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January 23, 2009



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Hello everyone:

Prince George played host this week to one of two economic summits that will be held in the province. The "Opportunities North Summit" attracted over 500 participants and the focus was on how to build on the fiscal foundation that has positioned BC to weather the current global economic uncertainty. The two-day session was led by the Premier and numerous cabinet ministers participated in working sessions to hear ideas, answer questions and learn more about northern perspectives. Throughout the event we were so impressed with the quality of the input we received but perhaps what was most significant was the sense of optimism and energy that dominated every discussion. Despite very difficult economic circumstances and in true northern style – the overwhelming response was a call to unified and focused action that capitalizes on constructive working relationships between all levels of government, aboriginal leaders, communities, and industry. Clearly articulated priorities will allow us to shape the directions that we need to take over the short and long term. The Summit was productive, positive and motivated all of us to work even harder to ensure a prosperous future for Northern BC.

Some good news this week as growth continued in mineral exploration. Last week it was reported that mineral exploration activity in the province reached \$367 million in

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Useful Phone numbers

BC Nurse line: 24 hour,
Toll free 1-866-215-4700

Pharma Net Hotline:
Mon-Fri (8:30-4:30pm) 1-
800-387-4700

Health Info Line: Mon-
Fri
(8:30-4:30pm) 1-800-
465-4911

Victim Link: 7 days a
week,
24 hours, 1-800-563-0808

2008. BC's solid mineral production for 2008 is \$5.8 billion, up one per cent from \$5.6 billion in 2007. We need to make sure that we continue to make this industry more competitive and build on these investments in 2009. One of the key issues identified at the Northern Summit was the need to streamline the approval and permit process and eliminate the duplication with the dual Federal and Provincial assessments. It was very encouraging to hear Minister Gary Lunn share the view that the Federal government has the same concerns. We need to see this change and have certainly made our views known in Ottawa.

Another theme we heard during the Summit was the need to develop our emerging knowledge-based economy and an agreement that was signed this week will support that work. Canada and British Columbia signed a \$50 million Western Economic Partnership Agreement. This partnership will be funded with \$25 million from the BC government and Western Economic Diversification Canada. Projects that are funded through WEPA will help BC organizations to research and develop clean energy and environmental technologies and accelerate investment attraction to BC. This is certainly a timely announcement!

While the week has been focused around economic issues we suffered an enormous loss in our government family. And I say family because that is what we are. As MLAs we spend a great deal of time away from home and in fact sometimes we spend more time with our "work family" than we do with our immediate family. All of us were deeply impacted by the sudden and shocking death of our friend and colleague the Honourable Stan Hagen. Stan was a personal friend and someone who has played a key role on our team for the last 8 years. Stan was first elected to the Legislature in 1986 and has served in ten different ministerial portfolios. He loved his family, and his wife Judy, their 5 children and 3 grandchildren were his pride and joy. He had a deep personal faith and was a tireless worker in his church, his community and our province. I cannot begin to tell you how sorry I am to have lost him as a friend and a colleague. He inspired us all as he battled cancer with a never quit attitude and always went out of his way to make sure everyone else was doing ok!! To lose him to a massive heart attack was truly an incredible shock. On Saturday he will be remembered in a service in Comox and while I wish I

could be there in person that is not possible. I will be right here in Prince George doing what Stan would want me to do and that is serve the people that I represent to the best of my ability. That is what he did with passion and it is a hallmark of his life as a public servant. Judy and the entire Hagen family will miss him, but so will countless other British Columbians who had the chance to know him. So Stan there is only one thing I can say “well done good and faithful servant” – we will miss you.

Until next week,

Shirley

Question of the week:

WHAT NEW SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES CREATES NEW EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES?

The Return to Work Employability Program, with a \$1 million budget for 2008/09, creates new employment opportunities for British Columbians, providing them with the opportunity to obtain skills that today’s employers are seeking, announced Murray Coell, Minister of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development.

Through this new program, we’re investing in our province’s most valuable asset, our people,” said Coell. “This employability program, now being offered in eight communities, has been designed to help British Columbians, particularly those in smaller, rural communities, gain the job skills needed to be successful.”

Each participant in the Return to Work Employability Program will receive individual and group-based training to improve their skills and readiness to work, as well as support for post-training job searches.

“This new program will go a long way to help British Columbians increase their skills and employment opportunities,” said Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development.

“Through our Labour Market Agreement, we are helping employers find the skilled labour they need, and through this new project, we are delivering on our commitment to help everyone access to the information, training and services they need to find jobs in B.C.”

Through programs like Return to Work, the B.C. government is working hard to help rural communities survive and thrive in tough economic times. The Province has created the RuralBC

Secretariat and made accessible a comprehensive list of tools that communities can access, through www.ruralbc.gov.bc.ca, to achieve their visions of the future. Participants can be unemployed individuals who are non-Employment Insurance clients; or employed individuals who do not have a high school diploma, a recognized certification or who have low levels of literacy and essential skills in the workplace.

The B.C. government, working with academic, industry and other partners is enabling British Columbians to gain the skills needed to successfully participate in B.C.'s provincial labour market, and respond positively to changing workplace demands.

Each year for the next six years, the Government of Canada will provide approximately \$66 million to the Province under the Labour Market Agreement. Through a variety of programs, these funds will increase training for employed individuals who are low-skilled and require essential skills, or who require recognized credentials to reach their full potential in the current marketplace. They will also help increase access to training for unemployed individuals who are not currently Employment

Insurance clients, including but not limited to, those who are underrepresented in the labour market.

For more information on the LMA, visit www.WorkBC.ca.

News Around the Province

ECONOMIC AGREEMENT SUPPORTS NEW WOOD PELLET PLANT

An economic development agreement signed with four Secwepemc First Nations will assist the harvest of mountain pine beetle timber and support the construction of a wood pellet plant near Kamloops. This agreement hits three important objectives – salvaging value from beetle-killed timber, addressing climate change through bioenergy production, and helping First Nations benefit from our forest resource. By working together, and capitalizing on our biomass reserve, we're creating enduring economic benefits for British Columbia.

The agreement allows the Whispering Pines/ Clinton Indian

Band, High Bar Indian Band, the Shuswap Indian Band and Little Shuswap Indian Band to apply for up to three million cubic metres of timber over 15 years to support the estimated \$20-million wood pellet project. The bands' joint company, Pelltiq't Energy Group Ltd., is currently working to secure construction, operating and harvesting partnerships, as well as a plant site. The facility is expected to be running by the end of 2010, creating an estimated 35 new jobs at the plant and another 30 in the forest.

"This agreement is the culmination of a lot of hard work and investment in training and educating our people to become full participants in the forest sector," said Michael LeBourdais, chief of the Whispering Pines/Clinton Indian Band and spokesperson for the project. "But the benefits won't be restricted to First Nations. This project is intended to contribute to the broader Kamloops and B.C. economy as well."

Once the plant is running at full capacity, it will consume a minimum of 300,000 cubic metres of fibre annually, with targeted production of 175,000 tonnes of wood pellets.

When used for pellets and other energy production, biomass is considered carbon-neutral because it releases no more carbon into the atmosphere than it absorbs during its lifetime.

Supporting the development of new bioenergy opportunities is a key step in the BC Bioenergy Strategy. For more information on the strategy, or to download a copy, visit

www.energyplan.gov.bc.ca/bioenergy.

This week's bouquet of recognition goes to...

*Tim Dennis and Street Kids International
For all you do for kids at risk in our community!!!*

Community Announcements

Family Literacy Week

Book exchange at the Pine Centre Mall, bring a book, pick a replacement and join the gang for Literacy Cake on the 31st
– 11am to 4pm

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Sultans come to McBride Roundhouse Theatre  
January 28,

Tickets for the show available at  
Stedmans or call Carol 250-590-0165

## **Mark your calendar...**

- ❖ January 23 – **Robbie Burns Dinner** at the Coast Inn of the North. Silent Auction and 50/50 draw. This event is suitable for the whole family. Tickets available at Excalibur Performers Assoc studio. Tickets \$25 for adults, \$15 for children, for info call 250-564-6326.
- ❖ January 24 – 31<sup>st</sup> – **Family Literacy Week** – book exchange at the Pine Centre Mall, bring a book, pick a replacement and join the gang for Literacy Cake on the 31<sup>st</sup> – 11am to 4pm
- ❖ January 24 - **Ukrainian New Years Showcase**, 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Malanka, Dinner, Entertainment and Yalenka Dancers and 2 live Bands at the Hart Community Center. Tickets available at Studio 2880 Adults \$35, Youth \$15, Children \$5
- ❖ January 24 – **Improv at the Duck**, the Waddling Duck, 1157 5<sup>th</sup> Ave, doors open at 7pm, show at 8pm, Tickets \$10 advance or \$12 at the door.
- ❖ January 24 to Feb 1 – The **Coldsnap Festival**; six main stage events, Tickets are \$25 or three for \$60 available at Studio 2880, Books and Co, and Meow Records.
- ❖ January 25 – **Walk for Alzheimer's**, Northern Sport Centre at UNBC, 1:30-3pm, Register on line at: [www.walkformemories.com](http://www.walkformemories.com) or call 250-564-7533
- ❖ January 26 – **The Way Home**- attend a screening of a new film on homelessness in BC at UNBC Woodland Theatre at 7pm. Room 7-238. This is a chance to learn more about homelessness, and to speak with one another about what we can do to make our province a better place for every British Columbian
- ❖ January 31 – Feb 7 – **Francophone winter Festival**, Sugar shack brunch, toffee on snow, sleigh ride, two people saw competition, and much more, for more info call 250-561-2565 or [www.franconcord.bc.ca](http://www.franconcord.bc.ca)
- ❖ February 5 - **Spring Fashion show and Dinner** at the Ramada Hotel, fundraiser event for Hospice Society, Silent Auction, Tickets \$70, Doors open at 5:30pm, Dinner 7pm and show at 8pm. For more info call Jacquie Clarke 250-562-2323
- ❖ February 6-8 – Drama show at ECRA more info to come or call
- ❖ February 8 – **Wealth Expo**- Coast Inn Ballroom

- 10am to 5 pm
- ❖ February 10 -
  - ❖ February 12-15- **Disney High School Musical** ice tour at the CN Centre, tickets on sale at Ticket Master.
  - ❖ February 21 – **Everybody's Bobbin'** concert at the Prince George Playhouse. Performances at 2:30 and 7:30pm, more info to come.
  - ❖ February 25 – **Jacson Katz**, renowned speaker and author to talk against violence against women. Coast Inn of the North at 7pm, to register call Paz Milburn at 250-5617343

***If you are a non profit organization and would like to advertise an upcoming event or share a story please email [Shirley](#)***

Thank you for taking the time to read my newsletter. If you would like to see something specific in the next edition of Ask Your MLA, please [email me](#). If you know someone who would like to receive our newsletter, email their name so we can add them to our list.



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Toll Free: 1-866-612-7333  
Phone: 250-612-4181  
Fax: 250-612-4188

[www.shirleybondmla.bc.ca](http://www.shirleybondmla.bc.ca)  
[shirley.bond.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:shirley.bond.mla@leg.bc.ca)

1350 5th Ave,  
Prince George, BC  
V2L 3L4