



September 2009  
Third Edition

A newsletter for  
Correctional Officers  
and Sheriffs of the



## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

As we approach fall, it's hard to believe we're two thirds of the way through 2009 and close to bargaining in the new year. Over the past several months you have elected new Local executives in each of your areas as well as a new Component 1 provincial executive that represents the interests of all Adult Corrections, Youth Corrections, and Sheriffs' Services in BC.

Over the past few months and months to come, your Local executives will have called meetings to accept bargaining proposals from members. Bargaining is just around the corner for the 15th Corrections & Sheriff Services Component Agreement as well as the next 15th Master Agreement. Master bargaining is scheduled to begin in January 2010 while Component bargaining is planned for the middle of February 2010.

We've had some pretty significant gains and wins over the past year, including our campaign towards negotiating the Temporary Market Adjustment (TMA), negotiating the classification appeals for supervisors in both Corrections & Sheriffs, the part-time regular deal for sheriffs, and the finalization and improvements on negotiating the Gortex jackets for both Corrections and Sheriffs. We now have to look at ways to make improvements in our collective agreements as we go into bargaining.

In our line of work we are constantly fighting an uphill battle. We continue to deal with the overcrowding and violence within our jails as the adult custody count moves toward 200 per cent over capacity. With sheriffs there is the ongoing battle with recruitment and reten-



tion as well as the staff shortages and safety issues that flow from that. I am deeply concerned about the ongoing reports of morale issues that seem to plague the Victoria Youth Custody Centre.

I know that with your continued effort, hard work and solidarity we will come together even more than ever. With this newsletter, the Component 1 web site ([www.bcgeu.bc.ca/C1](http://www.bcgeu.bc.ca/C1)), and the BCGEU e-mail alert system, we are keeping you more informed than ever before.

I pledge to keep up the pressure and I know you will all continue to perform above and beyond in the months ahead. I look forward to pressing our issues in the interim as well as ramping-up for our negotiations in 2010.

Dean Purdy

Chair, Component 1

Corrections and Sheriff Services

## Your new Component Executive

At the Component Executive meeting on May 14 and 15, 2009, the following motion was passed:

*“The Component wishes to thank outgoing Local Chairs Stephen Lisik (103) and Larry Cadieux (111) for their tireless work on behalf of Component 1 members, years of service and dedication to the BCGEU and their local membership, and to wish them well in their future endeavors.”*

*“The Component also welcomes new Local chairs and Component representatives Robin Lajeunesse (Local 111) and Peter Clegg (Local 103).”*

*Derrick Goodwin is re-elected as the Component 1 Treasurer (Local 103, 2nd delegate).*

*The Component also welcomes back re-elected Local chairs and members Dean Purdy (Local 101), Mike Scott (Local 102), Ron McCabe (Local 104), and Tony Tessari (Local 105).”*

“We look forward to serving you for the next three years,” said Dean Purdy, re-elected as the Component Chair.

The following is the new Component executive: Dean Purdy, VIRCC (Chairperson), Ron McCabe, FRCC (1st Vice-Chairperson), Tony Tessari, KRCC (2nd Vice-Chairperson), Derrick Goodwin, New West Sheriffs (Treasurer), Mike Scott, NCC (Recording Secretary), Robin Lajeunesse, PGRCC (Member-at-Large), Peter Clegg, Vancouver Sheriffs 222 Main (Member-at-Large).



Members of Component 1 executive (l-r): Wiho Papenbrock (Staff Representative assigned to Component), Tony Tessari (Component 2nd Vice-Chair, Local 105), Dean Purdy (Component and Local 101 Chair), Derrick Goodwin (Local 103 Vice-Chair and Component Treasurer), Mike Scott (Local 102 Chair and Component Member at Large), Peter Clegg (Component Member at Large, Local 103), Ron McCabe (Local 104 Chair and Component 1st Vice-Chair), Robin Lajeunesse (Component Member at Large, Local 111).

## Crisis & Opportunity Conference

By Dean Purdy

In the last issue of *Off the Cuff*, I reported on the first day of our “Crisis and Opportunity” conference. In this issue I’ll take a quick look at the second day.

There were three interesting speakers at the second day of the conference.

Mike Farnworth, the NDP critic for Public Safety and Solicitor General, spoke about public safety and responded to questions from the delegates.

Simon Fraser University professor Neil Boyd presented information on the survey of the work being done by sheriffs and

## DAY TWO

correctional officers, at the request of the component. The information Boyd provided was helpful in giving us an idea of how our members dealt with the daily challenges of their job.

BCGEU president Darryl Walker wrapped up the conference, pointing to the success in achieving the Temporary Market Adjustment. “You accomplished this because the facts and figures were so compelling to the media and an embarrassment to the government,” said Walker.

Members can still check out photos from the conference. Just go to the union’s web site ([www.bcgau.ca](http://www.bcgau.ca)) and click on Components, Component 1, and then Photo Gallery.

## Meet Local 102

### Mike Scott: Local 102 chairperson

Mike had great reservations about becoming a union activist after having done it for several years in Ontario before moving to BC.

He felt he had a huge target on his back after having dealt with approximately 200 grievances. "I joined Local 102 approximately six years ago as 1st vice chair in order to make NCC a better place to work," he says, adding, "It hasn't been easy with the Liberals in power."

During this time he realized that in order to become a more effective shop steward, sometimes it's necessary to think like a manager and plan your arguments and their responses ahead of meeting with them. "I am really encouraged by the work I see our Component One Committee taking part in right now. Every step forward is a huge gain to achieving our goals and earning Sheriffs & Correctional Officers the respect we deserve for our contributions to create a safer society for every B.C. resident."

### Garry Wilson: 1st Vice Chair

Garry started working in Corrections at Nanaimo Correctional Centre on May 17, 2004. He became a shop steward in the fall of 2007 and went on to become the 1st Vice Chair for 102 in February of 2008. Since then he has become a member of the 3.2 Committee and the local OSH Committee. As an OSH member he has also completed the Ergonomic Assessment training. Garry stated that he became a union activist to assist staff in ensuring that their rights are protected.

### Shane Rush: Recording Secretary

Shane began his career at Victoria Youth Detention Centre on July 4, 2001. He then transferred to NCC in August of 2008 and became a steward in September 2008. He was elected to the executive in the position of Recording Secretary in March 2009.

Shane states that he became a steward to protect the rights of staff. He was disillusioned at VYDC and wanted to ensure that the conditions there did not spread to our Centre.

### Roop Pohar: Member at Large

Roop has been with the service since 2001 and has been a steward since 2005.

### Mike Redlick: Shop Steward, Nanaimo Sheriffs

Mike has been with the Sheriffs Services since February 1994. He is currently the shop steward for the Nanaimo



The BCGEU Fraser Valley Area Office was the site of an Component 1 executive meeting on July 8, 2009. In the photo (l-r): Peter Clegg (103 Chair), Mike Scott (102 Chair), and Wiho Paperbrock (Staff Representative).

Sheriffs office and other offices north of us on Vancouver Island that don't have a shop steward. He became involved in the union September 2008.

"Better late than never," he says. "We had nobody at our office for a long while so I decided we need stability and have taken on the challenge. I feel that one of my best traits is problem solving. The one thing I have learned over 15 years with the sheriffs office is that nothing moves as fast as you want it to."

## HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

- Option 1:** Stay informed at BCGEU.ca; give your home e-mail address to your Local Executive member; support your union representatives at the worksite.
- Option 2:** Be proactive and look for things to do; attend a union meeting; and ask questions.
- Option 3:** Become a Steward or an OSH Committee Member.
- Option 4:** Write a letter to your MLA — solicit support for wage parity (Feds), improved safety and working conditions — ask your MLA to help influence Ministry and Government officials in an effort to have them recognize the difficulties faced by provincial correctional officers.



Site visit at the Victoria Youth Custody Centre. In the picture (l-r): Mickey Webster, John Carty (Steward), Greg Fletcher (Steward), Christian Hauer (Steward), Darryl Walker (BCGEU president), Mike Lewis (Steward), Rafael Fuentes, Dean Purdy (Component Chair), Tony Guarascio (Steward).

## Record low survey scores point to problems at Victoria Youth Corrections worksite

After many requests, BCGEU has finally obtained the results for the workplace environmental survey (WES) scores, which confirms that staff morale is a serious problem at the Victoria Youth Custody Centre (VYCC).

The low WES score of 39 supports what the union has been saying for months: mismanagement at the VYCC has created a poisonous work environment, chronically low staff morale and other problems that must be urgently addressed.

In March, Dean Purdy, chair of the union's Corrections and Sheriff Services component held an emergency meeting attended by more than forty staff from VYCC.

Staff voiced their concerns about issues that continue to plague their workplace. They were also updated on what the union was doing to deal with these issues.

As one of the steps to address the many problems at the work site, a subcommittee of our labour-management committee (the Ministry Article 29 joint committee) met to discuss the concerns raised by our members. Subsequently the committee has met a couple of times and Purdy has relayed members' concerns to top ministry officials.

BCGEU president Darryl Walker has also toured the VYCC where he spoke to staff about developing solutions to fix this broken work site. Walker says that he was astounded by how bad the work environment was at the centre.

In April, VYCC staff voluntarily took part in the WES survey. The Public Service Agency says WES results are a means to effect change and to show the most senior government officials what changes need to be made at particular work sites, in order to move forward in a positive direction.

Two years ago Adult Custody shuffled top level management positions at four of the nine Correctional Centres. We were advised this was primarily based on the WES scores and the new direction senior management was moving towards in the corrections branch.

The VYCC's 39 score compares badly to the other two Provincial Youth Centres. Burnaby (BYCC) scored 54, and Prince George (PGYCC) received 64. The overall score for the public service is 68.

Executive level management at VYCC scored 22.

## BCGEU continues lobby efforts to expand sheriff duties

Last March the BCGEU made their proposal to the provincial government to combat the growing gang violence in Metro Vancouver, take the pressure off police forces, and make additional officers available.

The proposal includes moving responsibility for some routine police duties like traffic patrol and serving warrants to B.C. sheriffs, freeing up police officers for more serious criminal investigations like the gang task force.

“Alberta moved to the new sheriff model in 2006, and it’s worked out very well for them, from an economical and operational standpoint,” said Dean Purdy, chair of the union’s Corrections and Sheriffs Services Component.

“In fact they’ve recently expanded their duties to include a gang task force. We can train sheriffs much quicker than police officers, and there are substantial cost savings for taxpayers in this model.”



A police officer position in Alberta costs about \$160,000 in salary, wages, benefits, support and equipment, compared to about \$100,000 for a sheriff. In Alberta, sheriffs are currently paid at a higher wage rate than in B.C.

There are over 40,000 outstanding warrants waiting to be served in B.C.

“This is a model that can help achieve the provincial government’s objectives quickly, at a reduced cost to taxpayers,” says Purdy. “It would also help address the recruitment and retention issue in the sheriff corps, by expanding job opportunities and responsibilities. It’s a win-win situation for B.C.”

“Our sheriffs in B.C. are highly trained, skilled peace officers who can step into this role quite easily,” he says.

The union has a October 27 meeting scheduled with the new Attorney General, Mike de Jong, and are hopeful the government will be receptive to discussing our proposal.

## Ron’s @\$% Rant!!!

By Ron McCabe

Over the years I have heard people criticize the BCGEU. When I became involved as Local Chairperson a representative from our union told me that the problem is not with our union but with our membership. I felt insulted at the suggestion that corrections officers and sheriffs are weak members. Since becoming involved at this level I have worked very hard at getting members involved in our union. Our local executive has done things that have never been done before in our Member-to-Member (M2M) campaigns, like bringing a meal to all members on shift at each of our centres. The idea behind the M2M Campaign is two-fold. The main idea is to get out and meet with the members rather than expecting them to come out on their own to all the meetings. The second reason for M2M is to get people involved and get them to come out to the meetings.

One thing that has really been reinforced throughout my involvement is this: “You are the union.” Just think about that for a moment. There are over 65,000 members in our union but we have only about 100 staff reps. There is no possible way that they can do everything. So, unions rely on volun-

teers to carry out a lot of work. Without volunteers unions could not function.

Our volunteers are stewards and health and safety members. Others volunteer as members-at-large, vice-chairs, local chairs and component chairs. Still more volunteer by attending union meetings. These people are the union. It’s you and me. “We are the union!”

Our staff reps are helpful people! They provide us with guidance and they organize our affairs. They will do just about anything that we ask them to but they are not the union. I have gone to worksites where people think I am a Staff Rep and they aren’t always positive! Once they realize I am a CO and work a living unit they don’t seem to know what to think. We are all volunteering; The union merely pays our expenses. So next time you think we have a weak union take a look within yourself and ask yourself how many times have I attended a union meeting and tried to fix our union. Remember that the membership can shape the union into anything they want. If no one gets involved nothing will ever change.

*Ron McCabe is First Vice-Chair of the Component.*



## Wilkinson Road jail to get \$4.5-million upgrade

The provincial government announced \$4.5 million for upgrades to the Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre in Saanich yesterday, but workers say what's needed is more staff.

The work at the Wilkinson Road facility, underway now, will create 29 jobs and will expand inmate capacity, upgrade emergency services and expand the parking area, the government said in a news release.

"The real issue for our members is to address the overcrowding," said Dean Purdy, chairman for the corrections and sheriffs services component of the BCGEU.

The inmate-to-staff ratio has tripled across B.C. since 2002, Purdy said, and at VIRCC it has reached as high as 40:1, when it should be closer to 20:1.

Source: *Times Colonist*

## Interested in becoming a Steward?

The Steward is the face of the union at your worksite. The steward's role is to enforce the collective agreement and protect your rights. Your Steward is elected by the members at your worksite. A steward does not just deal with grievances and complaints at the worksite.

- They are often the liaison between the worksite and the local and area offices;
- They sign up new members to the union at the worksite;
- Encourage you to attend Local meetings;
- Assist you in understanding your

rights under the collective agreement;

- Talk to members about what is happening within the Local and the union as a whole such as bargaining, educational activities;
- Ensures the union bulletin board is kept up to date;
- Refers members to committees on specific issues such as the Labour Management Committee or occupational health and safety;
- Listens to your concerns and issues;
- Can advise or refer on issues related to WCB appeals, STIIP/LTD issues, Unemployment and Classification Appeals.

# Staffing problems, overcrowding, major issues for Corrections and Sheriffs

Recent surveys of BCGEU members in Corrections and Sheriffs have confirmed what many component members have been saying about their work—there are staffing problems and serious issues related to overcrowding of facilities.



The surveys were conducted by Simon Fraser University professor Neil Boyd, who is a noted commentator on public safety issues.

Boyd surveyed Deputy Sheriffs in August and found three commonly expressed concerns: safety and staffing levels, rates of pay, and recruitment and retention issues.

Some specific findings include the conclusion that 90 per cent of staff reviewed current staffing levels as unsafe, almost 50 per cent of staff planned to leave their jobs within five years, almost 54 per cent of staff feel unsafe in performing their duties, 75 per cent of staff say job stress has increased over the past three years and only 45 per cent agree that their occupational health and safety committees are working effectively.

Corrections staff were surveyed in the fall of 2008. The three issues identified were: overcrowding, increases in inmate to staff ratios, staff safety and workplace violence.

Some of the findings include the conclusion that 73 per cent



Dean Purdy and SFU professor Neil Boyd.

of Correctional Officers do not feel safe in carrying out their duties; 50 per cent of all Correction Officers perceive training to be inadequate; Correction Officers have a ratio of WCB claims due to acts of force or violence that is 50 per cent higher than police officers.

“I am very concerned about these conclusions,” said Dean Purdy, component chair. “The BCGEU and the Correctional and Sheriff Services Component hopes the Ministry will work cooperatively with our members and their union to respond to the concerns that have been raised.”

Boyd presented information on the surveys to the Component’s “Crisis & Opportunity Conference” held earlier in the year.



Component 1 members lobby the NDP caucus.

# 2009 World Police & Fire Games

Congratulations to all members of Component 1 who participated in the 2009 World Police & Fire Games!

The Games were an exciting way to showcase the athleticism of our members and our competitive spirit. Special recognition is due to all those members who won medals.

As a token of appreciation, the Component provided a World Police & Fire Games golf shirt to all Component 1 athletes participating in the games. We also produced a limited-edition puck that was used during the hockey games.

The Games were a unique way to connect with our counterparts from jurisdictions around the world and I am sure you found it as rewarding as I did.

BCGEU members were active in the Games and played a key role in mak-



Members of the North Fraser Pre-trial Centre Gold Medal Soccer Team celebrate their success during the World Police & Fire Games.

ing them successful. I want to thank Donna Main, a Corrections Officer at the Surrey Pre-Trial Centre for her work in organizing the games. I've heard a number of stories on how the Games went, but would appreciate it if you would tell me more about your

participation. Send your story to: dean.purdy@bcgeu.ca.

Thanks to all those who helped out.

Dean Purdy, Chair, Corrections & Sheriff Services - Component 1



Andrew Hill, deputy sheriff and member-at-large, Local 101, on his bike during the Games.



Owen Russel, a Youth Corrections Officer, won Bronze in indoor rowing and for the 2000 Metre individual sprint.



Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre Paintball team.



Donna Main, a Corrections officer at the Surrey Pre-Trial Centre, was a key organizer for the Games.

# 2009 World Police & Fire Games

## Sheriffs Medal Winners

**Brad Morrison**, Gold, Silver, and a Bronze - Rowing

**Dale Lahaise**, Gold - Pistol

**Kurt Goessman**, Silver - Karate

**Paul Tudor**, Bronze - Beach Volleyball

**Al Rosa**, Silver - Pistol

**Peggy Maerz**, Silver - Bench Press

**Derek Murrell**, Silver - Field Lacrosse

**Angelo Stradiotto, Carla TenBrink,**

**Joyce Haveman, Michael Ospina,**

**Caitlyn Hartnell, Norm Bell, Varn**

**Dalvar**, Gold - Co-ed Soccer

**Kirby Fahlman**, Gold - Boxing

## Corrections Medal Winners

**Christiane German**, Bronze - Badminton

**Katja Fuess**, Bronze - Basketball: Women's 3 vs. 3

**Suk Gill**, Silver - Bench Press

**Ray Sullivan**, Bronze - Biathlon Team

**Ray Sullivan**, Gold - Biathlon Individual

**Yvonne Gooder**, Bronze - Bowling: Doubles

**Helen Sturtridge**, Bronze - Bowling: Doubles

**Yvonne Gooder**, Bronze - Bowling: Teams

**Helen Sturtridge**, Bronze - Bowling: Teams

**Lorne Kobzey**, Bronze - Darts

**Dave Backeland and Steve Phillips**, Bronze - Darts: Group B "501" Men's doubles competition

**Dave Backeland and Steve Phillips**, Bronze - Darts: Group B "Cricket" Men's doubles competition

**Carmen Lafontaine**, Gold - Golf

**Mala Brown**, Silver - Golf

**VIRCC Team**, Silver - Paintball

**VIRCC Team**, Bronze - Paintball

**Michelle Boyer**, Silver - Running: 1/2 Marathon Road Race

**Michelle Boyer**, Gold - Running: 1/2 Marathon Road Race: Women's Team

**Suzanne Tarlier**, Silver - Running: 4 x 100 meter relay

**Suzanne Tarlier**, Silver - Running: 4 x 400 meter relay

**Marna Leland**, Silver - Running: 5km Cross country race

**NFPC- Co-ed**, Silver - Slo-Pitch Softball

**Jim Hanna**, Gold - Slo-Pitch Softball: Co-ed

**Mary Galbraith** (Team "Guns and Hoses"), Silver - Slo-Pitch Softball: Women

**NFPC Co-ed**, Gold - Soccer

**Caroline Blagborne**, Bronze - Soccer

**Lauren Bicknell**, Bronze - Soccer

**Marline Striloff**, Gold - Swimming: Open Water Swim

**NFPC Men**, Silver - Tug of War: Catch weight

**NFPC Women**, Bronze - Tug of War: Lightweight

**Cody Fisher**, Gold - Wakeboarding

**Donna Main**, Bronze - Walking: 5000m Women's Master B Race Walk

**Roger Street**, Bronze - Wrestling

**Ray Moon**, Gold - Wrist Wrestling

**Owen Russell**, Bronze - Indoor Rowing, 2000 Metre Individual Sprint

*Please accept our apologies if we missed you.*



Surrey Pre-Trial Centre Flag Football team.

# In the news...

## B.C. Corrections officers urge Victoria to fast track two new facilities to relieve serious prisoner overcrowding

Faced with chronic overcrowding, increased gang activity, and mounting health and safety concerns, B.C.'s front-line corrections staff are urging the provincial government to build at least two new jail facilities.

"It's urgent--we need the government to stop stalling and build new facilities because our existing provincial jails are operating at close to 200 per cent over capacity," says Dean Purdy, chairperson of the Corrections and Sheriffs Services Component of the B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union.

"Solicitor General Kash Heed needs to understand that chronic overcrowding is impacting our members' ability to properly monitor inmates," says Purdy, who works as a correctional supervisor at the Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre in Victoria. "It's significantly heightened tensions and created a pressure cooker atmosphere at all our nine provincial jail facilities."

Purdy is hopeful there will soon be progress on building one of those two much needed facilities in the Lower Mainland.

"Now that there is a more appropriate consultation process in place with Metro mayors, there's no reason why a formal announcement on a new Vancouver-area remand centre can't be made in the very near future.

"But the bigger challenge," says Purdy, "is to build a new facility in the Interior."

Purdy says the root cause of the overcrowding crisis rests with decisions made by Victoria in 2002 and 2003, when a number of jail facilities were closed and 550 corrections officers were laid off. Inmate-to-staff ratios are now as high as 60 to one.

Purdy says health and safety concerns were highlighted in a recent survey of front-line staff by SFU professor Dr. Neil Boyd. In it, seven out of 10 corrections officers admit they don't feel safe performing their duties.

Purdy says corrections staff file 50 per cent more WCB claims for on-the-job injuries caused by acts of force or violence than police officers.

"With prisoners incarcerated under deteriorating conditions, it stands to reason that stress and agitation levels are going to be very high," Purdy says. "That can only lead to an increased risk of violent behaviour and deteriorating working conditions for corrections officers."

*Posted on the BCGEU web site August 12, 2009*

## Tensions high in remand centres

The shooting deaths of rival gang members across the Lower Mainland has created a public safety nightmare for police. *Now, imagine what prison workers are going through, housing all the suspects in the same remand centres.*

Some of the accused gangsters have been put in isolation to prevent gang murders inside the jails.

The BC Integrated Gang Task Force tells the Vancouver Sun at least 38 gang members from different groups have been arrested so far this year, including the men accused in the Surrey Six homicides, and the eight others charged with plotting to kill the Bacon brothers.



*From NEWS1130 web site, June 17, 2009*