

ROCK SOLID

Information from the MERC Team

Huge victory for Hamilton Wentworth Detention Centre members at the OLRB

by Barry Scanlon, MERC Chair

On Feb. 14, 15, 16 and 17, 2002, bargaining unit members at the Hamilton Wentworth Detention Centre engaged in a work refusal with respect to serious health and safety concerns at the institution. Instead of dealing with these issues, the Ministry filed a complaint at the Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB) alleging that our members were engaging in an illegal strike.

Prior to the conclusion of the OLRB hearing on the issue, the parties entered into a comprehensive settlement with respect to the dispute, signed Feb. 17, 2002. Health and Safety concerns at the Hamilton Wentworth Detention Centre were addressed in the settlement and the employer's ability to take any action against individual members was limited. In addition, a mandatory time frame was laid out for any employer action with respect to the terms of the agreement.

Subsequent to the settlement the union filed a complaint with the OLRB alleging that the

employer had violated the Feb. 17, 2002 agreement. The local employer at Hamilton had deducted pay (as much as 36 hours in some cases) from members who had been engaged in the work refusal. In addition, the employer sent individual letters to our members, which were at odds with the negotiated form of the letter. The letters stated, "[your] absence from work... was not authorized and no legitimate explanation was provided for your absence". As the Board set out in its decision,

"OPSEU argued the letter not only contained factual inaccuracies, but actually constituted discipline. The parties had negotiated a letter

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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.

We welcome your contributions (on disk or 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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EDITOR'S CORNER

Your MERC team has been busy working hard for you – the members. Whether it's at the table, sub-committee's or one-on-one local help, we are there for you!

Three of your MERC members have been elected to the OPS Corrections Bargaining. Dave Graves was elected from Region 5, and its his third time on the team. Barry Scanlon and yours truly are taking our second crack at negotiations for the category.

Barry has once again been given the lead, as Chair of the Corrections Team. Barry lives and breathes Corrections. Having spent many hours on the road with Barry this summer traveling in his rolling filing cabinet, I can attest that there is no non-corrections down time for this guy. He has the cell phone planted to his ear almost all the time as he is either checking in with local presidents or working a 'contact' for a settlement on something.

Jack Hopkins, Region 1, Bluewater Youth Centre, is back for a second taste of bargaining and Joe Wright, President of Algoma Treatment Centre is representing Region 6. Joe is a long-time activist out of S.S. Marie and past president of S.S. Marie Jail. Rounding out the team are Robert Curran and Glenna Caldwell from P&P, Regions 4 and 3 respectively (more about Robert & Glenna further inside this issue). Brian Chauvin from Region 1, Windsor Jail is our Corrections Rep. on the Central Team. Brian also sits on the Provincial H&S Team. Carl Thibodeau is the IHC Rep, who works out of the Thunder Bay Jail (proud to say from my local). Other Correctional people on the Central Team are Moira Cowan, Unclassified Rep., Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre, John Watson, Region 7 Rep. (P&P), Beth Anich, Region 6, (P&P, support staff) and Marg Simmons, CERC Rep. (Maplehurst Complex).

This newsletter is not just dedicated to this round of bargaining, we, at all times ask locals for articles and submissions that we can reprint to get the information out to the rest of the members in the province.

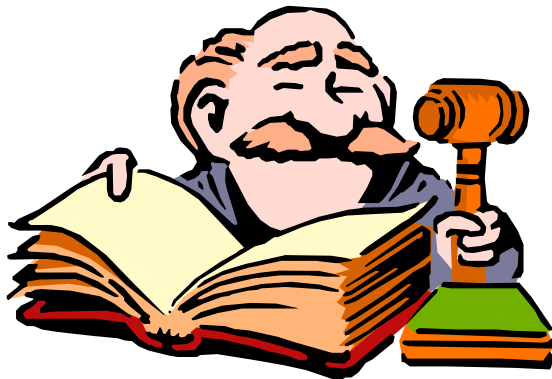
Hope to hear from you soon. E-mail any of your MERC Team members if you want something reprinted in the newsletter. Take care!

Len Mason, Editor & MERC Member

(Continued from page 1)

of reprimand...(and the) parties could not have contemplated given the settlement that the employer would provide the employees with a different letter.”

Finally, the union argued that these letters were issued, and the deductions of pay imposed, well after the agreed upon time frame. The union said that any or all of these actions clearly violated the settlement.



Argument over disciplinary letter

At a hearing before the OLRB on the union’s complaint, the employer argued “that the letter was not disciplinary and was just a statement of the results of the investigation contemplated by the settlement. The letter would have no impact on their career or future discipline.” The local employer at Hamilton also argued that the pay deductions were justified and that the timing of its actions did not violate the settlement.

In a decision released by the Ontario Labour Relations Board on Oct. 25, 2004, Vice-Chair Brian McLean upheld the Union’s complaint. **He found that the Employer had acted in an untimely manner:**

“If the employer’s interpretation of the settlement was accepted, the provisions of the settlement which provided clear time limits would be rendered meaningless. It could not possibly have been the agreement of the parties that the employer would take so long to take action under the settlement...the unpaid leave of absences were imposed beyond the time contemplated by the settlement.”

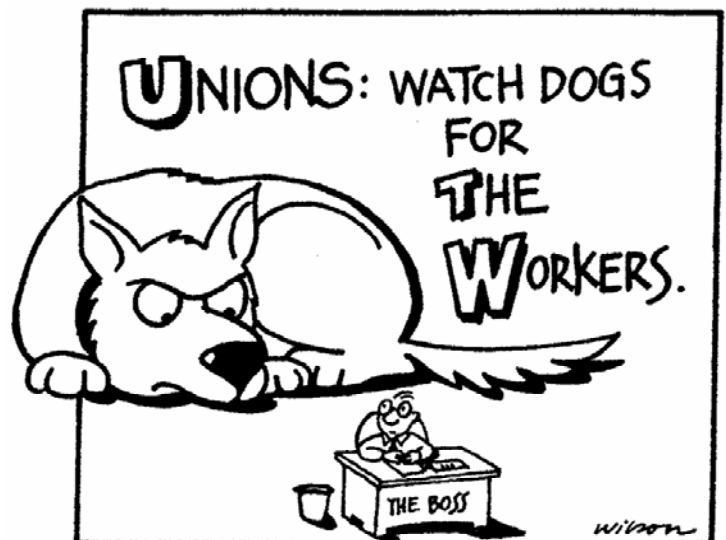
Vice Chair McLean also found that the form of the letter violated the settlement. He concluded that the form of the letter issued to our members: “is disciplinary, despite the assurance from the employer that it is not, because the letter clearly imposes a penalty for employees being absent without leave. As such it violated the provision of the settlement which provided the agreed to letter of reprimand and the prohibition in paragraph 7(g) against the imposition of ‘further or other discipline’.”

Vice Chair McLean upheld the Union’s complaint.

“In my view, therefore, the letter written to employees and the leave of absence imposed were not in accordance with the settlement and therefore the settlement was breached... Accordingly, there will be...a direction to the employer to rescind the letter and pay back any pay deducted.”

As a result of this decision, our members will have their disciplinary letters rescinded and individuals will be paid back any pay deducted.

Congratulations to Neil Fraser, Eddie Almeida and Steve Smith from OPSEU Local 248 for their hard work in taking on the employer and winning on this issue. Thanks to Craig Flood, our lawyer on the case, who did an excellent job in front of the Board. ❖



National support for protest at McGuinty's office

by Len Mason, Corrections MERC Member

Correctional Officers and Youth Facility Workers from across Canada demonstrated their support and solidarity with 145 striking workers from the Syl Apps Youth Centre by picketing Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty's constituency office in Ottawa in September.

Officers from across Canada were in Ottawa to attend the National Union of Public and General Employees Union (NUPGE) Corrections Caucus and to march in the Police and Peace Officers Memorial.

"We were there to show our full support for the striking workers at the Syl Apps Youth Centre, who've taken a strong stand against an abusive employer," said Barry Scanlon.

"The situation at Syl Apps epitomizes the ugly face of privatization and we applaud the courage and resolve of the workers on strike."



Protesters chant "Shame, liars, and broken promises," in front of Dalton McGuinty's Constituency office in Ottawa.

Workers at the Syl Apps facility have been involved in a bitter seven-month strike. Since the start of bargaining, Kinark has frustrated efforts to resolve contract issues.

The Syl Apps Youth Centre is a maximum-security detention and treatment facility in Oakville, Ontario which houses psychiatrically disturbed youth and violent young offenders, including those who have committed murder, armed robbery and rape.

The facility is run by Kinark Child and Family Services, a private company hand-picked by the Mike Harris-Ernie Eves Tory government in 2000.

The Ontario government has continued to pay the private contractor, Kinark, their full contract fee despite scaling back the 80-bed facility to serve just 23 youth.

"The Harris-Eves government created this mess by privatizing the operations of the facility," said Scanlon. "But the McGuinty government is prolonging the strike by bankrolling the private contractor through the dispute."

"We're here today to urge Premier McGuinty

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Barry Scanlon, Dave Graves and Len Mason protest outside Premier McGuinty's Constituency office.

(Continued from page 4)

and his government to take immediate action to bring a just and fair resolution to the intolerable situation at the Syl Apps facility,” said Scanlon.



“What do we want? A fair contract!” shouts Barry Scanlon at McGuinty protest.

NUPGE Corrections Caucus

Officers from Nova Scotia, British Columbia, Manitoba, Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan and Ontario attended the National Union Correctional Officers & Youth Facility Workers Working Group Session in Ottawa on September 23 and 24.

Participants shared information regarding privatization attempts in their respective provinces, recent settlements, staff training, overcrowding and health & safety issues.

The working group was chaired by Marie Bean, Larry Brown and Len Bush from NUPGE.

I found this working group extremely educational as it was my first time attending such a meeting. Issues such as victories in the areas of hospital escorts to the most recent collective agreement signings were very informative.

Participants also stayed in Ottawa to march in or watch the Peace Officers’ Memorial parade.

I was really proud of our Ontario Ceremonial unit. They marched solidly and I had a sense of pride as they represented the thousands of officers who work in our institutions each and every day.

Pension accrual rate

The allowable pension accrual rate was recently raised for firefighters to 2.33 per cent. The normal accrual rate for most occupations is 2.00 per cent.

A letter from James Clancy, President of NUPGE, was sent to the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Ralph Goodale in regards to the pension accrual rate.

“While we applaud the decision to recognize, in this way, that firefighters risk their lives while performing their public duty, it is equally true of the other public safety professions in this country. Police officers, correctional officers, and other public safety officers often put their health and safety, and their very lives, on the line each and every day in the service of the public,” said Clancy.

“We must recognize this commitment and take the necessary steps to ensure that they are able to enjoy a well-earned earlier retirement. Also, it is a simple matter of fairness – what is offered to one group of public safety officers should apply across the board,” states Clancy.

“The National Union of Public and General Employees, on behalf of the provincial correctional officers across Canada, is asking you to expand the pension accrual rate provision currently available to firefighters to all of Canada’s public safety officers,” wrote Clancy.

The letter was acknowledged by the Minister’s office. As this saga develops, **Rock Solid** will continue to keep its readers informed of its progress. ❖



National Union mourns death of Yellowknife parole officer

NUPGE

Louise Pargeter, first Corrections Canada officer to die while working with offenders in the community

The National Union of Public and General Employees has expressed condolences to the family of Louise Pargeter, a parole officer whose body was found in the Yellowknife apartment of a parolee she was visiting in the course of her duties.

RCMP in the Northwest Territories later chased down Eli Ulayuk, 36, who fled in a Corrections Canada vehicle toward the community of Rae-Edzo. The suspect was arrested and charged with first-degree murder.

“On behalf of the 337,000 members of the National Union I want to extend our deepest regrets to Sister Pargeter’s family,” said NUPGE president James Clancy.

“We grieve this terrible loss with them. The thoughts of the members of the National Union, especially those who work in the justice system, are with everyone affected by this tragedy.”

Parole revoked in 2001

In 2001, when Ulayuk was out of jail, Pargeter recommended that his parole be revoked. As a result, he was sent back to prison for almost two years.

He was released on full parole in June. Ulayuk was convicted of second-degree murder following the 1998 stabbing and strangling of Martha Ammaq. The conviction was later set aside on appeal. He then pleaded guilty to manslaughter and was sentenced to 15 years.

Reports said Pargeter was visiting Ulayuk for the first time since his latest release on the day she was found dead in his apartment last week. Funeral services were held on Wednesday.

The RCMP said it followed and attempted to stop the vehicle in which the suspect was travelling. “A short pursuit ensued. The motor vehicle went off the highway and the subject fled the motor vehicle into the bush,” said RCMP Cpl. Glen Demmon.

A tracking dog and handler were called in and Ulayuk was arrested six hours after the chase began.



Investigation launched

Tim Krause, a spokesman for Corrections Canada, said an investigation has been launched. “We are going to be looking at the entire circumstances surrounding this tragic incident to try to determine what happened,” he said.

Pargeter is the first Corrections Canada parole officer killed while working with offenders in the community. A parole officer was killed in a British Columbia prison hostage-taking in 1975.

Mike Lynagh, the brother of Pargeter’s partner, spoke out on behalf of the murdered woman.

“What rights did Louise have to protect her last Wednesday?” he asked.

“We will not rest until we are satisfied that the necessary changes are in place that will ensure that this will never happen again.” ❖

Bluewater Youth Centre Local signs riot shield agreement

by *Barry Scanlon, MERC Chair*

Five years of battling with the employer over the use of the lexan riot shields at Bluewater Youth Centre has finally ended in an agreement signed Oct. 19, 2004. The agreement identifies when the shields are to be used as well as detailing the mandatory training to be provided to workers who may be requested to use the shield.

In addition to using the lexan riot shield to protect workers from fluids and thrown objects, the shield is to be used for emergency dorm removals. Emergency dorm removals are: “any situation where a young person is in immediate risk of harm or danger to themselves or others or

otherwise needs to be immediately removed from a cell and/or a dorm and/or young person occupied area in any circumstances where time is of the essence and ICIT cannot be activated in time or it is otherwise not practical for ICIT to be activated.”

Training on the defensive use of the shield will include a video presentation and the opportunity to practice the defensive use of the shield. Initial training will be completed by June 30, 2005 and refresher training will be added to the regular ongoing training package after that.

Congratulations to Brenda Ball, Shelley Nickel Jack Hopkins and Bill Bell from Local 122 at Bluewater Youth Centre who worked extremely hard to get this deal. ❖

Ontario Health Premium a tax on employees, government says

Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty stated that the health levy recently imposed by the province’s government should be paid by employees, not employers. The premier was responding to an arbitrator’s ruling that a Guelph nursing home employer was required to pay the new levy, pursuant to a 24-year-old provision in a UFCW collective agreement. That provision required the employer to cover the cost of employee premiums under the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP). In her award, Arbitrator Anne Barrett rejected employer arguments that the levy was a tax based on income, not a premium, and therefore fell outside the scope of the provision in question. According to McGuinty, however, “this is a tax provision found within the [Ontario] Income Tax Act, and our intention is that taxpayers will pay this new premium.” The levy, which came into effect Jul. 1, 2004, is a fixed, lump-sum amount,

graduated according to individual income, to a maximum of approximately \$900 a year.

McGuinty noted that, in another recent ruling, the arbitrator held that the employer was not liable for the new health levy, despite a provision in the collective agreement requiring it to pay employees’ OHIP premiums. In that case, Arbitrator Martin Teplitsky concluded that, at the time the parties negotiated their collective agreement, “they could not have contemplated this new tax, which did not exist.” Furthermore, he found, the tax “fluctuates with income,” and “[n]o employer would agree to pay the tax on income earned in outside employment.” Finally, Teplitsky held, “benefits are always specifically bargained and identified. This ‘tax’ is not a benefit . . .”

It is expected that the courts will eventually rule on this issue, as the employer in the case decided by Arbitrator Barrett has applied for judicial review of her award. ❖

Nobody can do everything but everybody can do something

In 1985, when I joined the then Ministry of Correctional Services, I would have to describe myself as, if not “anti-union”, then at best, “non-interested union.” I took for granted those rights, privileges and benefits which came with the job. Inevitably, I asked the question – which every steward hears at one time or another, “what has the union ever done for me?” As the years flew by, I was the one being asked the question.

The first couple of dozen times you get asked, to be honest, is extremely annoying. After a time, however, you come to realize it is not such a bad question. It never hurts to stop and take stock of one’s life, or in this case, one’s Collective Agreement.

Over the years that I have been a member of OPSEU, my (our) Collective Agreement has given me a lot. Each summer I take a well earned vacation (Article 46). When my partner, a union sister, had our children she, or I, were able to stay home with them (Article 50). When there was the need for ongoing prescribed drugs, I did not have to balance need versus cost (Article 39). When there was death in my family, I did not worry about lost wages but could focus on the life crisis I was experiencing (Article 48). This represents a very, very small portion of your Collective Agreement.

This is all so obvious, why bother talking about it. Because if we don’t talk about it, if we don’t recall the struggle (s), we are likely to lose what we have fought so hard to achieve. None of the rights we enjoy as union brothers and sisters were given willingly. Every one of them has had a price and was not achieved without a struggle.

Involvement is the key to success. If not as a member of a local executive, a steward, or an activist, whatever that may be, then in lots of other ways. Show support by attending your local meetings. Wear OPSEU apparel or pins to work. Attend a weekend rally or a lunch hour information picket. Fill out a survey. How each union brother & sister decides to participate, is a personal choice. If the choice, however, is not to participate at all, we

may not like the choices that are made for us. And make no mistake, there are those whose choice would be to take away the rights, privilege and benefits union brothers & sisters have struggled to achieve.

No one of us can do everything. But certainly, all of us can do something. ❖

*Robert Curran, Vice-Chair,
Corrections Bargaining Team*

Probation strongly represented at the Table

Both Probation and Probation and Parole are strongly represented at the bargaining tables this round. Probation officers from both Ministries and support staff from the Probation side have seats at the two tables. We are a force to be reckoned with and will make our voice heard.

One Probation Officer from each side sits at the Corrections table. Glenna Caldwell of the Children’s Ministry represents Region 3 and Robert Curran of Corrections represents Region 4. Glenna, who is a long time activist, is a past member of the 1999 team and was involved in the steering committee of the Systemic Change Program when she was with Corrections. Robert was a past MERC member and was the President of the Probation Officers Association of Ontario (POAO) for a number of years.

At the Central table are Beth Anich, of the Children’s Ministry, one of two OAG representatives and John Watson, of Corrections, representing Region 7. Beth is a long time activist in Region 6 and came to the OAG table during the 94-96 round after the passing of Toni Manta. John Watson was a past MERC member and was at the Corrections table for the 94-96 round. When you think of the size of the tables having four people there is no small feat. Four out of 22 is great! ❖

Security changes in wake of Louise Pargeter murder

“A tragedy we never want to see repeated.”

NUPGE

Yellowknife - The murder of parole officer Louise Pargeter has prompted federal correctional authorities to tighten security for staff members who supervise criminals with a history involving death or sexual assault.

The measures have been instituted since Pargeter's body was found Oct. 6 in the Yellowknife apartment of Eli Ulayuk, an inmate who had been granted parole following a 1990 manslaughter conviction.

Ulayuk has been charged with the murder of the 36-year-old woman and is to appear in court on Nov. 9.

“This is the first case of a parole officer being killed in the community performing their public safety duties – a tragedy we never want to see repeated,” Don Head, acting commissioner of the Correctional Service of Canada, said in a statement.

“We are taking immediate, additional steps to enhance the safety of our staff.”

Series of measures

Two staff members, rather than one, will now be assigned when visiting parolees with violent histories for the first three months of their supervision. After three months, a reassessment will be made to determine how to proceed thereafter.

Police will also be notified prior to home visits in remote areas and training will be improved for parole officers.

“We will ensure our staff have the tools, the training and the support they need to perform this essential community service safely.” ❖

Unclassified Rep. On bargaining team is from Corrections

My primary goal in running for this position is to make a difference for the unclassified members throughout the province.

I have been actively involved in fighting the disparity and unfair treatment facing the unclassified members since returning to the Ontario Public Service in 2001. I was employed in the unclassified service at a COMSOC young offender custody facility in London from '1990 – 1996. I then worked in several halfway houses in London, before the government closed them.

I currently work as an unclassified correctional officer at the Elgin Middlesex Detention Centre (EMDC). During my employment at EMDC, I have resumed the fight against the injustices suffered by the unclassified. I have helped organize several information pickets. These pickets dealt with issues such as seniority, scheduling, fair and equitable treatment as well as a protocol for deciding where new CO-Start graduates are assigned and whether classes should be scheduled or not. These pickets have influenced rollovers based on seniority within the institutions, blocked the influx of new graduates from the training program into the institution and started consistent scheduling practices province wide.

Through my involvement, it has become quite apparent that the need for change is imperative for, the unclassified. The involvement and education of the unclassified province-wide is vital to our success in affecting this change. As the representative of all provincial unclassified members, I recognize many of the outstanding issues we face each and every day and I look forward to the challenge before me.

Moira Cowan, Unclassified Representative, OPS Central Bargaining Team.

Make Phase 2 of St. Lawrence Valley a reality **NOW!**

The Ottawa Citizen , November 5, 2004

The mess at the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre is dreadful but there is a way for the Ontario Liberal government to turn the situation around.

A major reason for Ottawa's jail becoming overcrowded is that other outdated jails in Eastern Ontario have been closed. That strategy was all right as long as the government went ahead with building the St. Lawrence Valley Correctional and Treatment Centre in Brockville.

But the government has had other priorities. While the first, 100-bed secure treatment unit was completed in 2003, the second phase of the project – featuring 300 correctional beds and a 54-bed remand unit to serve a recently rebuilt courthouse in Brockville – has been on the shelf.

This could be a large opportunity lost. In Ottawa, if the government proposed a new detention facility, there'd be years of community protest and piles of studies. In Brockville, the correctional facility will use the province's own property and retrofitted buildings at the Brockville Psychiatric Hospital site. The engineering and approvals are all in place. The city wants the centre because of the jobs it will generate.

As well, the Brockville centre is meant to integrate mental health treatment with the corrections function, so that we're doing something to actually help people rather than just locking them up. Too many prisoners in Ontario are told to get psychiatric treatment and counselling – for conditions ranging from addictions to pedophilia and violent behaviour – but never get it.

Too many mental patients end up in regular jail.

Just this week we saw an inquest into the death of a mentally ill Cornwall man, James O'Brien, who was sent to Ottawa's detention centre and died. While the circumstances of his death a year ago remain a mystery, he should have been in an institution geared to the mentally ill, as Brockville's St. Lawrence Centre is intended to be.

The fact that the new centre would be in Conservative Bob Runciman's Leeds-Grenville riding is certainly a problem to some especially partisan Ontario Liberals. Mr. Runciman, dean of the Tory caucus, has recently delivered pointed but reasonable criticism of the government as acting leader of the Opposition in the legislature.

We hope that Eastern Ontario's Liberal MPPs, led by Premier Dalton McGuinty, are able to rise above partisan interests and agree that building the St. Lawrence centre is in the best interests of Ontario.

And if the Liberal government is willing to get this project completed, Mr. Runciman should take the advice of the famous United States Congressman, Tip O'Neil, who said: You can accomplish anything if you're willing to let someone else take the credit.

The living and working conditions at Ottawa's detention centre, reported by Citizen reporter Juliet O'Neill over the last number of days, are appalling. Integrating corrections with psychiatric treatment is a humane and progressive course of action for the government. Justice is a core responsibility of government.

It's up to the McGuinty government to correct the injustice in Eastern Ontario's corrections system. ❖

Guardian Angels with Caring Stitches: Scarves back cancer battle

by Len Mason, MERC Member

Florence Chow, of OPSEU Local 737 has spent the last four months crocheting pink scarves. It's taken over 200 hours of her spare time and 60 to 80 balls of yarn to create more than 30 scarves, in different patterns, lengths, textures and shades of pink.

Her handiwork has been raising awareness and funds for breast cancer patients.

"If I was rich, an easy way to make a contribution would be to just give money," she said. "For me, I think it's more valuable to not just give money, but to give my time, and give my energy and turn it into something positive and warm for someone else."

Each scarf is selling for a minimum donation of \$30 to the Canadian Cancer Society's Thunder Bay branch, to be directed toward support programs for breast cancer patients. The scarfs were available during the *Taking Steps Against Breast Cancer* fundraising mall walk at Intercity Mall.

Florence said she hopes her labour of love will raise awareness, and inspire others to join her efforts.

"If I can help in any way, that's what I want to do," said Chow, who taught herself to crochet as an adult. She said she'd like to see school classes, clubs or groups of friends start crocheting scarves for fundraising.

"I hope it will be a ripple effect. . . If I start it like this, this year, maybe other people will catch on."

Chow has been putting her crochet hook to work

for others since March. She helped start **Guardian Angels with Caring Stitches** with her co-workers at the Thunder Bay District Jail. The Guardian part is a tribute to the local newsletter – **The Guardian**.



The correctional workers and other staff started by knitting and crocheting eight-inch squares using leftover yarn, and combining them into blankets for all pediatric patients at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Services Centre.

"We can make a contribution in our community without going deep into our pockets," Florence said. "We have the time, we have the talent, we have the energy to do this. This isn't a 'Union thing' either, this is any and all staff who want to help."

They meet about once a month for stitch sessions, where they knit, crochet, sew and put together blankets. They've also crocheted yellow butterfly lapel pins for the Canadian Cancer Society, sewed turbans for chemotherapy patients and created dreamcatchers for young cancer patients.

For Chow, it's all about giving a sense of comfort to people fighting the disease.

"Every stitch has been made with care and with a positive thought," she said.

Guardian Angels with Caring Stitches welcome donations of scrap yarn and fabric, and volunteers to help with the knitting, crocheting and sewing. For more information, call 807-767-7583 or e-mail guardian_angels737@hotmail.com. ❖



IN MEMORIAM

Larry Cripps

1952 — 2004

by Karen Sullivan, Local 368

It is said that we are given our family but that we choose our friends. If so I choose wisely when I choose Larry as my friend.

Friendship is all about loyalty, love and understanding. Larry gave me all those things and more.

I have lost a dear friend. I know, though, that friendship like his surpasses even death. I know he'll always be there keeping a watching eye and saying "I told you so."

I know for sure that it won't be as much fun. I know that I'll miss his quick answers, his sharp comments. I know that I'll miss his support at times of trouble. I know I'll miss all the things we did together.

Today I thank God for his friendship. I'm sorry He didn't leave Larry to us longer but I suppose that sometimes we have to lose something before we appreciate it properly.

Maybe I took our friendship too much for granted. Maybe I wasn't there when he needed me. Knowing the person he was I know he forgave me. He used to say, "You're only human."

That is not to say we agreed about everything. In fact we disagreed about life, activities and politics. Well it made life more interesting that way.

Our 'Union Life' will go on without Larry but it won't be life, as we knew it together. Still I know that we've been lucky to have a brother like Larry. I know he'd say "Cheer up I didn't want you to have too much of a good thing." Although it will take time I know that someday the hurt will go and only the memories will remain and they'll be good memories, every single one of them. If there is one message that I can pass to all you brothers and sisters from Larry, it is this; "it's not what your union has done for you, but what can you do for your union."

I'll miss him but my life will always be better for having known him. Certainly I will always have the odd smile when I think of things we did

together. Friendship is like casting fishing net. You may throw it out but you always pull it back in again. Larry won't be with me in body but he'll always be with me in spirit.

It's only human to die and it's human to cry. Larry's friendship is still there though it has taken another form. I know he's watching us and probably just now having a laugh at our expense. We can't laugh yet but we will because anything else would be an insult to our friendship. We valued that friendship too much to do anything that might harm it. Larry will always be special to us.

When I remember him I'll smile but the smile will be tinged with tears. Why not? He was worth them. Someday I hope we'll be together again for me to say to him "I told you so."

Eulogy Verse For A Friend

Friendship like ours it doesn't fade
For though you have gone away
The feelings I have in my heart for you
Will always add sun to my day.
I'm sad when I think that now we must part
I know just how much I've lost
Friendship like yours doesn't come every day
Is something I've learned to my cost?
I'm remembering now of the things that we've done
The outings, the meals, the songs and the fun
The gifts you gave me, the books that we read
Though I'm grieving today and feeling so sad
For our years of friendship I'll always be glad.
Thoughts of our friendship throughout the years
I salute it, and you, through my tears.
I pray that Larry will rest in the peace he so richly
deserves. ❖