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Telecommunication towers and small communities

To the editor,

As I expressed in the *Free Press* article last week, I have many concerns about the proposed location of a tower in Forest Grove. It is too close to the school, homes, and businesses. It will affect surrounding property values. It will be a 45-metre eyesore. And my biggest concern is the health risk associated with such towers.

In Canada and B.C., we pay some of the highest telecommunication fees in the world so I have trouble with the ar-

gument that it would cost more to put the tower somewhere else, away from any buildings and community activity. If the proposed location is approved we will be paying the cost to keep it cheap for Telus!

I get it, people want improved service and having reliable internet access has become a necessity for many of us. But it is like we are being held ransom and in order to have improved service. Telus is asking us to take the bitter pills of putting our health at

risk, property devaluation, and aesthetic compromise with the unsightliness of a tower in the middle of Forest Grove. Given that there are many alternative options outside of town that would be safer and that would not compromise the community, it is unfair to ask that we incur the hidden costs and risks of having a tower in the middle of town.

Sincerely,

Paola Francescutto
Forest Grove

Forest Grove cell tower location should be reconsidered

To the editor,

I am writing regarding the proposed cell tower in Forest Grove. I am very concerned with the proximity of the tower to the elementary school and local residences. I understand that the tower's position complies with the Health Canada Safety code 6, however, I believe we should err on the side of caution and choose an alternative site.

In Salmon Arm, residents went through a similar consultation process with the Cyprus land services this time acting on behalf of Rogers. In Salmon Arm,

after consultation, the proposed tower was moved in order to be 0.6k away from homes and 1.2K away from the nearest school. Obviously, Salmon Arm is a larger community but Rogers was willing to relocate the tower after concerns were raised. Surely our community's children should be given the same consideration.

The proposed tower is also to be 5G compatible and according to an article in the Daily Mail the UK health experts are calling the roll-out of 5G a health experiment as the waves are smaller

and "cannot travel as far or through as many materials." Apparently, the waves are primarily absorbed by the skin and nervous system.

The proposed tower with 5G compatibility will literally tower over our community elementary school and playground. I think the health and well-being of our developing children should take priority over the inconvenience and cost of relocating the tower to a more suitable location.

Sincerely,

Marla Burnham
Forest Grove

What did we learn in 2017, the year of wildfires and evacuation?

To the editor,

I will share what I learned. When we were evacuated, I spent every day at the Emergency Operations Centre in downtown 100 Mile House. I can tell you, it was an eerie feeling seeing the streets empty with virtually no activity. But the threat of losing our community was very present in the minds and hearts of those who were close to the scene. I discovered more than ever that we were vulnerable! I knew how close

the fires came to our mills; I knew the fire jumped Highway 97 at the 103; I knew we were losing structures at the 105 and the 108; I learned that the fire(s) could come from just about any direction. I looked at the maps and discovered that we were vulnerable from all directions. I saw how vulnerable Centennial Park, and our hospital, our long term care facilities, and our own fire hall could be. Please think about it. What did we learn?

In some ways we were lucky but what do we do next?

Now then, I am an elected official; I have been chosen to provide leadership for this community. Leadership means doing something! Needless to say, but I will say it anyway, I love this community.

The message from 2017 was clear... do something!

It would be ridiculous to place a fire extinguisher on every tree; we have to mit-

igate potential fire damage, and the best advice we have from all sources is to remove fuel. That does mean that some trees have to come down. I am personally tired of being beaten up on social media where most of the facts are distorted. I want you to know that I stand for our community. We have to protect it, care for it, embrace it, and yes, love it.

Ralph Fossum
Councillor,
100 Mile House

CRD raising taxes unwelcome

To the editor,

Did your assessment go way up? Prepare to pay more in taxes than you may think. The CRD in my area has been playing with numbers again. They propose a 3.6 per cent increase in taxes which is actually a lot. When my assessment goes up 19.5 per cent from last year I'd pay the 20 per cent more in taxes and then get

another 3.6 per cent. That adds up roughly to almost 9 percent: ridiculous. The CRD is playing the game again and I'll oppose them again. The CRD and assessors use the SWAG method of determining how much they can gouge out of you. Sophisticated Wild A-- Guess = SWAG.

The increase is based on previous

guesses and the greed of inflation. On our street, one property went up 23 per cent, another 55 per cent, 31 per cent, 44 per cent. Have been asked for why I'm appealing and the details etc, etc. My response is to show me how the assessor came up with the numbers. Them first as it should be. Is it so with you?

Gary Young

Lac la Hache

Editor's note: The CRD took increased property assessments into account when budgeting meaning an increased property assessment doesn't necessarily guarantee higher taxes in and of itself (i.e. the rates for some services went down to account for the increase in property values).

Time to listen to the doctors and legalize opioid drugs

As the B.C. Coroners Service released its 2018 overdose-related death totals, showing four people a day are still dying from mainly fentanyl-contaminated street drugs, there was a desperate edge to the message.

Dr. Bonnie Henry, the provincial health officer, pleaded with politicians to take action beyond handing out overdose kits and declaring emergencies. In short, prohibition is pushing users onto the street, and the flow of smuggled fentanyl, mainly from China, hasn't slowed despite frantic efforts to harden North America's borders to it.

The grim update was



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sometimes multiple times in the same day.

Meanwhile, people continue to die at home, alone. The vast majority are men between the ages of 30 and 59. They're not classic junkies, and as a member of that demographic, I would suggest that most of them hold down jobs rather than descending to stealing or selling their bodies to get the next fix.

Wood reluctantly calls them "weekend warriors." Another interesting stat is that the majority of them are buying stimulants, mostly cocaine or methamphetamine, that turns out to be contaminated with fentanyl. More on

that in a minute.

The message to politicians was clear. Henry noted that federal law criminalizing narcotic possession is the main obstacle to progress and that prescription substitutes such as diacetylmorphine have shown significant results in the limited tests Ottawa has allowed.

"That's what my office is working on ... how we can have de facto decriminalization of people who use drugs in B.C., recognizing that is one of the huge challenges that is leading to people using street drugs and dying, and using alone," Henry said.

Wood said public ed-

ucation is needed "so the winds start to blow in a direction where the politicians see where they can really act freely and start applying some of the public health models."

Henry said B.C. is studying Portugal's prescription model, which is held up as an international success. In 2001, drug laws there were amended to keep hard drugs illegal, except for authorized personal use. Anyone caught with up to 10 days' unauthorized supply is subject to an administrative penalty rather than facing jail time for possession of heroin, cocaine or the synthetic variants now

cranked out by organized crime.

Coroner Lapointe referred to a survey of B.C. users that found almost half claimed they were looking for pain relief. Given the option of "pain-related," that's what they told surveyors.

"Pain-related wasn't defined," Lapointe said. "Was that physical pain, was that emotional pain, was that psychological pain? But people are reaching out for help."

This is where I beg to differ with the soothing message of the medical establishment. Construction workers aren't scoring tainted coke or meth because their knees

are sore, or their divorce was unpleasant. They're doing it because decades of popular culture have taught them that getting high and partying are the main reasons to go to work.

Prohibition didn't work for booze, it didn't work for marijuana, and it won't work for "ecstasy" or heroin either. Fentanyl, a needed painkiller for people dealing with cancer or major surgery, might just open the eyes of timid politicians to the need to act.

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