

# Council wants to talk about Ruby Park's future

By CHERYL JAHN

Free Press staff writer

The City of Prince George wants to talk to B.C. Lands about the fate of seventeen acres of prime real estate at the corner of Highways 16 and 97 in behind Mr. P.G.

B.C. Lands wants to sell Ruby Park and developers have already submitted proposals for multi-million dollar commercial ventures. The ministry is now reviewing those proposals and the land will go up for auction in August. At that point, the successful bidder has one year to attain all the necessary zoning amendments and development permits to move ahead. That is really the only point where the city has any hand in the venture, and that doesn't make councillors very happy.

"I'm feeling left out at this stage," says Councillor Anne Martin, who introduced a motion to meet with B.C. Lands to discuss the present and future land use of Ruby Park before the development goes ahead.

She cites three reasons for her concerns. The first deals with the overall public concern expressed about the development: from the residents living in behind Ruby Park who clearly don't want to see it destroyed and from downtown merchants who fear the added commercial/retail activity.

"As well, I've heard from a cross-section of people who are worried about what it will do to that corner. The developer must be sensitive to the needs of the area. It's the first major intersection as you come into town and it has to give a positive impression of the city."

Councillor Martin also notes the possibility the intersection will have to be upgraded in the future to meet growing traffic demands.

"As far as I know, there's been very little discussion with the Ministry of Transportation and Highways in terms of the future trends on that corner. It would be a waste of time to develop the

## Sound Bite



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property and only to have the city have to buy it back," she concludes.

Mayor John Backhouse has his own concerns.

"I have concern about the impression that the development community gets about the way that development projects are handled by the city. The concerns are really on the difference

between a private development and a development involving a Crown Corporation," he explains, saying he doesn't want private developers to see it as a "what's good for the goose as not necessarily so for the gander" situation.

By the same token, he says, he doesn't want to leave the impression that he's against B.C. Land's plans for Ruby Park. He also warns Council from jumping the proverbial gun.

"We're reacting very quickly, saying we don't want this project before we even know what the project is about. For all we know, the project could be sensitive to the area and first impressions," says the mayor

In a bid to get a better perspective about what's planned, the city will meet with B.C. Lands either this week or next to review the projects and to discuss land use possibilities for the property both now and in the future.

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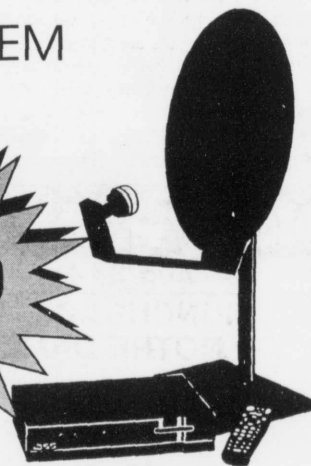
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### Car dealers dealt strike notice by IWA

The IWA, local 1-424 has served strike notice against the employers of three local car dealerships.

"We served Fred Walls and Son, P.G. Motors and Wood Weaton Chevrolet with 72-hour strike notice last week, so we're now in a legal position to strike," explains the IWA's finance secretary Frank Everitt. "But regardless, negotiations are still underway."

The three car dealerships have essentially the same contract, hence all three employers are negotiating at the same time.

The contract, which covers the mechanics, service riders, part employees and detailers, expired on June 30 and the parties have been in talks "on and off" for the past month. Mr. Everitt says the non-monetary issues have been settled "for the most part."

"However, we can't come to agreement on the issues of money and benefits."



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