

MAIL BAG

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WORTH REPEATING

Noteworthy comments from our social media feeds and TerraceStandard.com

Staircase possible for Lanfear Hill:

AMBER ROSE AUSTIN "Why not improve the trails leading up to the bench? Spend money on them instead. They are in the same places I feel like that makes more sense."

BRUCE MARTINDALE "That idea was part of an idea that wanted better access to the bench when I was on council. I pushed for it, but Lynn in particular pushed back. I lost when Brian, Carol and the the mayor got behind her. Time for change. I hope they see the wisdom now."

JEFF MEEKS "Resurface roads, nobody NEEDS a staircase to get up a hill."

MIRANDA ALLIE "I love this idea. But wow, what an expensive staircase!"

MANDA HUGON "It says for bikes, what about strollers, wheel chairs etc.?"

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LETTERS

Mourn for the dead, fight for the living

To the Editor,

Each year on April 28, we remember all the workers who were killed or injured on the job across our country. The pandemic has affected every facet of our work lives, changing perceptions on what is essential and shining a light on the inequalities. Workplace injuries and deaths are preventable, even during a pandemic, workers deserve enforcement of health and safety legislation and training on their 4 basic health and safety rights. Every worker should be able to go to work without fear of injury, being able to go home to their family, free from physical, mental or emotional harm. We owe it to the workers who we lost over the last year to do better, to protect those who are still on the frontlines, we encourage everyone to take a moment to mourn for the dead, fight for the living.

**Sam Raven,
President,
Kitimat, Terrace &
District Labour Council**

'Me first' approach not the answer

To the Editor,

"By the People, For the People."

While these words, spoken by Abraham Lincoln in Gettysburg, were related to the cause of democracy, they sprang to my mind as I considered the international COVID crisis. Considering the fact that much of the funding for research towards finding a vaccine has been bankrolled 'by the people,' should it not

be universally 'for the people?'

Perhaps I am idealistic, but if we could find our way to waiving trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights, and if manufacturers around the world were able to ramp up production of the vaccine to ensure that everyone, young and old, rich and poor, weak and strong could be vaccinated, wouldn't we all be safer? Sure, Canada might lag behind other developed nations in immunizing our population, but let us not lose sight of the overall picture.

The "me first" approach to obtaining and stock-piling vaccines by the world's wealthiest countries, is not the answer. To bring this pandemic to an end, the majority of the world needs to be immunized.

**Connie Lebeau,
Victoria**

Renewable energy systems critical for growth

To the Editor,

It bemuses me that the old granddaddy Conservative Party of Canada, is beginning to flounder under its own weight of intolerance.

Its newest leader Erin O'Toole, a young family man, recognizes that the best shot of leaving a legacy of health and prosperity to his own children and future generations, is to seriously consider the bleak future forecasted by physical science, if we continue to ignore the manmade causes of climate change.

I'm sure Mr. O'Toole, like the rest of us climate activists, are more than alarmed what

the future holds for these future constituents, if we carry on in our ways, of putting our monetary values above the health and safety of our citizens.

I believe he also recognizes that the best way to control carbon emissions is to put a price on it. Yet, because the base of Conservative support is in the heart of Canada's energy producing prairie provinces, Mr. O'Toole's plans get watered down to token, and totally ineffective carbon pricing and climate action, which basically guarantees the Liberals a majority in the next election, probably this summer.

I believe the biggest impediment for climate action, and solving the plethora of crises facing our shrinking planet are the current confrontational political systems. In Canada our system is referred to as a Westminster democracy, where generally 40 per cent of the vote usually translates into a majority government with 100 per cent of the power, that is highly lobbied by special interest groups within.

In my opinion our only chance of saving humanity from itself will be if all peoples work as one. As well as an electoral system where every vote is counted and every vote is represented in its legislators.

The greatest economic catalyst that the world will ever see will be the transformation to clean and renewable energy systems. We need to do this, not just for economic growth, but to save the biodiversity of the planet, as we cannot survive without it.

**Arthur Green,
Hope**

LIFE MATTERS

Wellness must be key focus of construction industry

By Chris Gardner

To say that as a society, we have a challenge with mental wellness, is to vastly understate the seriousness of a health crisis that is raging out of control. An epidemic before COVID-19, the pandemic-forced social isolation resulting from job losses, the closure of schools and religious institutions, and the cancellation of community events and family celebrations, is compounding the mental health calamity that has gripped our communities.

There remains a widespread hesitancy to talk openly about mental health issues and a cloud of stigma prevents the kinds of conversations that are needed to help people who are struggling.

Mental health is an issue running very deep, but very silent – when it surfaces, the consequences are too often deeply tragic for individuals, their families, workplaces and communities.

When I was five years old, my father passed away from an "accident." It was nearly ten years later that I was told that he took his own life. That's the way things were then – people simply did not talk about these things. In the decades since, there has not been a day that has gone by where I have not pondered the "what if" of this profound loss for my family. In recent years, I have wondered what it would be like to have the call display on my phone light up with

the word "Dad."

The men and women working in construction are not spared from the human toll of the crisis in mental wellness, and the statistics are sobering.

More than half the employed people who have died of opioid overdoses in B.C. in recent years worked in construction. WorkSafeBC reports that mental health claims in construction were up 25 per cent from 2017 to 2019. And, according to the Lancet medical journal, it's not just accidental overdoses that affects construction either – the risk of suicide for those working in construction is seven times the national average.

There are a lot of resources to help safeguard

and improve mental wellness, but not many of them are tailored to construction workplaces and workforces.

Construction contractors and workers have much to be proud of in how effectively they've enhanced commitments to workers' physical safety in recent decades. Now, we must strive to create workplace cultures that foster all aspects of worker wellbeing.

To do that, we need to talk about mental wellness more openly and in every part of construction – on our job sites, in our safety briefings, at our toolbox talks, and in our offices. My organization, the Independent Contractors and Businesses Association (ICBA), has spent the

past year consulting with contractors, construction workers, and wellness experts to develop a workplace wellness program with the construction worker at its centre.

And because the COVID-19 pandemic has taken such an enormous toll on people, families and their communities, ICBA is offering this new wellness program free to our member construction contractors and their employees.

Developed specifically for the construction industry and its unique challenges, ICBA's Workplace Wellness program is designed to change the construction workplace culture. It's holistic – addressing diverse, interconnected themes that collec-

tively influence individual wellbeing.

Everything is designed for the unique challenges of construction – the stress and pressure to meet schedules, the physical toll, life in a remote work camp, and the project driven nature of the work.

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety says only 23 per cent of Canadians feel comfortable talking to their employers about mental health issues. We want to help grow that number, especially in construction.

The scope and scale of the crisis that is destroying far too many people and families struggling with mental wellness challenges is indeed

daunting. Every month, B.C. officials report new record numbers of drug overdoses.

As we rebuild our economy after COVID-19, we must also ensure that we are rebuilding our people. We have to learn how to start conversations and remove the stigma associated with mental wellness. By doing so, we can help countless fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, friends, and co-workers avoid the pain and devastation that too often comes from silence, from saying and doing nothing.

Chris Gardner is president of the Independent Contractors and Businesses Association

Details about ICBA's Workplace Wellness Program can be found at icba.