

## NEWS UPDATE

## Sextuplets' parents to argue in Supreme Court that B.C. government violated their civil rights

**VANCOUVER** | Parents of the four surviving sextuplets born last month in Vancouver will be in B.C. Supreme Court Thursday arguing that the B.C. government grossly violated their civil rights by apprehending two of their children so they could be given blood transfusions.



Shane Brady

The parents are devoutly religious Jehovah Witnesses and follow their church's teaching that forbids blood transfusions. Two of the sextuplets have died.

At the end of January, officials with the Ministry of Children and Family Development received court orders allowing them to seize three of the surviving babies, and two of them are believed to have been given blood transfusions.

Ontario-based lawyer Shane Brady, who represents the parents — whose identities are protected by a court order — said he intends to argue that, during the process of apprehending the children, their parents were denied a fair hearing, contrary to a 1995 Supreme Court of Canada decision.

He said the Supreme Court found that governments should not interfere with parental decisions without giving parents a fair hearing.

The case is expected to last two days.

Vancouver Sun

## 12 British Columbians named to Order of Canada

**B.C.** | Twelve B.C. residents were among 87 Canadians cited Tuesday as appointments to the Order of Canada by Governor General Michaëlle Jean.

The recipients, officially appointed on Oct. 5, will accept their insignia at a ceremony to be held at a later date.

Joseph Gosnell Sr. (social service) of New Aiyansh was named a companion of the order, while Kelowna's Robert Louie (social service), Vancouver's Jaymie M. Matthews (science) and Vancouver's William H. New, (education) were named officers.

Appointed as members were: William Garden (marine engineering) of Sidney; Patsy George (social service) of Vancouver; Lois Hollstedt (social service) of North Vancouver; Carol Newell (philanthropy) of Vancouver; J. Norgrove Penny (health care) of Victoria; Jane Vance Rule (arts/writing) of Galiano Island; A. Jonathan Stoessl (health care) of Richmond; and Melvin N. Zajac (philanthropy) of Vancouver.

The Order of Canada was established in 1967 to recognize outstanding achievement and service in various fields of human endeavour and is the country's highest honour for lifetime achievement. Appointments are made on the recommendation of an advisory council, chaired by the chief justice of Canada.

Vancouver Sun



Joseph Gosnell Sr. named companion of the order.

## Paraplegic hit-and-run victim offered new wheelchair

**LANGLEY** | A paraplegic woman injured in a hit-and-run crash last month has been offered a replacement wheelchair by the Langley Lions Club.

"I'm definitely willing to give it to her," said Rick Harker of the Lions Society of B.C.

MacDougal, currently back in hospital for treatment of her injuries, was crossing 200th Street at Willowbrook Drive on Jan. 26 when she was struck.

A truck came down Willowbrook behind her, turned right and sideswiped MacDougal's chair. The impact spun her around, wrenching her neck and shoulders. One of her footrests was sheared off by the impact.

The truck did not stop, and no bystanders or other motorists came to MacDougal's aid. She made it home, but has since been confined to bed.

Both the police and MacDougal have called for drivers to be more cautious, after a spate of similar incidents.

Matthew Claxton, Langley Advance

## Wildlife group turns back on fisheries talks

**PRINCE RUPERT** | Proposed changes to the Fisheries Act will steal fish from residents and place it in the hands of special interest groups, says the B.C. Wildlife Federation.

"Not since the days of King John of England in 1215 has a more blatant attempt been made to steal the public's rights to fish and that move resulted in the signing of the Magna Carta," said federation president Wilf Pfeleiderer.

The federation's tidal fishing committee argues that under Section 43 of the new Fisheries Act, residents should be prepared to buy their rights from "a fishing organization, union, B.C. Packers or any friend of the government they want to give the fish to."

The federation concedes there are areas of the act that need examination and says it is prepared to work with the appropriate authorities to ensure that the act protects fish and eases the worries of industry by providing achievable initiatives.

But until Section 43 is removed, it will not take part in the process.

The federation says in the halibut fishery, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has given the rights to catch 88 per cent of the halibut to the commercial fleet.

If the recreational fishery exceeds its allotted 12 per cent, it is required to buy the excess from the commercial fleet, it says.

Prince Rupert Daily News

## PRINCE GEORGE

## Canfor probe finds faulty safety valve caused explosion

An investigation by Canfor Pulp has determined that an explosion at Intercontinental Pulp Mill's bleach plant earlier this month was caused by the apparent malfunction of a safety valve.

The failed valve allowed hydrogen peroxide — used in the bleaching process — to continue flowing into an area downstream where another valve was closed.

With a pump running against the closed valve, heat was created which decomposed the hydrogen peroxide faster than normal. The gaseous decomposition products generated enough pressure to cause the pump to fail, spreading metal debris in an explosion, the company found.

One employee sustained an injury to his back from a piece of flying debris. That worker has not returned to the job, but another employee that was sent to hospital as well, is back to work.

Repairs were made to the system and the bleach plant was restarted last weekend.

Before the bleach plant was restarted, the system was redesigned with an automatic safety shut-off valve that will close in the event the hydrogen peroxide feed pump stops, or the discharge valve on the stock pump closes, Canfor spokesman Ted Perry said Tuesday.

The repairs and loss of production is estimated to have cost Canfor Pulp \$1.5 million.

Prince George Citizen

## THE DAILY SPECIAL



## 'IT'S OUR MORAL

## B.C. BUDGET | Finance minister's housing endowment fund is 'for new, imaginative ideas, for new pilots, new models' in future

## From B1

But some critics said the province will actually end up with slightly less permanent social housing at the end of three years than it started with.

"Basically, there is no real money for social housing," said Coun. Tim Stevenson. That's because the budget provides money to convert 750 units of existing social housing to seniors' housing, while it appears that money dedicated to build permanent new units of social housing will only pay for 600.

"Housing is actually being taken away," said Stevenson.

It was difficult to decipher the budget documents, but housing expert Alice Sundberg said it looked to her as though 450 of the 600 permanent units were those announced last fall, when the provincial government launched a homelessness initiative.

The budget added another \$38 million in order to bring the

number up to 600.

"They're re-announcing numbers because they announced the 450," said Sundberg, executive director of the B.C. Non-Profit Housing Association. She described the housing measures in the budget as "a start."

"Once you start to see the details, it really starts to fall short of what's really needed," she said.

Economist Marc Lee, of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, concurred.

"There are some worthwhile initiatives, but it's spread pretty thinly. And it actually doesn't add any new housing."

The budget did include a massive increase in the province's annual emergency shelter program from about \$20 million to \$30 million a year. That works out to a total of \$27 million in new money over the next three years. That money will make it possible for five emergency shelters that would have had to close to remain open, including those at Belkin House in Vancouver

and William Booth in Abbotsford.

It will also allow 300 cold, wet-weather shelter beds to stay open year-round, bringing the total number of year-round shelter beds in the province to 1,300.

Murray said the new money may also allow the Salvation Army to convert the cold-wet weather shelters it now has in the Downtown Eastside, the Haven, the Anchor, the Beacon and Crosswalk, to permanent shelters.

The province also announced Tuesday that it will set aside \$250 million from this year's surplus to create a permanent Housing Endowment Fund.

"I feel it's our moral obligation to try and set aside some dollars for the future," said Taylor.

The interest from the fund, estimated at \$10 million a year, will be used to pay for housing projects that would not otherwise receive money.

"The purpose of this fund is for new, imaginative ideas," said

Taylor. "This is for new pilots, new models."

Sundberg said the endowment fund is "probably the most exciting aspect of the whole budget," saying it should help non-profit groups to develop new housing.

Tuesday's budget also includes:

■ \$45 million over the next four years to convert up to 750 social housing units into supportive housing units for the elderly.

■ \$6 million over the next three years to help pay for more staff at transition houses for battered women so the shelters can stay open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

■ \$123 million more in rent subsidies.

■ \$101 million in transfers from the federal government which the province plans to spend on housing, half on supportive housing for the mentally ill and drug addicted and half on off-reserve housing for aboriginals.

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## Home relief for first time buyers and seniors

BY CHAD SKELTON  
VANCOUVER SUN

**VICTORIA** | First-time home buyers, and low-income seniors living in million-dollar homes, received a break from the provincial government Tuesday.

The province announced in January that it would increase the Home Owner Grant threshold from \$780,000 to \$950,000 — so homeowners with houses worth less than that will still receive the basic \$570-a-year grant (or \$845 for seniors).

On Tuesday the province went further, announcing that the full grant will be available to all low-income seniors, regardless of how much their property is worth.

Finance Minister Carole Taylor said the new rules are designed to help poor seniors who bought their homes decades ago and now face huge property tax bills on multi-million-dollar homes.

"We think this will really help a lot of people to stay in their homes and continue to be inde-

pendent rather than being forced to sell their home because they are so house-rich," she said.

The province announced it would also lower the eligibility for property tax deferral from age 60 to 55.

That program allows homeowners to defer paying their property taxes until after their home is sold — at which point the taxes, plus a below-prime rate of interest, are taken out of the proceeds of the sale.

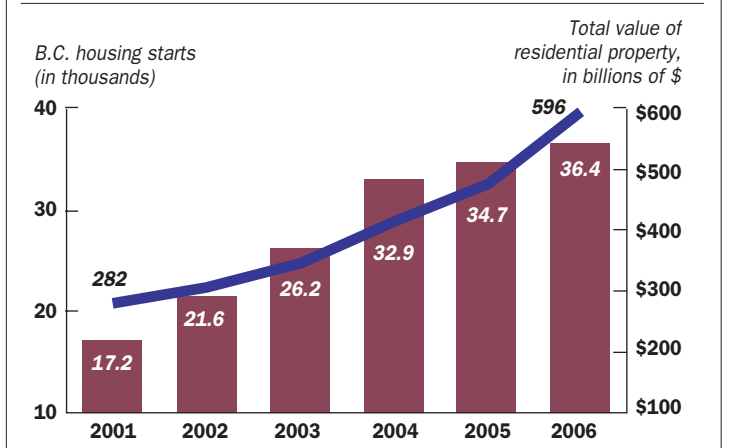
Taylor said in the past the deferral program was not popular with seniors, who worried about leaving debts for their children to pay out of their estate.

But as the baby boomers age, she said, the program has become increasingly popular — especially for those who retire early.

Tuesday's budget also included an expansion of the First Time Home Buyers program, which allows first time buyers to avoid paying the property transfer tax — which can run as high as \$5,500.

Previously, the complete tax

## Property values up 24 per cent in 2006



Source: CMHC; B.C. Assessment

VANCOUVER SUN

exemption was only available to home buyers if the property they bought cost less than \$265,000 — or \$325,000 if they lived in the Lower Mainland or south Vancouver Island.

Tuesday's budget increases that threshold to \$375,000 for the entire province.

Cameron Muir, an economist with the B.C. Real Estate Associ-

ation, said the raised threshold should make it easier for first time buyers to get into the housing market, especially in smaller communities.

"For first-time home buyers who are facing an affordability squeeze right now, it gives them a little bit of extra room," he said.

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## WEST COAST

## A major earthquake could hit the B.C. coast any day now or in hundreds of years, quake expert from Washington state says

The Big One could hit the B.C. coast any day now or hundreds of years from now, says an earthquake expert from Washington state.

Major earthquakes registering about 9.0 on the Richter scale occur about every 500 years along the fault zone extending from mid-Vancouver Island to Northern California, geologist Tim Walsh told an emergency planning forum in Richmond.

The area, known as the Cascadia Subduction Zone, separates the Juan de Fuca and North American tectonic plates and is where the oceanic crust of the Pacific Ocean is pushed toward and beneath the continent at a rate of 40 millimetres per year — the process that is called subduction.

The Cascadia subduction zone is a very long sloping fault that stretches from mid-Vancouver Island to northern California.

The last major subduction earthquake in the zone occurred in January, 1700 — which means that a major earthquake is probable sometime between now and the next few hundred years, said Walsh, geologic hazards program man-



STUART DAVIS/VANCOUVER SUN FILES

## Geologist Tim Walsh says Arthur Laing Bridge among those vulnerable to a quake.

Walsh said it is difficult to predict what

impact a major earthquake would have on downtown Vancouver given that no modern city has been hit by a subduction earthquake.

"Certainly the Lower Mainland is a great distance from where the strongest ground-shaking would be," Walsh told reporters, after speaking to the Emergency Preparedness for Industry and Commerce Council forum.

Walsh said that a large subduction earthquake would cause a major tsunami and noted that the earthquake in 1700 generated a tsunami that travelled across the Pacific Ocean and hit Japan.

Walsh said such a tsunami could send a three- or four-metre surge down the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

Walsh said areas with water-saturated sands such as Richmond and other municipalities in the Fraser Delta basin would be much more susceptible to ground-shaking than areas with bedrock.

Vancouver International Airport and connecting bridges would be vulnerable, he said.

Doug Ward, Vancouver Sun