



ROCK SOLID

Information from the MERC Team

Issue # 7 – July 2006

Beware of asbestos in the workplace

*By Rick Prestage, Local 108, Elgin-Middlesex
Detention Centre*

We recently had a problem with asbestos at the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre (EMDC).

On Mar. 22, 2006, I was conducting a workplace inspection and discovered an asbestos removal from the area where negative pressure cells were being placed. The area was tented off; however, I thought that this was the procedure for the building of the cells. One of our maintenance staff was in the area and informed me he just found out they were removing asbestos. This same person told me that he asked when he started if there was any asbestos and was told “no”. This was just over a year ago. At the time of my inspection this area of asbestos removal was not posted.

I informed one of the superintendents and it was immediately posted.

At our Health & Safety meeting that day, it was recommended that we have a company come in and perform an asbestos check.

On Mar. 24, I was summoned to the Deputy Superintendent of Services (who oversees such projects) and I was given a report dated May 2004. The report indicated the presence of

asbestos in the building and the precautions to be used when in the areas of the building where asbestos was located (primarily in the ceilings where our maintenance people are working). This was the first time I had seen this report.

I immediately contacted the Ministry of Labour (MOL). They issued an order for the next week with respect to turning over all the necessary asbestos related reports. This was done, and the only other report was one done in 1993 which again dealt with the necessary precautions in dealing with asbestos which were not put in place by the employer.

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Newsletter wins two national awards

By Len Mason, Rock Solid

Rock Solid – the newsletter of the Corrections Category MERC won two prestigious awards at the Canadian Association of Labour Media (CALM) conference held in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

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SAFETY
FIRST



Len's Corner

Hi Folks,

Hope you enjoy this issue of *Rock Solid*.

Letters and articles are starting to come across my computer system. Feel free to send in anything: interesting articles from other newsletters, the internet, grievance decisions, health and safety concerns, whatever (yeah, I'm begging).

Its been fairly quiet on the MERC front. The team has not met with the employer since early in the year. This is pretty much due to the fact that the employer Co-Chair has been acting as Assistant Deputy Minister. We are trying to nail down a July date.

RPMs are inching closer to completion but they are not all done yet.

Sub-committees should start getting on track after our next formal meeting. An unclassified committee has been established to look into existing issues (if any). The Training and Development Committee is something I am looking forward to and getting the word back to the membership via this newsletter.

I am very proud to accept the awards written about in this issue. The competition is very stiff as newsletters are submitted from across Canada. With your help, I'd like us to win again.

Divisional meetings in November are fast approaching. It would be great to see some interest from the members. Being on the MERC can be a great step in your activism path. It has taught me how bureaucracy becomes involved in even the smallest issues. It has allowed me to participate in a national forum for provincial correctional officers and attend meetings in a few different towns other than Toronto. The biggest and best thing of all, MERC has given me the opportunity to meet and represent you. The reward of a "thanks" makes it all worthwhile.

The next issue of *Rock Solid* will be out in a few weeks, it will be a summary of the EAP program. I spent many hours viewing the site and have listed all the different links and the types of assistance that are available to our members. It would be awesome if this issue is distributed to every member of our division by the employer and by us.

Take care of yourself and each other. In solidarity,

Len Mason

Editorial Policy

The content and editing of this newsletter is determined by the MERC Team. We want members to feel ownership of *Rock Solid*, and view it as independent of any particular segment of the union.

Content comes from our own huge base of activists, staff and other labour sources.

Articles are the views of the author and not necessarily the views of OPSEU or the MERC Team.

While we welcome your contributions (on disk or by e-mail if possible –mason@tbaytel.net), we ask that these be constructive. All articles should be signed and include local number, and should contribute positively to the welfare of this union and its members.

We encourage thoughtful discussion of all related issues and reserve the right to edit for libel, length and clarity.

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Beware of asbestos in the workplace

(Continued from page 1)

The MOL returned and issued five orders. Two of those orders were to PROFAC (PROFAC is the company that owns the building) that testing be done by June 2. The other three were to the local employer, regarding training, safety equipment, a “stop work” order until the training and equipment arrive and also an order to keep the committee apprised of all future projects.

The MOL ordered PROFAC to complete a asbestos survey and to provide the information to us by June 2. There is an order that tells the local employer to make sure our maintenance people are trained in asbestos and fitted with the proper safety equipment such as an IE respirator. There is a stop work for any invasive maintenance work until the training and safety equipment is provided, then I must sign off that I am satisfied before maintenance work can continue.

In addition (because the employer is not forthcoming with information) there is an order to provide the JOHSC with any information that could affect the H & S for the workers.

As with most other institutions there was supposed to be an asbestos abatement in the late eighties to early nineties (ours was supposedly complete 1991). I believed that asbestos was removed until we stumbled upon this problem. We need to get all H & S members involved in asking each individual employer what the status of asbestos in their institutions as well as demand that all institutions be tested. I believe the employer will NOT want to do this and we may have to go the route we did at EMDC. It should be noted that the MOL would not charge the Superintendent for not providing the information. We are not giving up - we want accountability.

Please provide information for the next *Rock Solid* so everyone in our division can be aware of this potential hazard on our workplaces. ❖

***** Editor's Note: The Provincial Occupational Health & Safety Committee will be placing Asbestos as an agenda item because of the efforts of the workers of EMDC and the subsequent MOL orders that were issued.**

Newsletter wins two national awards



(Continued from page 1)

The first award was the Katie Fitzrandolph Prize for the “Best Overall Publication”, locals up to 500. The second award was “Excellence in Writing” – locals up to 500.

The issue recognized was the Jan. 2005 edition (*Ministry violates the Ontario Human Rights Code*). The writing included articles from Barry Scanlon, Ed Almeida, Glenna Caldwell and myself.

Winning the Katie Fitzrandolph award was extra special as Katie is a friend and mentor through all her involvement in Editors’ Weekends and helping with *In Solidarity*. She was at the conference as a facilitator.

Following a career in daily newspapers across Canada, Katie Fitzrandolph became a communications officer with OPSEU. During her 25 years with OPSEU, Katie devoted much of her time to teaching new editors how to put out good newsletters. Katie now lives in Fredericton.

The judge was Doug Smith, a freelance writer and editor for more than 20 years. He is the author of more than ten books including a history of the Manitoba labour movement, a study of occupational health and safety, and most recently a profile of a CAW local’s fight to keep Canada’s last tractor factory in operation. ❖



Len Mason poses with Katie Fitzrandolph at the Canadian Association of Labour Media conference.

Letters to the editor:

Praise for *Rock Solid* and the return of CNCC to the OPS



Yes! Back in public, where it belongs.

This only happened because of your relentless fight. Congratulations.

Richard Larcher, EBM, Region 6

WOW, absolutely amazing newsletter, a visual treat as well as informative.

Becky Thomson, Local 275, South Bruce Grey Health Center

I have just received word that the McGuinty Government has decided to pull the plug on privatization at CNCC. This is great news! It has been a long hard struggle for you all, but successful in the end. I am very happy for you.

Perhaps now this will put a stop to privatization throughout the rest of Canada as well. Finally, governments are waking up to reality, and can see that privatization of corrections is a complete and utter failure.

Best wishes to you all.

Mort Todd, Retiree, Toronto West Detention Centre, Local 517

Congratulations! From the support staff of Mohawk College.

Kathy Maxwell, President, Local 241

Len has done another great job of pulling all this together in *Rock Solid*. Thank you brother for all your hard work and efforts on this.

In Solidarity,

Eddy Almeida, Chair, Provincial H&S Team

Thanks for sharing this incredible news. The hard work and perseverance by so many has paid off in the long run. The work is just beginning with having the super jail return to the OPS.

Congratulations! Pressure by the Union/ Membership and public out cries has served in making a difference. Bravo!

Brenda Clapp, President, Local 710

Brothers and Sisters:

When I received the message from Mike Grimaldi, I began to weep.

It has been a long struggle from day one with this U.S. employer. We gradually saw the “abandoning of the ship” by management. It will be interesting to see where the Statement of Claims against this employer will go now, but enough about them.

I wish to thank all of you and the members of corrections from the OPS and those that I haven't included in the email for your continuous fight against health and safety issues and the ongoing accusations by the management.

You can stand tall knowing that you have achieved your goal, and I hope to be there by your side during the transition period.

The transition will take some adjustment, but in the best interest of all – we will work together. We have a lot of work ahead of us.

Pauline Tapping, EBM, Region 3

First and foremost, Thanks for doing an excellent job on *Rock Solid*! It's great to have someone committed to such an important task.

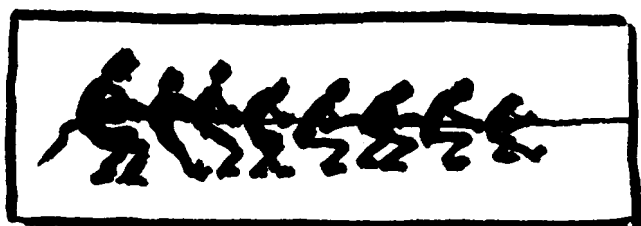
Brian Chauvin, Member, Provincial H&S Team

I salute my correctional brothers and sisters for their collective achievement. A lesson to learn is “United We Stand, Divided We Fall..”

The correctional team is doing a marvelous job. If there's anything I can do to help with your future campaigns, please let me know.

In Solidarity,

Joe Daniel, President, Local 506



Together we can be STRONG!

Letters to the editor

Yahoo!!

Congrats Brother to a job well done on *Rock Solid*.

Please thank your fellow brothers and sisters for their hard work to get this victory on privatization.
Sue Brown, RVP/EBM, Region 6

Hello, Sisters and Brothers

Wow!

A job extremely well done! Words could not describe my elation when I heard the news, and I am sure it did not match up to even half the level of yours.

This is a very proud moment for OPSEU.

It was truly a team effort for the past five years. There were those of us who worked on this according to our role but there were many of you who had to live it. For those of you who have been the activists at CNCC, you have my deepest respect and admiration. Your perseverance and commitment cannot be undermined.

I look forward to working with you over the next few months during the transition.

Again, revel in the victory and then off we go again to fight another battle.

In solidarity,

Doris Middleton, RVP/EBM, Region 3



Your VACATION:

- BROUGHT TO YOU THROUGH
UNION NEGOTIATIONS -

- PAST -

- PRESENT -

&
FUTURE



Brother Fraser bids farewell to MERC & the membership

Brothers and Sisters,

I would like to advise you that as of June 20, 2006 I am no longer be an employee of the ministry and I am resigning from the MERC team as I have taken an OPSEU staff rep position.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you all for your efforts and friendship over the last ten years that I have worked in this ministry and in our activism efforts. The circumstance that gave rise to my inclusion in MERC was certainly unexpected, and had it happened a year ago, I more than likely would have not made the decision to actively pursue employment with the union. I enjoyed what I did and looked to the MERC as a way to make more positive change for the membership.

You have my admiration and thanks for all the work you do, and the work you have done for the members within this ministry. You should be proud of your accomplishments.

It is difficult passing on the torch that I was eager to hold, however, there will be others to come along giving fresh ideas and a different perspective and that is always a good thing.

I look forward in seeing and reading the accomplishments you will be negotiating in the future and leave knowing that the members are being well taken care of.

To my colleagues at Hamilton-Wentworth Detention Centre, thank you for making work bearable. Your honour, and integrity to professionalism equals a standard in the province that is hard to match and is too often overlooked as part of the job. I am blessed in calling many of you friends. Thanks for making humour a big part of getting through each shift.

I wish you all great success in life and in health and look forward to seeing you within the union environment.

In profound respect and always, in solidarity.

Neil Fraser, Member, Corrections MERC

Traumatic Mental Stress

WSIB Operational Policy Manual # 15-03-02

Policy

A worker is entitled to benefits for traumatic mental stress that is an acute reaction to a sudden and unexpected traumatic event arising out of and in the course of employment.

A worker is not entitled to benefits for traumatic mental stress that is a result of the employer's employment decisions or actions.

Guidelines

Sudden and unexpected traumatic event

In order to consider entitlement for traumatic mental stress, a decision-maker must identify that a sudden and unexpected traumatic event occurred. A traumatic event may be a result of a criminal act, harassment, or a horrific accident, and may involve actual or threatened death or serious harm against the worker, a co-worker, a worker's family member, or others.

In all cases, the event must arise out of and occur in the course of the employment, and be

- clearly and precisely identifiable
- objectively traumatic, and
- unexpected in the normal or daily course of the worker's employment or work environment.

This means that the event

- can be established by the WSIB through information or knowledge of the event provided by co-workers, supervisory staff, or others, and
- is generally accepted as being traumatic.

Sudden and unexpected traumatic events include

- witnessing a fatality or a horrific accident
- witnessing or being the object of an armed robbery
- witnessing or being the object of a hostage-taking
- being the object of physical violence
- being the object of death threats

- being the object of threats of physical violence where the worker believes the threats are serious and harmful to self or others (e.g., bomb threats or confronted with a weapon)
- being the object of harassment that includes physical violence or threats of physical violence (e.g., the escalation of verbal abuse into traumatic physical abuse)
- being the object of harassment that includes being placed in a life-threatening or potentially life-threatening situation (e.g., tampering with safety equipment; causing the worker to do something dangerous).

The worker must have suffered or witnessed the traumatic event first hand, or heard the traumatic event first hand through direct contact with the traumatized individual(s) (e.g., speaking with the victim(s) on the radio or telephone as the traumatic event is occurring).

Acute reaction

An acute reaction is a significant or severe reaction by the worker to the work-related traumatic event that results in a psychiatric/psychological response. Such a response is generally identifiable and must result in an Axis I Diagnosis in accordance with the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV).

An acute reaction is said to be immediate if it occurs within four weeks of the traumatic event.

An acute reaction is said to be delayed if it occurs more than four weeks after the traumatic event. In the case of a delayed onset, the evidence must be clear and convincing that the onset is due to a sudden and unexpected traumatic event, which arose out of and in the course of the employment. Workers who develop mental stress gradually over time due to general workplace conditions are not entitled to benefits.

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Traumatic Mental Stress

(Continued from page 6)

Cumulative effect

Due to the nature of their occupation, some workers, over a period of time, may be exposed to multiple, sudden and unexpected traumatic events resulting from criminal acts, harassment, or horrific accidents. If a worker has an acute reaction to the most recent unexpected traumatic event, entitlement may be in order even if the worker may experience these traumatic events as part of the employment and was able to tolerate the past traumatic events. A final reaction to a series of sudden and traumatic events is considered to be the cumulative effect.

The WSIB recognizes that each traumatic event in a series of events may affect a worker psychologically. This is true even if the worker does not show the effects until the most recent event. As a result, entitlement may be accepted because of the cumulative effect, even if the last event is not the most traumatic (significant).

In considering entitlement for the cumulative effect, decision-makers will rely on clinical and other information supporting that multiple traumatic events led to the worker's current psychological state. Also, there may be evidence showing that each event had some effect or life disruption on the worker, even if the worker was not functionally impaired by the effect or life disruption.

An employer's work-related decisions or actions

There is no entitlement for traumatic mental stress due to an employer's decisions or actions that are part of the employment function, such as

- terminations
- demotions
- transfers
- discipline
- changes in working hours, and
- changes in productivity expectations.

However, workers are entitled to benefits for traumatic mental stress due to an employer's actions or decisions that are not part of the employment function, such as violence or threats of violence.

Diagnostic requirements

Immediate acute reaction

Where the acute reaction is immediate, the WSIB will accept the claim if an appropriately regulated health care professional confirms the worker is suffering from an Axis I diagnosis which may include but is not limited to

- acute stress disorder
- post-traumatic stress disorder
- adjustment disorder, or
- an anxiety or depressive disorder,

In accordance with the DSM-IV. The decision-maker may, at a later point, require an assessment by a psychiatrist or psychologist to confirm ongoing entitlement.

Delayed onset or onset due to cumulative effect

Where the acute reaction is delayed, or where the claim is based on the cumulative effect of multiple traumatic events, there must be an Axis I diagnosis in accordance with the DSM-IV by a psychiatrist or psychologist before the claim is adjudicated.

Application date

This policy applies to any single traumatic event, or in the case of the cumulative effect the most recent traumatic event, occurring on or after January 1, 1989.

References

Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, as amended Sections 2(1), 13(4), 13(5)

Workers' Compensation Act, R.S.O. 1990, as amended Sections 1(1), 4

Workers' Compensation Act, R.S.O. 1980, as amended Sections 1(1)(a), 3

More information available at
www.wsib.on.ca

GSB says NO to attendance credits used for overtime

By Moira Cowan, Local 108,
Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre

On October 24, 2005, Ken Petryshen, Vice Chair at the Grievance Settlement Board concluded that unclassified Correctional Officers (CO) cannot use attendance credits when calculating overtime.

The grievances were filed in 2000 and 2001 by unclassified Correctional Officers at the Millbrook Correctional Centre.

The decision rests on the distinction between authorized hours worked as set out in the overtime provision and the application of earned attendance credits.

The overtime provision states under Article 31.3.1, of the Ontario Public Service (OPS) Collective Agreement: *“One and one-half times the basic hourly rate shall be paid for authorized hours of work performed: ... (d) In excess of thirty six and one quarter (36 1/4) or forty (40) hours per week where employees do not have regularly scheduled work days.”*

This section applies to the majority of unclassified COs who do not have regularly scheduled shifts. These COs have contracts where they can work up to 40 hours per week. The overtime entitlement will only be triggered after 40 hours have been worked in a week.

The attendance credits provision states under article 31.8.1 of the OPS Collective Agreement: *“Employees who work 36 and one quarter (36 1/4) or forty (40) hours per week shall earn attendance credits of one and one quarter (1 1/4) days for each calendar month of full attendance or for each calendar month of leave of absence granted under Article 31.9(Pregnancy and Parental Leave) Attendance credits may be used for protection purposes only in the event that an employee is unable to attend his or her official duties by reason of illness or injury...”*



The union argued that article 31.8.1, is being relied on for the calculation of an employee's continuous service date under article 18.1, Seniority (length of continuous service) and should also be considered when calculating overtime. One's Continuous Service Date (CSD) is calculated by adding up all forty (40) hour weeks worked as an unclassified employee.

Since there are variations on work weeks, the parties agreed to use an example of a typical circumstance. An unclassified CO is off sick on Monday for an 8 hour shift and uses an attendance credit. The CO then works 32 hours from Tuesday through to Friday and works an additional 8 hours on Saturday. The COs pay would show 48 hours at the regular rate. The Union argued that the Saturday shift should have been paid at the overtime rate because 40 hours were accumulated between Monday and Friday.

Vice Chair Petryshen considered evidence presented by both the employer and the union and concluded that attendance credits cannot in fact be used to contribute to the overtime provision as set out in article 31.3.1. His decision is that unclassified employees **must actually work** 40 hours per week to be eligible for overtime. However, this does not affect their ability to accumulate full weeks worked for the purpose of calculating their CSD when an attendance credit is used.

The full GSB decision can be found on the OPSEU web page or click on the link: <http://www.opseu.org/pdf%20awards/ops/2000%2D0983.schmidt%20et%20al.06%2D03%2D20%20decision.pdf> or search the key word "Schmidt" in OPSEU grievance database. ❖

Alberta guards want nicotine patches banned due to inmates smoking them

The Canadian Press

Edmonton — Alberta jail guards want the provincial government to outlaw nicotine patches, claiming desperate inmates are smoking the scrapings from them.

Provincial prisons went smoke-free at the end of September.

Since then, 21 guards have filed workers compensation claims, saying smoke from the makeshift cigarettes is making them sick.

Dan MacLennan of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees says the scraped-off nicotine is soaked in water with toilet paper and dried.

Then orange peels or pencil shavings are added and

the concoction is rolled in paper to be smoked.

Solicitor General Harvey Cenaiko says the union has asked him to ban nicotine patches and gum, but that won't happen.

He said a deputy minister will look at how both materials are provided to inmates.

Cenaiko said maintaining the health and safety of guards is a major priority.

The union says it will go through Alberta Human Resources and Employment to find a legal way to ban nicotine patches if it has to.

Les Hagen, executive director of Action on Smoking and Health, said he sympathizes with guards.

He said there are alternatives to the patch; a spray nicotine that has to be prescribed by a doctor. ❖

CECC raises money for Autism Society

North of Seven (CECC newsletter)

Central East Correctional Centre staff once again came through for another charity. This time, the Autism Society of Ontario was the recipient. The money was raised after correctional officer Pauline Brown's son brought home a pamphlet on the neurological disorder from Jack Callaghan Public School, prompting her and chaplain Randy Dyer to collect at Central East Correctional Centre. The social committee also chipped in to bring the total to \$500.

Autism is a complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life: it is the result of a neurological disorder that affects the functioning of the brain. Autism and its associated behaviours have been estimated to occur in as many as 1 in 500 individuals. It is four times more prevalent in boys than girls and includes persons from all racial, ethnic, social, family income, lifestyle, and formal education level sectors.

Autism impacts the typical development of the brain in the areas of social interaction and

communication skills. Children and adults with autism typically have difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication, social interactions, and leisure or play activities.

They find it hard to communicate with others and relate to the outside world. In some cases, aggressive and/or self-injurious behaviour may be present. Persons with autism may exhibit repeated body movements (hand flapping, rocking), unusual responses to people or attachments to objects and resistance to changes in routines. Individuals may also experience sensitivities in sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste.

It is estimated that over 20,000 people in Ontario today have autism or some form of Pervasive Developmental Disorder. It is one of the most common developmental disabilities. Yet most of the public, including many professionals in the medical, educational, and vocational fields, are still unaware of how autism affects people and how they can effectively work with individuals with autism.

For more information: www.autismsociety.on.ca ❖

Communication empowers locals



By Paul Johnstone, Local 224, Owen Sound Jail

In our roles as trade unionists we are surrounded and inundated by many forms of communication. Everything from telephone calls, e-mail, newsletters such as *In Solidarity* and *Rock Solid*, to a new technology I have just mastered – text messaging. Who says you can't teach an old dog new tricks?

In our division, we have made strides over the last few years to improve our communications. The excellent MERC newsletter *Rock Solid*, as well as Brother John Howell's e-mail list (that we can use for instant information) are examples. However, there are ways we can improve our communication. It was pointed out to us at our correction's caucus at Convention that people can be overwhelmed by both calls and e-mail.

How do we improve? As presidents, when faced with a problem we need help to deal with, we contact our MERC Chair. We all think our own problem is the chairs only concern.

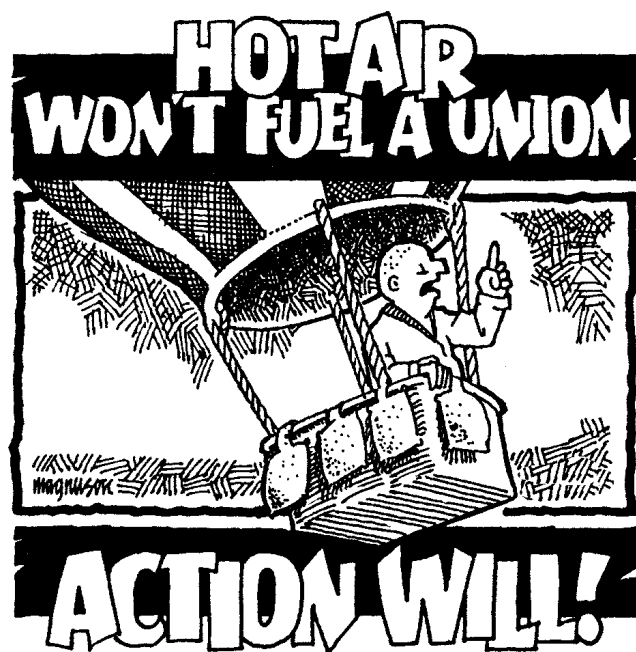
We elected three institutional members to our team, so maybe we can divide up responsibilities so that team members would be accountable for several facilities and the demand on the chair would ease.

Another possible improvement is "following the chain of command". When a member has a problem, they ask their steward and if the steward can't answer, it goes up the chain to local president, provincial health and safety, MERC or Staff Rep.

When an answer comes back, the chain is reversed. This way all involved are empowered. It also eliminates several members calling about the same question and leaving the president out of the loop. We have all had members circumvent us as presidents and this is unacceptable. Our MERC team should refuse to deal with these members.

We should also better utilize *Rock Solid*. We should all submit our local wins and losses with respect to grievances, ERC and H&S so all can benefit and learn from each other. By posting in *Rock Solid*, we will have possible answers when related issues pop up in our own workplaces, like last summers unbearable heat. In Owen Sound, I tried to use the Maplehurst/Vanier agreement regarding the wearing of shorts. During first day of my suspension, I found out many institutions had local agreements for shorts. If this information was more widely known it could have helped build my case. I can see many useful ways to use information we have all separately achieved through our hard work as activists.

It is my belief that by making some minor changes like this, we can make life easier for ourselves and build a much stronger division. ❖



Firm, Ontario dispute jail savings

Rock Solid

Prisoners and taxpayers are better served when jails are run publicly, Ontario's corrections minister said, despite a company's claims that millions of taxpayer dollars will be lost when Canada's only privately run prison is returned to the province.

Utah-based Management and Training Corp., (MTC) which has run the Penetanguishene prison since May 2001, said taxpayers would have saved \$11 million if its contract with the province was extended past the current deal's November expiry.

The company also said it cost the province \$23 million less to have the facility run privately over the past five years.

But Correctional Services Minister Monte Kwinter insists prisoner health care, security and rehabilitation were all lacking at the Central North Correctional Centre in Penetanguishene compared to a virtually identical jail run by public workers.

"We felt that the people of Ontario would be better served by bringing it back into the public service, where we can get the kind of outcomes that we as a government feel we should be getting," Kwinter said.

In a five-year study, the Penetanguishene facility was compared to the Central East Correctional Centre in Kawartha Lakes, which is nearly identical in design and houses the same inmate population.

Kwinter said the study showed offenders were better treated by the public service and were less likely to re-offend.

Kwinter's decision not to renew the contract with Management and Training Corp. ends a provincial experiment into the privatization of prisons, the first of its kind in Canada.

Quebec has flirted with the idea but political officials in that province have expressed doubts as to whether private companies can offer adequate services to prisoners and security to the public. Kwinter wouldn't elaborate on past problems at

Penetanguishene. However, two years ago, a review of staffing levels there indicated chronic understaffing and a lack of adequate supervision.

Among security concerns was a 2002 riot in which nearly 100 inmates almost escaped using a battering ram, according to the report.

Kwinter acknowledged it was cheaper to run the prison privately. But he attributed the savings to the contract drawn up by the previous Conservative government that allowed the company to employ 94 fewer people than Kawartha Lakes, which the minister said resulted in lower-quality services.

"The contract was flawed and we had two-tier correctional delivery," Kwinter said.

"We do not agree there was any evidence to support a change that will cost Ontario taxpayers millions of dollars each year," said Scott Marquardt, president of MTC Canada.

Kwinter said the company was fully compliant according to its contract. But he said there were plenty of situations where understaffing led to substandard services.

Kwinter said there are nine people at Kawartha Lakes who work to follow up with inmates after they leave prison so they can reintegrate into society. Penetanguishene only had one staff member doing such work.

New Democrat critic Peter Kormos said it's a good thing the prison is being returned to public hands. But he also said it provides evidence that the government shouldn't be looking to private companies to run anything from hospitals to highway maintenance.

"When you are dealing with public safety . . . the existence of a middle man who is going to suck money out of the process by way of profits inevitably puts the public at risk," Kormos said.

Conservative Leader John Tory said the government shouldn't shut the cell door on privatizations of prison operations. "I don't think we should rule it out," Tory said. ❖

Dashing around



By Len Mason, Rock Solid

Her mission is her dash. On a tombstone, there are two dates – the date of birth and the date of death. In between the two dates is a dash. To Florence Chow, it is the dash of life that counts. For the last 25 years, this woman has been making the most of her dash by volunteering to make a positive contribution to her community in Thunder Bay.

Her dash includes working full-time hours at her college field placement, working her full-time job as a correctional officer, school work and spending time in meetings organizing a fund-raising scheme for the Thunder Bay chapter of the Canadian Paraplegic Association. She is also garnering support for the motorcycle rally she is organizing for September.

Florence also acknowledges the gift of time and energy from the volunteers who help out in the organization she spearheaded two years ago – *Guardian Angels with Caring Stitches*. This non-profit organization is comprised of a core group of correctional staff that work full-time at the Thunder Bay Jail. The group is devoted to creating blankets for people in need of warmth and support in our community – in particular paediatric patients and victims of cancer. As one of the driving forces behind this stitch group, Florence states, “Volunteers are vital to this group – in supporting both the creative work and the organization itself.”

Guardian Angels with Caring Stitches enthusiastically share their project manager’s viewpoint on volunteerism. “Volunteering gives us a sense of connectedness and allows us to give of ourselves, to share our wealth (not necessarily financial) and express our human values of community.” Barb Janik, fellow Guardian Angel and Operational Manager at the Thunder Bay Jail, teases Florence by saying, “She genuinely thinks that what she does in a normal week is normal. Florence would get more done if she really did have wheels on her heels.”

Florence was recently informed that she was one of over 200 who were nominated to *Flare* magazine in recognition of their volunteer work. Although Florence did not make it into the “Top Six” she is elated with being nominated. One of the comments on the nomination form reads, “Almost every aspect of everyday life benefits from the input of volunteers. Communities thrive because of the very special contributions of community champions such as Florence.”

Of her most recent undertakings – apart from graduating from college and taking a course in legal research this summer – is organizing a rally for female motorcycle riders to raise awareness about the importance of nutrition for the younger members of our community. Of the 25 public schools in Thunder Bay, 13 have either breakfast programs or healthy snack programs at the schools. Florence believes that good nutrition at a young age will help the children now as they grow and in the future as a measure to help them with their own dashes.

The nutrition programs in schools are made possible through the vital contribution of volunteers. Volunteers enable organizations that support breakfast programs, such as the Canadian Red Cross, to carry out and provide services far beyond what the organizations’ budgets would allow. But more volunteers are needed to help in this link in the community chain of care. Those who would like to contribute some time to help serve the breakfast programs are encouraged to call their local school board and/or the Canadian Red Cross.

Florence hopes the “Heels on Wheels” motorcycle ride will rally the support of female motorcyclists, but every rider is welcome to come out for the ride to Grand Portage, MN. Her ultimate goal is to build a network across Canada to do a “pony express” in the summer of 2011. She tells us that people are welcome to e-mail her for more information on the September rally (TBayheelsonwheels@hotmail.com)...as she dashes off to help the Canadian Red Cross in Thunder Bay care for the evacuees from a Northern Ontario flood plain. ❖