

Opinion

Strike, lockout averted but questions remain

With a looming deadline, the Province and the union representing more than 6,000 correctional and probation officers returned to the bargaining table Friday for last-ditch negotiations.

Working without a contract since December 2014, the unionized employees who work in overcrowded and understaffed detention centres had already rejected one tentative offer from the Ontario government. And with an overwhelming majority — more than 95 per cent — of the local workforce voting against adopting a November deal, it appeared the odds of reaching a compromise at the 11th hour were slim to none.

At the entrance to Milton's Maplehurst Correctional Complex, a maximum-security facility, and Vanier Centre for Women, workers began preparing for the inevitable — a strike or lockout.

Skids and wood were piled high, while a large metal container, dubbed 'Old Smoke,' to represent Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) President Smokey Thomas, stood tall.

The Province, too, was making necessary arrangements, lining up strike workers and calling on managers from various ministries to fill in for jail guards in the event of a potentially dangerous labour disruption.

While we are pleased to report discussions between both parties were fruitful, resulting in a deal that was sealed just after 4 a.m. Saturday, many questions have been left unanswered.

Firstly, we can't help but wonder why the Ontario government resisted creating a corrections-only bargaining unit that would ensure corrections officers are deemed an essential service — a key sticking point with the union.

We also wonder how much wasted money went into preparing for a strike or lockout. Reports suggest the Province spent millions outfitting correctional facilities with furniture and household appliances to accommodate those who would be managing the facilities in the event of a walkout.

To echo the sentiments of the Progressive Conservative Critic for Community Safety and Correctional Services Rick Nicholls, it would appear that the time and money would have been better spent brokering a deal with jail guards.



Around Town

Enzo Turco, right, joins his team at Milton Car Audio Plus Home, and Marketing Mary's Mary Camastra Cheevers, second from the left, in presenting Food4Kids with a \$4,000 donation — proceeds from their third annual charity golf tournament. *Supplied photo*

The Champion invites readers to share their Around Town photos. Send yours to editor@miltoncanadianchampion.com. Be sure to include a description of the photo, including the location where it was taken, and the name of the photographer.

My View

A must-watch doc

I watch very little cable television. Excluding the news, which I can never seem to get enough of, my television consumption is limited to a few series. They include *Homeland*, *Girls* and *The Good Wife*.

However, with the advent of Netflix and other streaming services, I have found myself spending a considerable amount of time binge watching a variety of programs not available on cable. *House of Cards* is one of them.

Last week, Netflix suggested I give *Making a Murderer* a try.

A fan of documentaries and shows of the true crime variety, this 10-part series was right up my alley.



Catherine O'Hara
Acting Editor

It follows the story of an American, who was exonerated after serving 18 years behind bars for a crime he didn't commit. Instantly, I was hooked.

My interest in this real-life drama intensified as the story unfolded. I soon learned that, shortly after his release from prison, Steven Avery was arrested, charged and later convicted for the murder of a young photographer. He was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. For weeks, this Netflix-exclusive has been grabbing headlines here — and beyond. And for good reason.

The case, as presented in this fascinating documentary, points to alleged police misconduct and evidence tampering. While the show has proven captivating, it has also spurred many to action, with tens of thousands of people signing a petition calling for Avery's release.

So, if you're looking for something good to watch on a cold, winter day, consider the chilling story of a Wisconsin man's on-going fight to clear his name.

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