

# Multiplex ahead of schedule

## Decision on moving in early coming soon

Thanks in large part to unseasonably warm weather, work at the Multiplex construction project is progressing slightly ahead of schedule.

There are whispers that the brand new home of the Prince George Cougars could be ready before the planned opening in February 1996, and early in the new year members of the city's building committee will have a better idea if the 6,000 seat arena complex will be completed sooner.

"Once we get the steel up and the roof on we'll have a solid idea just what the time frame might be for completion," says Councillor Don Grantham, who is chairman of the building committee. "So far we're keeping our eyes on February '96 because that's a safe date, but we're also trying to improve on that every bit we can."

"By January we should be able to let the users know when they can expect it to be finished. Naturally we'd love to have it finished before the hockey season started."

The steel is scheduled to arrive within a week, while much of the major concrete work is nearly complete. Three of the four concourse quadrants are already poured, and the fourth, the east end, will be done while steel is erected at the west end. The city is satisfied with the work of the construction firm, PBK, which has a lot of the experience building similar facilities like the Red Deer Centrum, Saskatchewan Place and the Tri-City Coliseum.

"We've really been impressed with the work they've done so far," says Councillor Grantham.

"They're excellent, very professional and they've built many other facilities like this. The whole committee is very pleased with the work to date. They have been on time and under budget on every project they've taken on."

Meanwhile, negotiations with the Cougars on the lease arrangement continue to progress, with the sides maintaining a good working relationship. The Cougars are insisting talks will go much smoother if the city is able to bring all Multiplex services under one negotiating umbrella.

"There are starting to be some issues where we, as the Cougars do need some answers," says the hockey club's business manager, Dane MacKinnon, "and (the city) agrees and they acknowledge that we've been patient. That involves

some areas like signage and how that relates to rent situations with both rinks. The lease basically has to be in place this year, but I don't see there being a problem."

"There's an awful lot in the whole picture, but it's not an adversarial situation," continues MacKinnon. "You look at Kamloops and, despite the fact they've got the greatest thing

going right now in hockey, (the club and Riverside Coliseum) aren't getting along as well as they'd like. There have been problems with Saskatchewan Place in Saskatoon since day one, and we're trying to avoid those. The spirit of goodwill exists on both sides - we want to be here forever and the city wants to keep us here forever."



Three of the four concrete quadrants are done. ROB BIRON/FREE PRESS

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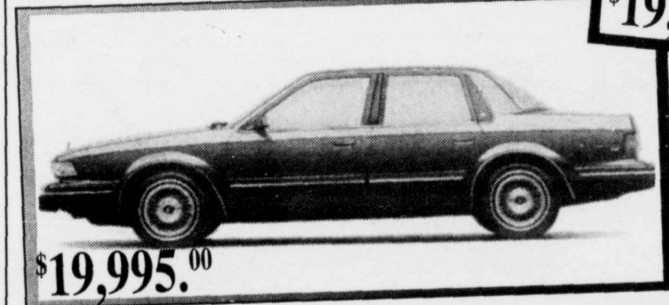


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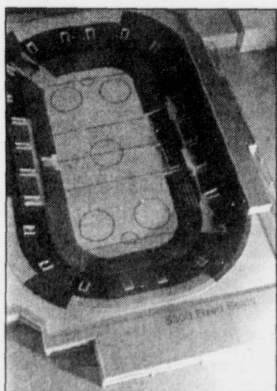
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