

THE FREE PRESS UP FRONT

Page A3

SUNDAY, MAY 26, 1996

PHONE 564-0005

Flying high/On a break



Travis Fontaine takes a break from the renovation work at the new indoor skateboard park to try out some of the ramps. JOHN MCKENZIE/FREE PRESS

Treeplanters getting showers again

Unemployed treeplanters are showering again at the municipal campgrounds.

"It felt good to get clean," says camper Prince Korda who had his first shower in two weeks after a *Free Press* story reported on how showers were turned on only for

paying customers. There is no longer a conflict between paying and non-paying customers over the showers, says campground manager Tom Goodson, because only the unemployed treeplanters remain at the camp.

Bad debt sparks debate over 'user-pay' system

By CHERYL JAHN

Free Press staff writer

Can 'bad debt' at Prince George Regional Hospital be taken care of with a modified 'user-pay' system?

One hospital board member thinks maybe, but the hospital's executive director says no.

The hospital has taken on "bad debts" totalling \$135,694 this year and board member Greg Jadrzyk feels that can be changed with a few more "guarantees."

Bad debt arises for a number of reasons. If, for example, a patient requests a private room at the hospital and then stiff on his bill when his visit is finished, it costs the hospital money. It eventually winds up under the "bad debt" column in the hospital's books at the end of the year.

It's something Mr. Jadrzyk feels could be controlled a little better.

"For those things that patients request that aren't a medical necessity, are non-essential, they should have to

perhaps guarantee that payment up front. If you want to rent a car, you have to show a credit card, for instance."

He says a promise to pay for the luxuries after the fact is not enough.

"If you don't get that guarantee, you run into the position of having to chase these people down for the money," he reasons.

But, for hospital executive

director Lucy Dobbin, "bad debt" will always be there.

"In a \$63 million budget, you tend to have some bad debt because that's the kind of business we do. But, I do understand the board's issue of trying to get that figure down."

For Mrs. Dobbin, the idea too closely resembles that of our southern neighbours.

"To start demanding a patient produce a credit card or cash before getting what it is they requested smacks too much of the American system. And that's not what we're about."

There are not that many items in which the hospital has discretionary power to demand payment up front, but all the same, she does concede there may be room for improvement.

For Mr. Jadrzyk, that's all he really looking for.

"I'd like to see a break down of where exactly the \$135,000 in bad debt went, and what the hospital's policy is in terms of discretionary powers."

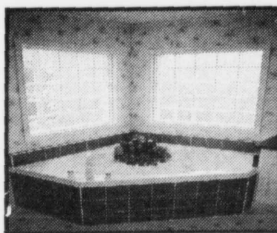
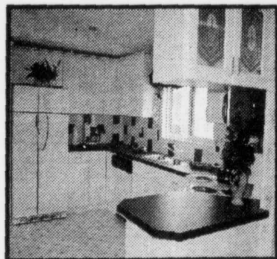
PGRH in the black

It's been a long time coming, but, by the end of the 1995/1996 fiscal year, PGRH's books will finally be in the black.

Anita Ho, the hospital's assistant director of operations, says the surplus has hit roughly \$80,000.

She attributes the good news to increased awareness by staff as to the stringent budget constraints and keeping waste to a minimum.

"It's very good news for the hospital," says board chairman Lorraine Grant.



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