

THE PRINCE GEORGE FREE PRESS

VO

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2001

press.com



STYLE

Rachel Worey rehabilitates a northern hawk owl.

Page B1

CHARITY

Cops cycle for a cure for cancer.

Page B5



Foodteller finished

Restaurant closes after 10 months in business owing \$125,000 to contractors

By DOUG BROWN

Free Press staff writer

Employees of Foodteller are rallying around their restaurant and their bosses in an effort to bring the plight of the now-closed business to the public.

Employees of the restaurant, which closed its doors Wednesday afternoon, have been standing outside the restaurant and letting customers and passer-bys know the circumstances behind the shutdown. The idea, says Danell Floyd, front-staff manager for Foodteller, is to make people aware that they support their restaurant and that its closure is due to circumstances beyond the control of themselves and the owners.

"We're really upset. Pay is an issue but it will work itself out. We're not angry about that. We're angry the restaurant was closed for something that didn't have anything to do with the restaurant itself," she says. "We're distressed. We care about the restaurant."

Foodteller was forced to close after 10 months in operation when contractors who are still owed approximately \$125,000 from the original construction garnished their account and put a freeze on electronic assets, says owner Robert Fernandez.

"We can't access our funds so we're unable to operate, pay wages or pay our suppliers."

Foodteller claims that money promised to them by their creditor was withheld, preventing them from paying their outstanding construction debts. Mr. Fernandez says there are three possible outcomes to the dispute — the credit union changes their mind and gives them the funds, someone will step forward to provide the funding they need or the restaurant doors stay shut.

In the meantime the 38 employees are facing lost wages to the tune of approximately \$10,000 and an uncertain job future. But they aren't taking it lying down.

"We have a lot of plans," says Ms. Floyd. The concerned employees plan on holding more information groups outside the restaurant this weekend and into next week. "There aren't many employers like these who care about their employees. And it's frustrating not knowing if you'll have a job tomorrow or next week."



Fernandez

Dog/And pony show



An unusual sight put smiles on a lot of faces when Blaine Jobin rode into town on his horse Shadow with Hyenna following close behind. Mr. Jobin says he is on a pilgrimage from the sacred mountains of Moberly Lake to Penticton which he says will take him about two months. KRISTIN BAILLIE/FREE PRESS

PSAC members plan to step-up job action

By DOUG BROWN

Free Press staff writer

Government offices across the country are bracing for increased job action by employees, which could mean an increased number of strike days at locations in Prince George.

Members of the Federal Public Services Alliance of Canada representing clerical staff at Prince George RCMP buildings, the airport, veterans affairs, department of agriculture and Industry and Revenue Canada will be stepping-up action starting this week.

Previously PSAC members had been striking only on Wednesdays, what the union has called "Work-less Wednesday," for the past three weeks, but B.C.

regional representative Patty Ducharme says that as of Monday that will change.

"We are going to step things up. We're going to escalate. We'll be increasing to at least two days a week and having strategic strike action at areas deemed to be important where a strike would be the most disruptive," she says.

Ms. Ducharme was in Prince George two weeks ago to meet with local strike co-ordinators to ascertain where job action could have the most impact. What areas those will be revealed when PSAC members hit the picket lines this week.

But one local resident is concerned that even the one-day strikes may have already caused a disruption in her own life.

The woman, who asked not to be identified, has been funded through a Human Resources and Development Canada skills training program. For the past two years she's had her UNBC tuition, books and living expenses paid while attending school. Her cheque for this semester's tuition and books hasn't arrived yet, despite being due last week — the same time she was supposed to have her fees paid. She's worried the PSAC strike may have put a wrench in the works.

"I have to find the money to buy my books or, with a five-course load, if I fall even two weeks behind it's too late to catch up," she says.

Representatives for HRDC say that the one day-a-week of strikes may have