



SECOND FRONT

MORE LOCAL NEWS
ON PAGE 5

RCMP should submit to drug testing, officer says

by KAREN KWAN
Citizen Staff

RCMP officers suspected of using drugs should be required to submit to a blood test, said the officer in charge of the RCMP North District.

A procedure that allows an officer's superiors to request a test should be established, said Supt. Mike Morris following last week's revelation that a Vancouver Island RCMP drug-enforcement officer died of a cocaine and heroin overdose.

"We have such a job here in society that... we should always be fully trans-

parent in how we do our business," Morris said.

"I think Canadians have an expectation that we would be doing (our duty) without any influence from drugs or any other noxious types of substances."

Const. Barry Schneider, 43, died Nov. 29 from what initially appeared to be a heart attack. But toxicology tests released last week found a lethal amount of heroin and cocaine in his blood.

Although highly publicized when it does occur, Morris said in 28 years with the RCMP he's only known of two

officers — including Schneider — who were found to be using drugs.

A member caught using illicit drugs would face disciplinary action, he said. Programs are available to help members overcome substance-abuse problems, whether the addiction is to alcohol, drugs or prescription pills, he said.



SCHNEIDER

In the years prior to his death, Schneider spearheaded a movement in the Courtenay-Comox area to institute the popular DARE program in local schools.

Morris said he doesn't expect there to be any changes as a result of the incident in the way the Drug Abuse Resistance Education program is delivered in schools.

He said he doesn't anticipate tighter screening of officers trained to teach the DARE curriculum.

"I think this will just give them more reason to push forward with the pro-

gram. I don't see it affecting or harming the program here in any way," he said.

Michelle Marrelli, chair of the District Parent Advisory Council in School District 57, said Schneider's drug-related death should send a strong message to children that drugs are dangerous.

"It's a clear and direct message that drugs are harmful."

The incident also shows students that anybody — no matter what their position in society — can be tempted and even killed by drugs, she said.

POLICE BEAT

Alley assault probed

RCMP are investigating an assault on a man in an alley in the 1100 block of Second Avenue Monday night.

The victim was struck in the head but the injury was not believed to be serious, police said. The man told police that the two male suspects fled into a hotel, but officers could not locate them. A number of witnesses have been interviewed, police said.

Vehicle stolen

A vehicle was stolen from the 700 block of Ochakwin Crescent Monday.

The car is a blue 1982 Chrysler New Yorker bearing B.C. licence number HHW 899. There was a baby carrier in the back seat.

Thieves hit house

Culprits forced the back door to a home in the 300 block Ewert Street Monday.

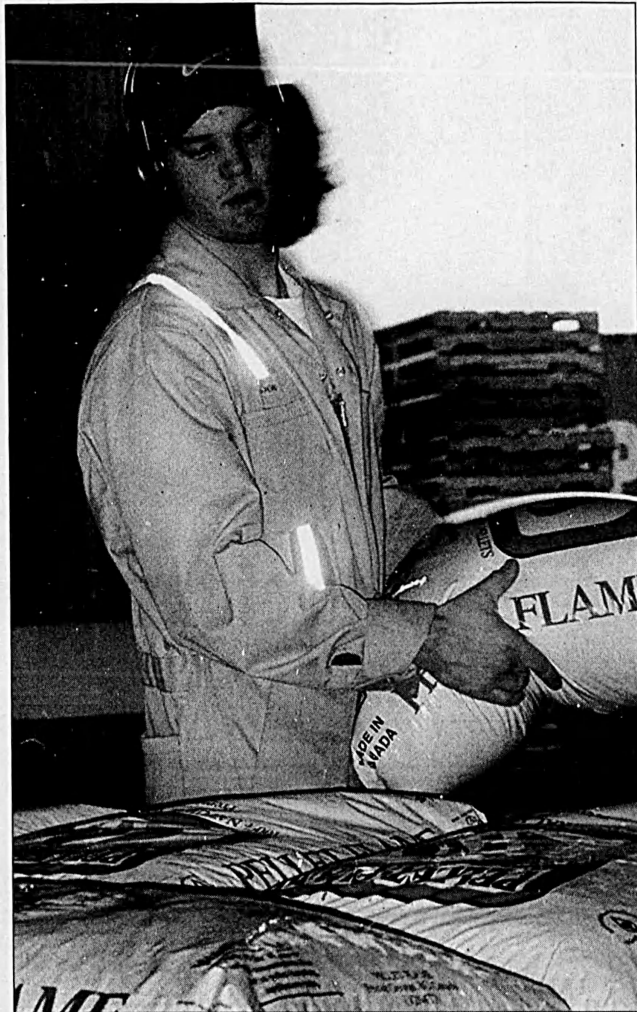
Stolen was a DVD player, a quantity of cash and liquor, police said. The matter remains under investigation.

Youths nabbed

Three youths were detained for trespassing at Prince George Auto Wreckers in the 6800 block of Algoma Crescent Tuesday morning.

A security guard caught the males skulking around in the yard, police said.

RCMP attended but the owner didn't want to pursue criminal charges. Nothing was reported stolen.



Pellet manufacturer targets energy users with cheaper product

by GORDON HOEKSTRA
Citizen staff

A Prince George wood pellet manufacturer hopes to capture new energy users in North America who are looking for alternatives in the face of escalating natural gas prices.

Right now, P.G. Pellet Flame exports 80% of its wood pellets to Sweden, where commercial consumers — including a city of 180,000 — take advantage of carbon tax credits for using pellets, which do not increase greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere.

The wood pellets — compressed under high pressure from sawdust and shavings — can be used in space heaters like wood pellet stoves, as well as in specially-made furnaces and boilers.

"The inquiries are coming in," said Pellet Flame owner John Swaan, who started the plant in 1994 south of the BCR industrial site.

"First, I think there was denial and anger over the increase in gas prices. But now people are looking for ways to do something about it. And there is another serious alternative which is viable, available and convenient."

Pellet Flame worker Ben Fonseca stacks 40-pound bags on pallets for shipment. P.G. Pellet Flame also ships pellets in bulk by ship and rail to markets in Europe, the U.S. and Japan.

Citizen staff photo

Just this week, 40 rail car loads of pellets were shipped to Quebec, where pellet use is more popular than in B.C.

Swaan pegs the annual cost to heat a home using wood pellets at about 35% to 45% less than with natural gas.

The initial capital outlay to convert to wood pellets can be recouped in two and a half to three years, he said.

Wood pellet producers — there's also a plant in Quesnel and one preparing to open in Vanderhoof — are also trying to interest greenhouse growers on the Lower Mainland to consider using wood pellets.

A conference has been organized, for later this month in Delta where pellet producers, boiler and furnace manufacturers and B.C. government officials will outline the product, its supply and cost to greenhouse growers.

"We're giving them an option," said Swaan.

Some greenhouse operations have seen their heating bills triple.

Vern Toews, who runs B.C. Vegetable Greenhouse in Delta, which has 40 acres of product under glass, said they're considering everything from coal to wood pellets as a long-term solution to the increased heating costs.

Unfortunately, he said, the growers also need some immediate relief.

COURT DOCKET

Hearing date set

A preliminary hearing for an 18-year-old Vanderhoof man charged in connection with a baby's death is scheduled to begin April 9.

Ryan Ernest Coombs is charged with manslaughter and criminal negligence causing death. The hearing — which will be held in Vanderhoof provincial court — will determine whether the Crown has enough evidence to send the case to trial.

Coombs was initially charged with aggravated assault and criminal negligence causing bodily harm after a four-and-a-half-month-old infant boy was taken to Vanderhoof hospital on Sept. 24, suffering from serious injuries. The charges were upgraded following the baby's death on Sept. 30.

At the time of the incident, police said Coombs was in a relationship with the child's mother.

Sledder recalls deadly avalanche

by KAREN KWAN
Citizen Staff

Armed with safety equipment, three snowmobilers tried desperately to save a friend who was killed Saturday by an avalanche on Torpy Mountain, one of the survivors said Tuesday.

Scott Dulmage, 32, died in the slide that tumbled down the north face of the mountain 80 kilometres northeast of Prince George.

One of Mr. Dulmage's good friends, Bruce Williams, who was riding with the group at the time, said all four men were carrying an avalanche beacon, a shovel and a probe — three items considered crucial when riding.

"The beacons directed us right to him," he said. "We had him dug out and doing CPR within 10 minutes. Unfortunately, just the way he was buried, it didn't matter if we had him out in two minutes," Williams said.

All four friends were extremely experienced riders who had taken avalanche-safety courses, he said. Although they couldn't rescue Mr. Dulmage, Williams said the men were able to use what they learned to locate him quickly.

On Saturday, Williams said he had climbed one side of the hill and was coming down just as Mr. Dulmage, without his knowledge, was starting up the other side.

"I felt a bit of a strange feeling and I looked over my shoulder and saw it coming. I hit the gas a bit and outran it. The whole hill let go," he remembered. "I turned around and it was finished. It was so quick."

Williams said he has experienced smaller slides but nothing of this magnitude. "It's a traumatic experience for sure," he said.

Later, he said, he learned of a slide that swept down another face around the same time as a snowmobiler was riding in that area. "I guess the vibration and shaking of one or the other set it off," he said. "That's how extreme the situation is now." The previous day, he said he saw a couple of fairly large slides on Torpy.

He urges people going into the backcountry to take an avalanche-safety course and to carry safety equipment. The majority of snowmobilers who ride regularly carry safety equipment, Williams said. Experts are warning outdoor enthusiasts of the high avalanche hazard in most areas of the province.

Mr. Dulmage's friends and family continue to mourn his loss, Williams said. "He was a great guy," he said, a happy-go-lucky person who was always willing to help a friend. "There's absolutely not one person in this town who knew him and didn't like him."

City building permits down last year

by PAUL STRICKLAND
Citizen staff

Building permits of all types were down significantly last year from 1999, says Richard Bergey, the city's manager of permits and licences.

But better conditions are expected this year, Bergey said Tuesday. Last year the city issued 519 building permits worth a total of \$46,870,000.

By comparison, in 1999 there had been 617 permits issued representing a construc-

tion value of \$51,540,000.

The hardest hit part of the construction sector was the area of single-family homes. Only 69 permits were issued for single-family houses in 2000, down from 150 the year before.

"The single-family market was off," Bergey said. "Sixty-nine is an extremely low figure."

The commercial and institutional portions of the construction sector did much better, however, he said. "We did have 102 com-

mercial permits with a construction value of \$11.6 million."

In the area of construction of governmental and institutional buildings, the value of construction for which permits were issued last year was \$18 million, Bergey said.

"So there were active, bright spots. Commercial and institutional are doing quite well. In the year 2001, we can expect positive results in the governmental and institutional areas, and possibly the industrial," he said.

Local dogs finish high on agility test list

A number of local dogs finished the year 2000 as among the best on a prestigious Canadian agility list, says a representative of the Top Dog Agility, Obedience and Flyball Association.

Kim Collins's six-year-old Shetland Sheepdog, Piper — fresh off a win at the U.S. national championships in September — was fourth in Canada on the Agility Association of Canada's top 100 dog list, the association said this week.

Bryn, a three-year-old border collie also handled by Collins, finished the year in sixth place.

Collins, a Prince George resident, is the director of agility for the Top Dog Agility, Obedience and Flyball Association. Altogether, seven dogs owned by asso-

ciation members were on the Agility Association of Canada's top 100 list.

Three dogs handled by association member Kay Whitehead of Quesnel also made the AAC list. Whitehead's border collies Ziggy, Mica and Flare placed 25th, 43rd and 57th, respectively.

Skye, a three-year-old border collie entered by Mary Zacharatos of Prince George, was tied for 43rd. Mackie, a five-year-old border collie handled by local resident Sue MacDonald was tied for 66th. Local dog owners and trainers also did well on the list of all-time top 100 dogs in the AAC.

Whitehead's border collies Flare and Ziggy were tied at fifth place at year's end, while Mica sat at 19th.

Collins's dogs Piper and Bryn also made that list at seventh and 12th respectively. Mackie, entered by MacDonald, sat at 69th on the all-time list. Bronte, a seven-year-old poodle handled by June Barton, achieved 72nd place overall.

Several other Prince George dogs appeared on breed-by-breed lists put out by the AAC.

Collins's Bryn was 35th among border collies entered. Piatra, a Labrador Retriever entered by Brenda Colebrook of Prince George, was 10th in that breed.

Ice, a Samoyed owned by local resident Sheldon Pineo, was 12th in its category. Barton's dog Bronte was 10th among standard poodles.

TIMELY.
TOPICAL.
TRUSTED.

PRINCE GEORGE
CITIZEN

Subscribe now!
Call 562-3301

Give a
Gift Subscription
of Call Display.

TELUS

CALL 310-3232

FLOW FACTS

"The winter release at the Skins Lake Spillway, as set by the Nechako Fisheries Conservation Program, is 1148 cubic feet per second (cfs), or 32.5 cubic metres per second (cms). This will remain the approximate release until April 2001.

On January 5, 2001 the reservoir elevation was 2790.1 feet. The reservoir level is currently about 3.5 feet below the long-term average. Flow measurement in the Nechako River at Vanderhoof is unreliable at this time of year due to ice build-up around the Water Survey of Canada gauging station.

For more information, please call Alcan's Regional Office in Vanderhoof at 567-5105 (Prince George: 561-1189; Burns Lake: 692-4315). Skins Lake Spillway discharges are posted on Alcan's homepage at www.sno.net/alcan. Nechako Fisheries Conservation Program information can be accessed at www.NFCP.org. Flow Facts information is provided on Alcan's 24-hour information line in Vanderhoof at 567-5812.



The
Real Estate
Leader

Bill Lynch
Broker/Owner
960-2366

RE/MAX Centre City Realty

Each Office Independently Owned and Operated
1679 - 15th Avenue Fax: (250) 562-8231
Toll Free: 1-800-667-7330

