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February 6, 2009



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Hello everyone:

It was an early start to the day with the Annual Heart and Stroke breakfast. I had the honour being a guest server at table 9. We enjoyed a heart healthy breakfast, heard inspiring speakers and had a chance to win numerous door prizes! The most pressing message...not a surprise...exercise, eat healthy and pay attention to your heart health. Great job by all the volunteers and sponsors!

Last Friday it was announced that the Province has purchased the Astoria Hotel here in Prince George. The Astoria is a vacant, 21-unit property located at 1145 2nd Ave. This purchase will provide housing with support services for people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness people. Homelessness is often thought of as a Lower Mainland or Vancouver Island – and not a Northern issue. But homeless is an issue for many in the North. That is why we need investments such as the purchase of the Astoria Hotel in Prince George. The Astoria Hotel will be renovated and converted into supportive housing. There will be safety upgrades, electrical upgrades and minor aesthetic improvements. The Astoria Hotel is also one of 15 properties being acquired in ten communities with an investment of over \$34 million by the Province under the umbrella of the Provincial Homelessness Initiative. Homelessness is not just an individual issue – it is a community issue. I am proud of our government's work on

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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

homelessness and supportive housing issues and I know we will continue this great work in the future. These are unprecedented economic times and we have had to make some of the most difficult decisions that have faced a government in decades. We are committed to strong leadership a fiscal discipline as British Columbia emerges from the current downturn.

One of the ways we intend to keep British Columbians working through this period of economic uncertainty is through infrastructure investments. This past week saw the announcement of close to \$14 billion in infrastructure spending over the next three years. This investment could also create tens of thousands of jobs and keep British Columbians working during this economic downturn. Of this \$14 billion, the Province has also identified \$2 billion in project acceleration, including hundreds of millions of dollars to be launched in the next 90 days. This money will be used for many priorities that you as constituents have identified, such as building housing for senior's, First Nations and the homeless, health care, education and climate change. We have made numerous investments in the infrastructure of Prince George, such as the Cancer Centre, Northern Sports Complex and the Prince George Airport. The infrastructure investments in the future will build upon the work this government has done for Prince George in the past eight years.

We have a new appointment to cabinet as of Friday, January 30th. I would like to congratulate my colleague Ron Cantelon on his appointment as the new Minister of Agriculture and Lands. Ron has been a hardworking MLA from Nanaimo since 2005 and I have had the pleasure of working with him on numerous files, especially in my role as the Minister of Education. I know that Ron will do a great job as a Minister and I look forward to working with him at the cabinet table.

This weekend is shaping up to be an exciting one. Today I hosted my second Meisner Show on 93.1 CFIS FM. The topic this week was post-secondary education in Prince George, and we had some great guests from both CNC and UNBC. I also hope you all have a chance to enjoy the free drop-in ice hockey and ice skating this Saturday at the Coliseum at 3 pm as part of Festival d'Hiver. We all know Prince George is a hockey town with a great hockey

tradition. It will be amusement pour tous! Lots of great community events to enjoy this weekend so I look forward to seeing you out and about!

Until next week,

Shirley

Question of the week:

WHAT IMPROVEMENTS WERE MADE TO THE NEW B.C. DRIVER'S LICENCE AND B.C. IDENTIFICATION CARD!

The new B.C. Driver's Licence and B.C. Identification Card will meet the highest standards of integrity and security features. These documents will reflect national and international standards established by the Canadian Driver Licence Agreement and the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators.

Facial Recognition Technology

Facial recognition technology has emerged as a new security benchmark for government-issued documents because of its proven success at detecting fraud. B.C. is joining other Canadian provinces and more than 30 U.S. jurisdictions that have implemented it. This technology analyses the measurements of facial characteristics that do not change, such as the size and location of cheekbones and the distance between the eyes. It is extremely rare for two people to have the same facial measurements. ICBC will flag any matches for further review and investigation, and only issue licences to people using their own identities, thereby reducing identity theft and fraud.

Facial recognition does not involve collecting any new information about drivers. The use of facial recognition technology has been reviewed for privacy implications and has been found to meet the requirements of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

New Card Security Features

The new cards will be extremely difficult to counterfeit or tamper with. In addition to the security features highlighted in the news release, the cards will include:

- An optical variable device – that is, a stamped foil graphic very similar to the bird on a Visa card. On B.C. cards, it will

contain whales, the provincial coat of arms and the provincial logo.

Its holographic qualities will make it very difficult to duplicate.

- Micro and rainbow printing that is only visible under a magnifying glass and written in a unique pattern.
- Ultraviolet designs that only show up under a black light, helping to prevent counterfeiting.
- An improved magnetic stripe, which will contain the same information that is on the front of the card.
- Two- and one-dimensional barcodes. The former cannot be altered, while the latter is a unique number assigned to each card.

The new licences and cards will build on other, recent efforts to provide British Columbians with security-enhanced documents. In January 2008, the Province began issuing one of the most high-tech and durable birth certificates in the world, with more than 20 security features.

Licence Fees Are Unchanged

The standard fees for the B.C. Driver's Licence and B.C. Identification Card remain the same:

- Two-year original licence or renewal: \$31
- Five-year original licence or renewal: \$75
- Five-year original licence or renewal (seniors): \$17
- Duplicate (replacement or upgrade licence): \$17
- Class 7 two-year learner's licence: \$10
- Original BC Identification Card: \$35
- Original BC Identification Card (seniors): \$15
- Duplicate or renewal BC Identification Card: \$15

Other Licensing Facts

The first B.C. Driver's Licence was issued in Victoria on February 16, 1925.

Exams for driver's licences became mandatory in 1939.

In 1950, the term of a B.C. Driver's Licence was extended to five years from one.

Photo driver's licences were first issued in B.C. in 1972, the same year licence classes were established.

In 2008, ICBC issued a total of more than one million driver's licences and identification cards.

ICBC provides licensing services through 121 locations across the province.

News Around the Province

CANADA'S FIRST COMMUNITY COURT

Canada's first community court is making progress in using a problem-solving approach to quickly assess and direct offenders to services meant to address the causes of their criminal behaviour. Getting people out of the cycle of crime and connected with treatment, information and health services such as psychiatric assessments or medications is one of the key goals of the community court . These initial results are very promising and show that collaboration can work well in providing the court with timely information to make sentencing and treatment decisions and address the rehabilitation of the accused.

It is still very early going, but the approach looks to be effective and efficient in addressing the complex needs of offenders, who often face multiple challenges.

Between Sept. 10 and Dec. 31, Vancouver's Downtown Community Court dealt with 658 individuals. Of these, 449 resolved their court cases, meaning they were either found guilty and sentenced or their case was concluded after completing community service. The community court expects to see about 1,500 offenders annually. The Province credited the court's early successes to the work of Judges Tom Gove and David Pendleton, Crown prosecutors, the staff lawyer who represents offenders and community corrections, police, court staff and health and social services partners. It's the collaborative approach that distinguishes this court from more traditional courts. Everyone working in the court is committed to making the model work and making a difference in the community.

While it's early to gauge the long-term influence of the court on accused, the judicial system is seeing some encouraging results. The community service being completed by offenders is already having direct benefits in the community. It will be in a better position to gauge the overall effects when the court is evaluated.

Community service is often part of the intervention plans and focuses on reconnecting offenders with their neighbourhood. It can involve such activities as removing graffiti or helping out at community agencies. The court has contributed approximately 1,285 hours of community service to downtown Vancouver businesses and community agencies. The services have a value of approximately \$10,280.

Interest in the court has been far ranging, and the Province has hosted delegations from across the province, Alberta, Ontario, Washington State, China, Russia and Australia.

The downtown community court is located at 211 Gore Ave., in the former Vancouver pre-trial centre. The catchment or geographic area of the court is downtown Vancouver from Clark Drive on the east to Stanley Park on the west, with Great Northern Way as the southern boundary and the Inner Harbour and Coal Harbour as the northern boundary.

The pilot was developed jointly by the Provincial Court, Ministry of Attorney General and many other partners. Information on the community court is available at: www.communitycourt.bc.ca.

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

*Cedar's student Mexico team
Thanks for making a difference to those less fortunate in our world!*

Community Announcements 33rd Annual Snow Daze February 6th to 28th

Mark your calendar...

- ❖ 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
- ❖ February 7 – Cedar's School Garage Sale 8am - 2pm at 701 North Nechako Rd – raising money for Cedars Mexico team. 31 students constructing home for need family, disturbing food and clothing.
- ❖ February 7 - McBride Trading Co offering chocolate making class 1-3pm - 250-569 2559 for more info.

- ❖ February 6-8 – Drama show at ECRA – Mid winter Madness- tickets \$10 - more info to come or call
- ❖ February 8 – **Wealth Expo**- Coast Inn Ballroom 10am to 5 pm
- ❖ February 8 – Bridal Show – Sweetheart Extravaganza from 11am – 5pm at the Prince George Civic Centre. Tickets \$20. available at Ken’s Goldsmith, Story Book wedding and CH Shoppers
- ❖ February 12-15- **Disney High School Musical** ice tour at the CN Centre, tickets on sale at Ticket Master.
- ❖ February 18 – Chamber of Commerce Recognition Luncheon at the Ramada Hotel 12-1:30pm call the Chamber for more info 250-562-2454
- ❖ February 19 – District Parent Advisory Council #57 presents “*Cracked*” at Vanier Hall, 7pm; grades 7-12 are invited to see this award winning production and follow up discussions facilitated by NH and Community Policing. Mature content. \$10 by donation benefits Street Spirits.
- ❖ February 21 – **Everybody’s Bobbin’** concert at the Prince George Playhouse. Performances at 2:30 and 7:30pm, more info to come.
- ❖ February 21 – Seedy Saturday – from 10 am to 3 pm at Exploration Place – first gardening even of the year. For more information or to book a table, please contact Jovanka at 564-3859 or at jovanka@netbistro.com
- ❖ 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.



My second e-newsletter, **People, Places & Projects** showcases great people and projects in our area. To subscribe to **People, Places & Projects**, [click here](#). To read past editions to go: [People, Places & Projects online](#).

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