

Citizen Sadrack

Low tonight: -5
High Thursday: 3.
Weather details, page 2

The Prince George Citizen

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DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY OFFERED

Report hits city's pessimism

EDUCATION

'Shoot for the moon'

School District 57 board should "shoot for the moon" in its preliminary budget submission and send a message to Victoria that education spending has got to increase, says local teachers association president Bob Tavernor.

Prince George and District Teachers Association spokesmen were ready at Tuesday's school board meeting with their list of where improvements are needed.

In a 40-minute presentation to the board, the teachers urged the board to include "sufficient funds" for teacher salary increases, equalizing class sizes, allowing preparation time for elementary teachers, the hiring of lunch room supervisors where needed and more professional development.

Tavernor said in an interview the district can send a message to Victoria in its preliminary budget, due March 15.

"They have to shoot for the moon now in the preliminary budget and cut it down in terms of tax increases when they find out how much Victoria is going to grant the district."

"It is sort of a bargaining position, if you like."

The Ministry of Education reviews preliminary budgets submitted by school districts in the province and then announces how much it will spend on education for the year.

Trustees then return to the table to hammer out a final budget.

District superintendent Jim Imrich said the presentation made trustees aware of teacher concerns and will provide additional information to consider as it prepares its budget.

Other items dealt with at Tuesday's meeting:

- Trustees agreed to ask the annual general meeting of the B.C. School Trustees Association to consider improving the teacher bargaining system by amending the Schools Act.
- Trustees rejected a request from parents the change the Miworth school bus route so it would not have to travel over steep, narrow roads leading over Cranbrook Hill to Miworth, especially during winter.



Cutting the weight

Prince George logging truck driver Randy Taylor reduces the weight of his load by cutting off the ends of the logs after he was stopped at the weigh scales on Highway 97 south near the BCR industrial site this morning. Up to six overloaded trucks at a time were pulled over near the scales as truckers reduced their loads by either bucking logs off or, with the help of other truckers, pulling whole logs

from the load and leaving them at the side of the road. Joint enforcement between the Prince George RCMP traffic section, highway patrol and the weigh scales branch cracked down on logging trucks and commercial vehicles, checking for faulty equipment, height, weight and length restriction violations. The checks will be held randomly to enforce load regulations, according to an RCMP spokesman.

Citizen photo by Dave Milne

by KEN BERNSOHN
Staff reporter

The major obstacle to the success of Prince George is the city's attitude, according to a \$25,000 economic development strategy released this morning.

This is important because "ultimately our successes or failures in economic development have a dramatic effect on the man in the street. He has his job, here, his house is here," said Dale McMann, manager of the Prince George Region Development Corporation, which commissioned the report.

"There is a deep-rooted sense of pessimism and a tendency to be preoccupied with perceived deficiencies in the physical surroundings and in community leaders and institutions... in our opinion the city is much too hard on itself," says the report by Overseas Canadian Project Management and Planning Inc.

The consultants received \$10,000 for the report, the development corporation spent another \$10,000 and student help worth \$5,000 went into the study, which had more than 120 interviews and briefs from local residents and groups involved.

To cure the pessimism it would take "two or three winners in this town, new projects or companies, which would indicate to people here people outside the community have confidence in Prince George," McMann said.

The pessimism "may be a result of how we lived for so long. We were a high-flying city," said Mayor John Backhouse.

"The impact of the recession took quite a while to arrive. But when it did, we couldn't climb out of it. There's a multi-faceted cause and effect."

Monica Becott, chairman of the Fraser-Fort George Regional District, said "attitudes are already changing due to talk of new possible projects," with more possibilities being talked of than just a few years ago.

McMann summarized the 80-page report saying residents had to become more positive about the city, that there is a need for Prince George to recognize its role as a regional centre and build on it, and as a place where there are eight or nine areas for economic growth. (See page 3 for details).

"It's really a reaffirmation of ideas in the past, but it's important to make sure we're hearing what the community wants," McMann said.

Although the goals are familiar as increased tourism and added-value forest products, McMann felt some approaches to the goals are new.

"Promoting native culture as a focus for the tourism plant" is a new idea, McMann said.

"We have been told of difficulties in having permits approved, lack of co-operation and understanding at city hall..." the report states.

"I am concerned about the perception that city hall is not really very co-operative, that we are not service oriented," Backhouse said.

"I happen to believe it is not true, but I am determined to change the attitude. If it is a minority of people (at city hall), they'll change."

"It will be a program of changing the attitude toward the city, starting at the top... it's being implemented."

The mayor said a "how to guide" to city development will be prepared.

"I want to make sure they not only get a how-to in written form but that they are treated as customers, not left to struggle, but are guided through the process."

"There should be less concern in the community as to specific locations for potential incoming retailers... We detect an attitude among some groups in Prince George that if something cannot go downtown then it should not go anywhere...," the report states.

However, Becott, a past president of the Towncenter Business Association, said this doesn't mean an end in trying to revitalize downtown.

"The city has to grow in all directions, but the city has to grow in the core as well, because there's already a strong tax base," Becott said.

\$50-MILLION PLANT

Site choice expected soon

by DAVE PAULSON
Staff reporter

A location for the proposed \$50-million meat processing plant for the Central Interior should be known early next month, Vanderhoof mayor Len Fox said today.

A West German firm, with unidentified investors from the Vanderhoof area, has tentatively agreed to finance a cattle and hog processing plant employing nearly 600 workers. Construction is expected to begin this summer.

The meat plant proposal was spawned by the Village of Vanderhoof in an economic development strategy unveiled last year, Fox said.

"The strategy included tourism, lumber and agriculture," Fox said in an interview.

"We approached another group first, through the Northern Opportunities office in Vancouver during Expo."

He said Williams Lake and Vanderhoof both approached an Italian delegation with a proposal of a joint venture in a slaughterhouse or meat processing plant.

Fox said the West German-based firm, through Vanderhoof contacts, picked up the idea and talks have been going on for the past five months.

"Through our MLA (Forests Minister Jack Kempf) we've been able to achieve the fast track," Fox said.

Premier Bill Vander Zalm met with some of the German interests during his European tour and announced the meat plant proposal for the Prince George or Vander-

hoof area when he returned to Vancouver Saturday.

Fox said the announcement was premature.

"I had hoped the announcement would have come at a time closer to when a location was known. We're going to have people from all over Western Canada saying they should build the plant in their town."

"It's not going to be a good scene, but I don't think it will jeopardize anything because the people involved are committed to improving the economic climate of the Central Interior."

Fox said he doesn't know of any other centres interested, except for Prince George.

"Prince George I'm aware of, and I have no problems with that. If the worst case scenario is that the plant goes to Prince George then that's fine with us," Fox said.

"It will still have direct benefits

to this area. Even if the plant is built in Vanderhoof, Prince George is still a winner. It's a no-lose situation," Fox said. "I just want it built."

Fox said a feed mill is the second phase of the proposal, "which may or may not be built here (in Vanderhoof), but the agriculture industry in the Central Interior is what the investors were interested in."

"The whole proposal calls for the animal to be totally utilized. As far as a pig goes, that means everything but the squeal."

The plant would make sausages of mixed beef and pork for export to Germany and the Pacific Rim, Fox said.

"There are all kinds of long-term plans. Two of the people involved have been in the meat packaging business for the past 20 years in West Germany."

Welfare relief on the way?

VICTORIA (CP) — Welfare recipients and food bank users may get some relief in the B.C. government's budget that will be introduced March 19.

"I would say there is a good chance that there are positive steps being taken in that direction," Vander Zalm told reporters Tuesday following an hour-long meeting with representatives from the Vancouver Food Bank.

"I can't tell you what's going to happen, but I can tell you that welfare rates are something that the Treasury Board is looking at," he said.

British Columbia last increased welfare rates five years ago. A single employable person receives \$334 a month for the first month, \$359 for the second to eighth months and to \$384 in the ninth and subsequent months.

A family of three receives \$789 a month, but is eligible for additional shelter and food allowances.

...and in tomorrow's Citizen...

Starting Thursday, The Citizen will publish the first article in a series from Southam correspondent James Ferrabee depicting life in Britain as the sun sets on its overseas empire and its economy at home.

Also planned:

- Reaction to the federal budget.
- A scientist explains how the Mona Lisa has changed over the centuries.

LaSalle: 'I've had enough'

by Canadian Press

OTTAWA — Minister of State Roch LaSalle, reiterating his plans to leave the federal cabinet, hinted strongly today his departure may form part of a cabinet shuffle next week.

"I've had enough," said LaSalle, who for years was the only Conservative MP from Quebec and now suffers a heart condition.

Sources say he submitted his written resignation to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney on Monday night.

LaSalle said a final decision will only be taken during next week's parliamentary break.

Asked if his departure would be part of a shuffle, he replied, "It would seem so." He added he intends to remain MP for Joliette, Que.

LaSalle denied a Canadian Press report that he used his influence to help 20-year-old Gervais Desrochers get a \$75,000 contract to select an airport site near Joliette.

Desrochers has no aviation experience, but a city council source told the news agency that Desrochers was hired on the basis of LaSalle's promise that Ottawa would fund the study if Desrochers got the job.

Meanwhile, LaSalle's aides have

denied a CP report that Luc Beaulieu, a lawyer who lost his licence to practice after he went bankrupt, works for LaSalle in his constituency.

Serge St-Pierre, LaSalle's chief of staff, confirmed today that the study awarded to Desrochers included the selection of the best site

for the Joliette airport from four possible locations.

St-Pierre said LaSalle knows Pierre Perrault, a Joliette Tory who owned the land chosen for the airport site, "as he knows nine out of 10 other people in Joliette."

The city paid \$125,000 for the land.

B.C. Grit chief quits

VANCOUVER (CP) — Art Lee, who as leader of the B.C. Liberal Party failed to win a single seat in last October's provincial election, said Tuesday he is resigning as party leader May 1.

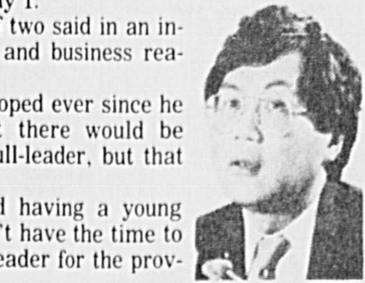
The 39-year-old lawyer and father of two said in an interview he was quitting for personal and business reasons.

He said both he and the party had hoped ever since he became unpaid leader in 1984 that there would be enough money to support him as a full-leader, but that isn't possible.

"Being a full-time practitioner and having a young family, I feel that right now I just don't have the time to devote to being an effective political leader for the province of British Columbia," Lee said.

Also a factor in his resignation, he said, was his party's failure to win a seat in the Oct. 22 election, which was "a big disappointment to me."

Although the party more than doubled its share of the popular vote to 6.7 per cent from 2.7 per cent, it has failed to elect a legislative member since 1979.



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