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PRINCE GEORGE

CITIZEN



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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1994

AUTO DEALERS 'CLOSE TO LOSING THEIR SHIRTS'

Downtown crime action planned

by BERNICE TRICK
Citizen Staff

Prince George auto dealers are "close to losing their shirts" due to crime, says the RCMP head of crime prevention.

"We have blatant, arrogant people in this community," Cpl. Al McCaig told about 40 Towncenter Business Association members at Wednesday's monthly TCBA meeting.

He's counting on the Commu-

nity Policing Access Centre (CPAC) to help reduce crime in downtown Prince George.

"We want to jump into CPAC with both feet. I'd like to see the whole (crime prevention) unit in CPAC," said McCaig, adding the idea is under review.

It would mean increased patrolling of streets and closer liaison with downtown businesspeople.

"It's a commitment we'd like to make to the downtown. We

believe in the community and we want it crime-free," said McCaig, who's scheduled a special meeting with auto dealers.

Supporting McCaig's statements, TCBA president Harry Streckenbach told how Honda North has had more cars stolen during the past eight months than over the past eight years.

Dave Fanshaw, owner of Honda North, said today he's had nine cars stolen since last June.

Those that have been recovered have been partially stripped, said Fanshaw, who believes most thefts become "quick-sells" to buy drugs.

One offender had a number of heroin hypodermic needles on his person when apprehended, Fanshaw said.

"It's fine to say we have insurance, but the insurance companies can't continue to pay, and we can't continue to afford the in-

creased insurance rates," said Fanshaw.

Since Dec. 1 seven vehicles have been stolen from Northland Plymouth Chrysler, sales manager Peter Crawford told The Citizen this month.

Both auto dealers speak of stolen wheels, smashed windows and theft of interior components like ignitions, stereos and speakers.

"RCMP do a fine job, but the

court system lets them go," said Fanshaw.

McCaig encourages businesspeople to attend a crime prevention seminar which will focus on shoplifting and armed robbery. The seminar is scheduled for 7 p.m. March 10 at the Coast Inn of the North.

McCaig invited business people experiencing particular problems to contact him at 561-3300.

Assessor defends hike in city property values

by BERNICE TRICK
Citizen Staff

Prince George businesses can blame themselves for rising assessments of downtown properties, says an official for the B.C. Assessment Authority.

"You in the business community are the ones driving (property) values in the City of Prince George," deputy assessor Andrew Moffat told about 40 Towncenter Business Association members Wednesday.

"You follow your customers. I just follow the market, but I don't set it," he said.

If property assessments are increasing it probably means business is good. On the other hand, if customers are scarce and business is slow, values probably won't go up, he said.

The 14 appraisers in Prince George use the "income approach" to assess at least 90 per cent of properties in the area from

Valemount to Fraser Lake to Mackenzie.

It means they base the assessment on what they figure an owner can profit annually, after expenses, if he was to rent the place out.

Moffat said it's the "most mysterious of the methods used to calculate assessments" which also include a "cost approach" which defines the cost to buy land and rebuild, and the "comparison approach" which compares selling prices in the area.

Those who want to appeal because they're unhappy with assessments are welcomed by BCAA.

"We're one of the few agencies which encourages people to criticize and review our work," said Moffat.

Two levels of appeal are available to property owners: an informal court of revision, made up of a three-member board, and a higher level Assessment Appeal Board.

The board charges \$25 for an

appeal, but it ensures the assessment is correct, said Moffat.

He doesn't like those years when assessments catch property owners by surprise.

"We don't want any more surprises," he said, referring to last year's tax revolt, particularly in the commercial sector, when some assessments soared.

To help avoid those surprises, taxpayers should study their assessment statements carefully each year.

"If you're being under-assessed, and we find out, it will be fixed. If the market is good, expect your market value to increase."

The province of B.C. also plays a role in assessments, said Moffat.

Last year Victoria changed the way it applied school tax and, "It took money from you," he said, adding the province can change its formula whenever it pleases.

HEAVY SNOW ACROSS PROVINCE

Avalanche warning issued

by Canadian Press

VANCOUVER — Heavy snowfall throughout British Columbia has created an extreme avalanche hazard, blocking highways, forcing ski resorts to close runs and prompting warnings against venturing into mountainous areas.

Up to two metres of snow has fallen in the past week in some parts of the province and more is forecast through the weekend.

"That amount of new snow just can't strengthen up quickly enough," Alan Dennis, manager of the Canadian Avalanche Centre in Revelstoke, B.C., said Wednesday.

The centre, 400 kilometres northeast of Vancouver, monitors snow conditions across British Columbia.

Dennis said the new snow is sitting on an unstable base, making

the safety risk the worst it has been all winter.

People planning trips into backcountry areas this weekend should use extreme caution, he said.

"We're really advising people away from the alpine," said Dennis, adding wooded areas or groomed ski runs are a safer bet. "It might be a good weekend to stay home and read a good book."

Drivers are also likely to encounter avalanche problems in the next few days, although highway crews are working to ensure roads are safe.

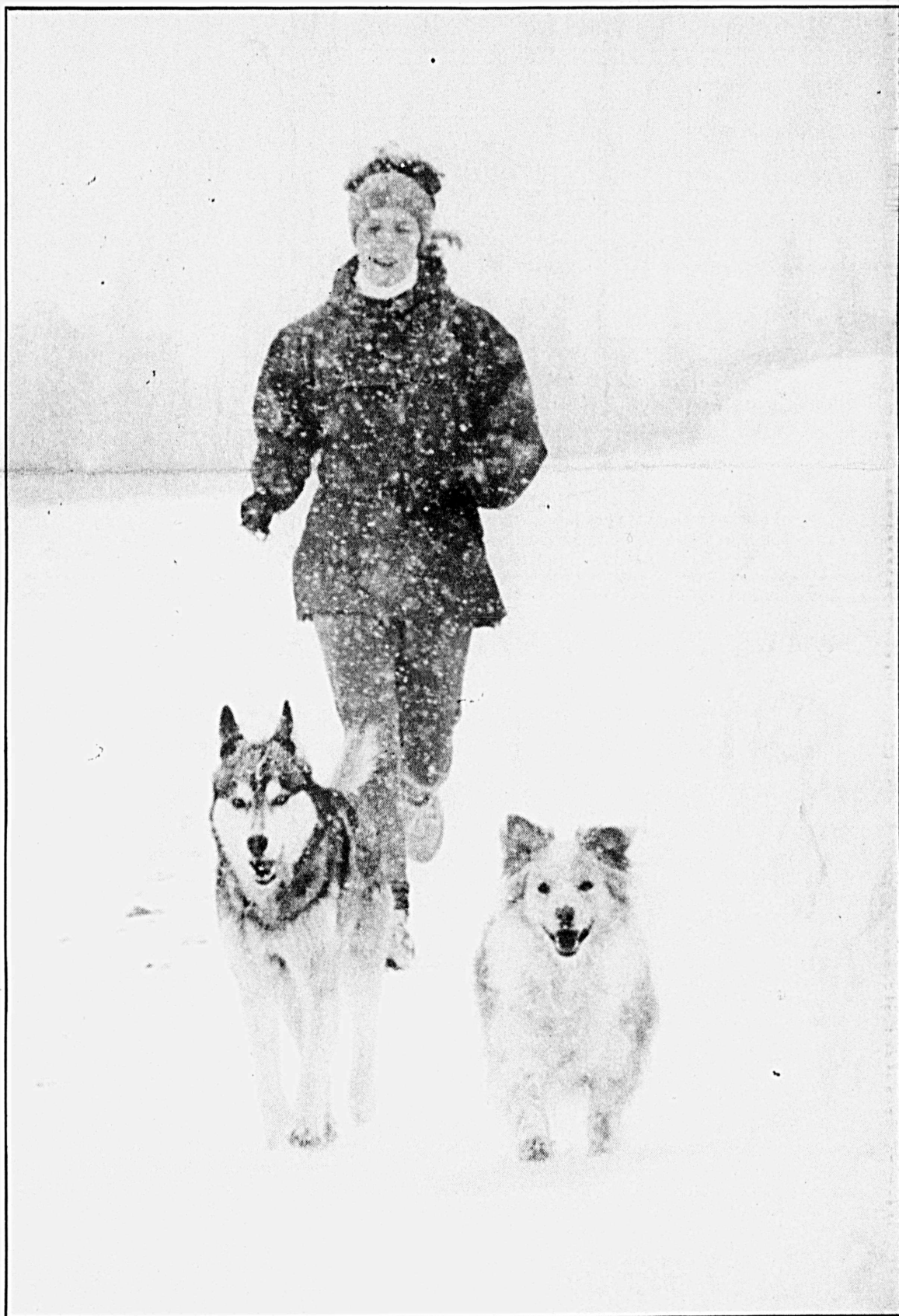
An avalanche closed a portion of Highway 3, known as the Salmo-Creston Highway, in the Kootenays for five hours on Wednesday. A small avalanche also temporarily shut down the road to Mount Washington near Courtenay on Vancouver Island.

And drivers on the Trans-Canada Highway should expect delays of up to two hours west of Revelstoke as road crews use explosives to bring down dangerous chunks of snow in Glacier National Park.

Whistler and Blackcomb mountains, 100 kilometres north of Vancouver, have received almost 200 centimetres of new snow — almost enough to bury a pro basketball player — in the past week.

"It may very well be the biggest storm in Blackcomb's history," Arthur DeJong, Blackcomb's operations manager, said of the recent snowfall.

"The backcountry is extremely dangerous right now, and I would advise that no one go into the backcountry."



Citizen photo by Dave Milne

Jogging with dogs

Valerie Houghton's trail-breaking dogs provided a useful addition to winter jogging along Foothills Boulevard since the snow began falling again. On top of the 12.6 centimetres that fell Wednesday, another 10 centimetres is expected by Friday morning.

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Farcus



"No excuses. It's overdue ... now, hand over the coconuts!"

Has life been getting you down lately?

by GORDON HOEKSTRA
Citizen Staff

Finding it a little difficult to drag yourself out of bed?

Looking less and less forward to shovelling your driveway?

Finding it hard to get off the sofa and down to the gym or out for a cross-country ski?

Well, you might not be alone.

Scientists have found that people, some more than others, are sensitive to changes in the amount of daylight hours.

During transition times — Prince George is experiencing one now (you may have noticed it's staying light longer and longer

— people have to reset their internal clocks and some have difficulty doing that and develop a set of symptoms called Seasonal Adjustment Disorder (SAD).

The symptoms include feelings of depression, sleep problems, low energy and the idea of just not wanting to pull yourself off the couch.

Many people experience some of these symptoms to some degree but when they become debilitating it's called SAD, said Mental Health Service director Mel Anthony.

"That is, it actually interferes

with a person's ability to carry out their normal functioning.

"It's not just, 'I'm feeling a little down today.' It's 'I can't get out to work.'"

People in the North are more susceptible to SAD because of the wide range of hours of daylight and hours of darkness, said Anthony.

"Most people have some reaction, but it doesn't stop them from going to work. They make a rapid adjustment to it.

"So, for a week or two they'll give up their exercise routines because they can't get around to

feeling up to it. But then they pick up again and off they go."

The best thing to do is to do the opposite of what you feel like doing, said Anthony. "Don't look for excuses, just get out and do it. Maybe not as much or push yourself as hard, but get out and do it."

It also helps if the people around you understand what you are going through because you'll probably be a little hostile and chippy, said Anthony, adding that light therapy can help

"Certain frequencies of light seem to affect the system positively."

SWITCHBOARD: 562-2441

CLASSIFIED: 562-6666

CIRCULATION: 562-3301