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Taking the shine off Abby's new hospital

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Premier Gordon Campbell was in Abbotsford to officially open the new Abbotsford Regional Hospital and Cancer Centre on Sept. 9, and already some of the shine is off the new facility.

Not three weeks later, there have already been numerous complaints that the hospital is not as clean as it should be. All rights reserved.

It is sad that the Abbotsford Regional Hospital and Cancer Centre, which cost B.C. taxpayers \$449 million to build, should not be celebrated.

Instead, it is getting a black eye.

According to this paper's website, www.abbynews.com, the two most read online stories in this region are headlined "Hospital is nothing but a mess," and "New hospital looks good on surface, but is really a pig pen."

These were letters to the editor, submitted by Abbotsford News readers.

Certainly this is not the type of impression Fraser Health would want their state-of-the-art new facility to be making.

It would be unbelievable, if not for the track record of slovenly hospitals in the Fraser Health Authority in recent years. While the FHA says the hospitals in the region have been trending toward greater cleanliness, the French firm Sodexho has often struggled to meet the standards of cleanliness set out by the province. At one point, four hospitals in the region were considered below standard.

And last year, during October of 2007, the cleanliness of MSA General was found to be officially unacceptable. That was no surprise to the many patients and staff members who had complained about conditions at MSA since Sodexho took over its cleaning.

We can only hope that this private firm, which is portrayed by FHA as having initially struggled but steadily improved, is merely experiencing some fresh challenges at our new hospital which it will swiftly get hold of. But it is not reassuring when this paper is contacted by a member of the hospital cleaning staff, complaining that they are understaffed and overworked.

Taxpayers have paid millions for this new facility, and they deserve excellence.