



DEL LAVERDURE  
Publisher



DAVE PAULSON  
Editor

# OPINION

# CITIZEN

Published by Hollinger Canadian Newspapers, L.P.  
150 Brunswick Street, P.O. Box 5700,  
Prince George, B.C. V2L 5K9 Fax: 562-7453  
E-mail: letters@princegeorgecitizen.com  
Web site: http://www.princegeorgecitizen.com

MAVES  
Society  
2003  
artisans.com

## EDITORIALS

### Keep flu birds out of Interior

Cache Creek residents should stand their ground in their refusal to allow the Fraser Valley's flu-infected chickens to be dumped at the town's landfill.

The provincial government's arbitrary decision to dump chicken carcasses at Cache Creek breaks a promise made when that community agreed to accept Greater Vancouver's trash in 1989.

About 450,000 tonnes of Lower Mainland garbage is disposed each year at the Cache Creek landfill, a situation which still doesn't sit well with many of the town's residents.

But the agreement was made with the understanding that only household waste would be dumped there.

Now the town is being told it may receive up to 300 tonnes of dead chickens infected with the avian flu virus. Just what effect the rotting, flu-ridden chicken carcasses would have on air quality isn't known, nor are the effects from fluids possibly leaching into nearby creeks and the Thompson River.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency says it prefers to compost dead chickens in the barns where they are killed, or burn them in incinerators. However, the size of the slaughter means there aren't enough facilities for all the carcasses.

Agriculture Minister John Van Dongen said the dead birds would be double-bagged and buried to ensure the virus cannot escape.

That's hardly comforting to Cache Creek residents, who fear for the safety of their own poultry farms if the infected chickens are foisted on their community. Given the speed with which the epidemic spread in the Fraser Valley — including by human transportation — their concerns are far from groundless.

What's particularly galling to Cache Creek mayor John Ranta and the town's citizens is the government's sudden pronouncement, without consultation, that the town may receive the diseased chickens even though the town has an agreement that no hazardous waste can be dumped there.

Van Dongen likens the situation to last summer's forest fires when the entire province pitched in a provincial emergency.

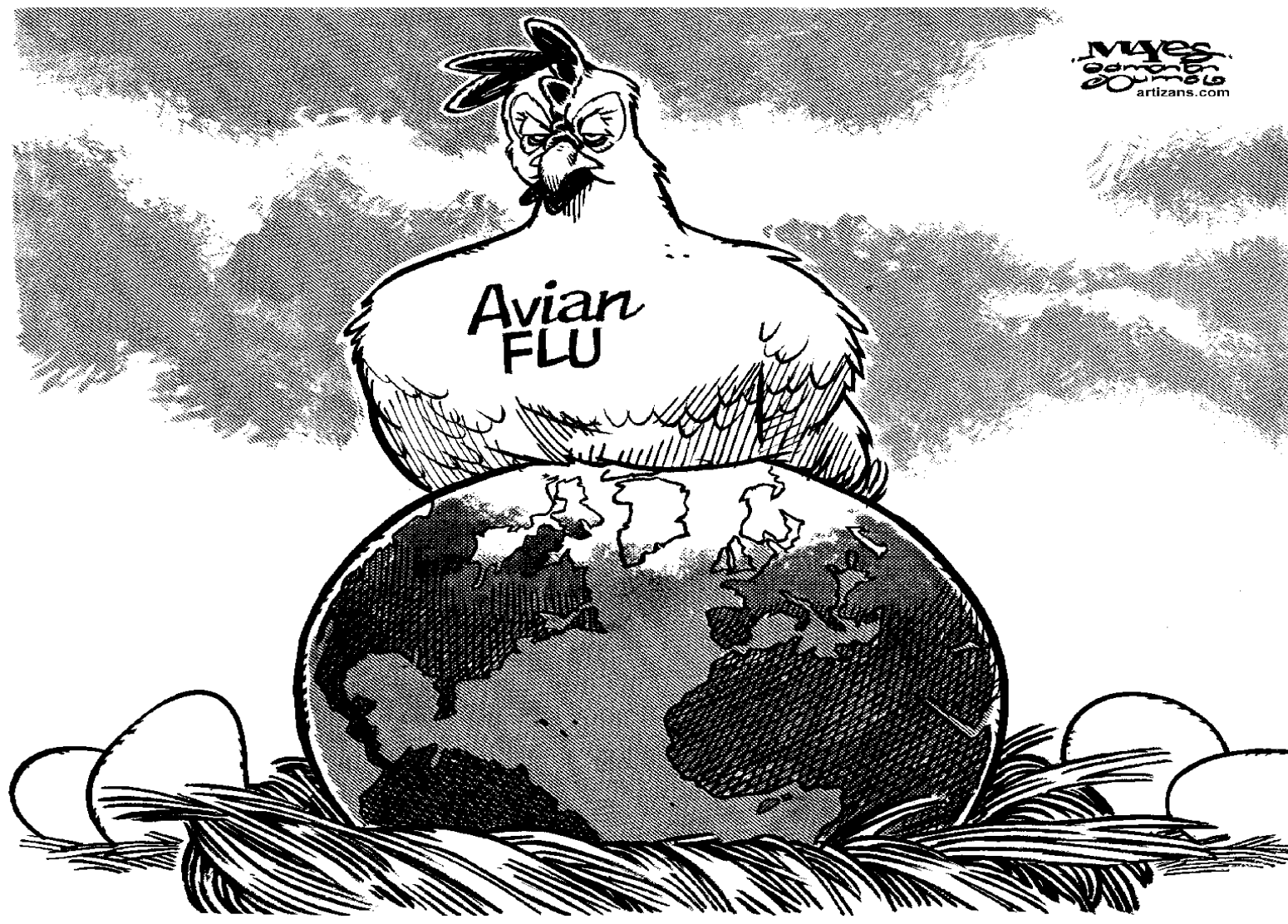
Ranta scoffs at the comparison: "Did we take burning trees from Kelowna and dump them in the Lower Mainland until they burned out?"

Incinerating the birds kills the virus instantly. Buried in landfills, it would take up to four months before the virus is killed.

Burning is the obvious solution, and the government should pursue it without delay.

Disposing them in Cache Creek is a convenient solution for the government, but B.C.'s rural areas are tired of being dumped on.

— Editor Dave Paulson



### Liberals, CN squabbling over B.C. Rail

VICTORIA — The B.C. Liberals are quietly working to resolve a potential glitch in the B.C. Rail deal, which has threatened to strip away a major benefit for the railroad's corporate customers.

Shippers in the resource industries were promised a seven-per-cent reduction in rates as part of the effort to persuade them to support the CN Rail takeover of the provincially owned railroad.

But that reduction was called into question by a recent dispute between CN and the government over the correct interpretation of the terms of their legal agreement.

Details, like other aspects of the deal, are murky.

However, I gather the two sides disagreed over the starting point for calculating the seven-per-cent rate reduction and whether it should be in American or Canadian dollars.

CN, though increasingly based in the United States, agreed to pay \$1 billion Cdn for B.C. Rail. The savings for shippers were also supposed to be realized in Canadian funds.

But along the way, someone at CN spotted a possible catch.

It had to do with B.C. Rail's practice of posting its rates in U.S. dollars for the convenience of resource companies selling into the American market.

CN seized on the U.S.-dollar-denominated rate schedule for 2002 and argued it should be the starting point for translating the proposed seven-per-cent savings into Canadian dollars.

A mischievous argument, because throughout that year, the Canadian dollar appreciated greatly against the American dollar.

The effect of using those higher valued U.S. dollar rates as a starting point would be to wipe out much of the potential savings for B.C.-



Vaughn Palmer

based shippers.

Far from saving money, by some reckonings, they would have ended up paying more under the "reduced" rates.

The Liberals, when they met with this pitch, cannot have been happy about it.

If CN's interpretation were to prevail, it would deny B.C. shippers savings estimated at between \$4 million and \$5 million.

But the Liberals said nothing publicly, believing, I suppose, that it could only add to the controversy surrounding their much-touted "partnership" with CN Rail.

The government did stand up to its partner privately.

Provincial negotiators insisted that the agreement could only be read as providing an actual seven-per-cent reduction in rates.

Any interpretation that would reduce or eliminate those benefits for shippers would violate the spirit as well as the letter of the agreement.

In B.C.'s view, the starting point for the calculation should be the rate schedule for 2003, a year that would put B.C. shippers at much less of a disadvantage on exchange rates.

The new freight rates would then be scaled back accordingly, ensuring that the average savings for shippers would be the full seven per cent.

The Liberals believe that CN is coming

around to their view of the issue, though the railway has yet to sign off definitively on the government's interpretation.

The two sides are continuing to fence over other, albeit less significant, aspects of the agreement as well.

Meanwhile, the public has been left in the dark about what the government has undertaken on its behalf.

Neither party has said anything about their rival interpretations of the agreement.

Nor is it possible to quote directly from the disputed passages because the text has been kept secret since the province and CN agreed to it last November.

The public was given only a government-approved summary of the deal, with heavy emphasis on the supposed spinoff benefits for communities along the BCR main line.

More information will be forthcoming, so say the Liberals, once the federal competition bureau renders its verdict on the deal.

If the bureau gives its consent to what it characterizes as a "merger" between CN and the BCR — and it is expected to do so later this month or early next — then look for provincial legislation setting out the benefits in some detail.

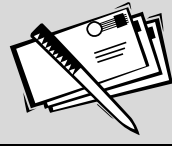
At the same time, the government says it will withhold any terms that could compromise the railroad's commercial interest. So forget about seeing the text of the agreement as it relates to rates, competitiveness or performance targets.

Even armed with the text, it would be hard to say exactly what this deal means for British Columbians in the long run.

As the foregoing dispute indicates, the parties themselves can't always agree on the significance of what they've signed.

vpalmer@direct.ca

## Mailbox:



## Your Letters

### PM should be careful when dealing with Bush

Dear sir:

Hardly has our new prime minister donned the robes of office when he will soon beat a path to the Oval Office, there to meet with the war president himself, George W. Bush.

They must have serious issues to discuss. George W. could tell Mr. Martin a thing or two: such as, how to:

- Win an election without really winning;
- Invade a sovereign country on the pretext they have weapons of mass de-

struction, but they really don't;

- Muzzle the media to paint a positive spin on the "war";
- Create flattering photo-ops, such as Dubya bringing a fully-dressed plastic turkey to the troops for Thanksgiving, but we know who the real turkey is;
- Hand-pick and stack audiences who will applaud your pithy platitudes;
- Be ever alert to any country suspected of having WMDs, yet the U.S. is the most highly-armed country on the planet;

- Never visit wounded and maimed soldiers because the citizenry might realize maiming and death are actually part of war;
- Instigate fake terrorist alerts on the citizenry so that they live in a state of continual anxiety
- Instruct the media to focus on health threats — avian flu, mad cow disease, SARS, AIDS and anthrax in your mail — to keep the public diverted from greater threats;
- Be the only country not to ban the

use of anti-personnel mines;

- Be the only country not to condemn Israel for the assassination of the wheelchair-bound, quadriplegic Hamas spiritual leader Sheik Ahmed Yassin;
- Give \$3 billion US a year to Israel while 35 million Americans are without basic medical care.
- Create a police state where you may be arrested and jailed without cause, without council, without judicial process, without family notification, to languish in jail indefinitely.

It's understandable that our prime minister wants to keep conciliatory relations with such a cantankerous and powerful next-door neighbour.

Hopefully Mr. Martin will listen carefully to his constituents before making major decisions that will affect us all.

The fact that he hasn't been invited to the holy Texas ranch, yet, leaves us a small glimmer of hope.

— Marilyn Juds  
Prince George

## PROSTITUTION

### City council must take decisive action

Dear sir:

I was raking my grass, getting ready for an Easter egg hunt with my grandchildren. I was overjoyed to find a fresh used condom in my grass.

I would like to thank the jerk who threw his slime in my grass and I wonder if he has children and grandchildren.

On April 13 I opened my newspaper to read the headline, Prostitution: Council taking a wait-and-see to Surrey plan.

How long is this wait-and-see plan going to take?

Are we not capable of making our own by-law banning street prostitution in residential neighborhoods?

You know, like the banning of escort services in residential neighborhoods. Wouldn't the bylaws work the same?

Are we waiting for an innocent child to be

picked up by one of these perverts called johns that drive around in their nice big trucks and cars?

We know who they are and they don't belong in our neighbourhoods.

Lots of these creeps are from out of town and in rented vehicles.

The people in the affected areas would like to thank Coun. Brian Skakun for trying to do something to help us.

We just wish we had more support from the other council members and I can't understand why we don't.

Women and children should be more important than dogs.

When are these legislative changes going to happen?

Any legislation to get street prostitution out of residential neighborhoods would feel good. Who is pushing for this legislation?

Some people feel the street workers are victims.

Well, so are the taxpayers and the women and children in the affected areas.

It is the children everyone in this city should be concerned about.

The prostitution problem shouldn't be going on, it should never have happened and it makes me sick.

We can't wait for Surrey.

We need something positive done now. Neighbors, keep phoning the police and contacting council members.

It looks like we are going to have to help ourselves.

Council needs to show some leadership. If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem.

— Bertine Robertson  
Prince George

### Hazardous materials need safe storage

Dear sir:

Please be aware of hazardous materials. Over the long weekend, we had a very disturbing experience and would like to share it.

We have a shop in the area off of Ospika Boulevard. We have had a cat at our shop for the past 12 years to control mice.

Over the weekend, he got out of the shop and fell into a container of oil (hopefully this was not done by someone on purpose).

As a result, we had a very sick cat. Even though we did endless washings of his fur, he had ingested the oil and became very sick.

We had to put him down on Wednesday.

I am asking everyone who has this type of hazardous substance to please dispose of them properly.

Make sure your containers are closed at all times and kept in a safe place.

Our cat and family have suffered the consequences.

— Marilyn Pastor  
Prince George