

EITHER THAT OR SEVERE RESTRAINT PROGRAM

Tax hike best alternative, premier says

by PAUL STRICKLAND
Citizen Staff

Increased taxes represent a better approach to cutting budget deficits than a severe restraint program, says Premier Mike Harcourt.

Modest revenue increases for Victoria are required for anticipated spending rises in essential areas — three per cent for schools, post-secondary education and hospitals, he told The Citizen Friday from Victoria.

The B.C. government is expected to present a new budget this spring.

"But if you agree that we have to put a lid on and reduce the deficit, that will require further revenue measures. And we think that balanced approach is the best approach, rather than the savage restraint program we saw in the 1980s from the Bill Bennett Socrads."

The NDP government did not materially

worsen what it knew to be a deepening deficit by granting a 5.5- to six-per-cent wage increase to civil servants in the B.C. Government Employees' Union (BCGEU) last year, Harcourt said.

"The settlement for this last year was two per cent," he said.

Higher increases for earlier years were justified, he added.

"The increases were merely mirroring those in the private sector, too, when inflation was five per cent or more. The settlements were five to six per cent that those settlements in 1990 and 1991 were mirroring — those in the private sector."

"But this year they were two per cent or less, and we're saying to the school boards and universities, hospitals and colleges, that we expect them to sharpen their pencils, cut out waste, cut out unnecessary administrative costs and spend smarter, and then they'll be able to live within

those modest increases, which are greater than in any other province, by the way."

Last July the BCGEU won pay raises of \$1 an hour across the board, or between 5.5 and six per cent, retroactive to July 1991, on an average hourly pay of \$17.64. The union had been without a contract since Aug. 1, 1991.

Increases of two per cent were then paid in December. In addition, a cost-of-living increase will be calculated and added this August.

In 1991 the inflation rate in B.C. was 5.3 per cent, and for Canada as a whole it averaged 5.6 per cent. In 1992 the inflation rate in B.C. was 2.7 per cent, while it was 1.5 per cent for the whole country.

Continuing revenue shortfalls and cuts in many areas of the provincial budget will not mean shelving or postponing projects in the Prince George area, Harcourt continued.

"I made it clear that the provisions, for example, for the Prince George courthouse (expected to open in 1995) and for the construction funds for the University of Northern B.C. are contained in those (budget) figures, as well as new schools that are required for a growing population."

"We've got in this year's budget over a billion dollars being spent on education construction alone."

The amount of the increased post-secondary education budget for UNBC is for this year's construction costs and to cover next year's construction costs. The main campus in Prince George is still expected to open in the fall of 1994, Harcourt noted.

"It will not slow down. Construction will proceed apace at the University of Northern B.C. We're recommitting in our budget to getting that university built on

time and on budget, and ready for the educational needs of northern B.C."

Asked to comment on other areas of the upcoming budget that will be of interest to Prince George residents, Harcourt said, "The assurances to Prince George are that health care is a high priority for us, but you can't continue to sustain increases in the budget every year. They're going to have to spend a lot smarter."

"Also education is a continuing commitment of this government, both in the growth areas like Prince George and new exciting institutions like the University of Northern B.C."

The mining industry should not be discouraged by the new tax regime, and Victoria is working with mining company representatives to be sure resource taxation is fair, Harcourt said.

Mishap sidelines PGSO manager

by ARNOLD OLSON
Citizen Staff

The woman who has worked hard to help build the Prince George Symphony Orchestra to its present stature in B.C.'s music community is taking a year off.

Those who work closely with PGSO general manager Irene Heese agree she probably wouldn't take time off by her own choice, even though she deserves it.

But her eyesight was impaired in a traffic accident last month.

The family car rolled into a ditch. Nobody received painful injuries but Heese received a severe bump on the head affecting the optic nerve. She has had



HEESE **CARSON**
only peripheral vision since.

A woman of boundless energy and determination, Heese tried to carry on but the strain on her eyes was too much. Her doctor ordered her to quit.

Hope still exists that her sight will come back if she rests.

"I want to see my grandchildren," she said, although that is a long way off yet.

However, taking the doctor's advice is still difficult for her.

"That orchestra is my baby and I'm giving it up for adoption and it's breaking my heart," she said with her voice catching.

Lisa Carson, Studio 2880 arts co-ordinator, has been chosen to take over for the following year.

John Unsworth, PGSO conductor and artistic director, has often commended Heese's devotion to the orchestra, and the enthusiasm she threw at every challenge.

"She's had an extraordinary impact. It's very, very rarely do we encounter individuals who have such an extraordinary impact on the community they serve."

Heese first worked as head office clerk for PGSO about six years ago, moving into the general manager's position 18 months afterward. She helped Unsworth to settle in a year later.

Since then, the pair led PGSO from a performing entity with a \$200,000 budget to one with almost a half a million dollars. The number of professional musicians has substantially increased as well as the PGSO's activity — not only in Prince George but in B.C.

"I certainly couldn't have done what I've managed with the PGSO without her," Unsworth said. "What has been done we did together."

City council

City council will discuss Monday two time-line options offered for construction of four proposed major facilities for Prince George by the turn of the century.

Council tabled the matter Jan. 11 for two weeks to ponder the options and give the public a chance for input.

"They may or may not choose an option Monday," manager George Paul said Friday. "They may feel they need more time to consider a decision like this."

The four facilities are an art gallery, ice arena, aquatic centre and performance theatre.

There are a number of groups in the arts and sports communities that want to see their favorite facility go up first.

"We can get into timeless arguments about which should be done first," said Paul.

"But council will be looking for a strategy that will get the job done rather than worrying about which should be built first, second and so on."

■ Option one is to have in operation an art gallery in 1995, arena in 1996, pool in 1990 and performance centre in 2001.

A total of \$17.6 million would have to be borrowed and taxes in 1998 would be four to six per cent

higher than if the facilities were not built, Kennedy said.

■ Option two is to have in operation an art gallery in 1995, pool in 1996, arena in 1999 and performance theatre in 2001.

A total of \$17.5 million would have to be borrowed and taxes in 1998 would be from 4.5 to seven per cent higher than if the facilities were not built.

★★★

In other business:

■ Council will look at providing backyard composters for the public.

One method is to sell composters with no city subsidizing at a cost of \$42.50 each after the provincial subsidy of one-third of the cost is deducted.

The other option is for the city to match the government subsidy and sell composters for about \$20 each.

Cost to the city would total about \$22,500.

■ Council's agenda does not include an expected report from McElhanney Engineering on the development of University Way, the main entrance leading to the University of Northern B.C. from 15th Avenue.

REGIONAL DISTRICT

Miworth residents okay natural gas

by BERNICE TRICK
Citizen Staff

Residents in Miworth are getting natural gas.

A Jan. 16 referendum to borrow money was conducted by the Fraser-Fort George Regional District (FFGRD) to help pay for the gas line system resulted in an 88 per cent vote in favor.

It's a first for B.C., says Harvey Clark, the FFGRD director for the Chilako River-Nechako electoral area.

"No local government has ever held a referendum to construct a natural gas system," he said.

Directors approved two bylaws at Thursday's regional district meeting to borrow \$111,000 towards the total cost of the \$600,000 project.

Property owners will pay back the loan over a 10-year period with about \$1 per \$1,000 property assessment being charged, said Tom Yates, FFGRD community services director.

The rest of the project will be paid over time in fees and services provided by B.C. Gas.

The gas should be flowing by the end of June, said Colin Kinsley, B.C. Gas construction supervisor.

Miworth, west of Prince George, has 121 homes with an average 1993 assessment of \$70,000.

At Thursday's meeting, requests were approved for natural gas feasibility studies in Ness Lake, Nukko Lake and McLeod Lake.

★★★

Fraser-Fort George Regional District wants an investigation into a new fee structure set by the Ministry of Agriculture which calls for fees of up to \$750 from those applying to have their property removed from the Agriculture Land Reserve (ALR).

The fee, effective Jan. 1, calls for a mandatory payment of \$500 to the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) and a further optional

\$250 for local regional districts wishing to charge a fee.

Local directors are angry because no consultation was done with regional districts or municipalities before the fee was applied.

"It's the same old story. The ALC is operating in a vacuum, and there's no dealing with the people," said FFGRD chairman Bob Headrick.

Directors voted to send "a strong letter" of protest to the ALC as well as 28 other regional districts across the province and the North Central Municipal Association which represents all regional districts in the top half of the province.

Union of B.C. Municipalities will be requested to investigate the matter.

"It's ludicrous that we have not been consulted on this matter," said past chairman Colin Kinsley.

★★★

A Prince George vehicle with historical significance might be coming home.

A 1928 Durant — a small truck — became available along with 60 other historic B.C. vehicles when the Transportation Museum at Cloverdale closed recently.

Regional districts and municipalities were informed about vehicles which originated in their areas.

Prince George's Railway Museum, with support from city council and the Fraser-Fort George Regional Museum, is applying to obtain the vehicle.

"It was a Prince George vehicle restored in this area. The word is it will be coming home," FFGRD director Monica Becott said Thursday.

★★★

FFGRD bylaw enforcement director Anne Hogan received congratulations Thursday for successfully completing a course in advanced bylaw enforcement.

Weather

Prince George: Tonight, periods of snow tapering to a few flurries overnight. Total accumulations near 5 centimetres. Windy at times. Low minus 8. Sunday, cloudy with sunny periods. Flurries likely mainly in the evening. Windy at times. High zero. Probability of precipitation 90 per cent tonight, 70 Sunday.

Chilcotin, Cariboo: Tonight, cloudy with a few flurries. Partial clearing overnight. Lows -8 to -15. Sunday, cloudy with sunny periods. Chance of flurries. Highs near zero. Probability of precipitation 80 per cent tonight, 60 Sunday.

Bulkley Valley, the Lakes: Tonight, periods of snow tapering to a few flurries this evening. Partial clearing overnight with winds diminishing. Total accumulations near 5 centimetres. Low -12. Sunday, cloudy with sunny periods. A few flurries developing in the evening and becoming windy. High -

3. Probability of precipitation 90 per cent tonight, 80 Sunday.

Parsnip: Tonight, periods of snow tapering to a few flurries overnight. Total accumulations near 5 centimetres. Low -12. Sunday, cloudy with flurries likely. High -4. Probability of precipitation 90 tonight, 70 Sunday.

TO THE CHURCH OF THE NORTH

"Whoever Shall Humble Himself As A Little Child—"

"The same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. The Lord regards the lowly, but the proud He sees from afar, (He won't come near them)." Mt18:4, Ps138:6.

*** Is it just the middle of January? And Christmas so recently past? Where has the gentler, kinder, sweeter spirit gone? So he cried out, "Lord! How can we retain that spirit? Please God." Then he burst into tears as the Lord spoke. "If My people will humble themselves and pray, and 'come to Me as a little child,' we will receive the meekness and sweetness, the quiet dignity and innocence of the Babe in the manger. The hardness and arrogance that comes with pride will go, together with the spirit of MOCKERY that draws attention to self with jokes and wisecracks. *** If we walked with God in this meekness, would we bring Him our own inventions, 'our (own) righteousnesses' which are as filthy menstrual rags?" orig. Heb. 1:64-6. Or would we then, in the simplicity that is in Christ? 2Co 11:3, just humbly obey Him? Consider the arrogance of man to

add or subtract even one word to the Bible, inspired by a God who gave us Jesus on the cross and created the whole universe, including us! The only thing in heaven created by us will be the marks on JESUS' body when we nailed Him to the cross, Jn20:27, inspired by our own inventions. Hence all these things, idols, including denominations, bring those marks to the Father's mind. And again the tears came as the Spirit spoke this word; the Lord also revealing unclean things in his own heart. *** Can you see the filthiness of those rags and of man made denominations? that betray JESUS today, MOCKING His prayer "that we all be one"? Is this filthiness what you really want to take with you to the Babe in the manger? or the Man of the cross? Is it not time to be ashamed, very ashamed "and turn from our wicked ways - that (God may) heal (our) land?" 2Ch7:14. And trust JESUS? *** Little children, guard yourselves from idols. Amen." 1st Jn last vs. John Funk.

PS: Ps131; "Lord, My heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty." But the proud and haughty spirits are the only kind emanating from TV.

Real Estate Speaking

ROSELYNE
Real Estate Practitioner

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Face Value

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2 YRS.		2 YRS.	
6.25	5.75	\$ 5,001 - 10,000	3.00
3 YRS.		3 YRS.	
6.50	6.00	\$ 10,001 - 25,000	3.25
4 YRS.		4 YRS.	
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5 YRS.		5 YRS.	
7.625	7.125	\$ 50,000 + UP	5.50

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