Attendant claims changes are making Oak Ridge less safe

aspect of the maximum like. security Oak Ridge psychiatric hospital.

Garry Lenehan, a former president of the union local which represents the Ridge's 220 attendants, said that the "big push" to make Oak Ridge look and feel like a hospital is at the expense of security.

"If I went from Oak Ridge to Penetanguishene General Hospital and said I would run PGH like Oak Ridge, it couldn't be done. I don't expect PGH to go to Oak Ridge and say, 'Run it like a hospital.' "

Attendants with many years of experience have been replaced by registered nurses as the top authority on Oak Ridge's psychiatric wards. The nurses are being used as window dressing by the authorities, Lenehan said. An RN's training is mostly medical; they don't have the experience or educational background needed to work with psychiatric patients, he claims. The attendants are the only group which deals with the patients 24 hours a day. Unified nursing is taking precedence over the welfare of Oak Ridge patients, he said. The RNs are "victims" too.

Placing nurses in charge of wards is part of a move to change the atmosphere inside Oak Ridge. But Lenehan claims nurses are wasted inside Oak Ridge because only the small part of their training involving psychiatric nursing is of use in that setting. Meanwhile Huronia District Hospital, he said, and Toronto hospitals, need

New uniforms to be introduced for the attendants will cost attendants some of their authority, and possibly contribute to their injury, he said.

The attendant's uniform of authority - figure blue shirt and grey pants is going to be replaced with a red shirt and grey pants. The shirt is a type that wouldn't look out of place on a golfer or a jogger, he said. In practical terms,

A 17-year Oak Ridge at- from one end of a ward, at- dollars, clean air, but tendant said last Friday he tendants and patients will there's always a payoff and other attendants are be less distinguishable in frustrated by what he the event of a disturbance. described as growing em- Patients can wear phasis on the hospital whatever clothing they

> Informal clothing will have a detrimental psychological effect too, he said. "If policemen walked around with golf shirts instead of uniforms, would you know they were policemen?"

Several severe assaults and a stabbing of one patient by another patient have happened since authority in the wards passed to the nurses, Lenehan said.

"Everything seems to be changing. The patients don't like what they are seeing either," with the exception of the patients who try to take maximum adof vantage environment.

responsibility, he asked?

psychiatrists

the treatment of Oak Ridge dividual is a patient. patients. The Mental "It's nice to have clean an excuse to close it.

somewhere," Lenehan warned.

"Social workers and psychologists working in Oak Ridge are being paid for nothing," Lenehan said. People in a controlled setting such as Oak Ridge do exactly as they are told. Their behaviour, when they are free, can't be predicted in a closed setting. "We're paying a lot of professional people for nothing."

Lenehan's opinion is that only one in 15 psychiatric patients' mental problems can be helped.

Management is the worst he has seen in his 17 years. Of his successor as union local president, Lenehan said, "No one is very happy with him right now."

Comparing the physical their environment of Oak Ridge and the Barrie Jail, Lenehan called for a way Lenehan called Oak Ridge to assign responsibility for the Hilton of the North. the release of a patient "You're better to murder when that patient's release someone to go to Oak is followed by an incident. Ridge than sit in the Where is the government's dungeon at the Barrie Jail."

Lenehan has concerns The government has to about the release of pabe held responsible for the tients, concerns which he result of releasing patients can't state in public who should not be releas- because of the oath of ed. The government is be- secrecy which prevents "sucked in" by Oak Ridge employees from and talking about patients. Oak psychologists, Lenehan Ridge employees, for example, can't answer as The surrounding com- simple a question as munity is becoming part of whether a particular in-

Lenehan is suspicious Health Centre which in- that the government wants cludes Oak Ridge is the Oak Ridge to be untown's largest employer, workable in order to have



Inside looking out

Stephanie Vaillancourt was happy to stay still last Wednesday for a passing Midland Times photographer. She and her fellow Prime Time Nursery

School friends were enjoying out of doors a fine September day.

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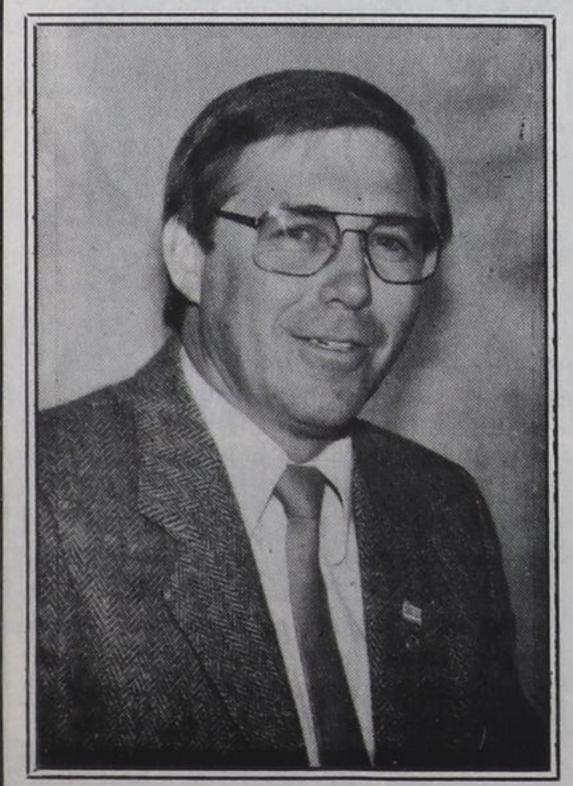
Effective Date: September 14, 1987



Ontario Hydro wishes to announce there will be a 3 hour power interruption from 1:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. Thursday, September 10, 1987. In the case of inclement weather an alternate date will be established and the interruption will be readvertised.

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