

Former judge vents fury over jail closing

**LOUISE DICKSON
and LINDSAY KINES**
Times Colonist

The closure of the Victoria Youth Custody Centre is the latest in a series of terrible decisions that will backfire on the government, a former youth court judge told a community meeting.

"The cavalier treatment of our troubled youth is going to come back and bite us some day if we don't do something about it," retired provincial court Judge Fred Green said.

More than 150 people — including youth custody

workers, teachers, probation officers, drug and alcohol counsellors and the public — packed into the theatre at Reynolds Secondary School Tuesday to hear politicians and union leaders discuss their concerns about the pending closure.

"The fact that there are no female remand centres on Vancouver Island is appalling," Green said. "The fact that female youth services are and will remain centralized in Burnaby is worse. And the proposed closure of the Victoria Youth Custody Centre and all youth custody services

to be drawn at Burnaby and Prince George is the bitter icing on the cake."

The B.C. government's decision to close the centre, made without any consultation, means youth in Victoria will be held in police cells for pre-court detention, remand and short sentences.

"This, in my opinion, is unacceptable and possibly illegal," said Green, who sat for four years as a full-time youth court judge.

Green told the audience he got to know youths, their parents and the people working with them. "That kind of connection from the

judicial point of view, as far as I'm concerned, is absolutely necessary for the continuity, consistency and the accountability of the youth as well."

Closing the facility and separating families from their children in custody will render it almost impossible for parents to spend meaningful time with their youth in custody, he said.

In 2011 and 2012, there were 1,061 youth cases before the court on Vancouver Island, Green said. "So we're not talking about small numbers."

The facility is not just

important for youths in custody, said Esquimalt-Royal Roads MLA Maurine Karagianis. Their programs help youths stay in the community and not be incarcerated. "There are 40 young people in the community attached to the facility.

Those heads are not counted by the government," Karagianis said.

Chief Bob Chamberlin, vice-president of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, said Premier Christy Clark's Families First agenda "is the most tragic punchline of this government." With the number of aboriginal children in

care in the justice system, there must be a duty to consult First Nations people, Chamberlin said. "We will work our damndest to make sure this decision, which is so horribly wrong on so many fundamental levels, is overturned."

Jeremy Berland, former director of child welfare, noted the Ministry for Children and Family Development has a budget of \$1.6 billion and will save \$4.5 million a year by closing the centre. "This decision is wrong," he said. ldickson@timescolonist.com lkines@timescolonist.com

Fire-hit residents 'want answers'

**KATIE DeROSA
and LOUISE DICKSON**
Times Colonist

Exhausted and frustrated View Towers residents attended a meeting at the University of Victoria Wednesday night, hoping they would learn when they could return to their apartments or where they would stay after last week's fire.

The media was not allowed to attend the meeting. But a statement issued by the city said the Canadian Red Cross and Salvation Army will set up a centre in View Towers this morning to provide services and information on what is next for residents.

About 30 displaced residents have been staying at UVic. Dozens more have been staying with family or friends. It's estimated about 70 people are unable to return to their suites in the 350-unit building.

As they waited for the meeting to begin, several women said the Red Cross and emergency social services had been great, but the uncertainty about their belongings and contradictory information about their apartments was like "emotional whiplash." Although they are looking for other apartments, they did not want their names published in the newspaper in case they have to return to View Towers.

One woman said she believed displaced residents will be looked after on a temporary basis by the Red Cross until they can make their own arrangements.

Resident Allan Brown said he was in his apartment the day after the fire and it had no water damage. When he returned, the locks had been changed.

"Management is giving,



ADRIAN LAM, TIMES COLONIST

A firefighter uses a ladder to tackle the blaze at View Towers last week.

totally, no answers to our questions at all," said Brown. "I got so pissed off I could barely talk. I want answers. I want to know why I can't get back in my apartment and get my stuff."

The fire broke out on May 15 and destroyed the ninth-floor suite where it was started by a lit cigarette.

Although emergency assistance typically lasts only three days, the province has provided seven days of assistance.

Last week, the Victoria Emergency Management Agency said 67 suites were damaged by smoke or water, displacing about 50 people.

Victoria Mayor Dean Fortin, Victoria Fire Chief

Paul Bruce, emergency management staff from both the city and the province, B.C. Housing and social agencies met Wednesday to devise a plan on how to help the residents in the long term.

Residents who have been allowed back in the building say they're concerned about poor air quality and asbestos.

A warning notice posted in the hallways by Downs Construction says: "Clean up and repair of the damaged areas may also cause air quality issues. Hazardous materials may include asbestos fibres. People entering this building do so warned of the potential risks."

Alex Krampol, who has lived in the building for two

years, said malfunctioning fire alarms go off on an almost daily basis and many residents ignore them. Krampol said when last week's blaze happened, he held his pillow over his ears until he smelt smoke and realized it was not a false alarm.

"In the future, it could be something that puts somebody's life in danger," he said.

The building does not have sprinklers because it was built in the 1960s when sprinklers were not required.

View Towers management would not say if they had any plans to reimburse displaced tenants on their rent or damage deposit.

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Talks unlikely to avoid strike, unionist says

JEFF BELL
Times Colonist

Two days of scheduled negotiations, today and Friday, stand between school activities and a series of rotating strikes around the province next week.

While there may be progress to head off the strikes, one local union official has her doubts.

Benula Larsen, president of the Greater Victoria Teachers' Association, said teachers had been seeking a contract for 16 months and a few more days might not be enough to make a substantial difference in the process.

The B.C. Teachers' Federation, with 41,000 members, has announced plans for a series of one-day rotating strikes across B.C. from Monday to Thursday next week.

Everything is geared toward getting a negotiated contract, rather than picketing, Larsen said. Despite the short time before the strikes are set to begin, she said teachers would stay at the table beyond the two upcoming sessions for further talks. "The BCTF has said has said to government: 'We are willing.'"

A meeting of teaching-staff representatives from Greater Victoria district schools is being held today to share information and distribute picket signs.

Sooke school district will be the first local jurisdiction affected by pickets. It is among 16 across B.C. that will be hit by a one-day strike on Monday. Saanich is next on Tuesday followed by Greater Victoria on Wednesday and the Gulf Islands on Thursday.

While the strike activity will leave some parents scrambling to make arrangements for their chil-

dren, before- and after-school care will run as usual in Saanich because of a pre-existing agreement involving district unions and the administration.

The deal allows for private care providers to keep operating, Saanich superintendent Nancy Macdonald said.

"Most of our out-of-school care is in portables outside the school."

It is a similar situation with the seniors' centre adjoining Cordova Bay Elementary School, which will also stay open, Macdonald said, as well as neighbourhood learning centres at North Saanich and Royal Oak middle schools.

Care programs in the Sooke district will be shut during its strike day, while the availability of programs in the Greater Victoria district will be decided on by child-care providers.

"The ones that have a lease with us, that's up to them because we can't break a lease," Greater Victoria superintendent Sherri Bell said. "Typically in the past, most of them have not operated."

The rotating strikes are an escalation from action that has included limits on teachers' supervisory duties.

The move to picketing at schools by the BCTF came after what it called a lack of progress in bargaining, and what it perceived as a threat from the B.C. Public School Employers' Association to cut teachers' wages by five per cent if a contract is not agreed to by the end of June.

Education Minister Peter Fassbender has said the wage-cutting proposal is not a threat and that teachers' wage demands are too high.

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Saanich

**DISTRICT OF SAANICH
NOTICE OF MEETINGS
MAY 26 – 30, 2014**

**COUNCIL/COMMITTEE OF
THE WHOLE
MONDAY, MAY 26, 7:30 p.m.,
Council Chambers**

Bylaws
9265: Oil Burning Equipment and Flammable Liquid and Combustible Liquid Fuel Tank Bylaw.

Resolutions for Adoption
• Tender 05/14 – Beach Park and Haliburton Sewage Lift Stations Generator Replacement.
• AVICC – annual dues.

Committee Items
• 5325 Cordova Bay Road – development permit amendment to vary the interior sideyard setback for proposed single storey commercial building for a physiotherapy clinic.

**ENVIRONMENT AND
NATURAL AREAS ADVISORY
COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, MAY 27, 5:15 p.m.,
Committee Room No. 2**

For more information contact the Legislative Division at 250-475-1775 or by email at clerksec@saanich.ca

Agendas and minutes are available at saanich.ca

RICK STEVES

SATURDAY IN THE TIMES COLONIST

Be a part of the future in Diabetes Research

If you are an adult with Type 2 Diabetes, you may be eligible to take part in a clinical research study called CARMELINA.

CARMELINA will look at the impact of a medication called linagliptin on the long-term occurrence of cardiovascular disease like heart attacks and stroke in people with Type 2 Diabetes.

Contact us for more information and to find out if you qualify for participation.

Dr. Michael Jones at CookMed Research
Cook Street Medical Clinic, Victoria
250-383-3311
cookmed.research@gmail.com
778-350-9109 (Jen, Study Coordinator)

Gorge pollutant identified

Times Colonist

A substance that polluted Gorge Creek and the Gorge waterway this month has been found to be a combination of motor oil and engine-cleaning fluid.

While most of the liquid has been collected, booms and absorbent material are being left in place for at least the next three weeks to ensure that if more appears, it will be contained.

The Ministry of Environment said five ducks were found to have been affected by the liquid.

The ministry has brought in wildlife experts and a veterinarian

to assess the condition of the ducks.

Municipal officials from Esquimalt are trying to determine the source of the spill, which was reported on May 8.

Anyone living in Rockheights or near the Esquimalt industrial park who saw someone pouring liquid into a sewer or catch basin is asked to call the municipality's department of engineering and public works.

The municipality repeated a reminder to residents that anything put into the sewage/stormwater system can come out in water courses or the ocean and cause damage.

Climber hurt in fall at potholes

Times Colonist

More than two dozen emergency personnel were involved in the rescue of a man who fell from a cliff at Sooke Potholes on Wednesday.

The man and a woman were attempting to rock climb in a restricted, fenced off area near the old lodge when the man fell about 20 metres, Sooke fire chief Steve Sorensen said.

The woman called 911 as the

man lay with a broken arm and injuries to his legs. Sooke firefighters arrived, but it became clear the rescue would need several rope technicians. Rescue personnel from Langford and Metchosin fire departments and Juan de Fuca search and rescue were called in to help.

The rescue took more than two hours. The man was eventually put on a stretcher and taken to hospital by B.C. Ambulance paramedics.