

Local news

Mark Allan
City Editor



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Local 503

Misconduct allegations investigated

by DIANE BAILEY
Citizen Staff

The co-chairmen of a committee looking into sexual misconduct by doctors will visit Prince George next week to hear submissions.

The two committee members, appointed last summer by the B.C. College of Physicians and Surgeons, will hold a public session Thursday between 10 a.m. and 12 p.m. at the Northern Interior Health Unit.

Private submissions will be heard in the afternoon from 1:30 p.m. until 3 p.m.

This is the first time the committee has travelled outside Vancouver since it began its work in September, said co-chairman Barbara Fisher in an interview.

She said she and Dr. Mary Donlevy are making the trip at the request of a number of people here.

One of the groups planning to make a public submission is Equal Justice For Women, formed in the wake of Justice Stewart McMorran's April 12 decision to acquit a Prince George doctor here on sex-related charges involving 12 former patients.

"One of the things we are asking for is an easier way for women to come forward with their complaints," said EJW spokesman Mary Ann Tierney.

She said in the local doctor's case, five of the 12 patients made complaints to other doctors.

"In no case did any doctor assist them in reporting it to the College of Physicians and Surgeons. A couple of doctors suggested they do that, but in no case did anyone assist them."

She said the college needs to clarify guidelines for how reports of sexual abuse are to be handled.

Tierney said EJW also plans to question whether it is reasonable for have doctors policing doctors.

It's an issue the college should examine in an open forum, she said.

EJW was formed to lobby governments for changes to protect women from exploitation by health professionals, to lobby courts to end gender bias in the justice system and to raise public awareness.

Anyone interested in making a presentation to the committee while it is in Prince George can call 1-800-972-8972.

The committee hopes to have its draft report ready for the council of the College of Physicians and Surgeons by the end of June. It should be ready for public release by late September or October, Fisher said.

WORKERS TO VOTE ON 'SURVIVAL' CONTRACT

Tentative deals reached at 10 mills

by KEN BERNSOHN
Citizen staff

Ten unionized sawmills in northern B.C. have agreed to new contracts with IWA-Canada Local 1-424.

After more than 10 months of bargaining, a tentative agreement was reached Monday with Domtar Inc., Dunkley Lumber, Finlay Forest Industries, Lakeland Mills,

The Pas Lumber, Quest Wood Products, plus Fletcher Challenge, Lignum Ltd. and West Fraser in Williams Lake.

All are members of the Council on Northern Interior Forest Employment Relations (Conifer).

Agreement was reached Tuesday with Weldwood of Canada for its Quesnel sawmill, according to Shiv Garcha, financial

secretary of the Prince George-based local.

"It's a survival package," Garcha and Dave Gunderson, executive director of Conifer agreed today.

Gunderson pointed out the three-year agreement would give the industry stability when it's under attack from the United States and firms have been suffer-

ing from lumber low prices for several years.

The deal, which has to be voted on by union members, goes for three years from the expiration of the previous contract last July. It calls for no increases in wages during the first two years and an 85-cent-per-hour raise during the final year.

The major improvement, ac-

ording to Garcha, is in pensions, with a 70-cent-per hour increase in pension contributions by the companies starting in the second year of the contract. This will bring the company contribution to \$2.40.

The union meets today with Northwood Pulp and Timber. Union members will begin next week to vote on the pact.

Murder case now in jury's hands

by KEN BERNSOHN
Citizen Staff

The work of prosecution and defence lawyers in the first-degree murder trial of Gerald (Jerry) Smaaslet is over.

The jury of eight men and four women began deliberating this morning whether the 30-year-old should be convicted of the murder of Donna May Charlie, 22, in September, 1990.

Charlie was Smaaslet's girlfriend. They were both from Fort Ware, a remote Indian reserve 450 kilometres north of Prince George.

On Tuesday defence lawyer Randy Walker told the jury why Smaaslet should leave the court a free man. Crown Counsel Alan Bate said why Smaaslet should go to jail.

Each lawyer began his summation by telling the jury it was their job to decide who to believe, and how much to believe them, and that they were the judge of the facts just as Mr. Justice Victor

Curtis's task was to be the judge of the law in the case.

"Two things are clear," Walker said. "Anyone whose liberty is at jeopardy is assumed innocent unless each and every point of the Crown's case is proven.

"The charge is that Jerry Smaaslet murdered Donna Charlie. You have heard Jerry Smaaslet defend himself against this charge.

"The people involved in this case are from a different culture — Fort Ware and the streets of Prince George.

"In both, the police are not your friends. They are the people who descend from the sky, come into your house and take you away."

He pointed out that witnesses for both the defence and prosecution have been reluctant to testify.

"This man, Jerry Smaaslet, came to Prince George with a cheque in his pocket and a girlfriend on his arm. The Crown would have you believe this is part

of some plot to kill her. But the facts do not fit this."

Walker pointed out contradictions he saw in testimony of witnesses for the prosecution and said, "We do not really have a cause of death in this case (established in court).

"But the Crown can't argue we have blood in a room and a dead woman, so obviously he killed her. The law doesn't work that way.

"This case is shot through with rumor and innuendo."

He said that although witness Wanda Isadore testified Smaaslet told her he mutilated Donna Charlie while she was still alive, this witness was not believable.

He then attacked the credibility of Marilyn Isadore, the one witness whose testimony supported that of her sister.

"There is little direct evidence, a lot of circumstantial evidence."

Bate began his summation by outlining all the things that had to

be proven before Smaaslet could be convicted.

"We have proven some of these things (without disagreement from the defence, namely that Charlie died in Prince George in early September 1990).

"I have no quarrel with my friend's assertion that the Crown's case is circumstantial. Yes, it is. The conflict is in the evidence presented at this trial."

But the crucial issue, Bate said, is who the jury decides to believe — the two witnesses who said Smaaslet admitted he killed Charlie or Smaaslet's testimony that he didn't.

Bate went over the established facts, that Smaaslet and Charlie checked into the Sportsmen's Motel and that she was eventually found buried in an empty lot nearby, that on Saturday morning the motel manager visited their room and found it a "shambles" with blood on the walls.

"But if that was all we had, we could all go home early."

He spoke of the uncontested testimony by the young male cousin of Smaaslet who helped bury the body.

"But I say again, if that's all we have we can all go home. But that is not all the evidence there is.

"What Wanda Isadore and Marilyn Isadore say is testimony if you accept it. . . Compare what these two say to whatever physical facts you know and ask why would they say this.

"As my friend has pointed out, they are reluctant witnesses. You have to weigh whether what they say is accurate and/or true."

He went over their testimony about what Smaaslet said after the murder, including allegations of the mutilation of Charlie while she was still alive, and of contradictions in Smaaslet's testimony compared to what other witnesses said.

PUBLIC SUPPORT APPLAUDED

United Way cash distributed

by ARNOLD OLSON
Citizen Staff

People throughout Prince George can look at each other with pride, says United Way manager Murry Krause, because this community has a generous heart.

Prince George not only succeeded in maintaining support for various agencies, but the \$405,214 raised in the 1991-92 fund-raising campaign is a 5.3-per cent increase over the previous year.

He announced today the shares that community agencies will get from that total.

"We're so impressed with the level of giving within the community," Krause said — volunteers bringing in increased amounts of money, despite the recession.

"We lost \$27,000 from one corporate gift alone this year. It means the volunteers not only

SERVICES

came up with the increase, but compensated for that \$27,000."

Only \$18,405 has been allocated for United Way operating costs, said Krause. The balance of the \$150,000 annual costs will be raised by more fund-raising.

About two dozen agencies are allocated base rate amounts so they can plan annual spending. As well as that guarantee, they get money that was donated specifically to them during the United Way campaign.

As an example, the Child Development Centre, which gets the largest amount, has a base rate of \$38,600 this year, up from \$33,600 last year. They will also

get \$6,408 which was donated specifically to them.

Only two agencies will get significant new money this year beyond base rate increases.

Krause said Intersect has not had a base rate increase for some time, despite its growth. That group will get an additional \$1,409 this year.

The new Brain Injured Group will not only receive the \$1,314 amount specified by donors, but will get an additional \$2,290.

Non-member agencies were named by donors and will get every dollar of that \$9,220, Krause said.

Krause said Prince George is bucking a trend set by other communities which have not met their targets and must cut what they give to their community agencies.

"I want to give a pat on the back to our volunteers and our

local donors for helping us achieve our goal and surpassing it."

He said some volunteers pressed beyond the norm, calling several times for donations when people were not home.

He said Prince George donors seem to be keeping inflation in mind, increasing their annual donations.

"The people, when asked, are very generous. We're so impressed with the level of giving.

"What has to be kept in mind is that as governments withdraw financial support for many of the agencies, or at least keeping them at past levels, it means more dollars are going to have to come from the communities if they want to see these agencies survive."

The small increase might offset possible shrinkage due to unfulfilled pledges, because of the recession.

Cameras stolen

Someone smashed the back door at Video Pop, 1701 West Central St. just before 4 a.m. today and removed video cameras worth about \$13,000, say the RCMP who responded to an alarm at the store.

The police are requesting help from the public in solving the crime and ask anyone with information to call them at 562-3371, or CrimeStoppers at 564-TIPS.

Although more women have been given court documents for soliciting prostitution during the past week than normal, this isn't part of a deliberate campaign, according to the RCMP.

"We normally have trouble prosecuting unless a victim comes forward," said Sgt. Rick Kimoto.

"But during the past week some of our officers have been solicited, which makes it easy to get witnesses."

Kemano foes keep up fight

by DIANE BAILEY
Citizen Staff

Fort Fraser residents are keeping the fight for public environmental hearings into Alcan's Kemano Completion Project in the spotlight.

A group calling itself A River Forever will have an information booth at the Pine Centre Mall in Prince George Friday and Saturday.

The plan is to introduce the group and present its concerns about the impact of the hydroelectric project on the Nechako River, said spokesman Pam Sholty.

The group also wants to encourage people to attend a public meeting with Environment Minister John Cashore on the issue Feb. 27.

The meeting, organized by the Prince George-based Allied Rivers Commission, is scheduled to begin at 7:30 p.m. at the Coast Inn of the North.

Three speakers from A River Forever will talk at the meeting about Fort Fraser's concerns. The project will reduce water flows in the Nechako to about half of what they are now, and only 12 per cent of their pre-1950 levels.

Residents in the Fort Fraser area are worried the lower levels will concentrate pollution, destroy fish and wildlife habitat, hurt the region's tourism potential and make crop irrigation impossible.

The community, along with the Cheslatta and Nautley Indian bands, plans to give a visual demonstration of its concern to Cashore at the Prince George meeting.

Sholty said her group expects to fill two school buses with people who want to attend the meeting, and all will be wearing light-blue sweatshirts with the group's logo.

The sweatshirts will be sold in Prince George at Junior Junction on Fourth Avenue and at Toyland in the Sprucecland Mall starting Friday. Pine Centre Mall policy prevents selling them at its information table, said Sholty.

Fort Fraser's interest in the Kemano issue is still as strong as it was more than two months ago, when half the area's population attended an information meeting, said A River Forever member Janet Romain.

"It's hard to even walk down the street without people stopping you to talk about the river."

She said although group mem-

bers have different interests to protect, there is consensus.

"There is a common thread. A steady flow with more water, and a full hearing, too."

Flows fluctuate now because Alcan releases water from its reservoir behind the Kenney Dam in the summer to keep the river volume high and the water temperature low enough so salmon don't suffer.

Romain said a major breakthrough for the group's position came when the Fort Fraser Livestock Association said recently that all cattle producers would benefit from a river with a steady flow.

The association had previously supported the Kemano project, she said.

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