

Photo Ray Giguere

No surprise

City officials didn't shock the citizenry yesterday with the first LRT run across the High Level Bridge. In fact, there's doubt about whether the bridge can be used for LRT. See LRT Quiz page 9.

the Gateway

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Never play leap-frog...

...with a unicorn.

Petition to protest ed. policy

by Mike Walker

U of A students will have the chance next week to join a province-wide campaign against the provincial government's education policies.

The Students' Union, in conjunction with the Federation of Alberta Students and students' associations at other Alberta campuses, is circulating a petition calling for:

- all post-secondary students to be considered independent of their parents for the purposes of student aid;
- no more funding cutbacks;
- no tuition increases without an adequate student aid program.

The petition is also being circulated at the University of Calgary, the University of Lethbridge, Mount Royal College in Calgary, and Olds College. The completed petition will be presented to Advanced Education Minister Jim Horsman and, if possible, Provincial Treasurer Lou Hyndman and a federal government representative.

SU vp external Kris Farkas expects a strong response from students: "Councillors were just taking handfuls (of petitions at Tuesday's Students' Council meeting). If we can get all those filled, we'll have 3,000 signatures."

Students can sign the petition at faculty association offices or at the SU office at 259 SUB.

The age of independence request "has been something students across Canada have been asking for for years," Farkas says. Students are not considered financially independent of their parents under the Alberta student loan program until they have completed three years in university or in the work force; under the federal plan, four years.

This means "many people aren't considered independent until they're finished university," Farkas says. And as long as they are considered dependents of their parents, the loan board assumes their parents are contributing to their education, whether they are or not.

Farkas says, "If they haven't talked to their parents for 10 years, that should be taken into account."

Cutbacks, she says, are in evidence everywhere: government underfunding is responsible for fewer course sections, shorter library hours, fewer periodicals subscriptions in the library and enrolment quotas.

On top of that, the federal government is toying with the idea of cutting its contribution to

post-secondary education (hence, the intention to present the petition to a federal representative as well). Since it currently pays for about half of Alberta's post-secondary education, a federal pullout would be a serious blow to students and the Alberta government alike.

"Even the provincial government is really worried," Farkas says. "The question is whether the provincial government will

pick up the slack... they really don't want to."

As for tuition fee increases, she says they are not justified until it is guaranteed through the student aid program that "students wouldn't find a real financial barrier to attending a post-secondary institution."

"You need an accessibility study to find out how much of a barrier there is," she says. FAS has been pressing for this all year.

Former SU manager sues

Bert Best bites back

by Mike Walker

Former Students' Union General Manager Bert Best has filed suit against the SU for more than \$80,000.

The suit follows his release by Students' Council last month, when it decided not to ratify Best's contract. Although he worked

under it for a year, his contract was never ratified by Council. Last year's Olmstead executive thought they could sign it without council approval.

This year's council thinks the contract is invalid because it was not ratified, but councillors are not saying why they decided in closed

session not to ratify it now.

Best's suit asks for \$82,300, the amount owing on his contract when he was released. If, however, the court rules his contract invalid, Best will ask for \$65,500 in general damages for unjustified dismissal.

If the court rules against Best on both counts, the SU will owe him only three month's severance pay.

The SU would like to settle out of court, though, according to president Nolan Astley.

"We would be willing to settle for above three months' pay," he said. "I don't know how much... it's a process of negotiation."

U of C profs still holding out

CALGARY (CUP) — University of Calgary faculty members are being advised by their faculty association to reject an "insensitive and unrealistic" salary offer from the university.

The U of C Faculty Association wants its members to reject the Board of Governors' latest offer which averages an 8 percent

increase, or 10½ percent including pension plan improvements, according to the Board negotiation team.

The Faculty Association wants a 30 percent increase "in an effort to regain some ground lost in previous years when salary settlements lagged far behind the rate of inflation."

The Association also claims that low salaries are "already beginning to take their toll on faculty morale," and that "it is becoming impossible to hire competent new staff."

University vice-president academic Paul Krueger admitted the university is having trouble getting quality people for some academic positions, especially in the professional faculties.

The U of C salaries "are normally the lowest among the province's four universities" and that increases have been "far less than comparable increases in other sectors of the Alberta economy," according to the faculty association.

U of C vp finance H.W. Bliss disagreed, but wouldn't comment further. He said, "We just can't meet that" faculty request.

Board of Governors members were unavailable for comment, but have refused to comment on negotiations in the past.

The faculty members can ask at any time to send the dispute to arbitration. But Faculty Association president Lawrence Nkemdirim said they would probably decide not to do so yet.

"This is not (the Board's) final offer yet," he said.

At the University of Alberta, academic and non-academic staffs opted for contract arbitration when they found little room for negotiation with the Board of Governors.

Both the staff associations approached this year's salary negotiations aiming to reach wage parity with the outside workforce.

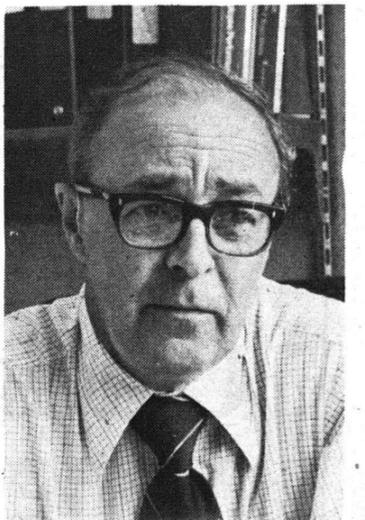
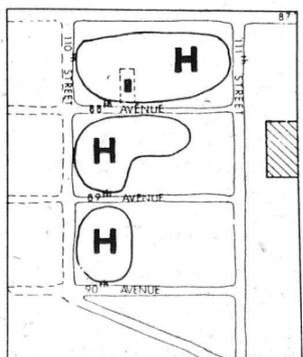
But the Board maintained it could only bargain within the restrictions of its budget, 89 percent of which is an operating grant from the Alberta government.

The U of A academic staff requested a 16 percent wage increase and was offered 10; the non-academic staff asked 20 percent, but the Board responded with 6 to 8.5 percent.

Land use okayed

The Board of Governors Building Committee approved the university's Long-range Land Use Plan for North Garneau Tuesday. It now will go to the Board of Governors April 3, at the same meeting as detailed development plans for the area will be considered.

Reproduced here is the university's official free hand diagram designating which areas of North Garneau will be reserved for housing. Editor Keith Krause pans the policy on page 4.



Former SU manager Bert Best