



Published by Black Press Ltd. 3764 Broadway Avenue, Smithers BC V0J 2N0

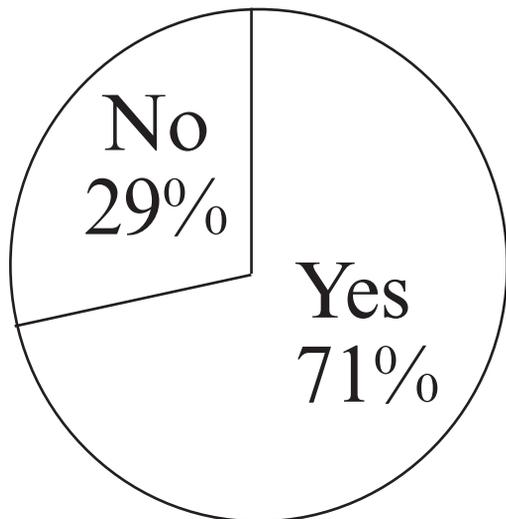
# OPINIONS

Publisher Grant Harris, Editor Chris Gareau



## Web poll

Do you agree with North Coast NDP MLA Jennifer Rice's proposed bill that calls for mandatory, regular water testing in B.C. schools?



## Urgent and immediate action required on youth mental health



**VIEW FROM THE LEGISLATURE**  
**MLA Doug Donaldson**

Statistics indicate 20 per cent of British Columbians will personally experience mental illness in their lifetime. In many cases there can be devastating consequences to the individual, their families, friends and society-at-large.

Early detection and treatment when warning signs are exhibited in children and youth are well known to alleviate further symptoms during adulthood. Yet in B.C. services are not sufficient, especially in rural and northern areas, and coordination is lacking.

These were some of the findings contained in the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth's final report *Concrete Actions for Systemic Change*, released in January, on youth mental health services. The bipartisan committee, of which I'm deputy chair, is made up of six BC Liberal and four BC NDP MLAs and spent two years studying the matter, hearing testimony and receiving submissions from families, youth, advocacy groups, health experts, academics and senior ministry staff.

Despite the bipartisan endorsement of the report's recommendations, and the call for urgent and immediate action, there was no increase for children and youth mental health services in the Ministry of Children and Family Development's budget for this coming year. In fact, after accounting for inflationary pressures, it lost ground.

A couple of significant recommendations from the report relate to service and coordination. One, that children, youth and young adults identified as exhibiting signs of behavioural, emotional or mental health issues are assessed within 30 days and begin receiving treatment within the next 30 days. Two, that a 'one child, one file' approach be instituted to address barriers to information sharing among caregivers.

The 30 day - 30 day recommendation reflects that delays in treatment and wait lists are significant and service gaps exist. It's hard to imagine that waiting almost two months is acceptable for a young person in need, but that would be an improvement over what is happening now in B.C.

'One child, one file' is a call to reduce legal barriers to information sharing by professionals caring for children and youth (i.e. teachers and school counsellors, doctors, psychiatrists) which is frequently cited as an impediment to providing effective, co-ordinated services.

It's time for this government to demonstrate concrete action and urgency by immediately implementing at least these two recommendations that could mean a world of difference for young people and their families facing mental health issues.

- Doug Donaldson is the MLA for Stikine and the Opposition critic for Children and Family Development.



• ESTABLISHED APRIL 13, 1907 •  
 MEMBER OF THE B.C. PRESS COUNCIL

Serving Smithers, the Bulkley Valley, the Hazeltons and District, Houston and District, and published on Wednesday of each week at 3764 Broadway Avenue, Smithers, B.C. V0J 2N0

Copyright number 321634.

Stories, photographs, illustrations, designs and type styles in The Interior News are the property of the copyright holders, its illustrations repo services and advertising agencies.

Reproduction in whole or in part, without written permission, is specifically prohibited.

Authorized as second-class mail by the Post Office Department, Ottawa, and for payment of postage in cash. PM40007014

MEMBER:

- B.C. and Yukon Community Newspaper Association
- Canadian Community Newspapers Association
- International Newspaper Promotion Association
- B.C. Press Council

THE INTERIOR NEWS IS A POLITICALLY INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER  
 PUBLISHED EVERY WEDNESDAY BY BLACK PRESS GROUP LTD.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

including GST:

- Local - \$40.50 per year
- Seniors - \$30.00 per year
- Out of Area - \$55.00 per year
- USA - \$230.62 per year



We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund of the Department of Canadian Heritage.



The Interior News is a member of the British Columbia Press Council, a self-regulatory body governing the province's newspaper industry. The council considers complaints from the public about the conduct of member newspapers. Directors oversee the mediation of complaints, with input from both the newspaper and the complaint holder. If talking with the editor or publisher does not resolve your complaint about coverage or story treatment, you may contact the B.C. Press Council. Your written concern, with documentation, should be sent within 45 days to B.C. Press Council, PO Box 1356, Ladysmith, B.C. V9G 1A9. For information, phone 888-687-2213 or go to www.bcprescouncil.org