

Decision to retire purely personal: Boone

By **MICHELLE LANG**

Free Press staff writer

Local NDP MLA Lois Boone announced Friday she would not be seeking re-election after the next provincial election, positioning herself for removal from cabinet.

The Children and Families Minister and MLA for Prince George-Mount Robson made the announcement in the wake of Ujjal Dosanjh's victory over candidate Gordon Wilson, whom Ms. Boone publicly supported, for the position of NDP leader and Premier. Ms. Boone says she advised Premier Dosanjh of her decision on Sunday so he can take it into consideration when he is creating his cabinet.

"I think it's important in formulating his cabinet that Premier Dosanjh knows who will be there for the longer term," says Ms. Boone.

She admits that she may have acted differently if Mr. Wilson had won. While Ms. Boone says there is no guarantee she would have stayed on, she does say she would



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Lois Boone

have to re-consider retiring from public life because of her commitment to Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Dosanjh is expected to shuffle his cabinet early this week.

Ms. Boone says until the next provincial general election she will continue to carry out her duties as an MLA and will serve the public in any role she is assigned.

She says her decision not to run for a fourth term of

office is strictly personal, one that will allow her to "reclaim my personal life and go back to being a private citizen."

Ms. Boone, who has served as an MLA for 14 years, says the highlight of her career was the opening of the University of Northern B.C. She says other major victories were the expansion of the university and the College of New Caledonia, the Prince George courthouse, the John Hart Bridge project and the introduction of alcohol and drug programs for northern youth.

She says the hardest part of being an MLA were what she calls personal attacks in the media.

"People tend to focus on the negative and forget a lot of the good things we do," she says.

Ms. Boone has served as Minister of Municipal Affairs, Minister of Transportation, Minister for Children and Families and Deputy Premier. Before entering politics Ms. Boone was a school trustee, a teacher, a small business person and an administrative assistant for government.

Following her retirement, Ms. Boone plans to spend more time with her family and work on her new home.

Union, city reach potential deal

After two days of mediated talks the City of Prince George reached a tentative agreement with the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

The deal ended the possibility of job action that could have included disruption of the Scott Tournament of Hearts. A strike also may have stopped city operations - from snow removal and sewage treatment to garbage removal. About 550 members of CUPE who work at the city voted 93 per cent in favour of strike action on the weekend.

Neither the city or CUPE are releasing details of the agreement, although both bargaining committees are recommending ratification. A ratification vote will likely take place by City Council and CUPE membership on Monday.

CUPE local 399 represents 181 outside workers at the City of Prince George who perform duties like snow removal and gardening. CUPE local 1048 represents 370 inside workers. The two unions have been jointly bargaining for a new contract after their old contract came up on December 31.

Bargaining came to an impasse last week and the two sides agreed to apply to the Labour Relations Board for a mediator. The city and the union took part in mediated talks on February 22 and 23 before reaching the deal.

The union says the main stumbling block was job security, although benefits and wages are also issues.

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