

gateway

Tuesday, October 18, 1982

If we finish early...

we can go for a RATT sandwich

New building opens

by Allison Annesley

The official opening of Alberta's new health science centre was met with mixed reactions.

Unhappy hospital administrators stifled themselves Friday afternoon at the official opening of the W.C. MacKenzie Health Sciences Centre while Premier Lougheed praised the new facility.

When phase two of the \$600 million centre is completed in 1986, there will be 156 fewer acute care beds than are now available in University Hospital.

Surgery Chairman Dr. H.T. Williams said last April that people awaiting surgery "can expect little relief from the long awaited centre."

The same centre according to Lougheed, "will be the fulfilling of many dreams for many people."

University Board of Governors Chairman John Schlosser thanked the Premier for his government's foresight in the allocation of money from the Heritage Trust Fund to build the centre.

While patient care is to be the centre's first priority, research staff are not impressed with the 540 square feet provided for their work within the 144,000 square foot centre.

University Hospital President, Bernard Snell, warned his staff in a memo the same day of a possible \$11 million hospital deficit. Described as "operational," the deficit was a sore spot with the Premier, who refused to comment on it during his appearance at the opening.

Snell's memo said the University Hospital Board was told by the Provincial Hospitals Department that "there will likely be no approval for new programs and no recognition for expansion in the volume of existing programs, or for increased costs relating to technological changes."

Snell commented on this disclosure in his memo as a "very disquieting story, one which has alarmed the Hospital Board and administration."

NDP leader Grant Notley held a press conference outside the centre Friday morning accusing the province of jeopardizing medical services through underfunding.

Notley also said, "Poor government management has led to soaring construction bills at the MacKenzie Centre, so it will probably cost more than \$600 million by the time it's finished."

Snell had said in an earlier press release that the centre would "enable us to care for some of the most complicated health problems in Canada."

The facility when completed will act as the major referral centre in Northern Alberta and replace University Hospital.

The seven level centre was named after Walter Campbell MacKenzie, a prominent surgeon, educator, and health care administrator.

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