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The Prince George

Citizen

FRIDAY, AUGUST 14, 1987



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WESTERN CANADA SUMMER EVENT FOR 1994

Mayor optimistic about games bid

by BERNICE TRICK
Staff reporter

Prince George Mayor John Backhouse came home Thursday with a "positive feeling" about holding the Western Canada Summer Games here in 1994.

He said the visit of the city delegation to Regina this week, including Mae Frenkel and Neil Fowle from the parks and recreation department, provided a "real feeling" about the organization and facilities required and Prince George's capability to hold such an event.

The delegation made the visit to let games organizers know Prince George is keenly interested in the 1994 event, which is scheduled to be held in B.C. for the first time.

The games, which began in 1975 with the four

western provinces participating, have been held in Regina in 1975, 1979 and 1987 and in Calgary in 1983.

Once B.C. is officially announced as the location for the games, the B.C. Ministry of Tourism, Recreation and Culture will call for bids from interested communities.

But before that happens the city's recreation department must prepare a full report to be presented to city council later this fall.

During the visit, Prince George representatives met with provincial director of recreation Russ Irving, "who seemed genuinely pleased to see a Prince George delegation in attendance," Backhouse said.

Regina has a 90,000-square-foot field house with an indoor track and portable floor for games like volleyball.

"It's no architectural beauty, but very practical," Backhouse said, noting the Prairie city also has an Olympic-sized pool.

Both facilities have been a boon for Regina's bids to hold major sports events.

Prince George could expect to handle 3,000 to 4,000 people over the course of the week-long event, but only half attend for the first four days and the remainder for the last few days.

Visitors would include athletes, who stay in an athletes' village, coaches and officials, provincial representatives, media and spectators who are usually family, relatives and friends of athletes.

If Prince George were selected to hold the games, it needs an all-weather running track, which is in the city budget during the next few years.

"It's a facility we need anyway — especially if we're awarded the 1990 B.C. Summer Games," Frenkel said.

The biggest expense of holding the games would be the pool.

"It could be a 50-metre or 25-metre, eight-lane facility," Frenkel said, adding, "the options are there."

She said it's always been the policy of the provincial government to pay 50 per cent of the capital costs for B.C. Games facilities.

Frenkel said she wasn't enthusiastic at first about holding the western national games here, but the visit to Regina changed her mind.

"I was excited and thought, 'Yes, Prince George could do this with no problem,'" she concluded.



Citizen photo by Lisa Murdoch

Prince George

Prince George, a knight in chainmail riding a white steed, makes his first public appearance during the opening of the Prince George Exhibition Thursday. The prince wears a red cross which symbolizes the Canadian Red Cross's mission to help those in need. Prince George and his steed, Silvala, intend to become a familiar sight in this area by participating in parades, festivals and other events.

Welfare rate cut called appalling

by Canadian Press

COWICHAN BAY — Social Services Minister Claude Richmond announced Thursday a \$6 monthly cut in payments for welfare recipients aged 26 and over, the government's response to a B.C. Supreme Court ruling that the system discriminated against younger recipients.

Richmond, attending a provincial cabinet retreat here, said the government couldn't afford to raise overall rates because that would add an extra \$4.6 million to his ministry's budget this year.

Instead, rates were being increased for welfare recipients under age 26 and decreased slightly for those 26 and over to average

out the payment system in line with the court's decision.

Reaction to the announcement was swift and negative. Peter Beaudin, a spokesman for the B.C. Human Rights Coalition, which had praised the court decision last week, called the government's response appalling.

There had been hints all week that the government wouldn't raise overall welfare rates to make up for the inequity which was challenged by a young welfare recipient.

Mr. Justice John Spencer's decision struck down part of the B.C. government's Guaranteed Available Income for Need regulations, which allowed for reduced welfare

payments for single recipients and married couples under the age of 26.

The ruling, which found the regulations to violate the Charter of Rights and Freedoms by discriminating on the basis of age, followed a decision last month by the B.C. Council of Human Rights. Attorney General Brian Smith said the government wasn't bound by the council's decision but that it would abide by the court's ruling.

The regulations phased in welfare payments, starting at \$334 a month for single persons under age 26 and \$359 for singles over 26.

Richmond said the new rates would equalize the first payment for both groups at \$359 a month.

The reduction will come in the second to eighth month of payments. Under the old scale, singles under 26 received \$359 and those over 26 got \$384. The new scale will, pay both groups \$378 a month.

Maximum payments for employable singles after eight months on welfare will also drop to \$378 from \$384 while the rate for unemployable singles will remain at \$439.

Richmond said a similar marginal reduction would be made in payments to the province's 3,000 employable welfare couples but did not detail the changes.

Under the existing scale employable married couples receive \$586 a month if both are under age 26, and \$611 if at least one is over age 26. The maximum payment for employable couples after eight months, regardless of age, is \$636 a month. Unemployable couples receive a maximum \$708.

Beaudin said the decision to equalize welfare rates shows the government has recognized an injustice existed. But he said the approach the ministry used was an even greater injustice.

"Rather than compensating those people under the age of 26 for the money that they have been losing for the last three years, they've gone even further and decided to punish everyone who is in receipt of welfare," said Beaudin.

He said the decision was a complete betrayal of the concept of human rights.

Dick Gathercole, executive director of the B.C. Public Interest Advocacy Centre, said welfare recipients over 26 were being made to pay for the government's mistake.

The total annual reduction in payments for more than 30,000 recipients over age 26 equals the increase given to the 15,000 recipients under 26, said Gathercole.

Negative reports worry coal town

by MALCOLM CURTIS
Staff reporter

TUMBLER RIDGE — The nattering nabobs of negativity are at it again.

It was a former U.S. vice-president who derisively used the phrase to refer to the news media. Now, residents here are berating

journalists, particularly those from Vancouver, for not giving this coal mining town a chance.

"The only reason there are negatives about this town is the press coverage," said Mary Lapp, local Chamber of Commerce president. But Lapp, who owns a clothing store and a video rental outlet, is optimistic about Tumbler's future.

"I should be, I've got two businesses here."

People like Ald. Garry Davies are hoping today's visit by Premier Bill Vander Zalm will shed some positive light on the advances the town has made.

The premier flew here today to open a new pit at the Quintette coal mine and cut the ribbon at a new golf driving range. The range, built by volunteers, symbolizes the commitment of a core of residents to the community, Davies said.

"We've been here for four years and we've heard nothing but bad news about the town since we've been here," he said.

"We're still here and we expect to be here for some time."

No one from the town's council is expecting Vander Zalm to make any magic announcements, Davies said. "Just his presence here means the town hasn't been forgotten."

If there is one token thing we'd like to hear it would be the announcement of a provincial court judge."

The nearest court is in Chet-
Continued page 3

Drug bill showdown in works

Southern News

OTTAWA — Liberal senators have made good on their threat to gut the government's controversial drug patent bill and send it back to the House of Commons.

The appointed Liberal senators, who hold a majority in the Senate, gave the bill final reading Thursday. The senators added 10 amendments to the legislation, all of which are considered unacceptable by the government. One key amendment drops monopoly patent protection on a new drug from 10 years to four.

By giving final reading to the amended bill, the senators have set up a showdown with the elected Tory MPs and may be putting up a serious roadblock in the free-trade talks with the United States. Opposition members insist the Mulroney government has promised American free trade negotiators patent protection to large drug companies would be extended.

Consumer Affairs Minister Harvie Andre said the senators' actions are "anti-democratic" and will provoke a public backlash.

"No matter how people feel about the bill I hope people would recognize the validity of a duly-elected government."

But the Liberal senators say they are not only defending the poor and the sick but Canadian nationalism as well.

"I will never have my behavior dictated by Americans," said Senator Norbert Theriault.

In the House of Commons, Liberal Leader John Turner and NDP Leader Ed Broadbent accused the government of pandering to the Americans. Broadbent said the drug patent bill arose from two direct requests from United States President Ronald Reagan.

Inflation rate dips in month

OTTAWA (CP) — The annual inflation rate fell to 4.7 per cent in July, rising 3.1 per cent compared with the previous five months, Statistics Canada said today.

The June rate was 4.8 per cent, the highest in more than three years.

Transportation costs were the main drain on consumer pockets in July, rising 3.1 per cent compared with a 0.4-per-cent gain in June.

Air travellers felt the biggest lift, as peak-season rates pushed the public transportation index up 23.5 per cent, the agency said.

But, compared with June, it also cost more for housing, health and personal-care items, recreation, reading and education, tobacco and alcohol.

And the price of food rose for the 27th consecutive year between June and July, the agency said, with food bought at stores up 0.2 per cent and restaurant meals up 0.6 per cent.

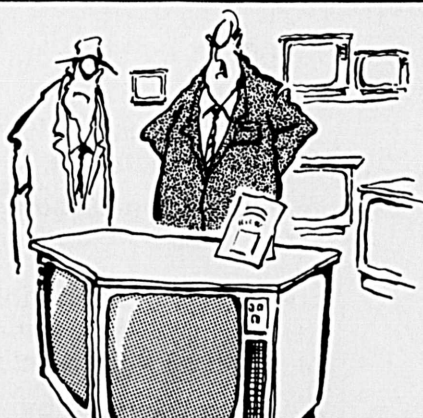
Increased costs for restaurant meals usually occur in January and July, the months that menus are revised, Statistics Canada said.

Clothing prices were the one break for the consumer — they fell 0.3 per cent during July.

The consumer price index is calculated from the cost of hundreds of goods and services monitored by Statistics Canada monthly. The index, based on 1981 prices averaging 100, stood at 139.2 in July, up from 138.2 in June and 132.9 in July 1986.

That means that the same goods and services which cost \$100 in 1981 cost \$139.20 in July.

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