

**May 4, 2007**

**Beaten cabbie wakes up Not out of the woods yet, says relative**

By CARY CASTAGNA

Pavan Chohan is out of a coma, but he's not out of the woods yet - not by a long shot, his family says.

The city cabbie who was savagely beaten and left for dead more than three weeks ago has yet to speak and is unable to move the right side of his body, said a family member who didn't want to be identified.

"It may come back, it may not," the relative said of the paralysis. "He's quite confused, but he's hanging in there. He's made quite a bit of progress in the last three weeks."

Family members are pleased with the progress, but they realize a brain injury involves a long road to recovery. "It's going to be a long, long road," the relative said.

"We have to take it one day at a time. We just hope and pray everything's going to turn out OK."

Chohan, a 61-year-old father of three and grandfather of one, opened his eyes about a week ago.

An MRI recently revealed some swelling on the Co-op Taxi driver's brain but no other apparent problems.

Chohan was listed in serious but stable condition at University hospital yesterday.

Meanwhile, drivers are rallying behind him.

A fundraising dinner is being planned for either May 13 or 20 at On the Rocks, 11740 Jasper Ave.

Fellow Co-op cabbie Jerry Whittaker, who's helping to organize the charity event, said he hopes to raise more than \$5,000.

"He was the sole breadwinner in his family, I've been told. I can't imagine he'll ever drive a taxi again," Whittaker said. "When you stop making money as a cab driver, that's it, it's done. There's no insurance to fill in the gap."

Cabbies have also been taking up a collection for Chohan. Donations have come from drivers with different cab companies across the city.

Whittaker said he expects cabbies from competing companies will also attend this month's charity dinner.

"It affects us all. Sure we're in competition, but they're all drivers," added Murray Neate, director of sales and marketing for Co-op Taxi. "When somebody gets hurt, we all hurt."

The attack on Chohan has rekindled the debate on methods to improve safety for cabbies. Plastic shields are currently optional, but some cabbies are calling for them to be made mandatory.

"Shields aren't the answer. Any shield I've seen is not going to stop a gun," argued Whittaker, who favours in-car cameras.

"They need to do something," added the Chohan family member. "It's getting out of hand."

Chohan was attacked by a fare as he drove his Co-op Taxi in the area of 42 Avenue and 38 Street around 10 p.m. on April 6, said police.

Ken Butler, 24, has been charged with aggravated assault. Butler is also facing charges in the slaying of his sister-in-law, 25-year-old Stephanie Rae Butler, who was found dead in her home at 4204 38 St. on the afternoon of April 7.