



# The Comp-Ten Report

NOVEMBER 2002

Newsletter Committee: Joy Kaplar, Chair; Gary Bennett, Kelly McDonald. Material for the Newsletter can be sent to: Joy Kaplar, Courtenay Area Office, 201 - 910 Fitzgerald Avenue, Courtenay, B.C. V9N 2R5. Fax: (250) 338-1345. e-mail: component10@hotmail.com

## CHALLENGING THE GOVERNMENT

### P3's: the new threat

**B**ased on the recent BCGEU response to the Ministry of Transportation discussion paper titled "Creating Opportunities for Expanding Transportation Infrastructure", P3's are basically public, private, partnerships that the present liberal government believes will bring our province into prosperity.

But at what price and whose prosperity?

P3's are risky business for taxpayers.

This is particularly true where government allows private consortia to own, operate, and collect tolls on B.C. highways.

Tolls, tolls, and more tolls! Do

we not already pay for our road infrastructure and its maintenance through fuel taxes, property taxes, PST, GST, etc.?

And where does it all end?

There is no end as far as I can see. Our children will not only inherit our debt, but will not get anything for that debt, except the pleasure to drive on a tolled highway, owned and operated by most likely foreign ownership, totally dedicated to a profit before safety business plan.

Send a message to this government. No to P3's!!!

*By Kelly McDonald, Local 1006  
Chairperson BCGEU.*

### Is road salt a major carcinogen?

**S**ince 1970, highway agencies in the United States have applied about 10 million tons of road salt each winter. Canadians also put down some five million tons annually. Sodium chloride is by far the most popular of the de-icers since it is inexpensive, reliable and easy to store and apply. Nevertheless, it causes enormous infrastructural and environmental damage.

To illustrate, its use is reducing water quality in many aquifers and lakes, killing roadside vegetation and wildlife and damaging soils, road surfaces, bridges, parking

garages and automobiles. In the United States, it has been estimated that the annual road salt cost for motor vehicle and infrastructural damage is between \$3.5 to \$7 billion. These estimates do not include the costs of environmental damage to soil, vegetation or surface and groundwater.

There may, however, be an even more dangerous consequence of adding road salt to highways. In 1986, this author explored

See "salt" on page 2.



Joy French.

### Local Chair Retires

**J**oy French is the 1002 local chair and a road crew worker for Mainroad Mid Island Contracting on Vancouver Island, she worked in the Parksville yard since 1996 as a worker on the Road crew, prior to that she was a Field Clerk in the Port Alberni Yard.

Born in Edmonton Alberta, she worked for the ministry of Social Services and Community Health as a clerk 1; in 1980 she moved to BC where she worked as a book keeper at the West Bay Hotel from 1983 to 1988; she was a legal secretary for Bonovic Scoffield and Mosely.

When it comes to Labour activism the apple did not fall far from the tree. Joy's Grandmother was a leading labour activist in the early 20th century, where she held many positions including secretary of the Leatherhead Labour Party and a member of the Surrey Womens advisory Council,

See "Joy" on page 3.

## Road salt associated with elevated mortality

correlations between USA mortality from 66 cancers and groups of cancers and 219 environmental variables.

In "Reducing Cancer Mortality: A Geographical Perspective", we argued that these correlations were suggestive of potential protective effects by soil selenium and calcium and demonstrated elevated cancer mortality in states where soils contained high levels of mercury or where road salt was widely used.

Subsequent clinical and/or field trials appear to have proved beyond reasonable doubt that selenium and calcium are protective against a wide variety of cancers.

Mercury is a selenium antagonist, reacting with it to form insoluble mercury selenide that does not pass into the food chain.

If, as the evidence strongly suggests, selenium is protective against cancer, mercury must promote it.

This leaves road salt as the only potential major environmental carcinogen identified by this author for which the evidence is still inconclusive.

Nevertheless, the geographical

data and analyses currently available suggests that road salt may be associated with elevated mortality from cancers of the breast, lung, esophagus, throat, larynx, large intestine, rectum and bladder.

It is impossible to apply the Bradford-Hill criteria to these apparent associations since, despite the fact it is so widely used, there is virtually no available literature on the health impacts of road salt. Cause and effect relationships, therefore, cannot be established without further study.

How likely is it that road salt use increases cancer mortality? Environment Canada has evaluated the toxicity of a wide variety of sources of storm water and has established that the most damaging is run-off from de-iced, multi-lane divided highways with traffic densities over 100,000 vehicles per day.

This is thought to be due to the quick contaminant release during snowmelt, the enhanced mobility of heavy metals caused by road salt and the presence of elevated concentrations of this de-icing agent itself.

Most road salt contains sodium

ferrocyanide as an anti-caking and corrosion inhibitor. Under acidic conditions, in the presence of strong sunlight, this compound is known to break down, generating toxic cyanide forms, including hydrogen cyanide.

These toxins appear to have caused serious fish kills as the result of sodium ferrocyanide's use by the BC Ministry of Forests in fire retardants.

Recent animal studies also have shown chronic cyanide exposure may be deleterious to liver and kidney functions and causes both time and dose-dependent DNA fragmentation, accompanied by cytotoxicity.

Hydrogen cyanide in cigarette smoke also is known to be cilia toxic, and may act as a pacemaker for the action of some carcinogens, such as aromatic hydrocarbons.

Are you sure you want to inhale wind-blown road salt or drink water polluted by it?

*By Harold D. Foster, PhD, Professor, Department of Geography, University of Victoria, B.C. February 2000*

### Sodium Ferrocyanide: Is it in your Road Salt?

**S**odium Ferrocyanide, or Yellow Prussiate of Soda as it is sometimes known, is an anti-caking compound used in some of our road salt. It is a yellow powder that may be mixed into your salt before you take receipt of it, or you may be mixing it in yourself.

In either event, it is important that you are aware of its properties and take precautions when handling the material.

The Material Safety Data Sheet should be consulted for detailed information about

this product.

You can find Astro Chemical's MSDS for this product on the Internet at <http://www.astrochemicals.com/15208.pdf>.

Ask your supervisor if this anti caking compound is used in your salt, or bring up the topic at your next toolbox meeting.

*By Joy French. Joy French is a machine operator with Mainroad Mid Island Contracting in Parksville, Bargaining Chair, and Chair of Local 1002.*



Jim and Joy French.

Joy from page 1.

## Joy marries, heads to Wymer

these were very significant positions and were groundbreaking during that time in England and anywhere else in the world for that matter. Joy is very proud of her grandmother Alice Rickets and what a better way to

show this than to follow in her footsteps.

As a BCGEU activist, Joy has been the local chair, bargaining chair, shop steward, chief steward, member of the Provincial Executive Womens

committee and recording secretary of component 10. During her time as an activist Joy has been involved in many causes and always fought for workers rights. Whether it was direct involvement in negotiating many collective agreements, working on the labour management committee to help enforce the language or being involved in the cross component committee where she was able to give back to the community; she was there and she was involved.

Joy was married last year and will now be moving to Wymer, B.C. to live with her husband Jim. Wymer is in the Kootenays and has a population of 120, her future plans involve going back to school and starting her new life and any challenges that come her way

We wish you well and hope the future is good to you. We'll miss you Joy.

*By Gary Bennett. Gary is the chair of local 1004, he works at the communications centre at the George Massey Control Tower for Mainroad Contracting in the lower mainland.*

## “Have you ever thought about changing your job?”

I'm sure a number of the Comp-Ten Report readers have had this thought in the past. Perhaps you have had a desire to become a Trade-Qualified Trades-person as a Welder, Millwright, Carpenter or some other recognized Trade.

The normal route to achieve this goal in the past would have been to find an employer to hire and train you in an Apprenticeship position, with the Apprenticeship Board overseeing your training and providing a classroom learning situation during each year of your multi-year Apprenticeship. This former normal route probably does not exist in British Columbia for any Accredited Trades now.

The “new” Apprenticeship

model still needs an employer to hire and train you but the classroom learning has mostly been replaced by a distance-education home-study curriculum. Coupled with this change, in the last decade or so, the Federal E. I. program has basically ruled against any income assistance to any individual attending compulsory schooling as part of an Apprenticeship Contract.

When we still had a Department of Labour, it was possible to challenge the Trade Qualification. At that time (pre-history - 1977) the requirements were that you achieve 68 % on the written exam and the same mark on the practical exam and interview and provide proof of

working in the trade for at least 10,000 hours. When a co-worker and I successfully challenged the Heavy-Duty Mechanic Certification in 1995, 70% was required on the multi-choice written exam and there was no practical exam or interview. The other requirement was to provide proof of employment in the trade.

Given the changes to the Apprenticeship Program in the last 1 ½ years or so and the decade-plus changes to the training parameters; what can an individual do to get a B.C. Trade Qualification?

The following options may not work for everybody, but they should work for some who wish to increase their “hireability”.

Option # 1 - find an employer who wants and needs you and will fully fund your

See “job” on page 4.

## New job?

apprenticeship.

Option # 2 - find an employer who is willing to assist you with funding for training and/or apprenticeship fees.

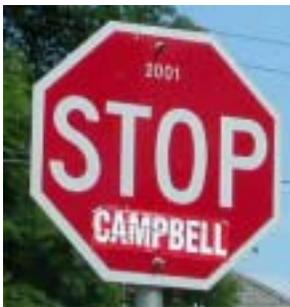
Option #3 - find an employer who wants an apprentice worker for lower wages and is still willing to assist with the paperwork.

Option #4 - work for an employer (or a # of employers) in a Trade, and provide an employer's letter(s) or a Sworn Affidavit (from a Notary), proving your work time to I.T.A.C. (Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission).

Option # 5 - win a major lottery and deal with the consequences!

The current information should be available online at:  
www.itac.gov.bc.ca  
www.learnandearn.bc.ca.

*By John Billwiller. John is a heavy duty mechanic in Grand Forks with Emcon Services Ltd.*



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news:  
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## What a deal!

WE Insurance (Working Enterprises) is a union agency and one of the largest writers of home insurance in western Canada. WE covers all aspects of insurance from life to home to personal RVs to commercial as well as travel insurance and group benefit plans.

As a member of CAUS (Canadian Association of Union Services), WE is a union owned and operated company, and its purpose statement is to benefit and promote the labour movement while providing ethical, quality unionized services at reasonable prices.

Personally, I highly recommend WE insurance. Because I belong to a union I received a significant discount on my home insurance. When all the dust settled on my own policy I realized a 25% savings. Yours might be different, but it's definitely worth checking out if savings are what you're looking for.

For more information phone toll free 1-800-663-4200 or check out their web site at [www.weinsurance.com](http://www.weinsurance.com).

*By Kelly McDonald. Kelly is a machine operator at Bridge Lake and works for Interior Roads Ltd.*

## In Memorium

■ Local 1001 wishes to remember long-time steward and fellow employee, Joe McGeachy, who passed away suddenly on August 21, 2002. Joe worked on the Duncan road crew for 23 years and was an active member in his community. We offer our heartfelt condolences to the family and friends he left behind.

■ Gary Hill and his wife passed away in a tragic accident on Highway 3 near Cranbrook September 26<sup>th</sup>. Gary was a member of local 1008 and will be fondly remembered by his family, friends and co-workers.