

ROCK SOLID

Information from the MERC Team

Maplehurst Pod safety issues at the OLRB

The pod safety appeal continued at the Ontario Labour Relations Board in May and June beginning with a walk through Maplehurst Complex by Arbitrator Freedman on May 29, 2003. This was followed by four days of hearings in May and June where local reps and advisers, Marc Dugas, Dan Sidsworth and Barry Scanlon dug in for what appears to be a fairly lengthy case. The case will continue in December of this year and dates have already been set for 2004.

As in most legal proceedings the hearing begins with lawyers on both sides outlining their case to the arbitrator. The union lawyer gave his opening statement but the employer legal counsel chose not to respond, at least, at this point. As this appeal is currently two years old it did seem odd that the employer had nothing to say in response to the union's opening statement.

Next, the Union called its first witness, Barry Scanlon, to testify regarding Ministry policy and procedures, staffing practices, security measures, Infrastructure Renewal Project, MERC activities, health and safety issues and so on. As Barry testified, various documents, reports, videotapes and other



items were introduced through him and tabled as exhibits.

The purpose of the witness testimony and documents, which are reviewed in the course of the evidence, is to lay a foundation for the union's case for the installation of sally ports in the wings and the addition of a correctional officer in each of the unit control areas. The process is quite painstaking and slow as verbal testimony is recorded through handwritten notes taken by both lawyers and the arbitrator.

When the case is finally completed the arbitrator (who is usually involved in numerous ongoing cases at the same time) must begin to sift through hundreds

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Editorial Policy

The content and editing of this newsletter are 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 authors and not necessarily the views of OPSEU or the MERC.

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.

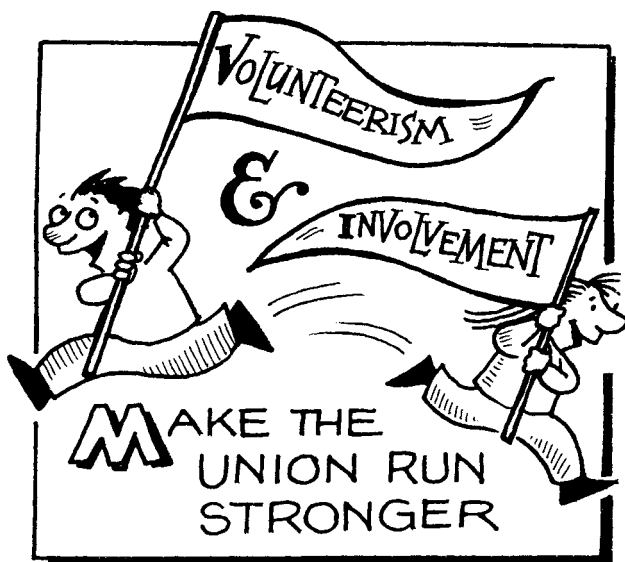
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In this corner

This is the second edition of *Rock Solid*.

Submissions for this newsletter aren't coming in as I had hoped for. I know it's hard to get motivated to write something for your newsletter, but once you sit down and put finger to keyboard, things will start flowing.

Most of the significant MERC work is being done on the "transition committee," and it is being printed up on memorandums, agreements, *Lock Talk* and *Straight Talk* so I have not included any of those issues.

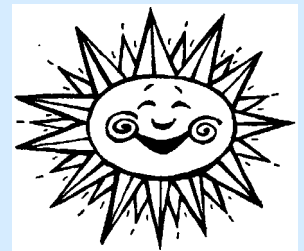
I am not a member of the transition committee, as our Chair and Vice-Chair were on this committee before I was elected to the team.

The MERC has been meeting regularly (every two months) and issues are presented and discussed.

I have learned awfully quick that things don't get done in a hurry at the provincial level. Patience is something that I am learning. Issues are presented and checked on and perhaps followed or referred to the next meeting. It is a frustrating process but nevertheless it is the way it is and I am sitting and watching, listening and learning about the system.

I still hope to be able to share information via this newsletter with members across the province. Again, I urge you to submit an article about your institution or workplace and I will print it in the newsletter. I would like one submission from each region for each issue.

Have a safe summer!



In Solidarity,
Len Mason
Member, Corrections MERC

Maplehurst Pod safety issues at the OLRB

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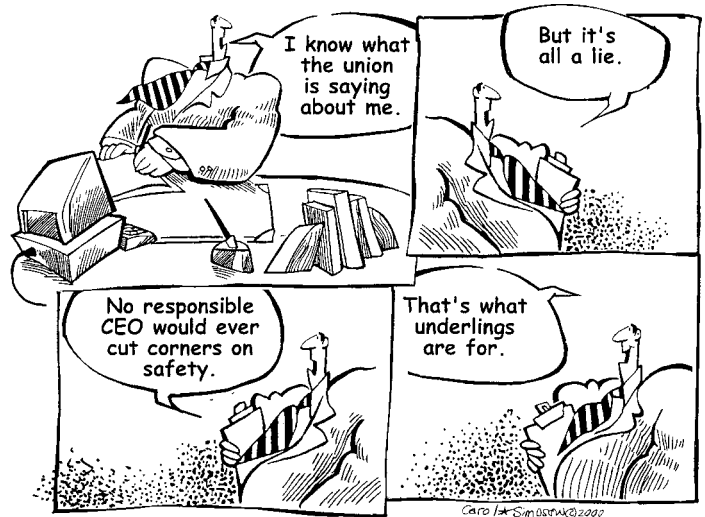
of pages of handwritten notes of testimony as he begins to formulate his decision. As many of his notes may reflect verbal evidence given six months or more previously, the notes are often his only recollection of the evidence. Therefore it is prudent for a witness to speak slowly and clearly, those notes may be as complete as possible. Currently Barry remains on the witness stand as he has been for four days. He will likely begin to be cross-examined by the employer's lawyer in December.

As well as a number of disturbing videos of the riot at Central North Correctional Centre, the report of the riot at Ottawa - Carleton Detention Centre last July has been placed in evidence. Perhaps the most shocking piece of evidence introduced so far was an excerpt from a set of minutes from the management provincial security committee. This committee which is comprised of Superintendents, ARDs, ICIT managers, Security managers and other senior ministry officials, reviews security issues all the way from riots and escapes to canteen issues. The committee also makes recommendations to senior ministry officials.

In the March, 2003, minutes of the security committee meeting which were introduced into evidence, the security committee recommends the ministry install sally ports in all wings of all pods at OCDC, CNCC, CECC and Maplehurst at a cost of \$ 3 million to make the pods safer. The minutes also indicate that the original design of these facilities included sally ports but that they had been eliminated to save money.

Sunshine Club Corner- 2002 Salaries (6 different employees featured each newsletter)

Todd Smith	\$129,761.41
Christine Eden	\$135,616.96
Robert Rackham	\$143,282.29
Steven Thomas	\$125,098.77
Richard Stuivenberg	\$158,401.90
Stephen Renzini	\$140,963.77



What's a living wage?

Ontario Coalition for Social Justice/CALM

Everyone deserves an adequate standard of living-but one in four Ontario workers earns poverty wages.

The current minimum wage in Ontario is a poverty wage. A full-time worker, working a regular 35-hour week, needs to earn \$10 an hour to be above the poverty line.

The minimum wage has been frozen in Ontario since 1995. The cost of living, including rent and public transportation, has increased, but the minimum wage has been frozen at \$6.85 an hour. Studies show that increases to the minimum wage do not cause job loss. In some instances, jobs are created when the minimum wage is increased. So-called "low-skilled" jobs are vital to the economy. In 2000, jobs in the retail, food and accommodation industries made up 18 per cent of all jobs in Ontario. In 2000, 24 per cent of women earning poverty wages worked in retail and 17 per cent worked in food and accommodation. For men, 29 per cent worked in retail and 20 per cent worked in food and accommodation. ³

“All quiet” is the order of the day

by Gord Longhi, MERC Member (P&P)

In the community corrections field at the Ministry of Public Safety and Security (MPSS), “all quiet” seems to be the order of the day in probation and parole at present. However this may be a sign that much more is happening rather than the reverse.

As activists, we feel a natural reticence at giving credit to the employer, even when it is due. The reticence perhaps is that you feel you may look like a sellout to your members. The other problem is that you are worried that the employer will read it as a sign of weakness and slide back on their commitments.

The employer runs the same risks don't they? Working with the union is a double edged sword for them, particularly with an ultra right wing government in power. They may want to establish a good relationship with their employees to increase productivity, yet they do not want to look like they are “letting the chickens run the coop.” And what happens when they have established good working groups on some issues, yet the union continues to hammer them on other issues? Do they pull up stakes on the good faith in one area to wage war with the union on principle? Tough choices.

In the end, we have more than a classic power struggle. It's also a perception dilemma. Even when both sides want the same goal, getting there together can be difficult. Working relationships with management and union are difficult to establish with the competing interests and distrust that is often present. Finding the compromise is not always a win-win situation.

With all that said, I have to take the opportunity to say that my recent experiences with senior management in community corrections have been predominantly productive and they have reflected a sincere demonstration of good faith at acting upon many of the critical issues of the day.

Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) has become a confounding mess that has not only community corrections second guessing but the courts and police also. The workload issues that are flowing from the new act are just a trickle at this point with the valve being slowly but certainly opened towards full as time progresses. There is little doubt that the new responsibilities for the single case management will be greater as will the level of difficulty of the young person that is placed into our care. The unanswered question now is what will the numbers be like?

Electronic Surveillance Program (ESP) has yet to take root, however the use of this tool will be monitored closely and its impact on the field will be raised regularly at our meetings with management.

Ergonomics, which had been stalled for a long time, has now taken off and with a bit of luck and a bit of hard work, we should see proper equipment in every office by the end of the fiscal year.

The MERC subcommittee on workload completed a report in March 2003. Of its many recommendations, there have already been several addressed. The subcommittee on workload met again on June 18, 2003 and that meeting with the employer suggests that memos will be released over the next few months that will report on further advancements on other matters. The paragraphs below detail our progress.

Regularly scheduled staff meetings should be occurring in offices with workload as a standing item. The issue should be discussed in detail and not just passed over. Discussions should be on use of resources, equity of work distribution, possible local solutions. Consider how Probation & Parole Service Delivery Model (PPSDM) implementation has affected your workload. The next Program Evaluation Unit report should shed some light on what is happening with PPSDM across the province. The minutes of all staff meetings must be forwarded

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to Regional Office and problems will be examined at the Regional ERC. Finally as part of the three pronged approach, any unresolved or contentious workload issues will go forward to the MERC table.

Development of a Workload Measurement Tool was perhaps the most significant recommendation. A working group has been established and has begun its task. An aggressive deadline of December, 2003, has been set for completion. The tool won't solve our workload problems but at least we will have good evidence to use in our efforts to achieve healthy workloads that will complement public safety. It will be up to us as members to make the politicians hold those election promises of more Probation/Parole Officers.

The elimination of manual stats has been implemented. Investigation has begun into the use of touch screen technology as well as voice recognition software. OTIS bandwidth has been increased, although I believe this was in the plans before our committee met. The employer is continuing to examine improvements in OTIS related to the concerns identified.

The issue of single jurisdiction has serious implications for both the Phase One Probation staff as well as P&P staff. To that end, both the MCFCS and the MPSS MERC members for OPSEU have arranged a table with the employer to discuss the contentious issues that will arise as we approach August 1 and thereafter. Among the issues are job security, mobility, workload, resources, training, representation, facilities, peace officer status, health and safety. Regular communication will flow from these meetings to keep staff from both ministries informed of what the road ahead will look like.

Health and safety as well as office accommodation/space issues continue to be on the radar screen and should prove to be both daunting and protracted negotiations. Health and Safety of the employee is a paramount responsibility. Our efforts in the following months to achieve gains in this area may well be fraught with discord. Yet I am hopeful that despite this, we can persevere in the gains we have made in other fronts.

All in all, a positive report. A period of quiet is not a bad thing at times. And it reminds the employer that mutual respect and co-operation has this benefit. There is however a significant amount of work that remains to be tackled. Particularly with our OAG

members who are struggling to keep their heads above water. How we complete that and other work depends on finding the compromise. Can we do it quietly and effectively, or do we blow the budget with fireworks and fanfare?

I prefer the logic of negotiated resolutions when it comes to labour relations. It maintains respect between the parties and promotes a sense of recognition of the employee's self worth. I believe we can achieve this in the environment we have established most recently. But just in case, I still have a big box of fireworks in storage. ³

P&P Western Region

by Dave Kerr , Local 115, St. Thomas P&P

Windsor Area Manager chooses to retire amid controversy. Yes it is true, and there are still some outstanding grievances that have not gone away.

Ergonomic issues are outstanding in many areas. At least one office has a recommended health accommodation (ergonomic) still not addressed. The medical doctor apparently doesn't know what is best for the worker, the Area Manager does!

Would you believe that an Area Manager wants to pick the Health and Safety **worker** rep! Also true. Yes you heard it here, election occurred, but employer wants to train another through IAPA to represent the workers.

Hamilton P&P has an excellent Intensive Supervision program in place. Great working relationship with the police even involves visiting inmates in distant areas prior to release to prepare inmates for being intensively supervised outmates after release.

Despite the modifications at London East, an office with several hundred outmates visiting; there is no secure interview room. St. Thomas has undergone a retrofit and they didn't get one either.

Congratulations to all the new (in the last year) Acting Area Managers. For most of you it is a good career move, and for a change there are few complaints about the choices. May you all do well, remembering what you were before you stepped up, and most importantly stay there until we get all your backfills converted.

No SARS or West Nile cases to report! ³

President's Message

It's all about Public Services



Leah Casselman

A message to all OPSEU members from Leah Casselman, president.

I think we all know that the next Ontario election is a crucial one.

For the last eight years, OPSEU members have suffered under a

government that has failed, over and over again, to recognize the value of the public services we provide. With the Tories in power at Queen's Park, we've seen mass layoffs. We've seen workloads rise. We've seen wages fall behind. And we've seen our communities suffer.

The Walkerton disaster showed what happens when public services are cut back until they collapse, but it's not the only example. Far from it! Our colleges and universities are not ready for the double cohort. Our hospitals can't keep skilled staff because of low wages and a shortage of full-time jobs. And this summer, we'll see the results of Tory energy and transportation policies when deadly smog blankets southern Ontario again.

No matter how you serve the people of Ontario, you've seen the bad effects of this government in your own workplace. Has your workplace been mauled by privatization, downloading, layoffs? Is your employer squeezing you harder to cut costs? Is service quality sinking with the Tories in charge? For virtually every OPSEU member, the answer to these questions is YES.

This election is all about public services and the people who provide them. Think back to the struggles you've faced since 1995. Think of what you've lost. Think about what your community has lost. Many of these losses could have been avoided – if only we had a government that cared.

This election is our chance to get one. That is why we are taking action now.

The OPSEU Executive Board has already made some key decisions around election strategy. Our top priority must be to get rid of this government. OPSEU members simply cannot afford another four years with Tories at the helm. To defeat Tories, we will put resources into ridings where OPSEU members can make a difference. In some cases this means backing Liberals; in others it means backing New Democrats.

Your Executive Board believes that a stronger NDP is good for public services and good for public employees. Part of our targeting strategy will be aimed at getting more New Democrat MPPs in the Legislature. A strong NDP caucus can keep the Liberals accountable, especially if there is a minority Liberal government.

We need a government that will start to rebuild public services in Ontario. I urge all OPSEU members to work hard to defeat this government and to elect as many people as possible who share our goals.

We need to mobilize all 100,000 OPSEU members for this job.

This means volunteering to work for opposition candidates.

It means making sure every member is on the voters' list.

It means putting up candidate signs in our front windows and on our front lawns.

It means donating money.

It means voting to defeat this government and urging all our friends and neighbours to do the same. OPSEU members know all about taking action to protect public services. In this election, let's do it one more time.

In solidarity,

Leah Casselman

President, Ontario Public Service Employees Union

Bullying in the workplace

Canada Safety Council (with permission)

Employers are beginning to take steps to make bullying as unthinkable as sexual harassment or drunkenness in the workplace.

Schoolyard bullying — the torment of one child by another — is often compared to workplace bullying. Both types represent a grab for control by an insecure, inadequate person, an exercise of power through the humiliation of the target. School bullies, if reinforced by cheering classmates, fearful teachers or ignoring administrators, grow up to be dominating adults. When they join the work force, they continue to bully others.

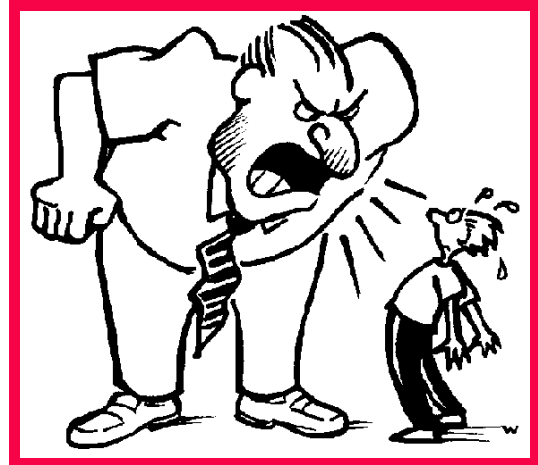
Psychological violence

A 1999 International Labour Organization (ILO) report on workplace violence emphasized that physical and emotional violence is one of the most serious problems facing the workplace. The ILO definition of workplace violence includes bullying: *“any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work. These behaviors would originate from customers, co-workers at any level of the organization. This definition would include all forms of harassment, bullying, intimidation, physical threats/assaults, robbery and other intrusive behaviors.”*

CUPE’s National Health and Safety Survey of Aggression Against Staff, published in January, 1994, mentions verbal aggression and harassment in its definition of violence:

“Any incident in which an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted during the course of his/her employment. This includes the application of force, threats with or without weapons, severe verbal abuse and persistent sexual and racial harassment.”

Bullying (general harassment) is far more prevalent than other destructive behaviors covered by legislation, such as sexual harassment and racial discrimination.



A Canadian survey on workplace violence found that physical violence is often reported from outside sources, such as customers, students and patients. Psychological violence is more often reported from within the organization. A U.S. study estimates 1 in 5 American workers has experienced destructive bullying in the past year.

Workplace policies needed

On April 6, 1999, a former employee of OC Transpo in Ottawa went on a shooting rampage that left four employees dead, then took his own life. The killer had himself been the victim of workplace harassment.

Among the recommendations of a coroner’s inquest was that the definition of workplace violence should include not only physical violence but also psychological violence such as bullying, mobbing, teasing, ridicule or any other act or words that could psychologically hurt or isolate a person in the workplace.

No jurisdiction in Canada requires employers to have a workplace violence prevention program. For that reason, the OC Transpo jury recommended that federal and provincial governments enact legislation to prevent workplace violence and that employers develop policies to address violence and harassment.

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Bullying in the workplace

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Perpetrators and targets

Over 80 per cent of bullies are bosses, some are co-workers and a minority bully higher-ups. A bully is equally likely to be a man or a woman.

The common stereotype of a bullied person is someone who is weak, an oddball or a loner. On the contrary, the target chosen by an adult bully will very often be a capable, dedicated staff member, well liked by co-workers. Bullies are most likely to pick on people with an ability to cooperate and a non-confrontative interpersonal style. The bully considers their capability a threat, and determines to cut them down.

Profile of a bully

Adult bullies, like their schoolyard counterparts, tend to be insecure people with poor or non-existent social skills and little empathy. They turn this insecurity outwards, finding satisfaction in their ability to attack and diminish the capable people around them.

A workplace bully subjects the target to unjustified criticism and trivial fault-finding. In addition, he or she humiliates the target, especially in front of others, and ignores, overrules, isolates and excludes the target.

If the bully is the target's superior, he or she may set the target up for failure by setting unrealistic goals or deadlines, or denying necessary information and resources; either overload the target with work or take all work away (sometimes replacing proper work with demeaning jobs); or increase responsibility while removing authority.

Regardless of specific tactics, the intimidation is driven by the bully's need to control others.

The burden of bullying

Bullied employees waste between 10 and 52 per cent of their time at work. Research shows they spend time defending themselves and networking for support, thinking about the situation, being

demotivated and stressed, not to mention taking sick leave due to stress-related illnesses.

Bullies poison their working environment with low morale, fear, anger, and depression. The employer pays for this in lost efficiency, absenteeism, high staff turnover, severance packages and law suits. In extreme cases, a violent incident may be the tragic outcome.

The target's family and friends also suffer the results of daily stress and eventual breakdown. Marriages suffer or are destroyed under the pressure of the target's anxiety and anger. Friendships cool because the bullied employee becomes obsessive about the situation.

Moreover, our health care system ends up repairing the damage: visits to the doctor for symptoms of stress, prescriptions for antidepressants, and long term counseling or psychiatric care. In this sense, we all pay.

Prevention

Workplace bullies create a tremendous liability for the employer by causing stress-related health and safety problems, and driving good employees out of the organization.

The business case for strict anti-bullying policies is compelling. Potential benefits include a more peaceful and productive workplace, with better decision making, less time lost to sick leave or self-defensive paperwork, higher staff retention, and a lower risk of legal action.

Identify bullying in your staff handbook as unacceptable behavior. Establish proper systems for investigating, recording and dealing with conflict. Investigate complaints quickly, while maintaining discretion and confidentiality and protecting the rights of all individuals involved. It is important to understand fully any incidence of bullying and take the problem seriously at all levels.

Organizations who manage people well outperform those who don't by 30 to 40 per cent. Development of strong interpersonal skills at all levels is fundamental to good management and a healthy workplace.

There is no place for bullies in a well-run organization. ³



Shift work takes a toll: report

Workers face higher risk of heart disease, hypertension, gastrointestinal disorders

Reprinted with permission by Katherine Harding (Globe And Mail)

TORONTO — Working wonky hours doesn't just leave you feeling tired, it can also put you at a higher risk of becoming extremely sick, according to a report released by Statistics Canada yesterday.

“While shift work may be critical to the economy, evidence indicates that it can take a physical toll on workers,” stated the report, called “The Health of Canada’s Shift Workers.”

Statscan estimates that about three million Canadians — or about 30 per cent of the country’s labour force — work non-standard hours. “For most of them, shift work is not a choice, but a job requirement,” added the report, written by Margot Shields, a senior analyst at Statscan.

The survey found that shift workers are at a higher risk of suffering from heart disease, hypertension and gastrointestinal disorders.

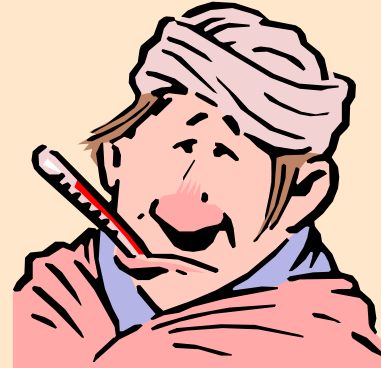
For women, higher risks of reproductive health problems and breast cancer were also reported.

The researchers also found that shift workers were more likely to report suffering from psychosocial problems than people who worked regular hours.

“Since non-standard hours can limit a worker’s participation in leisure time and family activities, the strain of shift work on family life can lead to social support problems and stress,” wrote Ms. Shields.

The study suggested several reasons why shift workers may be at a higher risk for developing chronic medical and mental conditions, including: The disruption of the body’s internal clock.

These workers reported high levels of work stress.



They often engage in “unhealthy behaviour,” including smoking, drinking and eating poorly.

The report used health and wellness data that Statscan has been collecting since 1994 about shift workers. Most of these workers tend to be younger, unmarried, less educated and less affluent Canadians, according to Statscan.

Increasingly, companies are waking up to the fact that around-the-clock operations are potentially unhealthy situations for their employees.

Hamilton-based Dofasco Inc. introduced a healthy lifestyles program after an employee audit in 1993 found that 80 per cent of its employees were overweight and 35 per cent smoke.

About 65 per cent of Dofasco’s 4,000 employees work shifts.

“Shift work is here to stay . . . so we advocate how you can live a healthier lifestyle while working shifts,” said Bonnie Topic, who leads the steel maker’s lifestyles program.

Ms. Topic said education and awareness about health and wellness is key. Staff is offered the training on an ongoing basis, as part of a specific work-shift education program. Ms. Topic said Dofasco even offers courses to employees’ spouses so they can better understand “what the shift worker goes through.” As well, the company gives its workers access to a 24-hour gym and free Weight Watchers sessions. ³

How bad is Correctional Officer stress?

by Len Mason, *The Guardian*

Available evidence convincingly documents that stress among correctional officers is widespread and, in many cases, severe. Furthermore, circumstances may have increased stress for correctional officers in recent years: Inmate crowding has steadily risen in many correctional facilities in North America.

Inmate assaults against correctional staff in Ontario have risen sharply. The ‘Sabotage’ survey taken by OPSEU showed an increase of 80 per cent.

Many offenders serving longer sentences do not fear punishment or respect the authority of correctional officers. According to one superintendent, “Inmates today aren’t afraid to assault staff; they don’t care if they get put in segregation.”

Organizational sources of stress

Understaffing

In many prisons and jails, there are too few officers available to staff authorized posts. The result is high turnover and excessive use of sick time and disability leave. Understaffing can create several different kinds of stress.

Occasionally working at breakneck speed to complete the required work, as well as addressing unplanned inmate needs and requests can cause a great deal of added stress.

The inability to get time off for special occasions or family crises adds to the frustration of handling stress.

Overtime

Staff shortages create the need for extensive overtime among remaining staff. According to an intake administrator for a state department of

corrections, “At least 100 officers have told me they don’t answer their telephones because it might be the institution calling for overtime.” Some officers get a second, unlisted telephone number, which they keep secret from the department. Some officers welcome overtime because of the extra money they can earn. As one officer said,

“Overtime is great — I worked three OTs a week for 18 months. However, she quickly added, “But I got burned out, and my supervisors didn’t even acknowledge my contribution.”



Rotating shift work

Correctional officers consistently report that rotating shifts create havoc with family life and reduce officers’ ability to perform their work conscientiously because of fatigue and irritability. “You can tell when shift work is getting to officers,” a lieutenant said. “Their work gets sloppy, their searches become careless, their units are filthy, and they stop following the rules.”

Supervisor demands

Several correctional officers reported that supervisors are a source of stress because, as one officer said, “They are always on you to do the job right, but you can’t do it right [because of staff shortages]. There is supposed to be one officer per tier here, but now they’ve collapsed the posts, and there is one officer for every two tiers. So there just

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isn't enough time for me to get inmates awakened, showered, and fed; keep my log books up to date; do my checks; and make sure the catwalks have all been cleaned and disinfected."

Other stress sources

Research studies have consistently highlighted two other sources of organizational stress that correctional officers and administrators themselves do not usually identify as stressful: role conflict and role ambiguity.

1) **Role conflict.** Researchers define role conflict as the struggle officers engage in to reconcile custodial responsibilities (maintaining security, such as preventing and finding contraband, escapes and inmate fights) with their treatment functions (helping inmates rehabilitate themselves).

2) **Role ambiguity.** Role ambiguity is the uncertainty created by supervisors who expect officers to "go by the book" and follow all rules to the letter when supervisors and line officers alike know that officers must be flexible and use judgment in their interactions with inmates. One study illustrates this. While officers work in a paramilitary organization marked by explicit lines of authority and a host of formal regulations, their task of managing inmates demands flexibility, the judicious application of discretionary justice, and the ability to secure inmate compliance through informal exchanges which deviate from written rules. Ambiguous and conflicting expectations are a likely result and a potential source of stress.

Work-related sources of stress

Threat of inmate violence

Correctional officers interviewed identified the threat of inmate violence against staff as a source of stress more frequently than any other single feature of their occupation. The threat of violence against staff has increased by 86 per cent in Ontario.

Inmate violence

Actual violence, including assaults, hostage taking, riots, inmates killing each other, and inmate suicides, can be a major source of stress for many officers not only during the episodes but afterwards: "Staff anxiety is intensified [after critical incidents] by the aftermath of recriminations, scapegoating,

blaming, and job insecurity." Except for police officers, the number of workplace nonfatal violent incidents is higher per 1,000 employees for correctional officers than for any other profession, including taxi drivers, convenience store staff, mental health workers, and teachers. From 1992 to 1996, there were nearly 218 incidents per 1,000 correctional officers, for a total of 58,300 incidents.

Inmate demands and manipulation

Many officers find the constant demands and attempts at manipulation by some inmates to be stressful — for example, requests for cigarettes or extra food with an implicit quid pro quo of promising not to create trouble or to keep other inmates in line. Furthermore, "When officers are manipulated [successfully] by inmates . . . , they may experience extreme stress."

Problems with coworkers

One survey found that 22 per cent of staff viewed "other staff" as creating more stress than any other single factor except for dealing with hostile, demanding inmates. The following conditions can precipitate stress among coworkers:

- (1) Burned out coworkers repeatedly venting their frustrations to their colleagues;
- (2) officers competing for limited, choice assignments;
- (3) apprehension that coworkers will refuse to back them up in a confrontation with inmates, are too inexperienced (e.g., due to high turnover) to know how to help out, or do not have the physical or emotional strength to be effective; and
- (4) inappropriate officer behaviour toward inmates — bringing in contraband, getting too friendly, using unnecessary force, and taking questionable disciplinary action.
- (5) Sexist attitudes by colleagues (and supervisors) and sexual harassment create stress for



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many women officers. Many male officers question whether female officers have the physical strength and determination to help in a confrontation with inmates. However, sexist attitudes and behaviour may have declined as more women have become correctional officers and, as a result, as male officers have gained the opportunity to see firsthand that women can be as effective as men in dealing with inmate violence.

Stress from outside the system

Poor public image

According to one researcher, “A negative image of corrections is regularly portrayed in the media . . . [with officers depicted] as stupid, animalistic, and senseless abusers of socially wronged individuals.” As one officer said, “The public hasn’t a clue as to what correctional officers do. Someone asked me just the other day if I beat inmates all the time.” One officer said she routinely tells other people, “I work for the State,” refusing to specify her precise job. The end result is that some officers come to feel isolated and estranged from friends and family.

Excessive stress can result in at least four serious problems for officers:

1. Stress may result in physical illnesses, ranging from heart disease to eating disorders. It may also precipitate substance abuse among susceptible individuals.
2. Stress can lead to burnout among officers.
3. Stress has been implicated in excessive disability retirements. Even when physical ailments are the reason for the disability, the illnesses may have been brought on by stress.
4. Correctional officers experiencing excessive stress may damage their family relationships by displacing their frustration onto spouses and children, ordering family members around just as they issue commands to inmates (one officer locked his son out of the boy’s room and searched it), and becoming distant by withholding information about their work that they feel family members will not understand. Shift work and overtime can create stress by preventing officers from attending important family functions.

The effects of stress on correctional officers can degrade their ability to perform their responsibilities in the prison or jail in ways that compromise institutional safety, cost money, and create stress for other staff.

Stress typically affects the behavior of officers along a continuum that can include (a) underlying stress not yet manifested in outward effects, (b) mid-level stress, manifested in such ways as excessive drinking or an unacceptably high number of discourtesy complaints, and (c) debilitating stress, resulting in inadequate job performance, severe health problems, or suicide (from NIJ, Developing a Law Enforcement Stress Program)

Effects of Stress on officers

- physical health problems – cardiovascular disease, gastrointestinal problems
- mental health problems – depression, anxiety, substance abuse and addiction
- interpersonal problems – poor communication, social withdrawal, increased aggression

Stress also affects the officer’s family

Many sources of stress for officers end up affecting the people closest to them, and even conditions or events that do not bother the officer themselves — or which they may even enjoy — such as shift work can cause serious problems for their families.

Acknowledgements:

- 1) Sabotage: how Harris government policies have increased the use of sick time by Ontario Correctional Officers (OPSEU)
- 2) Developing a Law Enforcement Stress Program (New Jersey) ³

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Lost Balloonist

submitted by Jim Kusmack, Local 737 (Internet)

A man in a hot air balloon realized he was lost. He reduced altitude and spotted a woman below. He descended a bit more and shouted, "Excuse me, can you help me? I promised a friend I would meet him an hour ago, but I don't know where I am."

The woman below replied, "You're in a hot air balloon hovering approximately 30 feet above the ground. You're between 40 and 41 degrees north latitude and between 59 and 60 degrees west longitude."

"You must be an engineer," said the balloonist.

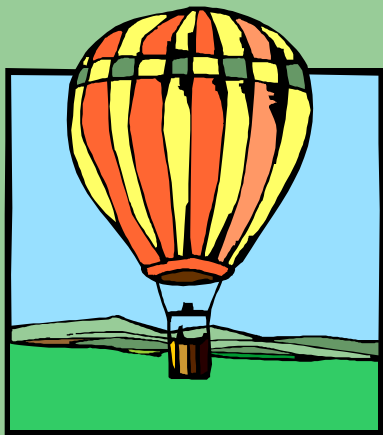
"I am," replied the woman, "How did you know?"

"Well," answered the balloonist, "everything you told me is technically correct, but I've no idea what to make of your information, and the fact is I'm still lost. Frankly, you've not been much help at all. If anything, you've delayed my trip."

The woman below responded, "You must be in Management."

"I am," replied the balloonist, "but how did you know?"

"Well," said the woman, "you don't know where you are or where you're going. You have risen to where you are due to a large quantity of hot air. You made a promise, which you've no idea how to keep, and you expect people beneath you to solve your problems. The fact is you are in exactly the same position you were in before we met, but now, somehow, it's my fault." ³



Rumours and News from the Private Jail

*Bargaining Bites — News from Local 369
Central North Correctional Centre*

Q. "I've heard that we would be bumped by public service correctional officers if MTC cancels their contract at the jail. Is this true?"

A. It is *extremely* unlikely. If MTC cancelled their contract (or had their contract cancelled by the government), one of two things would happen:

1. The government would look for another private operator to run the facility. With a union contract, the new operator would be required by law to continue to employ all of the current staff, and the union contract would remain in effect. Without a union, the new operator would not be obligated to keep any of the current employees, nor would they have to keep in place any of the current wage rates and working conditions.

2. The government would take over the operation of the facility, and all employees at CNCC would be covered by the OPSEU Ontario Public Service (OPS) collective agreement. There is a bumping provision in the OPS agreement, only for members who are laid off. However, public service corrections is extremely understaffed, a situation that will not likely change anytime in the future. Also, the first bump provision is that members must bump within 40 kilometers of their worksite, and there are no correctional facilities within 40 kilometers of Penetanguishene. Members can bump outside of 40 kilometers, but again, due to the staffing situation in public service corrections, the chances that there would be no vacancies anywhere in the province is remote at best (vacancies must be filled first before bumping can occur).

One benefit to members at CNCC in the #2 scenario is that they would be allowed to apply for transfers to other jails in the province, something that is not allowed now. ³