



SECOND FRONT

COURT DOCKET



Icy sidewalk case

A Prince George woman must cover court costs for legal action launched against a property owner after she slipped and fell on an icy sidewalk, a B.C. Supreme Court judge decided.

Justice G.R. Coultas ordered Elizabeth Cullinane to pay OEPP (Northland) Realty Ltd. for costs incurred when she named the company in a lawsuit against the City of Prince George.

Last August, Coultas found the city liable for 65% of the plaintiff's damages and Cullinane responsible for 35%, saying she was also negligent. Cullinane then sought an order requiring the city to pay Northland's costs.

On Jan. 24, 1997, Cullinane was walking along Third Avenue when she slipped on the city-owned sidewalk and fractured her wrist.

The sidewalk was adjacent to a vacant lot and parking lot which was owned at the time by Northland. In her lawsuit, Cullinane claimed the city was negligent in its duty to clear its sidewalks and warn people of any hazard. She alleged Northland was liable because it contravened a Prince George city bylaw requiring owners to maintain sidewalks adjacent to their property.

But Coultas dismissed the action against Northland, since the bylaw didn't hold owners responsible for legal action by another party.

New fishing trial

A judge has ordered a new trial for an Alberta man who was accused of operating an unlicensed fly-in guide fishing outfit in Northern B.C.

The decision grants an appeal filed by the Crown to overturn a provincial court decision which stayed proceedings against pilot Wayne Hodges. Hodges had applied for a judicial stay of seven charges under the Wildlife Act and the Federal Aeronautics Act, claiming unreasonable delays in his court case infringed on his constitutional right under the Charter.

But Justice Eric Chamberlist quashed the earlier order and recommended a re-trial.

Singh temple donates \$1,500 to quake victims

The Prince George Gurugobind Singh Temple Association has donated about \$1,500 to the Red Cross India Earthquake Fund to assist with relief efforts in western Gujarat state.

A devastating 7.9-magnitude earthquake hit the region Jan. 26.

"We are doing as much as we can in this time of need," said Balam Parhar, temple association president. "We want the community to work together so we can send funds to help with the relief efforts."

The Red Cross is mobilizing resources in response to what it is calling the world's worst earthquake since a similar disaster in Turkey killed more than 17,000 in 1999.

Those wishing to make a financial donation can call 1-800-418-1111, a 24-hour toll-free line that accepts Visa or MasterCard. Or they can call the local Northern B.C.-Yukon Regional Office of the Canadian Red Cross at 1-800-278-7177 during business hours. Cheques should be made payable to the Canadian Red Cross, earmarked "India Earthquake Relief Fund," and mailed to the Northern B.C.-Yukon Regional Office, 1399 Sixth Ave, Prince George, V2L 5L6. On-line donations are accepted at www.redcross.ca.

Donations of goods are not accepted. Many local branches of Canada's chartered banks and trust companies are accepting donations earmarked "India Earthquake Relief Fund."

Snow clearing schedule

Day-shift snow-clearing crews will be concentrating on residential areas today.

Subdivisions scheduled for clearing are: Pinecone, Pinewood, Charella Gardens, Starlane, Baker, Peden Hill, Elkhorn, Foothills, Lakewood, Spruce-land, Nechako, Quinson and Hart Highlands. Time permitting, clearing will also be done in Vista Ridge, Saints and Marleau.

Snow removal parking restrictions are in effect. The public is reminded that on-street parking in residential areas is prohibited between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m., and in the downtown area between 1 a.m. and 8 a.m. Vehicles will be ticketed or towed, says the city's transportation division.

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Throne speech predictable: Harris

Says details about how to weather economic storm should've been given

by GORDON HOEKSTRA
Citizen staff

Canadian Alliance MP Dick Harris said he's concerned the Liberal throne speech delivered this week didn't set out clearly enough how the country will weather an economic slowdown in the U.S.

"It was pretty predictable — it touched on a lot of motherhood stuff," the Prince George-Bulkley Valley MP said Wednesday from Ottawa. "But they didn't talk about any of the plans the government has to weather what

could be a little bit of an economic storm coming. That causes us concern."

The throne speech, delivered by Gov. Gen. Adrienne Clarkson, highlighted making social justice for the most vulnerable groups in society the priority this term. Later,



HARRIS

Finance Minister Paul Martin said despite a slowing economy, Ottawa can still afford the tax cuts and spending promises for health, education and research in the throne speech. There's no need for a winter budget, and its new tax cuts will boost the economy, said Martin.

As Canada depends on the bigger U.S. economy for much of its trade, a "hiccup" in the U.S. will cause "severe heartburn" in Canada, said Harris, the Alliance's deputy finance critic.

The Canadian Alliance said the

Liberals need to introduce a new budget with aggressive measures to deal with the looming economic slowdown.

In an effort to prevent the faltering U.S. economy from slipping into a recession, the U.S. Federal Reserve cut a key interest rate by another half of a percentage point Wednesday.

The U.S. economy grew at an annual rate of just 1.4% during the final three months of 2000, the weakest performance in more than five years.

— with Canadian Press.

Parents want Blackburn to remain junior secondary

by PAUL STRICKLAND
Citizen staff

Thirty Blackburn zone parents met in Buckhorn Tuesday night to map strategy to have Blackburn Junior Secondary School replaced as a Grade 8-10 school, said spokeswoman Gina Moore.

"We want to keep it as a junior secondary that it

has always been for the past 35 years," Moore said Wednesday.

At the meeting, parents organized into a group they named Rural Communities for Blackburn Junior.

Last month a School District 57 committee held a series of meetings at Blackburn-zone elementary schools to explain the options of a junior middle school

(Grades 6-8) and a senior middle school (Grades 7-9).

Survey forms handed out at the meetings included only those two options, Moore said. Some parents who called for Blackburn Junior Secondary to be replaced as the same kind of Grade 8-10 school it currently is, but their views were not seriously considered, she said.

Rural Communities for Blackburn Junior had planned on making a 10-minute presentation during the public comment session at next Tuesday's school board meeting, and initially they were told they could be on the agenda, Moore said.

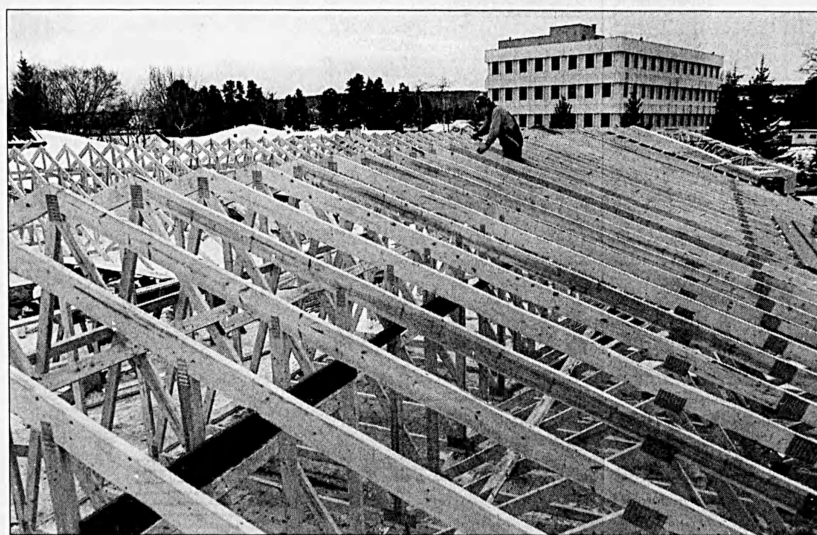
But at mid-week, board chairman Bill Christie told them it wouldn't be fair to all sides if one group had a chance to directly address the board during the public comment session, she said. He advised the parents' group they would instead have to send in their information and the comments they had gathered to assistant superintendent Bendina Miller for inclusion in the written report to be presented to the board Tuesday, Moore said.

"We feel very frustrated," Moore said. The sudden withdrawal of permission to speak directly to trustees violates the spirit of a report the SD 57 board received last fall calling for more openness in board operations and greater public participation in board decision-making, she said.

"Some parents favor the middle school concept, and others are opposed to it," Christie said Wednesday. If one side attends the meeting to speak against the middle school idea, but if no one shows up to speak on behalf of those who favour it, it would look like favouritism by the board to the one side that did appear before them, he said. "The guideline is, all information is to go to Mrs. Miller," Christie said.

Christie said concerned parents may fax their comments to Miller at 561-6820 or by e-mail to bendina_miller@fc.schdist57.bc.ca

The deadline for comments to be considered in preparation of the report is Friday, he said.



Citizen photo by Dave Milne

LODGE TAKING SHAPE — Carpenter Jim Hembling erects trusses on the roof of the addition to the Simon Fraser Lodge, a private long-term care facility on 10th Avenue.

Metis president wants to erase organization's \$500,000 deficit

by KAREN KWAN
Citizen staff

Following a ballot recount last week that upheld his presidency of the Metis Provincial Council of B.C., Harley Desjarlais says he wants to focus on overcoming the organization's half-million-dollar deficit.

Desjarlais, a Prince George resident, and the new council were officially sworn in Saturday at a ceremony in Richmond.

Desjarlais's leadership was placed in jeopardy two weeks ago after a B.C. Supreme Court judge ordered that 15 ballots that were incorrectly rejected after November's election be counted.

The additional ballots could have swung the vote in favour of incumbent Jody Pierce of Surrey, who received 460 votes to Desjarlais's 473.

However, the latest count boosted Desjarlais's tally to 477 compared with Pierce's 463 votes.

"So we went through this exercise to get one more vote," Desjarlais said, referring to his margin of victory.

Shortly after the Nov. 18 election, the North Cariboo Metis Association and four candidates in the election, including Pierce, filed the court action. They sought a court order to count 224 special ballots that had been rejected because the voters could not be properly identified.

Although he wasn't seriously worried about losing his post, Desjarlais said he's glad the political limbo has ended. "There was some lingering is-

sues but the decision brought closure and certainty for everyone," he said.

"I was always optimistic that we would prevail. But the fact is I was ahead, I didn't have any votes to make up. I was probably in a better spot than (Pierce) was."

Now, he said, shrinking the deficit — which Desjarlais said was created by "mismanagement" — is a priority. Streamlining administration and searching for new sources of funding are possible options, he said.

He estimates the number of Metis in B.C. at 25,000, with about 3,000 to 5,000 in the Prince George area. The council's annual funding of \$6.7 million comes from the federal government's employment and training programs under Human Resources Development Canada.

In his judgment, Justice Ian Meiklem acknowledged "there were undoubtedly shortcomings in the procedures adopted and many errors and omissions in the preparation of the final voters' list." But he said counting all of the previously uncounted special ballots without determining whether the voters were qualified and registered on time would set "a very dangerous precedent."

The petitioners who filed the court application also wanted the chief electoral officer to investigate alleged offences at the Prince George polling station during the election, but Meiklem denied the request, saying the application had no merit.

Meeting to look at water

Local residents will be able to learn more about a government plan to protect drinking water in B.C. at an information session Tuesday at the Ramada Hotel.

The session is scheduled from 7 to 9 p.m. The Environment Ministry is holding sessions across the province to gather input on the plan before introducing the legislation this spring.

Included in the proposal are several approaches to ensure drinking water is safe, including four requirements set out by health and water-quality experts:

- Land uses around drinking water sources must be managed to prevent contamination;

- Water treatment must be improved;
- Distribution systems for water must be safe and well-maintained;

- Water quality must be monitored and standards enforced.

For more information about the consultation process or the draft plan, call 1-800-663-7867 and ask for the water management branch. Information is also available on the ministry Website at www.env.gov.bc.ca/wat/wq/dw/

Those who are unable to attend the meeting can submit comments through the Website.

Laid-off forest workers corner Zirnelt

VICTORIA (CP) — Angry laid-off forest workers and a cabinet minister staged a yelling match Wednesday in the British Columbia legislature.

About 25 forest workers from the recently shut down Vancouver Island sawmill at Youbou pointed fingers and yelled accusations at Aboriginal Affairs Minister David Zirnelt during a heated hallway confrontation.

Zirnelt, who is handling the government's response to the TimberWest sawmill closure, raised his voice several times during the tense debate.

"Excuse me," said Zirnelt, his voice becoming louder. "Why are you yelling that point at me?"

Last year, Zirnelt stepped down as Forests Minister for several months after his staff complained about temper management problems.

Premier Ujjal Dosanjh reappointed him to cabinet last November.

TimberWest officially shut down its Youbou sawmill last Friday, axing 220 union and management jobs.

The closure is expected to devastate the nearby community of Lake Cowichan, B.C., about 100 kilometres northwest of Victoria. "We want justice for the workers and we will have justice for the workers, one way or the other," said Bill Routley, president of the local International and Allied Workers Union.

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CORRECTION NOTICE

In our 1-1 Housewares Fair flyer, ToGo "Rings" dinnerware on page 3 will be late - rainchecks are available at the store. On page 6, Lagostina professional cookware 10 piece set and Analon Professional cookware 8 piece set are regular \$649.98 sale: \$324.99. Market Square deluxe pasta sets offer on page 6 should read: regular and deluxe pasta sets. On page 11, Governor's Home thermal blankets offer should read: Martex value priced thermal blankets.
Sorry for any inconvenience this may have caused.
385824

SHAW

Shaw Cable would like to notify all its customers of a scheduled outage due to technical upgrades occurring February 1st from 1 a.m. to 4 a.m. This outage will effect all Cable and Internet services. Shaw would to thank all of it's customers for their cooperation during this upgrade.

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