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B.C. burns

Long weekend sees fire crews busy

Frank Peebles
Citizen staff

Forest fires were shot from the sky all over the region late last week and during the long weekend.

While B.C.'s largest fire burns near the Yukon border - 8,000 hectares - causing the closure of Highway 37 but causing no serious threat to lives or property, many more concerning blazes burn just to the west and the south of Prince George. Wildfires line the torso of the province like burning indigestion, the bulk of B.C.'s 393 fires centralized in the Cariboo and Kamloops regions.

Of greatest concern for this area are the series of lightning-caused blazes in the vicinity of Francois Lake and Ootsa Lake. Smoke from these, and from the Cariboo fires, can easily blow into this airshed and the stress on firefighting resources is already being felt.

A fresh force of 230 experienced personnel from Alberta and Ontario arrived in central B.C. on Sunday to relieve B.C.'s fatigued smokies.

"British Columbia has also acquired 14 additional aircraft, including bird dog planes and airtankers from the province's two airtanker suppliers, and from Alberta and the Yukon," said Kim Steinbart, provincial fire information officer. "The Provincial Air Tanker Centre is establishing a temporary facility at the Quesnel Airport to accommodate these additional aircraft."

Steinbart's counterpart, Gwen Eamer, was deployed to her hometown of Prince George but recalled this weekend to provincial headquarters in Kamloops due to all the activity there.

"They have been very challenging for crews," Eamer told The Citizen. "The fire behaviour and conditions have been extreme. There are a number of interface fires burning in the Cariboo region. They are very large, and there is a lot of smoke. We don't have one fire of greatest concern, there are several. There are a number of evacuation alerts and some evacuation orders."

The orders (an alert is a "get ready to leave" recommendation, an order is a "please leave now" recommendation) applied to the fire areas of Meldrum Creek, Dog Creek, and Pelican Lake.

Others got out before they were asked.

"We weren't told to leave, but we are leaving," said a resident of the communities at the eastern ends of Francois and Ootsa Lakes. He was on the Francois Lake ferry heading away from the plumes of smoke puffing up over Uncha Mountain.

"The Binta fire was already going, it was moving fast, and then another lightning strike hit and started another one on the other side of us, and the winds are blowing strong, so we aren't going to take any chances."

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Gwen Eamer of Prince George is a provincial fire information officer.
Submitted photo



DON'T BE AFRAID TO CHIME IN — Angela Brown checks out silverware made into chimes at the Chimes by Kari booth at the Farmers Market Saturday. The market was filled with a variety of wares and produce for sale.
Citizen photo by David Mah

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Feds roll out forestry money

Frank Peebles
Citizen staff

There is now a \$100 million envelope of federal money available for progressive forestry initiatives.

The Government of Canada announced on Monday that the Investments in Forest Industry Transformation (IFIT) program was now underway. The Ministry of Natural Resources is calling for proposals.

"This program supports the ongoing evolution of the forest in-

dustry. It will make the sector more economically viable and environmentally sustainable," said minister Christian Paradis. "Investments in novel transformative technologies have the potential to open new opportunities for Canada's forest industry."

Paradis added that the purpose of the IFIT program is to demonstrate and deploy new and advanced technologies in the forest sector through investments in innovative processes. The goal is to encourage the development of a

wider range of innovative technologies, which would help secure a more prosperous future for Canada's forestry industry and the communities who depend on it. Forest sector companies that have existing facilities in Canada, including those that have been recently affected by the global economic downturn, could be eligible for IFIT support.

Anyone interested in learning how to apply for IFIT funding is encouraged to visit: forest-transformation.nrcan.gc.ca.

Concorde Painting painter Amri Yusuf Edris while Ayub Sulaiman paints the walls of the new Northern Cancer Clinic - University Hospital of Northern BC parkade. The parkade opened Sunday.
Citizen photo by David Mah



Cancer clinic taking shape

Frank Peebles
Citizen staff

The first step in the suite of construction projects around the Northern Cancer Centre was quietly taken on Monday.

The gang of dignitaries that came to Prince George last week focused on the ground breaking

at the spot where the cancer treatment facility will soon be underway, but there was no mention of the parkade next door that has been going up since January.

It is the first puzzle piece to be put in place for the cancer care headquarters, along with some improvements inside University

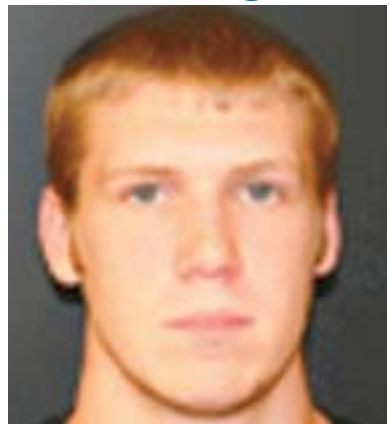
Hospital next door.

"We will open the parkade on Monday and they will be digging (for the main cancer clinic building itself) on Tuesday," Wayne Marsden of PCL Constructors, the general contractor for the project, told The Citizen late last week.

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