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Tune up/For Terry



Students from Peden Hill Elementary School enjoyed a practice run on Friday as a way to raise awareness for the upcoming Terry Fox Run. JOHN MCKENZIE/FREE PRESS

▼ RCMP

Delays not a concern

By SHANE MILLS

Free Press staff writer

Inspector Bob Williams says policing won't suffer in Prince George due to a delay in getting four new officers on line.

"We need the four extra officers but we're not going to suffer if we don't get them," says the second-in-command at the Prince George detachment.

The concern about where the four officers are was raised in a memo from city finance director Bill Kennedy which said the city coffers would have an extra \$154,000 available this year. "There are indications that the RCMP will not be in a position to supply the additional four officers that were added during the 1996 budget review process until sometime in 1997," wrote Mr. Kennedy. "It was expected that the officers would be added in mid-July."

Several councillors expressed worry over the delay but city manager George Paul says the RCMP, under the terms of the contract with the province, have a year to provide the officers.

"The RCMP are feeling the implication of the budget crunch and this is one the areas they have a little bit of flexibility," says Mr. Paul.

According to Inspector Williams, the request is forwarded

Turn to Officers, A2

Wage hikes key to avoiding strike at Woodland

Strikes could be on at four local Woodland Group operations if the IWA votes down a contract deal today.

"If we don't get a contract this weekend, a strike is imminent," says Neil Meagher, second-vice-president of the IWA local.

The 150 employees have been without a contract since the end of June and voted 97 per cent in favour of a strike on August 18.

Union negotiators haven't made up their mind whether to recommend acceptance of the three-year deal. "We'd like to recommend acceptance but at this time we're still undecided. We're still not totally satisfied so anything can happen on Sunday. It's really up in the air,"

says Mr. Meagher.

The IWA was asking for a wage increase of 8 per cent per year at the start of bargaining, but the deal to be voted on is based on the employer's final offer of a 1.6 per cent increase each year.

Wages start at over \$10 an hour but workers were interested in recouping a previous wage-rollback of 10 per cent.

The Woodland Group of companies referred all questions about contracts to the IWA.

The union begins meeting at 10 a.m. Sunday at the Simon Fraser for the vote.

Trustee worries about boards becoming extinct

By CHERYL JAHN

Free Press staff writer

After 12 years on the job, school board trustee Adrienne Radford is calling it quits. But she warns a future crop of trustees might be retired by the provincial government.

"Over the years, the ministry has left school boards across the province with very little in terms of control over their own affairs," says Mrs. Radford, who serves as vice-chair of the school board.

"I believe we are really moving

down the path of no longer having a locally-elected school board. And I've often wondered if it will be a case of 'You don't know what you had until it's gone.'"

She maintains a locally-elected body to oversee the affairs of public education is "critical," but that body cannot do its job unless it has real power and real authority.

Over the years, the education ministry has taken over control of a number of school board duties: school boards have lost the power to tax, to allocate a good portion of their funding, and determine

how their employees will do their jobs, for instance. The only job the ministry hasn't taken over is answering to an increasingly more frustrated public.

"It feels as though we're called upon to be more and more accountable to the public, while having less and less control over what we're being called upon to be accountable for. School boards have become the ministry's scapegoats."

In terms of taxation, Mrs. Radford suggests what better way to be more accountable to the public

than to have locally-elected trustees. "We see the parents, sit beside them, at a hockey game. And we have to explain directly why their taxes have to go up. That's direct accountability."

It's the parents who are going to have to exert more of what she sees as a considerable power to affect change. "We've seen cases of it already, where the government tends to respond to the angry parents much more quickly than to an angry school board."

She cites both the struggle over Turn to Fight, A2



Radford: Boards are 'scapegoats' for the province.