

Occupational Disease Clinic Helps More Than 550 Current and Retired Steelworkers

Sault Ste. Marie, ON— Thanks to occupational health clinics sponsored by USW Local 2251 for current and retired USW members and their families, SOAR members had the opportunity to learn whether any of their health concerns are work-related and possibly compensable.

In addition to helping past and present USW members and their families with compensation claims, the clinic provided necessary proof for the urgent need to establish a registry of occupational illnesses.

Cancer rates in Sault Ste. Marie are four times the Ontario average. It is suspected that past or current working conditions have contributed to illnesses such as cancer and heart disease, as well as many other chronic medical conditions.

USW Retirees Get Answers

Retired 76-year-old USW member, Ronald Barrow, who traveled from British Columbia, told the Sault Star that he saw the clinic as an opportunity to get some answers. Barrow, who suffers from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease said, “If it hadn’t been for this clinic, I don’t know where I could have turned for some answers on whether my condition was work-related.”

Another retiree who underwent surgery in 1989 to remove a brain tumor said, “I didn’t connect the dots that my health problems could be the result of toxic exposure until a few months ago, when the union began its occupational disease campaign.

“I am hoping to at least get some confirmation that all I’ve gone



More than 550 current and retired Steelworkers took part in an Occupational Health Clinic sponsored by USW Local 2251.

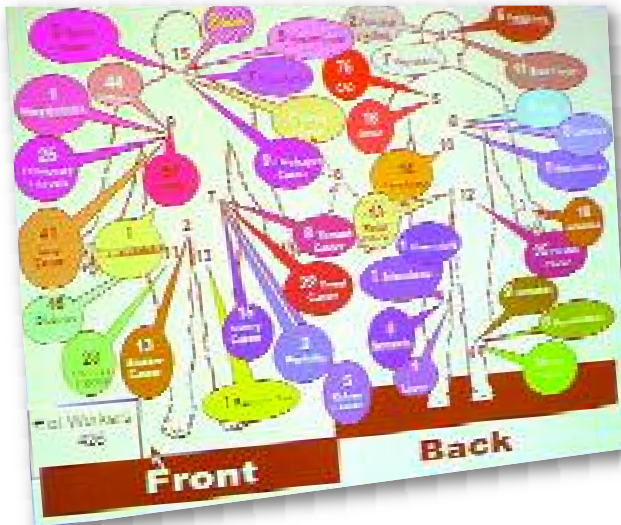
through is work-related. If it is work-related then I want my story on record so maybe my experience can help someone else in the future.”

Clinic Provides Evidence for Occupational Illness Registry

A technique called body-mapping to identify health concerns showed 453 diseases among 438 participants, said USW Local 2251 President Mike DaPrat.

New Democratic Party MPP Andrea Horvath and MP Tony Martin have introduced private members’ bills in the Ontario legislature and in Parliament calling on their respective governments to establish an occupational health registry to require employers to report information about accidents, occupational diseases and other hazards.

“Workers have the right to know the safety record of employers as well as trace the source of an illness,” Martin said, crediting the USW for the registry idea. “Governments have an obligation to make job sites safer.”



“Body Map” reveals possible industrial illnesses.