

Jewel of the North:

Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre

On Sunday, February 22, 2004, the new Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre (TBRHSC) accepted its first patients. They came to the new state-of-the-art centre from two 100-year old hospitals, the General Hospital of Port Arthur and McKellar General.

Utilizing telehealth and state-of-the-art air and land ambulance strategies, this centre sets new standards for the delivery of acute care to a population spread over a land mass the size of France. Everything is consolidated on one site. And next year, with the arrival of students from the new Northern Ontario Medical School, TBRHSC achieves teaching status to complement its current activities as an acute care referral centre to 13 community hospitals in Northwestern Ontario.



The new Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre is adjacent to Lakehead University and complements TBRHSC's new position as a teaching hospital or "academic" regional health sciences centre.

sites functioned separately under the Thunder Bay Regional Hospital umbrella as part of a restructured healthcare organization – mandated in the mid 1990s. They were icons of the past. And so the central location of one new site is important;

an area of the city adjacent to Lakehead University which in turn complements TBRHSC's new position as a teaching hospital or "academic" regional health sciences centre.

Driving on to the site, people first notice TBRHSC's striking architectural design. It is a magnificent combination of wooden beams, native stone and an expanse of glass surrounded by lovely landscaped ponds and woods. Given that Thunder Bay is a resource-based

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The City of Thunder Bay also presented a challenge. It was amalgamated in 1970 from two cities: Port Arthur and Fort William. Many inhabitants are still loyal to "their side" of the city and call it by its old name. Until the opening of the new TBRHSC, the "Port Arthur" and the "McKellar" hospital

community relying significantly on natural resources for industry, the use of local materials is especially relevant. A departure from the typical box-like hospital building, the soothing use of natural light helps to heal the patients and lift the spirits of both visitors and staff.

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Glen Ritchie, Manager of Supplies and Distribution, and his staff have set up the Par Wall™ Storage system, a unique modular high-density storage solution. Staff members now deliver supplies on a tote distribution cart using an automated pull-truck to facilitate the new long hallways.

The construction of the new health sciences centre was full of novel challenges. In addition to regular duties, department and unit managers were responsible for the planning and purchasing of new equipment, as well as the amalgamation of staff, resources and supplies from the two original sites. Fortunately, during restructuring and functional planning of the new facility, many managers were placed in charge of both sites and so could coordinate immediate and long-term needs.

For example, a significant challenge was the development of a strategic storage and distribution system. The old hospitals had small supply rooms that could not accommodate the growing number and variety of inventory found on a contemporary nursing unit. It often frustrated nursing staff; they wanted to locate supplies quickly but couldn't find them in the many out-of-the-way wooden cupboards and drawers. Distribution staff was constantly asked for supplies that took time to locate in their many inaccessible places. To make matters worse, many supply carts and hampers were left in crowded hallways – not conducive to efficient flow of people and materials or for safe patient care.

In the new facility both supply rooms and procedures were redesigned to suit special storage and delivery applications. Glen Ritchie, Manager of Supplies and Distribution, wanted to increase the inventory levels on the unit while decreasing the frequency of top-up. And given standards of infection control, all outside cardboard had to be de-cased in Stores and brought up in enclosed totes. Working with Acart Equipment Ltd.,

Ritchie and his staff set up the Par Wall™ Storage system, a unique modular high-density storage solution. Staff members now deliver supplies on a tote distribution cart using an automated pull-truck to facilitate the new long hallways. They succeeded in putting all stock into the new room and standardizing each nursing unit for the convenience of the nursing staff. According to Derek Gascoigne, the Director of Environmental Services, the system now in place is flexible and provides both storage and just-in-time delivery to meet demands from anywhere on the site. The system also ensures that staff at the new health sciences centre can continue to implement new efficiencies when and where it can.

This is an exciting and challenging time for the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, the City of Thunder Bay, and the vast region of Northwestern Ontario. Everyone should be proud of this new acute care “Jewel of the North.”



The soaring main atrium of the new facility