

HUB FIRETRAP from page one

Edmonton fire department but that there was some difficulty because the building had an innovative design.

However, he said, Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and the National Research Council called the building safer than a conventional high-rise.

An Alberta Fire Commission official said Monday the building did not have city approval originally until the design passed the national council level. David Murray, Wilkin's partner, added there was some negotiation with Ottawa over the building's plans.

The executive-director of the Alberta Association of Architects commented, "I've never heard of anything like that before — negotiating over fire regulations."

But Paul Mousseau, building standard inspector of the Alberta Building Standards Edmonton branch, said no building code guarantees any safety for occupants.

"Nine out of ten buildings don't meet building code regulations," he said. "You secure an opinion on each building, each one has its own characteristics."

"The safest place for the girls above the fire would have been for them to have stayed in their room. There's supposed to be an hour before the fire goes through the ceiling into the apartment above, according to test conditions."

He added that two exits were not necessary to have the building approved under the building code.

Wilkin said he wanted a double-door system for the apartments in HUB but it would have added \$20,000 to construction costs and money was "really tight at the time."

Gordon Wallace of Poole Construction Ltd., the general contracting company that built HUB, said the building was built according to plan and that no short-cuts were taken in constructing the kick-out emergency panels.

Wilkin told the *Gateway* it is imperative the emergency exits be kept clear because without them tenants cannot escape to other stairwells.

But university fire chief Cid Smith says many of the panels are taped shut by tenants who do not wish to be disturbed by noise from an adjoining apartment. In some cases, these exits are nailed shut to prevent theft and ensure privacy.

"Some of the doors are jammed from lack of use; others because people have put tape around them to reduce the noise. But most of them will open if you give them a good thump."

Or in other cases, adds HUB manager Gerry Durrant, the smoke seals on the exits "are put on a little too tightly," making it difficult if not impossible to open them.

Durrant said Monday the emergency door which jammed during Wednesday's fire had to be opened with a screwdriver after the fire.



Locked exits
Padlocks are clamped on emergency exits to HUB roof.

Wilkin said the locked roof panels must be opened if HUB is to be a safe building for tenants.

"I have always maintained that the roof exits should be left open," said Wilkin. "They were designed with a full stairway with a door rather than the ship's ladder and hatch they have now."

"It was decided to have the hatches to save money on construction, but the roof was supposed to be deck space and an open air area which anyone could go up to."

The Alberta fire commissioner apparently spoke with Edmonton's fire chief following a *Gateway* interview Monday in which the locked roof panels were discussed.

Wilkin added at the end of the interview that there may be a couple of broken skylights through the year, because roof exits are unlocked, but the small maintenance costs involved should in no way obstruct the safety of the tenants.

Besides the jammed emergency panels and locked roof hatches, several officials have indicated there are problems in the design of HUB itself which make it unsafe during a fire.

An architect with the provincial government, who asked to remain anonymous, said something billowing into the HUB mall from an apartment fire could cause serious problems for firefighters and HUB residents.

At Wednesday's fire, although firefighters were at the scene four minutes after the fire began, there was a ten-minute delay before hoses could be hooked onto hose stations in the mall resulting in part because of smoke in the mall blinded firefighters.

According to fire chief Smith, the "route plans" for HUB, which detail hose connections to building entrances, have not been quite completed by the university because they have only had eight months to work on them, since the University took over HUB in July from the Students' Union.

The provincial architect suggested that a system of emergency high-pressure exhaust fans could clear the mall of smoke quickly.

The smoke from Wednesday's fire had not been completely cleared by midnight, an hour and a half after the blaze.

Chief Smith told *Gateway* Monday the water pressure in HUB fire hoses was adequate, but that the diameter of the hoses — 1 1/4" — is half as wide as hose normally installed in buildings.

Although the pressure was up, he said, the hoses aren't wide enough to deliver much water. Smith agreed with a spectator at Wednesday's fire who attempted to put out the fire and afterwards remarked disgustedly that he could only get "a trickle of water" through the "garden hoses" used as emergency fire hoses in HUB.

"Quite frankly, I've never seen that sort of hose before," Smith said. "In size it's about the same as a good quality garden hose."

"They (the designers) managed to get 3/4" hose which is appealing to Ottawa and National Building Code," Smith said.

Smith noted at the end of the interview that, although problems exist in fighting fires in HUB, the fire dept. reached the building four minutes after being called. Smith said the university has worked out "route plans" with the fire officials which guide firetrucks to a building anywhere on campus as quickly as they arrived Wednesday night.

Garneau

A proposed administrative switch transferring jurisdiction over the North Garneau community from the university planning and development department to housing and fire services has been delayed for a year.

The switch will still take place, said vp planning and development R. E. Phillips Monday, but not until further landscaping and repair work carried out by his department.

The transfer had been set for April 1, 1977.

Phillips said the area was not yet in the condition necessary for housing and food services to move in and administer effectively.

A meeting to discuss the delay will be held Wednesday 7 p.m. in the North Garneau Housing Association office, 1103 Ave.



STUDENTS' UNION
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Wed. Feb. 23 Noon

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Answers

1. True
2. b) Roger Crozier
3. b) Henry Armstrong - 1938
4. Hugh Campbell and Terry Evanshen (17)
5. Bud Grant, 5
6. Winnipeg Blue Bombers, 13
7. b) Mickey Wright, 13
8. a) basketball b) tennis c) golf d) skiing
9. False, Maurice Richard, 1,285
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