

UPEI Health Centre in Jeopardy

more cuts to be made to the Health Centre's budget

By **RANDY MCDONALD**

Students seeking health care for the first time this year at the Health Centre in the basement of Marian Hall will find that the Health Centre has changed significantly.

Perhaps the biggest changes is the marked reduction in the hours that the Health Centre is open – from 35 hours a week to 20 hours a week – and the fact that many people associated at UPEI, from children in the nearby daycare centre to students and professors who already have general practitioners, aren't being treated anymore by the Health Centre for all but the most urgent cases.

For the 1998-99 school year, the UPEI Health Centre will be run by the School of Nursing, not by Student Development, as was the case in previous school years.

Staff at the Health Centre has been cut down to three individuals: A doctor, a nurse, and a secretary.

Thus, once funded to be open full-time five days a week from September to April for 35 hours a week, funding to the Health Centre will now be only enough to keep it open on a part-time basis for half that time.

When asked to explain the reasons for the cutbacks, VP Crossley commented that the Health Centre, as it was run in previous school years, was too expensive, costing, at 65 thousand dollars, 1% of student's tuition.

Administration initially considered hiring a third party to run the Health Centre on-campus.

As Crossley explained it, at the time administration thought that "We should be able to find someone who could

run a Health Centre on campus without subsidies."

Administration asked Island doctors and pharmacists to put together a proposal for establishing a practice at the UPEI Health Centre. They claimed to encour-

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ter several problems, the most serious of which was the relatively small use of the UPEI Health Centre's services.

Including visits by students and UPEI workers who already had doctors elsewhere on PEI, and the immunizations provided to students in the School of Nursing and the Atlantic Veterinary College, there was only five thousand visits made by students last year, of which only half

were billable.

This number was only half of the minimum of ten thousand visits annually estimated to be required for a financially viable medical practice for a single physician at the UPEI Health Centre.

Another option considered by administration was the establishment of a UPEI-based clinic that would be available to the wider Charlottetown community, but that would reserve services for UPEI students. Again, it was concluded that there would not be enough business to keep such a clinic open for even five days a week.

The abolition of the Health Centre was also seriously considered. "It's not as if we're living in a Third World country where no health care is available."

Eventually, it was decided to cut back funding to the Health Centre, and to make it a "100% student service" by limiting its services to UPEI

students.

It was decreed that lower levels of service could be justified, on the grounds that the Health Centre handled only two emergencies last year, it didn't need to be open after-hours, and nearly all of the students at UPEI were relatively young.

As a result, the subsidies were cut back from 65,000 dollars to 40,000 dollars, and three doctors were recruited for a half-day each. For the rest of the time, a nurse would be available to assist students with minor health problems.

When asked about whether the reduction in funding and services would discourage students from going to the Health centre, Crossley suggested that keeping non-students from using the Health Centre would actually increase the availability of the Health Centre to UPEI students.

Regardless, "We're going to monitor the situation."

National News Brief

Will the big man admit he's wrong

By **ALEX BUSTOS**

OTTAWA (CUP) -- It takes a big man to admit he's wrong. And the big question on Parliament Hill these days is whether Solicitor General Andy Scott is that man.

As far as opposition members of parliament are concerned, Scott's goose is cooked.

Calls for the embattled minister to resign mounted last week after New Brunswick lawyer Fred Toole filed a court affidavit to the RCMP Public Complaints Commission in Vancouver.

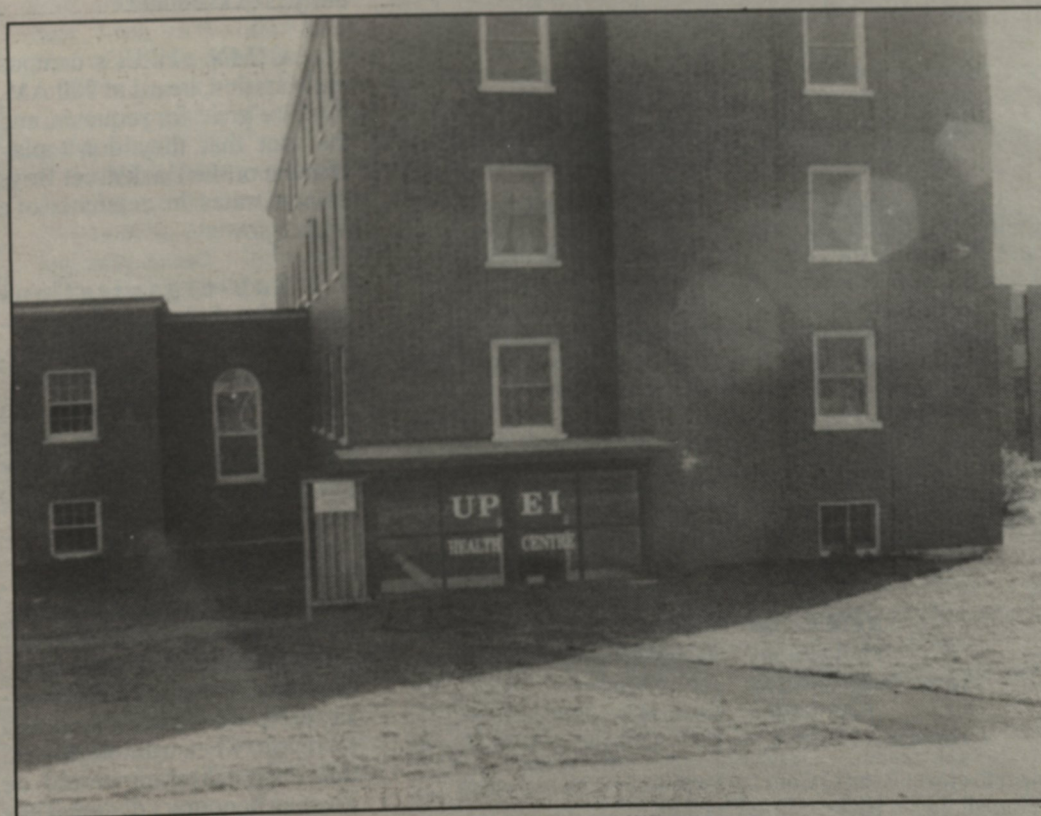
Toole was Scott's seatmate on the now infamous Oct. 1 flight from Ottawa to Fredericton. According to his statement, the solicitor general told Toole that RCMP Staff Sgt. Hugh Stewart might be found guilty of using excessive force against protesters at last year's APEC summit.

The question abuzz in Ottawa is how long the federal Liberals will continue to support Scott.

Toole's affidavit is damning because it backs up the initial version of events provided by New Democratic Party MP Dick Proctor, who eavesdropped on the airplane conversation, that Scott had prejudged the APEC inquiry.

But Scott was nowhere to be found last week as opposition MPs once again called for him to step down. The embattled minister mysteriously disappeared last Thursday on personal business and wasn't expected back to the Hill until today.

Scott's bizarre absence sent Ottawa political circles into a whirl wind of speculation on whether the government was preparing to dump him. Scott's cabinet colleagues, however, were mostly mum about his fate.



More cut to the UPEI Health Centre

-photo by Richard Haines