

Speeding drivers to face tougher penalties

by JAN-UDO WENZEL
Citizen Staff Reporter

Speeding drivers will likely pay fines again instead of having demerit points added to their driving records.

Attorney-General Allan Williams announced in Victoria Tuesday that stiffer penalties for speeding would soon be implemented.

While the change is being studied, the Prince George CAR-nage traffic safety committee is observing its fifth anniversary.

The committee was formed in 1975 when the rate of accidents was out of proportion for the number of vehicles registered in this area.

CARNage's theme is "Take the Car out of CARNage" and during the years the committee has conducted a number of campaigns for safer driving.

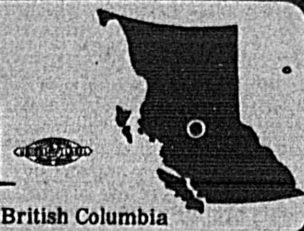
The committee was successful in cutting down the number of accidents by holding information seminars and advertising campaigns.

A film depicting the horrors of heavy accidents was made and has been shown widely.

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Co-operation of various bodies, such as the RCMP, driving schools and doctors made drivers more aware of the dangers of driving.

CARNage has also continued to publish a weekly statistic and so far this year these statistics show two persons killed in accidents, 208 injured and 351 drivers arrested as impaired in the area.

This compares with six persons killed, 292 injured and 240

arrested for being impaired during the same period in 1979.

Mayor Elmer Mercer has designated this week as CAR-nage Week in Prince George.

In Victoria, Attorney-General Williams based his decision to make things tougher for speeders after seeing recently-released statistics that show B.C. drivers have more accidents per vehicle, per 1,000 persons and per one million km travelled than any other drivers in Canada.

Williams said the demerit point system has not deterred drivers, but has created more paperwork.

Demerit points are given to drivers charged with various offences, including speeding. Police issue Traffic Violation Reports, which result in the driver being assessed a number of demerits.

But when police issue Traffic Ticket Information, this results in the driver having to pay a fine.

A TTI is issued, for instance, if a driver is found not to be having his seatbelt fastened. The fine for this is \$15.

Sgt. Ken Craig, in charge of the RCMP traffic section in Prince George, said his men have issued 4,881 TVRs to the end of April this year, compared with 3,730 in the corresponding time in 1979.

Local RCMP also issued 2,979 TTIs to the end of April and about 2,000 for the same period in 1979.

He feels the increase in the TVRs may be a result of drivers not being overly concerned when they receive demerit points on their records and don't have to pay fines.

Photo page 3

Girl, 9, feared drowned

MACKENZIE (Staff) — A search is continuing for a nine-year old Ingenika girl missing in the Ingenika River and presumed drowned.

Mackenzie RCMP said Stacey Pierre and two other children were rafting down the river Monday, when their raft struck a log jam in the fast river and they were dumped into the water.

The two others made it to shore. Searches on Tuesday and today have failed to locate the girl. Ingenika is 200 km north of Mackenzie.

Tornadoes devastate community

KALAMAZOO, Mich. (AP) — Downtown Kalamazoo looked like a jigsaw puzzle with several pieces missing today after several deadly tornadoes ripped through the city and outlying areas, killing five people and causing \$40 million in damage.

"It reminds me of a bombed-out city," said Gov. William Milliken after a tour of the damage Tuesday night.

Two tornadoes in Kalamazoo, a city of 90,000, and twisters in four adjacent townships in Van Buren County — Bangor, Arlington, Waverly and Ardena — injured 65 people and left about 1,200 people homeless, officials said.

Kalamazoo Mayor Edward Annen said the damage figure might be increased after more inspection today. Milliken declared a state of emergency in Kalamazoo and the four townships.

City officials originally said seven people had died but that figure was reduced to five early today when it was discovered that one of the reported victims had not died and another had been counted twice, said officials at Bronson Methodist Hospital.

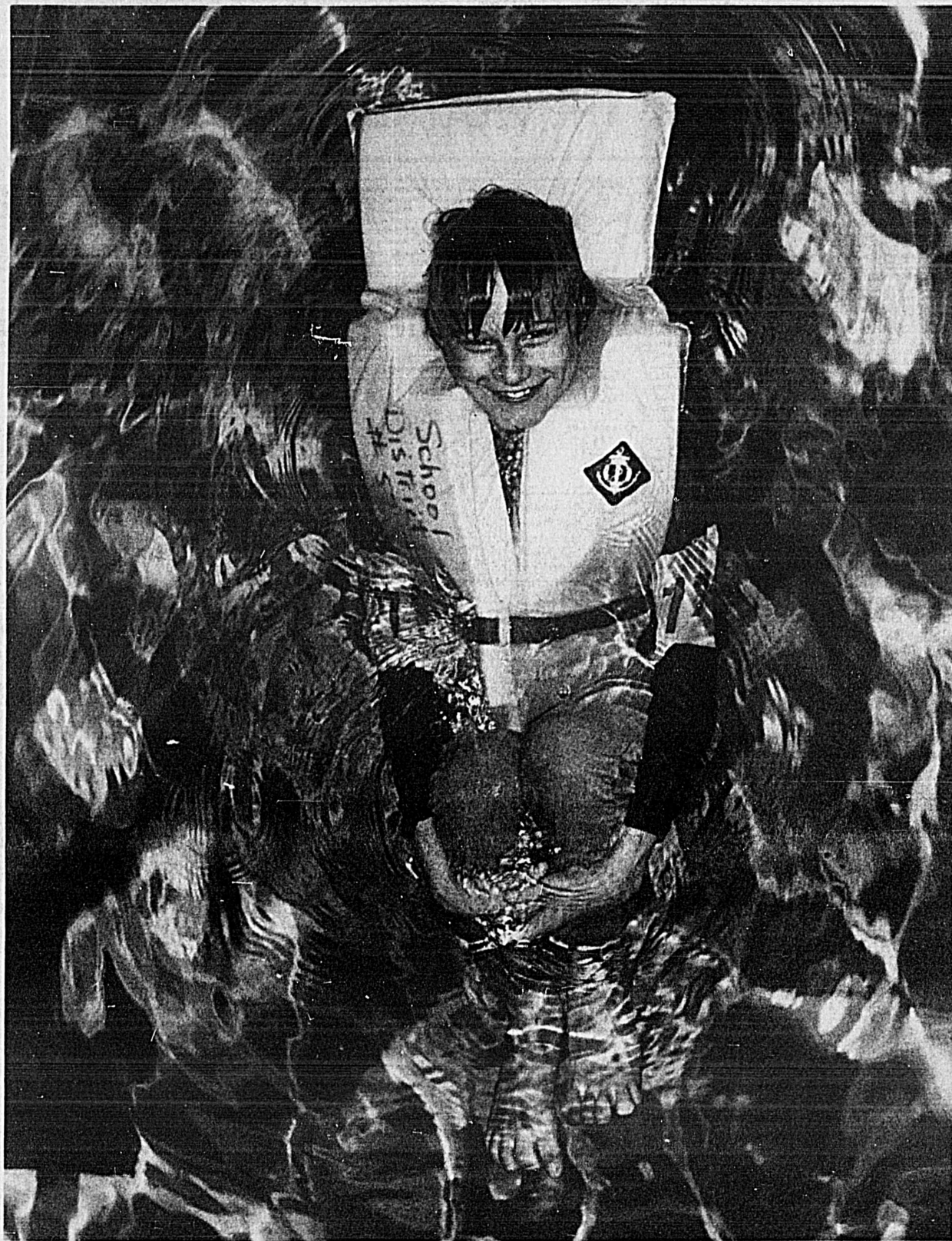
By early today, Kalamazoo police had reported one looting arrest and one arrest for a curfew violation.

Red Cross officials said most of the homeless were staying with friends and relatives although three emergency shelters were established.

The tornadoes touched down during the Tuesday evening rush hour, tearing apart the city's pedestrian mall, causing scattered fires and knocking out utilities. The top of the 10-story Industrial State Bank was ripped off and almost every window broken, said witnesses. "It happened so fast, you hardly had time to collect your thoughts or prayers," said Rev. Lewis Briner.

Clifford Smith said he tried to turn his car around and escape when he saw a funnel cloud about half a block away.

Photos page 5



Citizen photo by Doug Weller

The right way

Todd Davis, 12, learns to conserve his body heat while in the water, during swimming lessons run by the local school district and Red Cross. The lessons are a continuation of a pilot project that will become the standard swimming instruction method throughout the province in July. It is a 10-level water safety program and can be taught to adults as well as children. Davis is at level 5 of the program.

DISTRICT FORESTS

Fire spreading rapidly

The Hay River fire, in the Fort Nelson area close to the Alberta border, has doubled in size and now encompasses almost 3,500 acres.

Tom Waller, duty officer for the B.C. Forest Service, said the fire was out of control with no moisture recovery overnight to help check the fire.

"I don't know when we'll get a handle on it."

"One of the problems is ground level access. We've had to fly people in with helicopters."

The area, part of the Peace River district of the Prince George region, is in a high to extreme fire hazard rating.

West of the Rockies, the rating has dropped to moderate, from a previous moderate-to-high rating.

Waller said the number of fires in the region — McBride

and Valemount to the Yukon border and from Endako to Alberta — stands at 124, with three new fires reported overnight.

Of the three fires, one was caused by lightning and the other two were man-caused.

On the firelines are 397 firefighters, 35 bulldozers, 11 skidders, 14 helicopters, four fixed-wing aircraft for spotting, three air tankers and a bird dog aircraft.

Bonaventure sails again — on roads

VANCOUVER (CP) — As the aircraft carrier HMCS Bonaventure was towed into the sunset in 1971, Canadians thought it was the last they'd see of the floating white elephant.

They were wrong. Japan has returned much of the former Canadian warship piece by piece, in the form of Datsons, Toyotas and Hondas.

Japanese automobiles sold in Canada contain recycled steel from the carrier, says Sheridan Lax, president of the Canadian Association of Recycling Industries.

He said in an interview Tuesday that the Bonaventure is a good example of how recycling can save energy and money by using scrap metal for new products.

The federal government sold the Bonaventure for scrap in 1971 after a lengthy controversy over the vessel's \$13-million refit in 1967. It was originally the 20,000-ton British carrier, Powerful, but was not completed until Canada bought it and changed the name. Bonaventure originally cost Canada \$18 million in 1957.

Vancouver businessman Bill Kennedy bought the decommissioned Bonaventure for \$750,000 and immediately resold it to Mitsui Scrap yard.

PUBLIC HEALTH JOBS

Full-scale strike hinted by nurses

VANCOUVER (CP) — Registered nurses employed by the B.C. government have voted 90.6 per cent to reject a non-binding inquiry commissioner's report and threatened Tuesday to resume strikes if they don't have a new contract by Friday.

"Our members' patience is exhausted," said Glen Smale, negotiator for the Registered Nurses Association of B.C. and the Registered Psychiatric Nurses Association of B.C. which represent the 2,700 government nurses.

"We need to get down to some serious collective bargaining. Enough time has been wasted in resolving this dispute."

The nurses, who work at public and mental health units across the province, are seeking a 39-per-cent wage increase over 27 months, but the report prepared by Mr. Justice Henry Hutcheon of the B.C. Supreme Court offered wage increases totalling 25.6 per cent over two years.

However, the nurses' associations said the report shortchanged their members in comparison with new hospital nursing rates. The 12,500 general hospital nurses recently ratified a contract that provides increases averaging 44 per cent over 27 months.

In Prince George there are 40 government nurses — 19 at the health unit, two with mental health, and 19 working in long-term care and home care programs.

Government nurses have traditionally earned more than their hospital counterparts who work 37½ hours a week compared with 35 hours for government nurses.

"Government nurses are being told to take an economic step backward, and without good reason," Smale said. "If anything, general hospital nurses should be advanced to the government nurses' position."

The government nurses' starting salary is \$1,361 a month.

Mike Davidson, negotiator for the Government Employee Relations Bureau, accused the nurses' association of conducting a misleading vote.

He said the question of acceptance or rejection of the report was worded in such a way it created confusion.

The nurses held rotating strikes for two days prior to Hutcheon's appointment April 15. Smale would not disclose the extent of strikes planned if a contract is not reached, but said nurses "have nearly exhausted the range of limited job action."

In the event of a fullscale strike they have promised to maintain essential services.

Canada renews NATO pledge

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AP) — U.S. officials attending a meeting of NATO defence ministers expressed doubts Tuesday that all 15 member countries of the alliance will meet a pledge to increase defence spending by three per cent over the next five years.

One exception was Canada. Defence Minister J. Gilles Lamontagne gave his full support Tuesday to U.S.-sponsored military measures to counter the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and pledged to meet the NATO spending goal.

TODAY



Ban Wits

"I'll go along with the plan if you're sure the Iranians have never heard of Troy."

FEATURED INSIDE

Workers ignore protest

Most of Britain's 26 million workers have ignored a 24-hour nationwide shutdown today in widespread rejection of union bosses opposed to government labor policies. Page 5.



Getting involved

Prince George residents confined to wheelchairs have learned to become participants in activities they used to just watch. Page 13.

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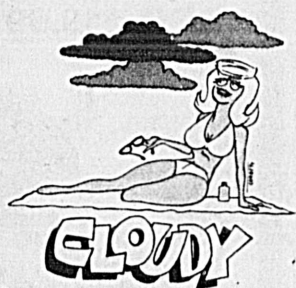
THE WEATHER

Sunworshippers may complain about the cloudy, wet weather, but it is just perfect for people planning to plant their vegetable gardens this weekend.

The forecast for tonight and Thursday calls for cloudy skies with clear periods, and occasional showers. The expected high today was 19, the low tonight 5.

Thursday's forecast high is 19. The high Tuesday was 15, the low 4. On this date last year the high was 14, the low -3.

Sunset today is 9:04 p.m. Sunrise Thursday is 5:09 a.m. and sunset 9:06 p.m.



Details Page 2

NOW HEAR THIS

● The popular Outdoors Unlimited program goes tonight at the Civic Centre — but those who wanted to hear about moose management will have to wait awhile. While that talk has been postponed, anglers will be happy as the discussion tonight will be about area fisheries. Tight lines...

● A city man's plans to acquire a passport were temporarily delayed Tuesday — the post office in the Spruce-land Shopping Centre only had application forms in French.

● While looking at a recently-acquired dresser a young woman was heard to utter: "Look at it, it's all scratched and uneven; it must be a hundred years old. I think I'll paint it."

Got a news tip? Call The Citizen's 24-hour news line at 562-2441.

DROUGHT CONDITIONS ON PRAIRIES

Dust blows over parched fields

by Canadian Press

The spectre of drought is slowly taking form in grey veils of dust rising with the breeze over parched prairie fields.

Some would say it's here already, particularly farmers and ranchers in areas that have been without rain for more than 50 days and have little hope of any in the immediate future.

Governments, too, are becoming alarmed at the situation and Agriculture Minister Gordon MacMurchy of Saskatchewan says meetings are being

planned between federal and provincial officials to deal with the drought potential.

But in the meantime, dry conditions are adding to serious financial problems many farmers are encountering due to high interest on money borrowed to plant Spring crops that could be ruined by drought.

Ranchers in areas of Southwestern Saskatchewan and Southern Alberta are looking bleakly at dried-out grazing land that in many cases wouldn't recover even with heavy rain.

To help the ranchers, some provincial governments are looking at emergency programs to bring feed to range cattle if the situation gets worse, and to bring in water to fill depleted dugouts.

"We're getting to the stage where it could start to get serious," Al Martin, crops branch chief with the Manitoba department of agriculture.

I've sort of set a May 15th benchmark," Martin said in an interview. "That seems to be kind of a turning point."

Martin said the critical stage is the last two weeks of May.