

Students leaving in droves

Complaints pour in over student housing

by Andrew Watts

Despite the new housing complex in East Garneau, Housing and Food Services continues to be attacked on many levels of performance and administration.

Students' Union VP External, Teresa Gonzales, says that she's getting reports of mass desertions by students from places such as the Faculte St. Jean residence. These desertions are occurring even at the loss of money to the residents.

According to the Faculte residents' contract with Housing and Food Services they are tied into an eight month lease. If anyone leaves before the end of the contract, they lose 20% of what they had left to pay. The contract is worth \$2660 for the entire eight months.

"From the reports I'm getting, 30% of the students have left (the Faculte)," Gonzales says.

According to Gonzales, the complaints from the Faculte students center on the cafeteria.

"Apparently the food situation is very bad," continues Gonzales, "the quality of food is poor and many students do not know what they're eating."

This stems from the fact that the menu is in English only, and many residents are French. Also, until recently, students could not see the food being served them as a metal partition blocked the view.

This problem has been rectified and glass partitions have replaced the metal ones.

The President of the Faculte Students Association, Lise Malo, agrees that the situation is bad and she puts the number of students who have left the Faculte residences since September at 29. The number of residents is down to 36, from 65.

Malo, though, states that there have been problems in the past and students have mobilized to make their complaints more vocal. Last year the complaints centred on the state of the

residences themselves. They were in need of painting and also in need of fumigation to get rid of silverfish. These two concerns were met and the painting and fumigation was done.

Malo also says that a meeting in November, 1982, between VP External Gonzales and Housing and Food Services was held to address the complaints of the faculte. It was agreed at that time that two students would be hired to translate the menus into French and English. This has not been done.

The problems, however, do not stop at the Faculte. Gonzales also reports that complaints are coming across her desk from North and East Garneau.

According to Gonzales, the houses in North Garneau are falling into disrepair and many of the residents are upset.

Gail Brown, the director of Housing and Food Services, agrees that the houses in North Garneau are in need of repair. The problem, she asserts, is "getting the money to do it."

There are also many complaints regarding the new housing complex in East Garneau. Gonzales notes that of an expected 90% occupancy rate initially, the occupancy rate now stands at 53%.

"It's a desperate situation for them (Housing and Food Services), they're going to lose a bundle," Gonzales comments.

Gonzales expects the losses because of the fact that the mortgage in Garneau stands at \$59,000 a month. If the apartments are not filled then the mortgage cannot be met.

Brown notes that the one bedroom units are 100% filled and the two bedrooms are nearly filled as well.

"The problem lies in the four bedroom units," continues Brown. "It (expected occupancy) was a miscalculation on my part."

In addition, of the six renovated houses available, only

two have been rented.

Brown feels that the problem in the multi-room units and houses lies in the fact that students do not want to pick up everything and make a big move and then have to move out during the time of the games.

"I expect things will fill up after the games," she says.

Many complaints stem from apparent shoddy workmanship. Brown says these fall under a deficiency list provided by Design and Construction after the complex was completed. This list shows where many aspects of the new structures are not quite right.

According to Brown the list consisted of "pages and pages."

Comments Brown, "In a complex of this size nothing is going to be perfect."

Another problem concerns the advertising posters put up around campus for the new Garneau Housing complex. The poster lists the rents from \$200. In fact, no base rent is from \$200 and this figure is based on a per person rent.

Gonzales feels that the rent quote is misleading and Brown agrees.

"It (the poster) should have said per person," Brown says.

Brown further comments that no effort is being made to take the existing posters down and correct them but that students are being informed of the correct rent structure when they phone in to make inquiries.

Brown also says that complaints go both ways and should not be totally 'one directional.'

Teresa Gonzales says that her department is continuing to lobby Housing and Food Services and the Board of Governors and she is hopeful of improvement.

New housing?

Tenant speaks up

by Andrew Watts

The complaints against Housing and Food Services don't seem to be confined solely to the administrative level.

A recent tenant to the new Garneau student housing complex, who wishes to remain anonymous, describes a two-bedroom unit acquired in January as "poorly constructed."

In fact, there is quite a list of complaints and irregularities in the unit.

To begin with, when the tenants first arrived they found that their cupboards were not made to fit and their fridge would not slide underneath them. After having the fridge pushed against a living room wall for almost a week the cupboards were repaired and the fridge is in the kitchen. But the problems do not stop here.

In addition: a half-inch gap existed between the skirting board and the patio door until a workman came and repaired it by taking a hammer and pounding down a piece of metal to cover the gap. The tenants still have to use a towel stretched across the bottom

of the door to prevent a draft.

- the window in one of the bedrooms does not sit properly and a draft exists

- the bathtub leaks onto the bathroom floor

- the cable outlet is in such a place where, if a t.v. is desired it has to be placed behind the dining room table

- there is a crack in the plaster board above the patio door; the tenants were told by workman that it would be fixed 'sometime next year'

- there is a faulty light switch in the living room; to turn the light on they have to push up hard to ensure a connection and then wait for the light to come on while releasing the pressure on the switch slowly to not break contact

- there is no visitor parking anywhere in the complex

- the front door security system has only been in effect one day and further, the outside buzzer does not work, they can't tell if they have visitors

With all these problems, why don't these tenants move out? Answered one, "It's convenient and it beats living in residence."



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