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PORTRAIT OF A COUPLE'S LIFE ON THE STREETS

SEE PHOTO ESSAY, PAGE A3

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See video of Michael Graham and Doris Nitz on our website.



Michael Graham and his common-law wife Doris Nitz rely on each other to survive life on the streets of Calgary. Colleen De Neve, Calgary Herald

Cuts in oilpatch rise to \$1.2B

**Tories dismiss
EnCana claim
royalties at fault**

TONY SESKUS
AND JASON FEKETE
CALGARY HERALD

Alberta Energy Minister Mel Knight is dismissing criticism his government's contentious royalties plan is largely responsible for driving more than \$1.2 billion in oilpatch spending out of the province for 2008.

Canada's largest independent petroleum producer, EnCana Corp., announced Wednesday it will ramp up capital spending next year by 13 per cent — including an increase in its oil-sands operations. But the company said it is chopping \$500 million from its natural gas plans in Alberta next year. "Announced changes to the royalty structure in Alberta have already influenced our budgeting process," EnCana CEO Randy Eresman said. Combined with recent announcements by industry heavyweights Canadian Natural Resources and Nexen, the

oilpatch has announced so far it will invest \$1.2 billion less than planned in Alberta in 2008 — with much of the blame aimed at the royalties framework.

While Knight conceded higher royalties will erode some spending, he rejected criticism the province's new framework unveiled in October is largely responsible for diminishing capital investment in the energy sector.

"I don't know about that 'largely' part," Knight said. In an interview, Knight argued petroleum producers "will

ALSO SEE admit themselves" that EnCana to low natural gas prices, a tight labour market and the high-flying Canadian dollar invest in U.S. E1 E4

are also delivering a major wallop to the oil and gas industry. "The other thing that I think people need to do is hang onto your hat for a minute," he said. Knight noted the government continues to tinker with its plan to ensure it doesn't deliver "unintended consequences," such as making certain wells or resource pools uneconomical to develop.

SEE ENCANA, PAGE A6

City debates freeze on new developments

COLETTE DERWORZ
CALGARY HERALD

Calgary's explosive growth is forcing aldermen to consider freezing some residential and commercial development on the city's outskirts for one year.

Coping with billions of dollars in infrastructure needs and serious staff shortages, city planners said they can't keep up with the work that is required over the coming year.

On Wednesday, officials asked a city committee to defer five projects — mostly in recently annexed lands in the west and north — until 2009.

Dozens of developers, upset by the proposal, showed up at

City Hall on Wednesday, warning aldermen that delaying any projects along the city's borders would be "devastating" for the industry and could lead to higher house prices.

"My members are saying it would be devastating to them," said Michael Flynn, executive director of the Urban Development Institute, which has about 130 members. "I don't have a figure for you... but to take any city that is growing and prosperous and put a freeze is a pretty drastic measure."

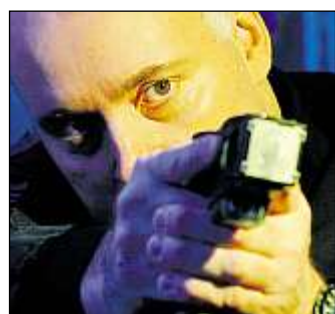
However, planners said they don't have enough qualified staff to complete all of the work that is required.

SEE FREEZE, PAGE A4

RCMP urged to restrict Taser use

The RCMP's complaints commission is calling for the force to restrict — but not suspend — the use of Tasers. Paul Kennedy, who heads the commission, said officers are using Tasers "earlier than reasonable," due in part to policy changes.

News, Page A5



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A busload of care for those in need



GWENDOLYN
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The man's frostbitten toes were black.

At the hospital, he was told they would have to be amputated, so he quietly checked himself out.

Outreach nurse Bev Straus saw another solution, so every two days she debrided the injured toes, wrapped them up in new bandages and taught the man how to care for them himself.

"I took it as a personal mission," she says. Today, he has all 10 toes and

Straus to thank for that.

It's another success for the nurse, who sees some of Calgary's most marginalized patients on the Alex Community Health Bus, a mobile clinic that reaches out to people on the streets and the working poor by stopping a 12-metre-long motorhome in communities citywide.

The Wellness on Wheels program is one of 14 agencies selected this year as beneficiaries of the Calgary Herald Christmas Fund.

The people who make their way onto the bus for treatment are the forgotten ones, many of whom wouldn't go to a regular clinic for help, others who may have taken up a space in the city's increasingly busy emergency rooms.

For the clinic's nurses, it's a chance to treat medical problems, but also take care of minds and spirits.

SEE BUS, PAGE A3

CITY & REGION Driver paroled after infamous hit-and-run

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Complete
weather
information
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Today 0°
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Man dials up \$85,000 cellular bill

A Grande Prairie man was hit with a whopping \$85,000 cellphone bill this month, after using the device to download movies to his computer.

Piotr Staniaszek, who works in the oilpatch, said he should have been warned earlier.

"They never called me when it got up to \$1,000 or \$2,000 or \$30,000," he said.

Bell Canada said Staniaszek's browsing package is meant for Internet and e-mail use on the cellphone only.

The bill has been recalculated using a lower rate, but Staniaszek says he won't pay.

See story, Page B1

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FROM A1 FREEZE: City struggling to cope with growth

"Given some of the challenges that we have, we have to put our hand up and say, 'You know, right now, we can't do it all,'" said Mary Axworthy, the city's director of land use planning and policy.

The city's rapid pace of growth is also straining the city's ability to keep up with roads, fire halls, police stations and recreation centres.

As a result, Axworthy asked council's land use, planning and transportation committee to delay the projects and focus on intensifying established areas — including planning for development along the west leg of the LRT, which was approved by council earlier this month.

Areas suggested for deferral Wednesday include the recently annexed lands on the western and northern borders, Spy Hill in the northwest, Providence in the south and a development in the inner northwest.

Donna Moore, executive director of the Calgary Region Home Builders Association, said the delay is problematic. "Any significant delay impacts affordability for new homebuyers," she said. "Land further away from the core is not as expensive as in the inner city."

Moore suggested the delay could also put people out of work in the future, because it would force developers to look outside of Calgary until more developable land becomes available within the city limits.

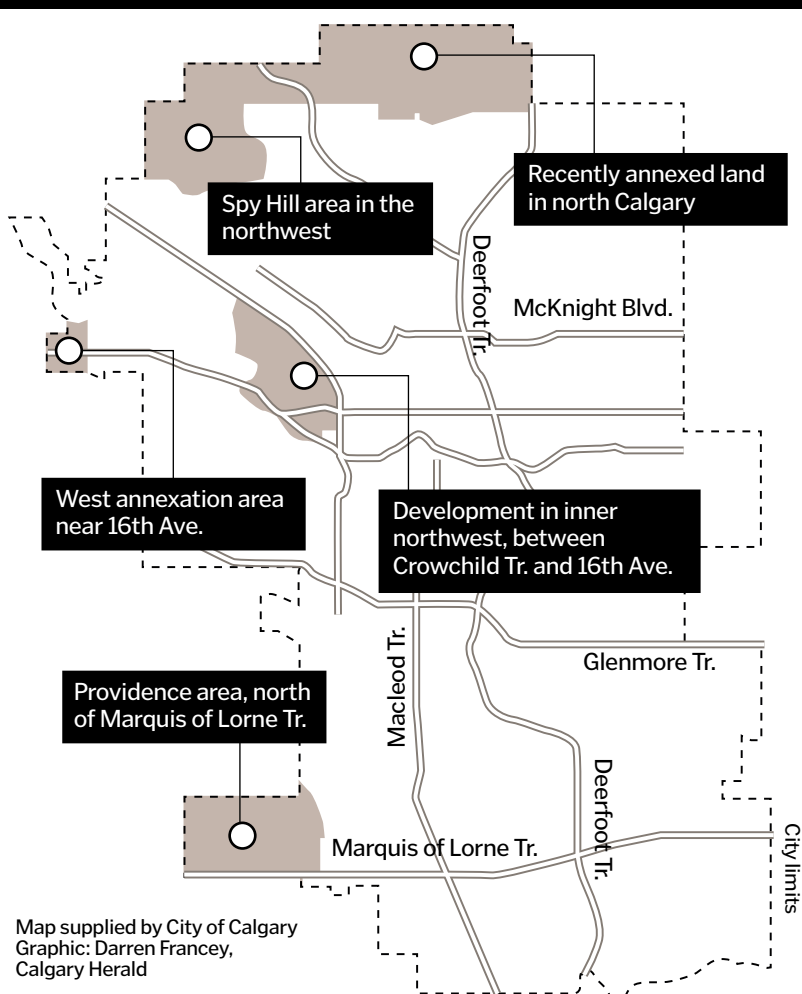
"It delays the entire process," she said. "The (planning for the) land won't be available next year, so it could be three years before the land is available for development."

Some developers, many of which are working on the edges of the city, suggested they could run out of developable land in the next five years.

City officials, however, said there is enough planned residential land to accommodate 275,000 new residents — or about a 15-year supply, which is within the policy set by city council.

"We do not believe delaying the policy plans we have identified will impact the pricing of housing in Calgary because there is a sufficient land supply," said Axworthy.

DEVELOPMENT AREAS IN CALGARY SLATED FOR DEFERRAL



Map supplied by City of Calgary
Graphic: Darren Francey,
Calgary Herald

Mayor Dave Bronconnier, who didn't participate in Wednesday's committee meeting, said the city has more than 20 new subdivisions in the works.

"We can't keep pace with continuing more of the same," the mayor told reporters. "We've got a larger picture that city council will have to deal with in the future and that is when you start looking at growth and the cost of growth."

A recent report showed it will cost Calgary more than \$7 billion over the next decade to build enough roads, fire halls, police stations and recreation centres to keep up with the growth of 225,000 people.

After 10 hours of debate, aldermen de-

ced in a 5-4 vote the proposal should be considered in a broader context, referring the issue to council's strategic planning meeting in late January.

"The issue is much bigger than a work plan," said Ald. Druh Farrell. "We have a serious resource challenge. We have a serious infrastructure challenge. It's a very complex issue," she said.

Aldermen opposed to the referral argued they needed to fulfil their commitment to developers to go ahead with the planning process for the areas.

WITH FILES FROM KIM GUTTORMSON,
CALGARY HERALD
CDERWORIZ@THEHERALD.CANWEST.COM

Grits attack Baird's polluter crackdown

Announcement just 'regifting,' say Liberals

BECKY RYNOR
CANWEST NEWS SERVICE
OTTAWA

The Liberals are accusing Environment Minister John Baird of "regifting" after he announced at an international climate change summit that big industrial polluters will have six months to report on their greenhouse gas emissions.

Liberal environment critic David McGuinty, said Baird was re-announcing existing policy.

"There's nothing new," McGuinty said Wednesday. "Since 2004, large industrial emitters have been asked on a yearly basis to provide their overall emissions to the government. That's been in place for four years."

Baird, attending a major United Nations climate change summit on the Indonesian island of Bali, said Wednesday the Conservative government served notice during the weekend that all large industries must submit data about their emissions within six months so the government could introduce regulations to crack down on pollution.

"In this holiday season, Conservative regifting just keeps on coming," McGuinty said during question period. He added that "the minister said Canada's 700 largest polluters had better watch out or else they are going to be in trouble if they do not do what they have already been doing for four years."

Prime Minister Stephen Harper shot back: "I am afraid these kinds of nonsensical questions will only stop when the House ceases sitting."

"What I can promise the honourable member is this: When the previous government raised greenhouse gas emissions by 35 per cent, that is not an

announcement this government intends to regift."

Outside the House, McGuinty said Harper dispatched Baird to Bali to "go sell a pig in a poke."

"When Mr. Baird stands up in Bali and tells the largest industrial polluters that you've got six months to do what you've already been doing, it tells me their climate change plan has been rejected at home and abroad."

The emission reporting requirements and deadline of May 31 was published in the Canada Gazette last week.

The Canada Gazette contains all formal public notices and official appointments, proposed regulations and public acts of Parliament from government departments and agencies.

In Alberta, the country's highest greenhouse-gas emitting province,

oilpatch representatives said industry has been expecting Baird's announcement.

Pierre Alvarez, president of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, insisted the oil and gas sector won't be dramatically impacted by the federal reporting standards because most large companies in Alberta already report their emissions, he said.

However, new provincial greenhouse gas regulations — which will require companies to buy into a technology fund or purchase emissions credits if they can't meet the standards — will place another financial burden on industry, he added.

Combine that with higher oil and gas royalties, and industry is feeling the financial squeeze in Alberta and may reallocate investment outside the province, he argued.

WITH FILES FROM JASON FEKETE, CALGARY HERALD



John Baird

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