

BACKGROUND

OCCUPATIONAL & ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH COALITION – PETERBOROUGH (OEHCP)

OEHCP HISTORY – Phase 111 2015 - 2017 (updated July 2017)

The OEHCP held its first public, community-right-to-know meeting in September 2015. Representatives from OHCOW, OWA and Unifor made presentations. Since then eight more meetings have been held - most recently in July 2017 with over 120 attending - increasing our database to 200.

In January 2017 OEHCP engaged fully with Queens Park, following on the heels of Sara Mojtehdzadeh's investigative research series published in the Toronto STAR: LETHAL LEGACY (DEC/2016). ***OEHCP's goal has always been to turn the Peterborough GE story from a lethal legacy into a "FAIR LEGACY"- bringing closure and ensuring justice for the workers and their families. Breaking the silence for fair compensation in Peterborough was the first step in our 2015 strategy. DONE!***

Building under the working-title PROJECT "Z", 40-plus GE-retirees, along with the widows and families of GE-retirees, produced a comprehensive file of GE NEWS and made significant contributions identifying chemicals and hotspots to assist "mapping the GE plant". The mapping project was agreed to by OEHCP in Minister Flynn's office in September 2014. The project's implementation was launched at the OWA-initiated Summit in Oshawa April 2015. The Unifor-led mapping sessions were ongoing for more than a year and the final REPORT: The REPORT of the Advisory Committee on Retrospective Exposure Profiling of the Production Processes at the General ELECTRIC PRODUCTION FACILITY in Peterborough, Ontario 1945-2000 was published in May 2017

Following on regular meetings with Minister Kevin Flynn and MPP Jeff Leal, the Ministry of Labour hosted three days of Information sessions in Peterborough. Workers and their families could meet and update the agency staff and advocates who manage their compensation files.

Three summits with the participating partners OWA, OHCOW, Unifor, WSIB and OEHCP were held in Oshawa in March-June 2017. The OEHCP is on track seeking presumptive entitlement for the historical GE cohort of occupational disease.

A booklet of Roger L. M. Fowler's poems was published in time for the 4th O&EHCP Celebration of Life in October 2015. In November 2015, we supported the Sudbury workers lobby to highlight the flawed WSIB compensation system. OEHCP continues to

support Ontario groups seeking justice for compensation from WSIB and to participate in Ontario workers' events, mainly in Toronto.

Since April 2016, under the working title "Widows of Asbestos", Natasha Luckhardt and Rob Viscardis immersed themselves in their documentary - interviewing many GE workers, families, members of the OEHCP steering committee, Ontario politicians and civil servants.

When Gary Lane died on March 12 2016 our OEHCP community lost a well-loved leader and organizer to occupational disease. In Gary's honour we renamed PROJECT Z: "The GARY LANE PROJECT – breaking the silence for fair compensation (GLP)." Sadly, Diane Carl OEHCP's key political point-person for the GLP governance committee, died suddenly in June 2017. We mourn these two leaders and so many other GE workers! In support of each other, our annual Celebration of Life event in the fall continues, as well as support work for widows and GE-retirees.

In 2017 we continued to initiate, engage and respond to media coverage. We re-established our working relationship with the MOECC and Peterborough City around the toxicity of the environment from Peterborough's industries of the past, present and the future. This fall OEHCP is re-engaging with Trent Community Research Centre's (TCRC) to work on collaborative projects with post-secondary students.

OEHCP HISTORY – Phase 11

2012 - 2015

Early in 2012, the O&EHC-P Steering Committee met with WSIB Chair Steve Mahoney to review the unresolved compensation problems. The Chair made a commitment to address and correct. A written statement by John Ball re historical dumping of toxins at and near the Peterborough airport was circulated and O&EHC-P participated with the local citizen movement to address SSI's tritium issue.

A public event "A Good Neighbours Forum", facilitated by Toronto Environmental Alliance & Environment Hamilton, garnered media attention: "Sharing Responsibility for Healthy Communities in Peterborough (SRHCP) followed by more media attention and interviews in response to a CHEX TV story on blocks to workers' claims. In the fall, O&EHC-P was invited to join the October meeting of the CELA/TEA strategy and update meeting in Toronto.

The first SUMMIT meeting with OWA, OHCOW, CAW & WSIB was hosted by OEHCP on July 31st 2012: "Breaking the Log Jam" re CAW workers' lost, delayed, dismissed and denied claims in Peterborough. A joint media release from the five participating partners committed to "Breaking the Log Jam" resulted in CHEX coverage regarding the need to integrate the new science into the claims process for fair compensation. Later in the fall, Peterborough This Week ran a series of articles and a letter-to-the-editor

followed. In October 2012, the Coalition met with new WSIB Chair Elizabeth Witmer and the SUMMIT Small Working Group met in Toronto for its first meeting. These small working group meetings continued until June 2013 when OEHCP decided no progress was being made.

In 2012, a new group came together: O&EHC-P, Hiawatha First Nation & Hamilton Township (Rice Lake) citizens to deal with concerns regarding the impact of sewage and industrial toxins downstream of Peterborough. In late fall an open public meeting at PDLC updated the general membership and in early December 2012 a meeting of the OEHCP Steering Committee and workers was held at the GE plant with GE CEO/President Elyse Allan followed by a tour of the GE plant. A document proposing a plan to work together was presented to Ms. Allan – “a work-in-progress”.

Following media coverage of the unresolved compensation issues during the fall of 2012 and in response to the July SUMMIT, O&EHC-P launched its “Fair Review – Fair Compensation Review Process (FR-FCRP): “Navigating the Systems”. The purpose of this process was a review of workers’ files: a) to identify missing exposure information; b) to flag inaccurate work and exposure information; c) to help workers or widows figure out the next steps in the process of navigating the system; and d) to identify systems issues that needed to be changed so that a fair hearing was possible.

The end result was that, after three years of work, virtually every worker’s file that was reviewed showed work and exposure histories that had been missed or had been significantly under-reported. The OEHCP work of supporting workers in filing comprehensive and complete compensation claims reached approximately 35 local GE-Peterborough workers and/or their families; only some of which were filed at the end of three years.

Early in 2013, OEHCP participated in both the Provincial and WSIB consultations on occupational health compensation issues. Then in June OEHCP met with Minister of Labour Yassir Naqvi and MPP Jeff Leal at Queen’s Park. They promised to address our compensation concerns.

In the fall of 2013, the first OEHCP “Celebration of Life for families and friends - remembering and honouring those who lost their life to occupational disease” was held at St Paul’s Presbyterian Church on Water Street and more than 40 attended. This annual event is now organized and facilitated by the workers and families.

In September 2014 the OEHCP met with Minister of Labour Flynn to address, once again, the outstanding concerns. Subsequently, OWA launched the retrospective mapping of the GE plant project to provide needed information for the claims process. OWA convened a 2nd SUMMIT of partners, with the noted absence of WSIB, and the “mapping project” was launched.

During 2012 -2015, OEHCP has been able to extend public awareness both in the community and with all three levels of government through the good work of our students and the OEHCP documents SHUTDOWN & SNOWSTORM that were widely circulated.

McMaster post grad student Natasha Luckhardt's Master's thesis, under the supervision of Dr. Robert Storey, documented the need for accountability of the compensation system and the players involved. The compensation system was investigated to answer questions such as the extent of the workers' exposure to asbestos and other chemicals; the method of which their exposures were recorded; the various players responsible for supporting the workers in their claims; the mechanisms of accountability for the players to do so; the extent of their commitment and responsibility and underlying social, political, economic and medical factors which complicate the likelihood of the workers receiving compensation. Luckhardt's thesis received impressed most and alarmed UNIFOR local 524.

The purpose of 3rd year Trent student Carly Roome's report on "Navigating the System" was to assist workers and families in gaining a better understanding of the compensation claims process and to support them in the process of moving their claim through the many systems. Both papers were distributed to Ontario Minister of Labour Flynn, MPP Jeff Leal, WSIB Chair Elizabeth Witmer, OWA, OHCOW and others. The work to address the broken system has begun again, this-time-round with OWA, OEHCP, Unifor and OHCOW under the initiative of OWA in April 2015, all

of whom were represented at the September 16th meeting called by OEHCP to update the Peterborough community on the status of the Peterborough Project....**Community-Right To-Know.**

OEHCP HISTORY – Phase 1 2006-2011

In 2006 the PCCHU developed a package of resource materials for physicians in the community and met with physicians to develop protocols and to encourage documentation for workplace history as part of a patient's file. The OEHCP launched a number of new initiatives and pilot projects in 2007: "To Your Health: Planning a Healthy Future" – the Coalition's first Public Forum held at Fleming College. The first of five Trent Centre for Community Based Research (TCCBR) students produced a literature review, published in 2009. SAFE HAVEN was launched as a pilot - the first OEHCP support group for those who have experienced occupational illness, injury and/or loss of a loved one. During this year, members of the OEHCP met with MPP Jeff Leal and participated in their first Mindjet Session to plan and prioritize future actions.

In 2008 a qualitative research, pilot project looked at the impact of occupational health hazards on people later in life and assessed how these people could benefit from

support networks. A second public forum, “Our Peterborough: Building a Healthy Community” was held at St. Paul’s Presbyterian Church, Peterborough.

At Trent University in 2009, O&EHC-P invited representatives from Labour, PCCHU, Trent University, PRHC, scientists, First Nations Communities, OWA, OHCOW, Trent- Severn Waterway and community environmentalists to explore and examine the threats to Peterborough’s water table. Trent scientist Dr. Chris Metcalfe chose the meeting to share his recent scientific data on water samples (collected near GE parking lot) that showed alarmingly high levels of un-weathered PCB contamination.

OEHCP held a series of meetings with Prince of Wales School, the PCCHU, MOE staff, CAW 524 & 524 Retirees, OWA’s Managing Director and Board, MPP Jeff Leal, MP Dean Del Mastro, City of Peterborough Mayor and staff, County staff and Hiawatha First Nation Chief and staff. These meetings continue, as needed, to monitor the status of industrial toxin cleanup in Peterborough.

The 2010 Ontario award winning 4th year university history essay prize went to our OECHP/TCCBR student Patarapa (Natalie) Padungpat for her paper on social policy in Canada: “A View through the Eyes of John Ball: Why Improved Occupational Health and Safety Policy Failed to Make a Difference in a Small Town.” Two affidavits from GE-retired workers were circulated to all levels of government and our first brochure was produced.

“Grab” soil and water sample results, in cooperation with residents south and west of GE site, came back below MOE benchmark (1996 regulation) for unsafe parkland/residential level. Data was turned over to the PCCHU in 2011. Our 3rd OEHCP/TCCBR student completed her final year Biology paper: Health Effects of Workplace Chemicals Toluene, Benzene, Methyl-ethyl- ketone peroxide, and Epichlorohydrin.

Other 2011 highlights included the public film screening of the Sandra Steingraber’s documentary at the Peterborough Library: “Living Downstream” based on the book by Sandra Steingraber with Guest Speaker/Producer/ Director of Living Downstream Chanda Chevannes, Also in the fall of 2011, PDLC and OEHCP issued a joint media release opposing federal export of asbestos to developing countries and continues to support the national effort to ban asbestos in Canada.

OEHCP – Beginnings 2004-2006

The Coalition (OEHCP) of individual citizens, the Peterborough & District Labour Council (PDLC), GE retirees, widows and families came together as a working group in response to the alarming findings from the Occupational Health Clinics for Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW) Peterborough Project. The OEHCP supports those

who have been impacted by occupational & environmental disease and advocates for action to reduce the burden of occupational & environmental disease resulting from Peterborough's industrial history. Through advocacy and projects, OEHCP serves as a voice that can help shape policy decisions related to industrial toxins that impact the environment and our wellbeing.

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