clinched Dreamcatcher for Prince George was a visit by director



The front of Stephen King's novel Dreamcatcher is shown here.

Lawrence Kasdan, who visited here last month and "loved it", said Shaak.

Kasdan "is a very highly noted director" who's directed such films as The Big Chill and The Accidental Tourist, said Shaak. If a director doesn't like a community, there's no chance for a film project, she said.

Another factor which Shaak said helped to get the film was the pre-approved use of potential filming locations to save officials with Castle Rock Entertainment and Kasdan Pictures a lot of time.

Filming is expected to take eight to nine weeks — about twice as long as was required for Reindeer Games in 1999.

Reindeer Games dropped about \$5 million into the local economy, so Shaak

said she expects this film to boost the economy on a much greater level.

Filming locations will be forested, cold winter settings which require major construction work expected to begin shortly, said Shaak.

Dreamcatcher is the story of four boyhood pals who reunite for a hunting trip at their favourite deep-woods cabin where they encounter a strange man.

"Construction work is the next step, and where possible, local ticketed carpenters and other union trades people will be hired," she said.

Ten to 25 crew members will be working in Prince George to do construction and set up locations, and the majority of the remaining 150 to 200 crew members will arrive for filming in early January.

Dreamcatcher will have four to six leading roles, a number of supporting roles not yet cast, and an expected need for extras, which Shaak expects to be hired in November or December.

Since filming will be done five days a week, Shaak said the cast and crew will be visible around town on weekends in shopping areas and at events. "It will be great for local business and the community," Shaak said.

Shaak said capturing this film for Prince George emphasizes the need for a film commission. "It took me forever to find the locations, and it's been a whole summer's work just working on this project alone." She said she has been working on the project seven days a week since June.

Snow tube park plowed under

Council unanimously rejects bid

by **SCOTT STANFIELD**
Citizen staff

Council unanimously opposed third reading to a rezoning application for a proposed snow tube park on Cranbrook Hill, following a public hearing Monday which attracted about 75 people.

The park, proposed for the end of Massey Drive by Maple Ridge outfit Lust Enterprises, was to include three tube runs, a rope tow and a small concession stand.

"My first inclination was that this was a terrific idea," Councillor Gord Leighton said before the vote.

"(But) the proponent has chosen a poor location for this project."



LEIGHTON

David Lust, who along with wife Monica planned to move to Prince George to develop the park, said snow tubing is a growing recreation in Eastern Canada and the U.S.

"It's for all ages," Lust said Monday. "That's one of the

biggest draws of it." Residents, however, said they feared the park would destroy part of the green belt, decrease property values, increase the noise in their neighbourhood and increase the slope instability on the hill under University Way.

"I believe this is an issue of respect for our environment, our neighbourhood and our way of life," said Lori Elder, who said she opposed removing trees or charging admission to use the park in an area which people already use for a variety of recreational purposes.

"I believe there's a lot at stake," Elder said. "It's a serious issue. I implore you to say no to this rezoning."

Lust said he was planning to charge \$14 for adults and \$8 for children, which was to include equipment rentals.

The city's development services department had recommended council approve the rezoning application, subject to an acceptable geo-technical report. A preliminary review by GeoNorth Engineering said neither construction work for the park nor the removal of trees in the areas of the proposed snow tube runs would affect slope stability.

"If that hill did come down where is the liability?" Nehring Avenue resident Harold Demetzer said. "Who is responsible? This is a serious concern for all of you (council and city officials) and all of us."

He also said he was "surprised and shocked" at the lack of a marketing plan in the proposal.

Demetzer had previously written council his concerns about stability of the hill, which he said was a costly issue when the university was built there.



Citizen photo by Brent Braaten

DRIVE FOR THE HOMELESS — Leona Whitehawk, left, and Barb Gail sort out donations at the Community Donation Drive for the Homeless. The event was part of Housing Week 2001, which concludes Friday with the Community Awards, in recognition of exceptional neighbours, landlords, tenants and homeowners.

Good Time against Bonanza using its old bingo building

by **GORDON HOEKSTRA**
Citizen staff

The Good Time Bingo Association (GTBA), which is moving into the revamped Cineplex Odeon Theatre, voiced strong objection Monday to another association moving into their old location.

The competition of another bingo hall at 490 Vancouver Street, just a block away from GTBA's new location, will hurt its 83 charities with reduced revenues, GTBA president Perry Slump told a relocation hearing panel organized by the B.C. Gaming Commission at the Civic Centre.

But the Bonanza Bingo Association — which wants to move from its current location at the Diamond Bingo Hall on Sixth Avenue to the GTBA's former location — says the move is needed to increase revenues to its 30 charities.

"The only solution is a better location," said Bonanza president Mel McMillan. "We believe proximity will

be an asset to both locations, not a liability. Our association members are deserving of support as much as the Good Time Bingo Association's."

The move to the soon-to-be-vacated bingo hall on Vancouver Street has more offstreet parking, is more visible and in a higher traffic area, said McMillan.

Slump, however, argued the move would increase costs by \$1.4 million to the bingo associations without increasing revenues to local charities. That's in part because government guaranteed top ups would increase to charities with increased competition, he said.

"Bonanza's business projections identify a \$4.4 million increase in revenues, not because they are going to attract new bingo players to the market, but their intention is to redirect bingo players and take a significant portion of revenue away from our new approved facility, Bingo City, only 100 metres away," said Slump.

Instead, the Good Time Association suggested Bonanza consider amalgamating with them.

It would increase proceeds to local charities and reduce costs to the government, said Slump.

George Morfitt, the sole member of the hearing panel, was unsure how long it would take him to come to a recommendation. B.C.'s Gaming Commission chair will make the final decision based on Morfitt's recommendations.

Prince George city council has already unanimously endorsed the move. The Gaming Audit and Investigation's report found no concerns in its review of the relocation proposal, and the B.C. Gaming Commission's staff recommended the move be approved without any restrictions.

The B.C. Lottery Corporation, which is set to take over responsibility for provincial gaming next year, also had no concerns with the move.



Cornered by Baldwin



It all began with free-range chicken. Then it was organic vegetables. Next the farmers decided they should all take a year off to go find themselves.

E-Mail address:
pgcnews@prg.southam.ca
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Call Centre Team hopes to ring up business

by **GORDON HOEKSTRA**
Citizen staff

The Prince George Development Corporation has formed a Call Centre Team, but will not be out selling the city until it has developed a package highlighting the community's advantages.

"We'll be a little bit more aggressive with our marketing, but we need to get our act in order first," Call Centre Team chairman Lorne Calder said Monday. "It's one thing to promote the community, but you need to have the package deal."

Since Prince George has the type of educated workforce and telecommunications infrastructure call centres are looking for, real estate is a key issue, said Calder.

While there are one or two buildings

that might fit the bill for large call centres, once rewiring and renovation costs to the tune of \$4 million to \$8 million are added, it might be less expensive to build to suit, said Calder.

The package will also include training options and is expected to be ready before the end of the year, he said.

The team — which includes experts in training, telecommunications and real estate — will also be putting together packages for small- and medium-sized call centres.

In each case, there's bound to be some customization for interested call centres, said Calder.

Interest in bringing a call centre to Prince George has been heightened since Stream International almost sealed a deal to come to the city earlier

this year. After a deal appeared imminent and later stalled, Stream chose to locate in Chilliwack.

Calder said the annual payroll for Stream would have been \$30 million.

The reason for putting together different packages is to ensure the city doesn't leave a deal like that on the table because it was beaten out by another jurisdiction for \$150,000 or less, he said.

While the packages are being hammered out, the PGDC is taking part in a Chicago call-centre trade show later



CALDER

this month. Kathleen Laughlin from the development corporation staff and Lori Tataryn, a development corporation board member, will attend the show.

Linx B.C. will also have a representative there. Linx was set up to promote B.C. as an attractive location for high-end call centres. It's funded by the B.C. government, Telus, and five B.C. communities, including Prince George.

Call centres provide telephone support services — usually toll-free and round the clock — from anything from computer troubleshooting to banking and catalogue ordering. According to an industry profile by the federal government, there's an estimated 60,000 to 70,000 call centres in the U.S. employing four million people. There were 6,000 to 14,000 call centres in Canada in 1997.