



**PEI FEDERATION OF LABOUR'S 2006
BRIEF TO CABINET**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	Page 3
First Collective Agreement Legislation	Page 3
Pensions Legislation - Proclaim the Act Now:	Page 5
Pay Equity	Page 6
Occupational Health & Safety	Page 7
Day of Mourning Monument	Page 7
Raising the Occupational Health and Safety Maximum Fine	Page 7
Provincial Fair Wages for Construction Sector	Page 8
Recognizing the National Building Code Across PEI	Page 9
Caribou Ferry Service Ferry Replacement	Page 10
Minimum Wage Should Be a Living Wage	Page 10
Anti-Scab Legislation	Page 12
Overtime Exemptions	Page 14
Standard Work Week	Page 15
Right to Refuse Overtime	Page 16
Statutory Holidays	Page 17
Childcare	Page 18
Human Rights Education	Page 19
Literacy	Page 19
Emigration and Immigration	Page 19
Education	Page 20
Growth Works	Page 20
Conclusion	Page 21

Introduction: The P.E.I. Federation of Labour represents directly approximately 10,000 Islanders who are members of organized labour in this province. These members are from all across Prince Edward Island and work in both the public and private sector in a wide range of occupations. We are as diverse as the Island's workforce and our concerns range from the young and old as we seek to represent the concerns of our members' families including their children and grandchildren, as well as our own retired members. We are the only central labour body in this province and we are a chartered body of the Canadian Labour Congress which represents over 3 million workers in Canada.

Our organization was born in 1964 and its constitution gives us the mandate and responsibility to represent the interests of all workers in this province. There is no other comparable group or institution mandated to carry out this role. Our concerns and mandate are focussed most simply on the welfare of workers within this province.

First Collective Agreement Legislation: It is a basic right of all Canadians to choose to join an union. This basic right is being hindered here on PEI by the lack of First Collective Agreement Legislation.

British Columbia (1973), Quebec (1977), Federal (1978), Manitoba (1982), Newfoundland and Labrador (1985), Ontario (1986) and Saskatchewan (1994) all have First Collective Agreement Legislation. As you can see by the year of implementation provided for each jurisdiction, the legislation has been in place in these jurisdictions for a long time and has proven to be effective at preventing bitter strikes over union recognition.

This is something that has not gone unseen by the Alberta government who in November announced that they will be taking a very serious look at enacting First Collective Agreement Legislation in Alberta. The federation considers it shameful that it took three bitter and sometimes violent strikes in the past five years, all of them about the same thing - a group of workers trying to get a first collective agreement, to finally press the Alberta government into action on this important issue.

The main goal of First Collective Agreement Legislation is to promote good faith bargaining between the employer and the newly formed bargaining unit and provide a disincentive to employer conduct aimed at undermining this process and preventing negotiation of a first contract in a timely and fair manner. It is always best when the union and employer can come to a fair and timely agreement on a first contract on their own but for times when they can't it is important for First Collective Agreement Legislation to be there.

In most cases, newly certified unions and employers are able to reach their own first agreements without having to impose the first collective agreement provisions but unfortunately there are still a significant number of employers who would do anything to deny their employee's right to organize. The recent \$500,000 labour board ruling against the now defunct Polar Foods for laying off employees and moving production to another plant to try and derail an organizing drive and the tactics used by WalMart against their employees in Jonquière Quebec in which they closed the store rather than bargain in good faith with their newly unionized employees show the lack of respect that some employers have for their employees basic rights and the kind of despicable tactics that they are willing to use.

In 1994, First Collective Agreement Legislation was passed through the PEI Legislature but was never proclaimed. It is time for this to change. Why should Island workers not be granted the same protection enjoyed by most other Canadians?

Thus, we urge the government to amend the labour laws of P.E.I. to provide for the imposition of a first collective agreement in a system with the following features:

- i) When a trade union has been certified and has attempted to bargain a collective agreement with an employer and failed to conclude a collective agreement, either the trade union or the employer should be permitted to obtain binding arbitration of a first collective agreement with the employer.**
- ii) At any time after certification and an attempt to bargain, a collective agreement, either the trade union or the employer should have the right to apply to the Provincial Labour Relations Board for the appointment of an arbitrator mutually agreed on by both parties or, if no agreement can be reached, one selected by the Board.**
- iii) Both the union and the employer can agree on the appointment of an arbitration board rather than a single arbitrator. Each party should nominate a representative, in addition to the arbitrator mutually agreed to by both parties or selected by the Board.**
- iv) Having received a proper request, the Board must appoint the arbitrator or arbitration board and the arbitrator or the arbitration board should have the right to impose the terms of a binding collective agreement on all parties.**
- v) Where either the union or the employer has made an application for the**

appointment of an arbitrator or an arbitration board, neither party shall have the right to resort to strike or lockout or to continue an existing strike or lockout.

- vi) The cost of the arbitrator appointed by the Board should be borne by the Government, and the cost of nominees should be borne by their respective parties.**
- vii) The Arbitration Board should be authorized to impose a collective agreement with a minimum term of one year and a maximum term of two years but with the right to impose terms back to the date of certification.**
- viii) In imposing a first collective agreement, the arbitration board should be required to determine terms and conditions of employment based on the collective agreement terms already agreed between the parties, minimum terms defined in labour standards and other labour legislation and the comparable terms in collective agreements freely arrived at by collective bargaining in the same industry.**

Pensions Legislation - Proclaim the Act Now: The Federal Government and every province, except for one, has pension benefits legislation in place - that is, legislation that regulates workplace pension plans. The one exception to the rule is Prince Edward Island. The P.E.I. Legislature adopted the Pensions Benefit Act in April of 1990, but the legislation was never proclaimed, therefore, never been in force.

Pension legislation is important because it protects working families. Pension benefits legislation is important for working people who belong to workplace pensions. This type of legislation typically provides protection and rights for plan members in three areas:

- 1) it requires employers to finance pension plans in a way that minimizes the risk that pension promises cannot be fulfilled;
- 2) it requires pension plans to include certain types of benefits (e.g. survivor benefits and benefits on termination of employment prior to retirement); and
- 3) it establishes certain membership rights (e.g. access to information about the plan.)

The P.E.I. legislation that was never proclaimed, included these kinds of protections for plan members.

Pension benefits legislation recognizes that if employers are left to operate workplace pensions without regulation, certain problems are likely to arise. Employers will take shortcuts in financing the plans; they will approach the design of pension plans thinking only of their interests (e.g. they may decide that to make the plan a means of keeping people working for them, they will not pay benefits to people who leave the employer before retirement age); and, they will treat the pension plan as if it is their personal property.

PEI's workers have worked hard to setup pension plans and make sure that the contributions they make to those plans will help ensure they can afford the retirement they deserve after all their years of effort and service to society. After 15 years of waiting, they deserve the same basic piece of mind that all other Canadians have. They need to know that there is legislation in place to make sure that the retirement they have worked so hard to earn is there for them when they retire.

Therefore the PEI Federation of Labour asks the government to proclaim this legislation now.

Pay Equity: The PEI Federation has always been opposed to wage discrimination based on sex. We feel that its very important that all workers are paid equal wages for work of equal or comparative value. In order to understand the situation It is necessary to distinguish between the following concepts: a) equal pay for equal work, b) equal pay for work of equal value, and c) pay equity.

a) **Equal pay for equal work** addresses the more overt form of discrimination in the payment of wages on the basis of sex. Equal pay for equal work involves direct comparison of jobs occupied by opposite sexes where they are the same or substantially the same

b) **Equal pay for work of equal value** provides for the reduction of the wage gap by comparing male and female jobs of a different nature. For instance, the employment of a nurse and that of a parking lot attendant can be compared using job evaluation techniques.

c) **Pay Equity** refers to legislated programs that aim to achieve equity in pay in a predictable and organized fashion. Pay equity laws are pro-active in that they do not rely on a complaint being filed in order to engage. These laws provide specific targets and deadlines, and use the collective bargaining process to get the parties to agree on a job

evaluation system and on pay adjustments. As is the case for equal pay for work of equal value, pay equity allows for the comparison of male and female jobs of a different nature.

PEI currently has Pay Equity Legislation based on the criteria of 1) Skill; 2) Effort; 3) Responsibility, and 4) Working conditions. We feel that the legislation should also include criteria of duties, services, education and experience such as to help in comparing work value.

Our current legislation also only applies to the public sector.

Therefore, we recommend that the criteria of duties, services, education and experience be included in P.E.I.'s Pay Equity Legislation and that it be extended to the private sector as it is in Ontario and Quebec.

Occupational Health & Safety: Every day, thousands of workers are going to work in order to feed themselves and their families. These workers, be they men or women, old , middle-age or young are expecting to come back to their loved ones in the same health as when they left. The reality is that a number of them will get injured or even die.

From 1993 - 2004, PEI has averaged approximately 5,000 injuries and 3 deaths per year on Island worksites . We also know that there are a number of workers who have died due to workplace related illness and are not part of the statistics.

Day of Mourning Monument: As you know, the Federation has been working hard to erect a monument in memory of all workers killed or injured on the job in P.E.I.. After two years, of effort and the financial support of the Island's labour movement, we are proud to say that the monument was installed on December 19, 2005 . We would like to thank the Minister for Community and Cultural Affairs, Elmer MacFadyen and his Deputy Minister Ron MacMillan for all the work they put into securing the land for the monument.

We are planning to unveil the monument at our April 28th ceremony and we hope that most of the ministers would be able to attend.

Raising the Occupational Health and Safety Maximum Fine: The Federation is very happy that the provincial government is looking into increasing the maximum fine in PEI's Occupational Health and Safety Act from its current level of \$50,000 to \$250,000 which will bring it more in line with the rest of Atlantic Canada. Both Nova Scotia and Newfoundland are currently at that level and New Brunswick is currently under review with the recommendation to increase to \$250,000.

On December 7, 2005, the Federation's President and Vice President attended a meeting of the Occupational Health and Safety Council and were very happy with the level of support that was shown for the increase from both labour and employer representatives and with the unanimous vote the Council gave to recommending the increase. However, we were disappointed that it was expressed at the meeting that some employers are concerned that this increase in the maximum fine will increase the cost of doing business on PEI.

Increasing fines in the Act will not increase the cost of doing business on PEI, it will only increase the cost of putting profit above the safety their employees. We feel that it is high time all companies realize that the cost of doing business on PEI is to provide their workers with a safe working environment by meeting if not exceeding PEI's Occupational Health and Safety Act.

In order to do this, the fine levels in the Act need to be at a level to ensure that the fine is seen in the business community as a strong warning that the offence will not be tolerated. It must not appear to be a mere licence fee for illegal activity. Considering the \$50,000 fine in our Act is tied for the lowest in the country and no fine levied on PEI has even come close to the maximum. Our current fine hardly acts as the strong warning that is needed.

In conclusion, It is our hope that increasing fines will play a part along with preventative enforcement, and education in ensuring that all companies doing business on PEI treat workplace safety with the utmost importance that it deserves and help them realize that there is no profit in ignoring the safety of their workers.

Therefore, we ask the provincial government to act on the Occupational Health and Safety Council's recommendation to increase the maximum fine in PEI's Occupational Health and Safety Act from its current level of \$50,000 to \$250,000.

We also ask the government to recommit itself to ensuring that the resources, manpower, and political will necessary to enforce and educate employers and employees about the Occupational Health and Safety Act are there.

Provincial Fair Wages for Construction Sector : One of the many problems facing the construction industry on PEI is the out flux of skilled tradespeople to other parts of Canada due to the low wages being offered on the Island. In a comparison of the federal wage schedules across Canada, Island electricians and plumbers were the lowest paid in Canada while Island carpenters were the third lowest paid.

The Federation feels the province could do a lot to stem this flow and improve the construction industry' s sustainability by following the federal government and instituting provincial fair wage legislation on provincially funded construction projects and basing those wages so union wages are not undermined by contractors paying low wages and providing little or no benefits.

COMPARISON OF CANADIAN FAIR WAGE SCHEDULES

Province	Electricians	Plumbers	Carpenters
Alberta	25.08	23.61	21.02
British Columbia	22.73	22.64	20.92
Manitoba	22.85	21.78	19.89
New Brunswick	17.94	20.59	14.99
Newfoundland	18.84	18.84	14.28
Northwest Territories	23.78	23.93	21.23
Nova Scotia	20.1	19.15	18.75
Nunavut	23.49	19.23	19.06
Ontario	28.71	27.97	24.36
PEI	16.22	17.23	15.18
Saskatchewan	21.62	20.39	18.02
Yukon	\$23.50	\$23.50	\$23.50

Note: Based on averaging Federal fair wage schedules for each Province.

Recognizing the National Building Code Across PEI: The National Building Code of Canada (NBC) is designed to ensure that buildings are structurally sound, safe

from fire, free of health hazards, and accessible. The fact that only Summerside and Charlottetown is covered under the Code is reprehensible and as was shown in the recent fire in Bloomfield, buildings not built to code have the potential to be vary dangerous.

It is the government's responsibility to make sure minimum standards are met to ensure not only that the public gets what they pay for but to also ensure that the public's safety is not sacrificed in the name of profits or incompetence.

Therefore the Federation of Labour urges the government to institute the National Building Code, return Inspection of Electrical installations to compulsory rather than random, and make sure that there are sufficient resources and penalties in place to ensure that these codes are enforceable. All Islanders should have the right to feel that their homes and the buildings they work in and shop in are safe and at least meet minimum acceptable Canadian standards.

Caribou Ferry Service Ferry Replacement: As the provincial government knows the ferry in Wood Islands provides not only much needed direct employment on the ferries themselves but also is a key component to the present and future economic development of Kings County.

The Wood Islands ferry also affects the Island economy by providing a more efficient way to transport goods to Nova Scotia and is the Island's only other way to move vehicles on and off the Island. The loss or another reduction of this valuable service will have a major economic impact to the whole Island and could be disastrous should anything ever happen to the Confederation Bridge.

The federation was very happy to see the federal government sign a new 5 year contract with Northumberland Ferries that will allow the ferry to operate from May to December with two ships at traditional levels of service. Even with this new level of Federal support, there is however a problem looming with the aging Holiday Island. This ship should soon be replaced.

Therefore, the PEI Federation of Labour urges the provincial government to do what it can to ensure that the federal government takes steps to replace the Holiday Island and when Transport Canada decides to do a replacement, we hope that the provincial government will do what it can to make sure any work that can be done on the Island during construction of the replacement is done here.

Minimum Wage Should Be a Living Wage: While the federation is happy that the provincial government has been increasing the minimum wage on a yearly basis, we are

very concerned about the amount of time it is taking to get that wage to a level that workers can subsist on.

As you can see in the table below, our province currently ranks number 10th in the country when it come to Minimum wages. Workers making minimum wage at \$6.80 an hour are bringing home a gross income of \$14,144 that is if they are working 40 hours a week and 52 weeks a year.

In our province, we know that there is a high percentage of workers who are in seasonal industries, are working part-time and are at minimum wage. A good percentage of them are women (a lot of single parent) and young people.

If we take Statistics Canada's before tax low income cut-off (2004) for a community like Charlottetown, a single individual would need to make \$17,407 just to be at the poverty line. A couple with two children would need to make \$32, 345.00 a year.

While we realize that the minimum wage on PEI will be increasing to \$7.15/hr effective April 1, 2006. It still puts a single individual working at minimum wage, full-time, year round at only \$14,872 which is still \$2,535 below the poverty line and will only move P.E.I. to the rank of eighth in the country.

As you can understand, someone at minimum wage would have a very difficult time to survive.

Our province needs to increase our minimum wage in order to help workers and their family have a decent living. A higher minimum wage would also help businesses because more money would be available to workers and to spend in Island businesses.

So what kind of a increase are we talking about? The minimum wage needs to increase to at least \$ 8.25 an hour just to lift individual workers out of poverty and to \$10.00 an hour to move it to a living wage. Such a move would benefit not only those most in need but contribute to healthy communities and a vibrant productive economy.

The problem with a low minimum wage is compounded by the fact that only 43% of Islanders work full-time and year round causing many to rely on the 55% of their wages that EI supplies.

We urge the government to do what it can to eliminate the working poor on PEI and ensure that all working Islanders can afford to live on the wages they work so hard to earn.

Current Minimum Wage Levels Across Canada

Jurisdiction	Hourly Rate	Effective Date
Nunavut	\$8.50	March 3, 2003
Northwest Territories	\$8.25	December 28, 2003
British Columbia	\$8.00	November 1, 2001
Quebec	\$7.60	May 1, 2005
Ontario	\$7.45	February 1, 2005
Manitoba	\$7.25	April 1, 2005
Yukon	\$7.20	October 1, 1998
Saskatchewan	\$7.05	September 1, 2005
Alberta	\$7.00	September 1, 2005
Prince Edward Island	\$6.80	January 1, 2005
Nova Scotia	\$6.50	April 1, 2004
New Brunswick	\$6.30	January 1, 2005
Newfoundland	\$6.25	June 1, 2005

Anti-Scab Legislation: Bargaining in good faith is the underlying principle of all labour legislation in this country. This means that in all labour disputes, parties must try to genuinely resolve their differences. The use of strike breakers runs completely contrary to this principle by allowing employers to circumvent the process and ignore their obligations to try to reach a resolution. When this happens, workers are frustrated. Their sense of powerlessness and desperation sometimes leads them to act in ways they would never otherwise consider. Tragedies can and have occurred.

The use of scabs and replacement workers breeds anger on picket lines that can lead to violence, including damage to property, injury to workers and even death. Labour disputes are prolonged by the practice with a lingering animosity that can infect a workplace for years.

There is no reason for this. Quebec and British Columbia have anti-scab laws in effect

today and the results are clear. The year after BC changed its labour code, the province realized a 50% drop in the amount of work time lost to strikes. Under the Quebec labour code, the average number of work days lost each year to labour disputes is about 15, compared to an average of 31 days lost each year under the Canada Labour Code. Ontario banned the use of replacement workers in 1992, but lifted the ban a few years later following a change of government. Despite the rhetoric used by the opponents of the law, the short period it was in place was characterized by few work stoppages, moderate union demands and picket line peace. Furthermore, in the first year following its passage, Ontario's economic growth was the highest in the G-7.

On Prince Edward Island, the longest strike in P.E.I. history between the five members of CUPE local 3373 and their employer, the Southern Kings Group Home which took 373 days to settle was lengthened needlessly by the use of strikebreakers by the employer, this dispute could have ended more quickly if anti-scab legislation was in place. The strike which had five women go out on strike for over a year was seen across Canada as an affront to workers everywhere when it was understood that their employer refused to return to the table and employed scab labour including those with less qualifications than the women on strike.

Labour legislation should treat both workers and employers fairly in the event of a strike or lock-out. Both sides must pay an economic consequence in such situations. The fact that employers can stall negotiations by the use of replacement workers undermines the whole collective bargaining process and gives the employer an unfair advantage.

The PEI Federation of Labour asks the provincial government to show their support for a fairer collective bargaining process by enacting Anti-Scab Legislation here on PEI as soon as possible and we propose that anti-scab legislation be introduced reflecting the following principles:

1. During a legal strike or lockout, an employer is prohibited from using the services of any person to perform work ordinarily done by the striking or locked out employees, including:
 - (a) Employees of the employer in another establishment transferred or any persons hired between the day negotiations begin and the end of the strike or lockout;
 - (b) Employees of other employers and subcontractors;
 - (c) Members of the bargaining unit involved in the strike or lockout;
 - (d) Persons employed by the employer in another establishment;
 - (e) Persons who are not employees under the governing legislation, but whom the employer employs in another establishment;
 - (f) Employees in the establishment who do not belong to the bargaining unit on strike or

locked out.

2. Any of the persons listed above cannot be used to perform the functions of striking or locked out employees.
3. Procedures should be established that upon application, the Minister may dispatch an investigator to ascertain whether the provisions are being complied with and to make a binding report.
4. At the end of a lockout or strike, any affected employee is entitled to recover his or her employment in priority over any other person. Any dispute may be submitted to arbitration as if it were a grievance under the collective agreement.

Overtime Exemptions: The main reason for having Overtime rules is to financially deter employers from forcing workers to work excessive hours on a regular basis and allow workers to not only have a social and family life outside of work but also allow them time to recuperate from the physical and mental stresses that are apart of everyone's daily work experience.

Considering that study after study is showing that excessive work hours are dangerous, unhealthy, and disruptive of family and community life and with PEI tied only with Nova Scotia already having the highest standard work week in Canada within its Employment Standards Act, it is incomprehensible to us that our Employment Standards would further reduce this deterrence by allowing an exemption that permits a standard work week of up to 75 hours.

Therefore, the PEI Federation of labour urges the Provincial government to remove all overtime exemptions from the Employment Standards Act.

Current Overtime Exemptions to PEI's Employment Standards Act

HEAVY EQUIPMENT OPERATORS	55 hours
SEASONAL HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION WORKERS	55 hours
FISH PROCESSING INDUSTRY - INSIDE WORKERS	55 hours
FISH PROCESSING INDUSTRY - OUTSIDE WORKERS	75 hours
PEAT MOSS INDUSTRY	60 hours

COMMUNITY-CARE FACILITY WORKERS	60 hours
AMBULANCE DRIVERS	60 hours
TRUCK DRIVERS	55 hours
SANDBLASTING	60 hours

Standard Work Week: As you can see by the accompanying table, PEI is tied with only Nova Scotia as having the highest standard work week in Canada. As you can also see on the table standard overtime rules in most of Canada’s jurisdictions are that overtime should be paid after **8 hours per day or 40 hours per week**.

Therefore, the PEI Federation of labour urges the Provincial government to change overtime rules in the Employment Standards Act from requiring overtime be paid after 48 hours have been worked to requiring overtime be paid after over 8 hours per day or 40 hours per week have been worked in order to bring PEI more in line with the majority of Canada.

Comparison of Overtime Rules across Canada

Jurisdiction	Overtime rules
British Columbia	Over 8 hours per day or 40 hours per week In BC, overtime pay also includes double time for hours after 12 hours per day
Northwest Territories	Over 8 hours per day or 40 hours per week
Yukon	Over 8 hours per day or 40 hours per week
Federal	Over 8 hours per day or 40 hours per week
Nunavut	Over 8 hours per day or 40 hours per week
Manitoba	Over 8 hours per day or 40 hours per week
Saskatchewan	Over 8 hours per day or 40 hours per week
Newfoundland & Labrador	Over 40 hours per week

Quebec	Over 40 hours per week
Alberta	Over 8 hours per day or 44 hours per week
Ontario	Over 44 hours per week
New Brunswick	Over 44 hours per week
Nova Scotia	Over 48 hours per week
Prince Edward Island	Over 48 hours per week

Right to Refuse Overtime: To remain consistent with the concept of overtime – that of a demand in addition to the usual employment contract – workers should possess the right to refuse overtime. The right to refuse overtime allows the worker to choose whether they wish to earn premium pay, or maintain those hours for family or personal pursuits.

No worker who is unwilling or unable to work overtime should be forced to work, except in emergencies. Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and the Yukon have taken the step to legislate a worker’s right to refuse overtime. Saskatchewan’s provisions are particularly effective, as they do four things:

- No employer can force a worker to work overtime, except in emergency situations
 - No disciplinary action can be taken against a worker who refuses overtime
 - Onus is on employer to prove “emergency situation”
 - Defines emergency situation as “sudden or unusual occurrence or condition that could not, by the exercise of reasonable judgment, have been foreseen by the employer.”
- (section 12(4))

Saskatchewan’s provisions protect workers who attempt to maintain balance in their lives, but allow for the labour needed to address emergencies.

We believe this will not unduly inconvenience employers, as in any workplace there is a mixture of workers – those who take as much overtime as they can get, and those who value time away from work.

Therefore, we ask the provincial government to add an employee’s right to refuse overtime into PEI’s employment standards similar to Saskatchewan’s provisions.

Statutory Holidays: As you can see on the chart below workers on PEI are tied with

Newfoundland and Nova Scotia for having the lowest number of Statutory Holidays in Canada at **6**. Even workers on PEI who fall under Federal jurisdiction are entitled to **9** paid holidays.

Thus, we request that the provincial government add Victoria Day and Thanksgiving Day as statutory holidays in order to bring PEI more in line with all other Canadian jurisdictions outside of Atlantic Canada.

Comparison of Statutory Holidays across Canada

Jurisdiction	Number Stat Holidays	Recognize Victoria Day and Thanksgiving Day
Northwest Territories	10	Yes
Yukon	9	Yes
Federal	9	Yes
Alberta	9	Yes
Nunavut	9	Yes
Saskatchewan	9	Yes
British Columbia	9	Yes
Ontario	8	Yes
Quebec	8	Yes
Manitoba	8	Yes
New Brunswick	7	No
Newfoundland & Labrador	6	No
Nova Scotia	6	No
Prince Edward Island	6	No

Child Care: The PEI Federation of Labour is very disappointed that the provincial

government has announced that it will not fight to keep the child-care deal it signed with the federal government.

A national early learning and child care program based on the QUAD principles (Quality, Universally inclusive, Accessible and Developmental) is a goal that labour has fought long and hard to bring to fruition and with all provinces signing child care deals with the federal government it looked as if this goal was starting to come within reach. Now with Stephen Harper's Conservatives threatening to render those agreements null and void it is time for everyone especially the provincial government to show support for the start of a quality child care system that took so long to get.

The Federal Conservatives' policy of income support and tax-allowances is no substitute for a real child care program . Their child care policy does nothing at all to create child care spaces and the dollar amount falls woefully short of what is needed for quality care. At present there are only enough regulated spaces for 15% of children under 12, even though 70% of children have either both parents, or a single-parent, in the labour force. The Federal Conservatives are out of touch with the real costs of child care, the needs of child care workers, the needs of families in Canada where 66% of mothers with children aged 0-3 are in the labour force and 75% of mothers, whose youngest child is between 3-5 years, are in the labour force, and what is needed to create a child care system that affords Canadians high-quality, affordable programs for their infant and pre-school children. Another problem is there are no accountability mechanisms in the Conservative policy meaning that there is no guarantees that the money they are allotting for child care will go to childcare.

Something that we hope both the Provincial government and Federal government remember is that a majority of Canadian voters marked an "x" beside a candidate who supported the federal-provincial child care agreements. Now it is time for their wishes to be respected.

PEI needs a childcare system that provides its children with affordable, accessible, and high quality programs that our children need to get a headstart in life and provides child care workers with the wages and benefits they need to support their children while they look after ours.

Thus we urge the provincial government to change its position and fight hard to make sure that the child care deal you signed on November 24, 2005 remains in place.

Human Rights Education: With recent incidents involving publication of cartoons,

the issue of the Noodle House restaurant and other racial incidents on PEI, we would like to recommend as part of PEI's move to attract more immigration to the Island and become more diverse that the funding cut to the education programs of the PEI Human Rights Commission be rescinded. We also need more programs worked into our education system to address these issues.

Literacy: The recent release of literacy statistics for PEI show that the need to address this problem still exists and to a greater degree. Current efforts on a federal level with the National Literacy Secretary may endanger the funding which assists in Workplace Education. The Provincial government must ensure that adequate levels of funding exists for the delivery of workplace education for all Island workers.

Here like other jurisdictions in Canada, employers are not reinvesting enough in training for their employees. It is clear that in order to grow and remain competitive employers must do more.

The Provincial Government should explore instituting a payroll education tax so that employer's are encouraged to voluntarily reinvest in their worker's education and if they do not they would pay into a fund which would assist in the delivery of programs like the PEI Workplace Education Program. On going literacy and essential skill education should also be encouraged at the local community level as well.

Emigration and Immigration: Recently, We presented a brief to the committee examining these concerns but we would like to highlight the fact that adequate supports need to be in place to promote immigration to PEI and also examine the out migration of workers from PEI.

One of the major causes of out migration of young Islanders who are trained in the trades and other occupations is the fact that there is not only more opportunities for them outside of PEI but also most times the wages and benefits are much better than would be offered to them here on PEI. If we do not look at addressing these issues we will continue to lose our future to other provinces.

Meanwhile if this government is truly serious about attracting more immigration to PEI to meet our future labour needs, the Island needs to ensure that the social and educational supports needed by new immigrants are in place. So they can learn language and cultural skills that will help them integrate more easily into their new homeland. They also need the ability to have the skills that they learned elsewhere recognized here particularly in occupational areas where labour shortages exist. Without these supports in place, we will continue to have problems attracting immigration to PEI.

Education: The PEI Federation of Labour wishes to recognize that the recent education report draws attention to some significant concerns. The recommendation that the kindergarten system become integrated into the public school system is a good one as that is the case in every other K-12 jurisdiction in Canada. The current system can be adopted over time so that existing employees have the opportunities to get the additional skills and training where needed and that a common curriculum can be adopted. All Island children deserve the same opportunities and kindergarten workers deserve decent wages and benefits as they work with the children that will shape our future.

We also wish to state that other recommendations regarding the shortage and age of textbooks points to a larger problem in the school system not highlighted in the report. Per capita spending per student in our school system is if not the lowest in Canada it is among the lowest of any Provincial jurisdiction. This helps to contribute to a shortage of specialists and other necessary support systems.

The recommendations regarding standardized testing in the school system do not address the concerns of underfunding, the role of inclusivity in our system and will do nothing to address any real problem other than divert needed resources to testing which could lead to the negative aspects of testing found in other jurisdictions such as “teaching to the test”. Standardized testing may seem like a cheap formula to address concerns but will not even touch on some of the very real concerns within the school system. In study after study the role of success or failure in Standardized tests relate more to the socio-economic status of the students as a whole rather than other factors.

Lastly, the report wants to give greater power to the School Boards to determine the fate of small schools. We believe that the province is trying to download the political responsibility of making this decision from where it belongs (the Province) to the School boards. Recently, we have seen the level of openness and accountability of existing elected school boards to be less than in most if not all other jurisdictions in Canada. We do not think that already underfunded school boards should be given the authority over a decision which should rest with the provincial government.

Growth Works: The Growth Works Atlantic Venture Fund was created in January of 2005 to raise money from Atlantic Canadians to invest in Atlantic Canadian companies. Total assets of the fund now stand at \$24 million with a goal \$125 million by 2012. Thus far, the fund has invested in 5 companies. Growth Works has been managing labour sponsored funds since 1992 with over \$800 Million in assets under management and has a good track record.

Over \$1.5 billion leaves this region each RRSP season to be managed and invested

outside of Atlantic Canada, if we could get 1 - 2% of that amount in the Atlantic Fund there would be a lot of capital to invest in local companies. Currently, PEI is the only Atlantic Province not to offer provincial tax credits to residents who invest in the fund. (N.S. 20% , N.B. 15% and NL 15%)

As a sponsor of the fund with the other Federations of Labour in the Atlantic Region, we ask that the provincial government approve a provincial tax credit to PEI residents of atleast 20% to coincide with Nova Scotia.

Conclusion: As always the PEI Federation of Labour appreciates this opportunity to convey our concerns regarding labour issues to Cabinet. We feel that it is very important for government to hear labour's side of the issues and we thank you for you attention