

New inmates arriving on regular basis at super-jail

By FANNIE SUNSHINE
The Champion

New inmates have been arriving on a regular basis at the expanded Maplehurst Detention and Correctional Centre, a spokesperson with the Ministry of Correctional Services confirmed.

"Yesterday we were informed the Waterloo and Wellington correctional centres are in the decommissioning process, so we expect to get approximately 200 inmates (from those facilities)," Julia Noonan said earlier this month.

A new facility for female prisoners being built on the north side of the complex is nearing completion, she said.

"It will combine the use of the existing facility as well as a brand new area."

Ms Noonan also clarified incorrect information in a story that appeared in the May 18 edition of the Toronto Sun regarding laundry refusal at Maplehurst.

The story stated prisoners in the detention centre refused to do laundry in protest of poor air quality. Laundry from Toronto East Detention Centre, Metro West Detention Centre and the Mimico Correctional Centre is sent to Maplehurst to be washed.

"The inmates weren't refusing to do laundry, the staff workers were refusing," she said. "The Ministry of Labour was called in to investigate and found the air quality wasn't a problem."

Ms Noonan refused to elaborate what stemmed the initial investigation, adding the laundry facility at the complex is currently up and running.

When asked if other health and safety concerns were brought forward, Ms Noonan confirmed several concerns were brought to attention but wouldn't go into detail.

"Operations of the facility are addressed by the Minister of

Labour. They are all taken seriously and abided."

In March a number of issues were raised by Union President Bill Gillies, including concern over the alternate fire route.

Mr. Gillies said if the primary fire route was blocked due to fire, the only alternate escape route would be through the courtyard, which has two holes in the fence for police wagons.

Pat Franklin, part of the infrastructure renewal project team at Maplehurst told The Champion in March necessary precautions have been taken to ensure public safety as well as the safety of inmates.

"It's not our goal to put anyone in danger," he said. "We have different evacuation routes that were deemed a safe area."

Mr. Franklin added the police would be called as in any emergency situation and the courtyard fire escape route would be a last resort.

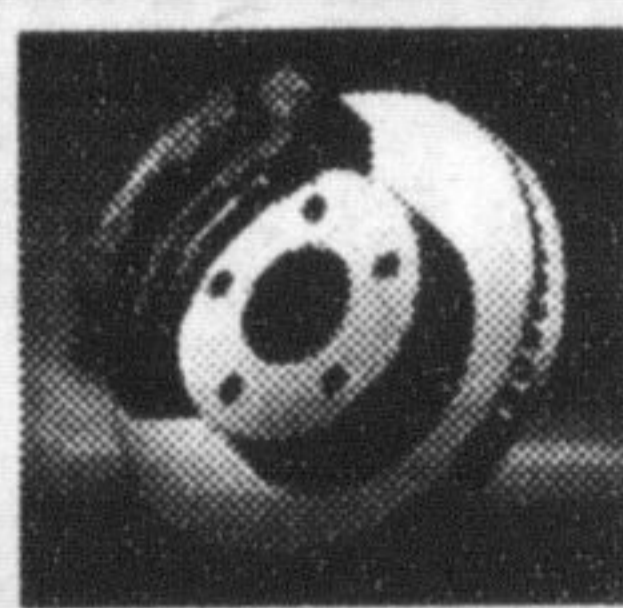
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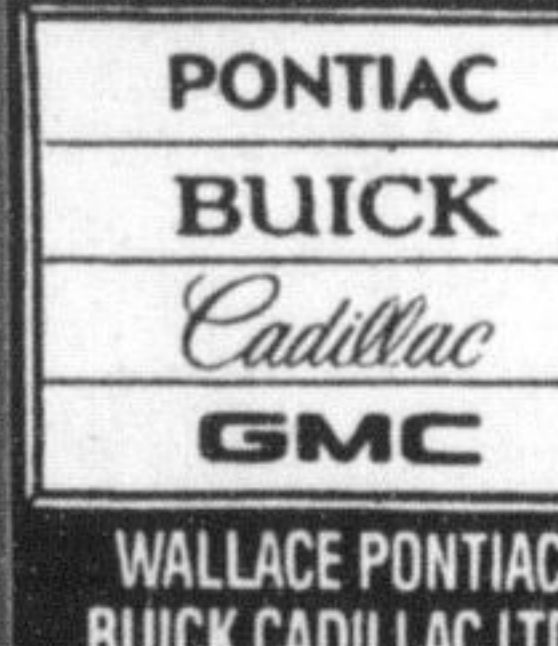
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