



TRACK DOWN — Members of the Gitksan First Nation blockade a CN railroad track in Kitwanga between Terrace and Smithers, on Wednesday. The Gitksan were supporting a nationwide day of Idle No More protests as well as drawing attention to local issues such as the Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline. CN and Via Rail stopped traffic on the line during the blockade.

CP PHOTO

Clark offers to reform 'tainted' AG process

The Associated Press

VANCOUVER — Controversy over the imminent departure of British Columbia's auditor general has forced the provincial government to take steps to revamp the watchdog selection process, a practice that the premier admits is tainted by politics.

The government will introduce legislation amending the act used to appoint the independent watchdog in the wake of a committee's decision against renewing John Doyle's term, Premier Christy Clark announced on Wednesday.

"When you're working inside a flawed process, you're likely to get a flawed result," Clark told reporters at her Vancouver office.

"We need to fix it for the citizens of British Columbia so that they know that this office will always be above politics."

Future auditors general will be appointed to single, eight-year terms if the changes to be introduced in the spring session are passed, Clark said.

The premier said she has reflected on the current situation and reviewed best practices across Canada and within the federal government to make the decision. Her goal is to prevent the pattern of issues

that arise when a term ends ahead of a provincial election, she explained.

"By doing this we give the auditor general appropriate time to pursue the matters he or she needs to look into appropriately and effectively, without worrying about whether or not they will be rehired," she said, "and without perceptions that election year concerns are playing a role."

A Liberal-dominated committee decided earlier this month not to renew Doyle's contract for another six years.

The move comes in the midst of allegations from the Opposition NDP that the committee had shunned Doyle because his work routinely criticizes the Liberal government, which heads into an election in May.

Clark now suggests the members of the five-person committee consider extending Doyle's expiring term by another two years, in order to complete the new eight-year scheme.

The independent committee is not legally bound to explain its decisions, but must make them unanimously.

"If I had my wish, Mr. Doyle would be offered the opportunity to stay on," she said, while noting the decision clearly remains in the committee's hands.

Several of Doyle's reports have taken

aim at the government on spending issues. He has also spearheaded a drive to uncover more information about a decision to pay \$6 million in legal bills for two former government aides who pleaded guilty to corruption charges.

NDP caucus chairman Shane Simpson said his party wants to see more details of Clark's plans, calling the moves damage control.

"Clearly, they made a decision to not reappoint Mr. Doyle. It has blown up in their face, and across the province people have said it's a horrible decision," he said. "They're now trying to fix it and this is the premier's effort to fix this."

Simpson acknowledged that NDP Leader Adrian Dix said publicly earlier this month the party would praise Clark and the Liberals if they moved to reconsider the decision not to make the reappointment.

He added the NDP still isn't convinced the all-party committee will agree to Doyle's term extension.

Controversy also arose around the process of appointing an auditor general in 2007, when then-watchdog Arn Van Iersel resigned. Van Iersel left office saying he believed it was important for the position to be permanent.

B.C. film industry losing to Ontario, Quebec

The Canadian Press

VANCOUVER — Film crews are sitting idle and studio space is near-empty in British Columbia as higher tax rebates lure productions to competitors in Ontario and Quebec, says an industry insider who's lobbying for change.

Peter Leitch, president of North Shore Studios, said more people have gone without work in B.C.'s film and television industry in the last six months even as Premier Christy Clark has touted job creation in the western province.

"It's pretty devastating in terms of the number of people who are unemployed right now," Leitch said Wednesday.

"Part of it is seasonal, but certainly part of it is that our tax credits are not at the level playing field that they used to be historically."

An online petition has garnered thousands of signatures to save the B.C. film industry, and that's a sign of desperation from people without work, said Leitch, who is also chairman of the Motion Picture Production Association.

Even a temporary increase in tax credits would remedy the "devastating situation," he said.

"In terms of studio space availability, I've never seen this much studio space available in Vancouver in my 25 years, and

that's a real barometer of employment," he said.

Meanwhile, Montreal and Toronto are continuing to build stages as business grows.

"This will be our worst quarter I can remember," Leitch said of his 23-year-old studio in the province that earned the moniker Hollywood North in its heyday during production of TV hits such as Stargate, X-Files and Smallville.

British Columbia offers the film industry a 33-per-cent tax rebate on labour costs, as compared to 25 per cent in credits on all costs involved in productions in Ontario and Quebec, Leitch said.

That represents only a 10 per cent savings in the end for made-in-B-C projects, he said.

"And they get bigger federal tax credits because of the all-spend [incentives]," he added.

Premier Christy Clark said the government shells out \$285 million in tax credits to the film industry and more money won't be available as the province aims to balance its budget.

"I've been talking to leading members of the film industry and I understand the pressure, the race to the bottom we've seen in economies that are really struggling," she said.

"But in British Columbia, we're also go-

ing to balance our budget. We don't have a bottomless pit of decisions to be able to make."

Leitch said customers from California, for example, are more likely to do business in B.C. because of the similar time zone and proximity, but the bigger bang-for-the buck in the eastern provinces is a huge draw.

The B.C. industry has invested more than \$1 billion in infrastructure and benefited the province's economy in spin-off business from production crews.

British Columbia's return to the provincial sales tax on April 1 will mean another blow because the seven per cent PST won't be returned to the industry. As well, the high Canadian dollar is also causing pain, Leitch said.

Karen Thorn-Stone of the Ontario Media Development Corp., said the change to the so-called all-spend tax credits from labour-only credits occurred in 2009 in that province.

"In terms of production statistics, 2011 was the best year we've had ever — almost \$1.3 billion in production activity," she said, adding 70 per cent of that comes from domestic projects. "I'm confident in saying that here in Ontario there is strong government support, strong industry support, and we see a positive future ahead for all of our creative industries."

Passengers take action against bus firm

The Canadian Press

VANCOUVER — Two British Columbia passengers who survived a bus crash that killed nine others on an Oregon highway have filed a lawsuit against the tour bus company and the driver. June Won Kim and his wife Hee Eun Kim said in their notice of civil claim that the bus was mechanically defective and the tires were inadequate for the road conditions on Dec. 30, when the vehicle crashed through a guardrail on Interstate 84 and tumbled down a snowy embankment near Pendleton, Ore.

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Judge wants Chinese firm's documents

The Canadian Press

VANCOUVER — A Federal Court judge has ordered Ottawa to reconsider whether it can do anything more to convince a mining company to turn over material related to its plan to bring roughly 200 Chinese miners to British Columbia.

The ruling is part of the proceedings around a legal challenge related to those temporary foreign worker permits, a case that remains bogged down in a fight over documents.

Two unions are challenging the government's decision to allow HD Mining to bring Chinese miners to its proposed Murray River project near Tumbler Ridge, rather than hiring Canadian workers.

Last month, a judge ordered Human Resources and Skills Development Canada to turn over any documents it had related to HD Mining's applications for foreign worker permits, as well as any material within HD Mining's possession that had not yet been handed over to the government.

Federal lawyers told court they had asked HD Mining three times for those documents, including resumes from Canadian workers that HD Mining said were not qualified for jobs at the proposed mine. The company refused.

Ottawa claimed it had no way to compel HD Mining to produce documents that weren't already in the government's possession and asked that the production order be changed to reflect that reality.

Judge Michael Manson ruled that the order still stands.

Manson didn't outline just what the federal government should do to comply, instead leaving that with Human Resources Minister Diane Finley. He noted that the government's previous requests to HD Mining were made without any consequences if the company refused.

"It is not my decision on case management to now determine if the minister has sufficiently exercised that control, but the judge hearing the applicants' application for leave for judicial review may draw an adverse inference against the minister if the judge is not satisfied that the minister has complied," Manson wrote in his decision, issued Tuesday.

"The minister, in her discretion, shall further consider the scope and nature of her compliance with the production order."

Manson said if the federal government decides it can do more to convince HD Mining to turn over the documents, it must take action by Jan. 21.

The unions are challenging Human Resources and Skills Development Canada's decision to provide HD Mining with a positive labour market opinion, a document that confirms that a company needs to use foreign workers because it can't hire or train Canadians.

UP TO \$5000.00 REWARD

Reward offered for return of **logging parts/equipment and information** of persons involved in theft from **Hasler Creek Chetwynd area logging site on Jan 3 evening**. Stolen items include but not limited to:

- Hydraulic Cylinders • Honda Generator
- Hydraulic Fittings and Hoses • Dies for Parker Hose Press

Contact: loniy@telus.net
 250 788-5320 R001425325

Learning For Life!

FRENCH IMMERSION PARENT INFORMATION NIGHT

Will be held at three locations

All parents interested in registering their children in the French Immersion program for Kindergarten or Grade One are encouraged to attend.

École Lac des Bois
Wednesday, January 30, 2013
 7:00 pm
 4131 Rainbow Drive, Prince George, B.C.
 250-562-1164

École College Heights Elementary
Wednesday, January 23, 2013
 7:00 pm
 5410 Cowart Road, Prince George, B.C.
 250-964-4408

École Heather Park Elementary
Tuesday, January 22, 2013
 7:00 pm
 7151 Heather Park Road, Prince George, B.C.
 250-962-1811

Pre-registration will take place using the electronic registration form available at www.sd57.bc.ca on Wednesday, February 6, 2013 beginning at 9:00 am

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION OFFICE
 School District - No. 57 (Prince George)
 2100 Ferry Avenue, Prince George, B.C., V2L 4R5
 Telephone: 561-6800 Fax: 561-6801

"Help Hunger Disappear" Food Drive! THIS FRIDAY!

Save-On-Foods and the Spruce Kings Present

"Food Drive Evening" Friday, January 18 @ 7Pm vs Chilliwack Chiefs

ANY FANS WHO BRING A NON-PERISHABLE FOOD ITEM TO THE GAME WILL RECEIVE 1 EXTRA ENTRY TO WIN A TRIP TO LAS VEGAS (One lucky FAN will win a 3 night trip for 2 to Las Vegas)

SATURDAY, JANUARY 19TH - CHILLIWACK CHIEFS TAKE ON THE SPRUCE KINGS - 7 PM

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