

# FRONT LINE FLYER

## SPECIAL EDITION

Mine Mill Local 598/C.A.W

www.minemill598.com

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The following is a letter from CAW Local 3019 concerning The Canadian Pension Charter to CAW National President Buzz Hargove:

March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2007

The Canadian Pension Charter states:

1. "We have the right to retire with dignity and security and to enjoy the later years of our lives free from the need to work. Canada is a wealthy country, and we can afford adequate income security for all seniors"
2. "Our pension system should provide opportunity for Canadians to retire early, especially those in difficult jobs."

Dear Brother Buzz Hargrove:

CAW Local 3019 is writing this letter on behalf of miner's who have worked underground for many years. We have witnessed many deaths in the industry during that time and observed a large majority of our fellow brother's and sister's whose health is suffering as a result of the hazardous conditions and high-risk work that we do. We believe that now is the time for positive change. CAW local 3019 is writing this letter to itemize some of the major differences between working underground in Europe as opposed to Canada, as well as to propose some major changes in the way we think about our retirement in Canada.

Miners in Canada deserve an unreduced CPP pension for early retirement. Presently miners in Canada are penalized 6% per year on their cpp.

When looking at the specific issues and risks of working underground when comparing ourselves to our European Brothers and Sisters, it should be argued that we are entitled to retirement with full Canadian Pension, without reduction well before the age of 65.

Hazardous working conditions underground have been recognized and well documented in all Westernized Countries. Despite this, collectively Canadian miners have had little

success in fighting for acknowledgement and recognition that these risks exist in their daily work environment, or that the retirement age for miners should be different as a result.

Miners in most European countries, for example, have been awarded early government pensions as well as private company pensions. This consideration is tied to the knowledge that the average life expectancy for underground miners is between 66 (Poland) and 69 (Germany) years old. This is 7 to 10 years less than their average national life expectancy, and should be a statistic that you consider very carefully as you read this.

The harmful conditions of working underground cannot be denied. The accumulated effects of constantly breathing dust and diesel exhaust, physically and emotionally adjusting to shift work, hard physical labour, potentially deadly mistakes and consequent stress all contribute to dramatic health problems and generally cause premature death. Twenty years underground is like a death sentence for many of us. Therefore; miners in Canada required to work till age 65 and knowing their life-expenctancy is shorter is unrealistic.

When looking at all of the inherent risks and health ramifications of mining, it is no surprise that many European countries outline very specific and unique treatment for those working underground. In Poland for example, anyone employed underground for at least 25 consecutive years, regardless of age, is entitled to full government pension. Germany, France and England also have similar laws.

We are all paying maximum Canada Pension Premiums, however most of us will die before we can take full advantage of our pensions. Whether we retire before 65 (due to health issues, stress or exhaustion from years of long, hard physical labour) or retire at 65, the statistics prove we will only collect a fraction of the pension that we put in. Despite being one of the richest countries, {a member of the G8 forum for the world major industrialized



democracies}, Canada is well known for high social standards, helping with international aid, and being a leader in the recognition of basic human rights. The Canada pension plan has ignored our needs, letting us die prematurely without just compensation for our hard work underground.

The reality of a shortened post-underground life-expectancy, we should be able to collect full pensions by no later than the age of 60.

We are requesting your support for an unreduced early retirement for all Miners in Canada.

We need to unite in this matter, to have the politicians pay attention to what we deserve, as compensation for our hard work and lost years. We propose that we bring this issue to the attention of our political representatives and have them present our concerns to the Parliament. It is imperative that we do this with our goal in mind. At the same time we should have the top union representatives in Canada involved to support our cause nationwide.

CAW Local 3019,  
Campbell River, B.C.

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Local 598/CAW is in agreement with the above. The following is our own letter of agreement and support dated May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008:

Dear Brother Hargrove:

RE: Canada Pension Issues -- The reason we must fight for improvements!

Miners have always been caring and benevolent towards their own community. Because our work underground was dangerous, we needed "eyes in the back of our head". So our mates became that - and watched our backs for us.

Due to this "closeness" a brotherhood was born, and when a shout went up that men were injured, or had been tragically killed, the miners responded with little or no regard to their own risk.

As part of this unity, our forefathers formed a Union, so that even the meekest of men among us had a voice, and protection from a bullying employer who would seek to exploit this timidity. They bargained for workplace pensions that were designed to give them dignity and independence in old age, without becoming a burden on society.

It is well documented that many workers in the mining sector have their life span and retirement shortened because of their years of hard toil in the mines, mill and smelters. Many of those who do manage to reach retirement don't enjoy the quality of life they deserve. In the sixties and seventies, it was these same mining related deaths and cancer rates that propelled provincial change and gave birth to the Ontario Occupation Health and Safety Act.

It is against this historical background of careful thought and self-sacrifice that we – must once again take up the fight to secure dignity for our members and we must continue to press for governments to make improvements to government pensions, as they have done in Europe.

*Under the Belgian pension scheme, a miner's retirement pension is awarded to an underground worker, irrespective of his age, provided he worked for 25 years normally and this was his main occupation.*

*President Kwasniewski signed into law a plan to extend miners' rights to retire early on a pension after 25 years' work.*

When you consider that a 'miner's' life expectancy is seven plus years less than the general populous and they are further penalized to the tune of 6% on their CPP if they opt for early retirement, often prompted by health concerns, it screams out to you that things need to change.

We, the mine, mill and smelter workers from Sudbury, Ontario, applaud and support the attached letter written by CAW Local 3019, dated March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2008 regarding this issue and are willing to assist in whatever capacity we can to pressure governments to not only acknowledge the health risks of our industry, but to compensate us for those risks, without penalty.

Yours in Solidarity,

Dwight Harper (Vice-President),  
On behalf of the entire membership

