



PEI FEDERATION OF LABOUR'S 2007 BRIEF TO CABINET

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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.

Atlantica - Atlantica a very flawed and unrealistic proposal conceived by big business circles and fiercely promoted by the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies (AIMS), would create an integrated cross-border economic region that encompasses the four Atlantic provinces of Canada, a piece of Quebec, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and a large swath of northern New York State all the way to Buffalo. In that region of "business without boundaries," according to the proponents, "the removal of barriers and harmonization of regulations" will provide corporations with more privileges than those they already enjoy with NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement).

The primary focus of this proposal is not strengthening trade within this cross-border region. Instead, proponents aim to convince Atlantic Canadians that the road to economic prosperity lies in turning the port of Halifax into the gateway for a high-volume roadway along which "truck trains" would haul Asian goods to the U.S. mid-west. One problem with this strategy is it ignores current realities such as increasing capacity in west coast ports which are closer to Asia, plans to expand the Panama Canal by 2015 and heightened security at the U.S border.

Another problem is that even if there was a remote chance that Halifax could become a major corridor for Asian goods to the United States, this part of the proposal would bring few economic benefits to the rest of the Atlantic region. Increased highway spending would absorb public funds that could otherwise be used for more diversified infrastructure investments, while increased heavy-truck traffic would make the region's roads less safe and harm the environment.

The other main proposal of Atlantica is its energy corridor policy. This policy focuses on exporting the region's oil and gas as rapidly as possible on terms that favour the energy

industry. The big problem in this is that it pays little attention to whether the Canadian public is getting a fair share of revenues from these publicly-owned and non-renewable resources. It also ignores Atlantic Canada's future energy security and the negative environmental effects of accelerated fossil fuel exploitation.

The Atlantica proposal also insists that:

- minimum wages are too high on both sides of the border. Even though the minimum wages in Atlantic Canada are among the lowest in Canada.
- the percentage of union workers is too high and its better to increase the number of unprotected workers.
- all governments are too big and they are a deadweight that burdens the private economy.

As you can see from this Atlantica is truly a deeply flawed and unrealistic proposal that is meant to benefit business interests only while ignoring the best interests of the citizens Atlantic Canada.

The PEI Federation of Labour feels that the pipe dreams of creating a massive Asian goods corridor, deregulation, privatization, restriction of basic workers right, and ignorance of Atlantic Canada's own energy needs that make up the backbone of this proposal will have a deeply negative impact on PEI and its citizens.

We are especially concerned that Atlantica is being hatched away from all public participation, input, and accountability. It is all about private interests taking over our resources and infrastructures without giving anything back to secure and promote lasting local prosperity.

Therefore, we ask the Provincial government to join with us in working to put a stop to all discussions on this Atlantica proposal. Rather than waste time and resources on this proposal that wishes to give away our assets and our economic future to corporate interests, let us instead think of real ways of promoting homegrown opportunities and prosperity that will benefit all Atlantic Canadians instead of just big business interests.

We also urge you to read and take to heart the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives study "Atlantica: Myths and Realities" by Scott Sinclair which explores alternative policies to Atlantica, such as emulating Norway's successful energy policies that garner an 85% share of energy revenues for its citizens, enhancing cross-border cooperation between Atlantic Canada and New England to

reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

TILMA- the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement- In addition to Atlantica the PEI Federation would like to warn the Province about another Trade Agreement that is starting to rear its ugly head in B.C. and Alberta.

TILMA is an inter-provincial agreement being promoted by right-wing governments and thinktanks. It is designed to merge the economies of B.C. and Alberta. It takes the harshest provisions of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and makes them inter-provincial and with its provision that allows other provinces and territories and even the federal government to sign on. TILMA and where the Province stands on this issue is of great concern to the PEI Federation of Labour.

The two main Myths behind this agreement is that it is a way to increase trade and labour mobility among provinces.

Reality 1- is that interprovincial trade is already a healthy reality in our country, most experts argue that there are no significant barriers to inter-provincial trade and there is no evidence that such obstacles entail significant economic costs.

In fact:

- Research conducted for the 1985 Macdonald Commission concluded that interprovincial barriers cost no more than 0.05% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- Relative to distance and market size, Canadian provinces are far more likely to trade with each other than with American states.
- Since 2000, interprovincial trade has been growing much faster than Canada's international trade.

TILMA is not about Trade.

Reality 2 - It is not difficult to move to another province and work in one's chosen profession. Islanders have been moving whether temporarily or permanently to other parts of the country to work for ages with very little trouble. In professions where there are different standards among provinces, there are regulatory bodies who can deal with these issues. **TILMA is not about Labour Mobility.**

So what is TILMA all about? It is about profit margins taking precedence over democracy. It is about the greed of corporations and their wish to restrict governments from doing what is in the best interests of their citizens if the corporate world feels it might potentially damage in any way their profit margin.

Under this agreement if any level of government tries to introduce a law or regulation that is in any way a restriction on the ability of companies to do whatever they want, which almost all relevant laws or regulations are, the government body can be overruled by a Disputes Panel which can award up to \$5 million in compensation .

Private individuals and corporations from either BC or Alberta can take complaints forward, and the Disputes Panel can make binding rulings. Even if a regulation is accepted as being for a legitimate reason and in the public's best interests, it can still be overturned if the Disputes Panel feels it is not the least restrictive way to achieve the objective.

To allow an appointed panel to have this much say over the policies decided on by duly elected official is unconscionable in our opinion.

Environmental regulations, Occupational Health and Safety regulations, government procurement policies that encourage governments to buy locally; local hiring policies; economic development programs designed to boost local economies like ACOA, development policies, land use restrictions, school board policies and bylaws on issues like pesticide bans or commercial sign restrictions could all be argued to contravene TILMA.

Also Under TILMA, Crown corporations that provide public services could be seen as a government monopoly, and therefore challenged as a restriction on free competition and investment. In fact, there would be few areas of our economic, physical or social lives which TILMA would not negatively impact.

TILMA would clearly force democracy to take a back seat to business interests and allow them to dictate public policy over the public's best interests.

Therefore, the PEI Federation of Labour calls on the Provincial government to not sign on to this agreement, to actively discourage other provinces from signing it and to see if there is anything that can be done to talk some sense into the governments of Alberta and BC before this agreement becomes a reality in their provinces on April 1, 2007.

Pharmacare - In the 2004 federal-provincial Health Accord, Canadians were promised a National Pharmaceuticals Strategy(NPS), one whose cornerstone is a catastrophic drug plan.

However to date, there has been no action on implementation and no indication if the federal government will help cover the costs. the NPS is still largely a good idea mired in a bureaucratic bog, and many Islanders are suffering unnecessarily — financially, physically and emotionally — as a result.

While we know that the provincial government is supportive of this Strategy, more needs to be done to pressure the Federal Government to move ahead with this program. With spending on prescription drugs at \$20.6-billion and galloping upward at a rate of 12 per cent annually, the growing challenge posed by expensive new drugs for rare (and not-so-rare) diseases, and escalating concerns about drug safety and appropriate prescribing practices; getting a strategy in place is the most pressing issue in the health-care field.

Prescription drugs are an essential element of healthcare and Canadians can no longer depend on a confusing patchwork of public and private drug plans and a myriad of rules about what is covered where.

Especially when you consider that at least 600,000 Canadians almost all of them in Atlantic Canada have no drug coverage at all. Another six million Canadians have inadequate drug coverage. This makes even basic treatments for common conditions such as diabetes pose a serious financial hardship, and treatment of conditions such as colon cancer or rare illnesses such as Gaucher's disease utterly unaffordable or inaccessible for far too many Canadians.

Diabetes is especially troubling to Islanders considering PEI currently has the third highest Diabetes rate in Canada at 6.3% (2005 rate see table1) and the fourth highest annual out of pocket expenses for type 1 and 2 diabetes (according to the 2005 Diabetes Report produced by the Canadian Diabetes Association).

It is not acceptable to have access to prescription drugs in this country depend largely on where you live and where you work, rather than need. Islanders need a national, publicly funded and controlled pharmaceutical strategy that eliminates barriers to treatment by covering essential drug costs in the same way that Medicare now covers hospitals and physicians, provides safe, timely and equitable access, while embracing the concepts of patient involvement, transparency and accountability. An universal public Pharmacare plan would be more cost-effective, advantageous to employers and all Canadians, and

bring our health care services up to the standard that exists in every other developed country except the U. S.

Therefore, we ask the Health Minister to do what he can to work with the other Provincial Health Ministers and the Federal Health Minister to come up with actual timelines and implementation plans to bring this important program to fruition as quickly as possible

Table 1 Diabetes rate by province/territory for 2005

Northwest Territories	3.4%
Alberta	3.9%
Yukon	4.3%
Manitoba	4.4%
British Columbia	4.6%
Ontario	4.8%
Saskatchewan	5.1%
Quebec	5.1%
New Brunswick	6.0%
Prince Edward Island	6.3%
Nova Scotia	6.6%
Newfoundland and Labrador	6.8%

Three Day Waiting Period (3/5 Weekly Salary) - With PEI undergoing a full legislative review of the Workers' Compensation Act this year, the PEI Federation of Labour would like to see one of the big mistakes that came out of the last review removed from the Act.

PEI is one of only 3 jurisdictions in Canada who have a waiting period for WCB benefits. The other 2 being New Brunswick (3 day waiting period) and Nova Scotia (2 day waiting period).

In 1996 New Brunswick undertook a study to determine the impact of the introduction of

the waiting period on accident reporting practices and found that 12% to 20% additional accidents, serious enough to require time loss from work, are occurring but are not reported. In addition, the study found that a number of workers reporting accidents are not reporting time loss but are rather working through the injury, using sick time or benefits from some other source.

The 2005 PEI Workers Compensation Board Report, shows that there has been a significant decrease in the total number of claims; from 4815 in 2002 to 4153 in 2005, a decrease of 662 cases - over 14%. This leaves us to believe the same trend of under-reporting is occurring in PEI.

Also from the experience of New Brunswick which has been faced with a three-day period for a number of years, it is clear to them that some employers are trying to reduce their experience rating, employees have to use their sick leave benefit in order not to lose income, others are forced to stay at work injured and also some employers are concentrating in reducing the number of claims filed and the number of claims accepted by Workers' Compensation Board. This is often called a "Claims Management" approach.

On PEI where many workers are employed in precarious forms of employment such as seasonal and temporary contract jobs, the 3 day-waiting period puts extra pressure on these workers to not report and to work through workplace injuries.

It is clear that the imposition of this 3-day waiting period here at the urging of some employer lobbying groups does not serve the public interest. In fact, this policy probably incurs greater costs on our public medicare system while employers save money.

There is no reasonable argument to be made for forcing injured workers to serve out a waiting period before compensation is paid. A waiting period simply encourages abuse of sick leave or disability plans or forces injured workers to work through injuries possibly further aggravating their injury. Workers don't ask to be injured at work. They shouldn't be asked to forgo, even briefly, the payments that are meant to, at least in part, compensate them for the injury they have suffered.

Therefore, the P.E.I. Federation of Labour asks the provincial government to remove the three-day Waiting Period from the Workers' Compensation Act.

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.

All full-time workers deserve to earn a wage that at the very least covers the bare necessities of everyday life. Yet according to the Canadian Labour Congress's Report Card 2006 *Is Your Work Working for You?* study that is not the case for a full 1/8 of all Canadian workers who are stuck in a low-wage jobs that do not cover cost-of-living essentials such as rent and food, and the number is rising despite unemployment rates that are at or near 30-year lows. These remarks are backed up by the Canadian Association of Food Banks, which recently reported that people with jobs make up the second largest group of food bank clients. On PEI 17.1% of food bank recipients have jobs, the second highest when compared to the rest of the provinces. This is an unacceptable situation especially in a wealthy country such as Canada.

As you can see in Table 2 below, PEI currently ranks tied for ninth in the country with Nova Scotia when it comes to minimum wages. Workers making the current minimum wage at \$7.15 an hour are bringing home a gross income of \$14,872 based on 40 hours per week 52 weeks per year .

While we realize that the minimum wage on PEI will be increasing to \$7.50/hr effective April 1, 2007. It still puts a single individual working at minimum wage, full-time, year round at only \$15,600 which is still \$2,184 below the poverty line and will not change P.E.I.'s ranking of ninth in the country. The poverty line we are using is based on Statistics Canada's 2005 before tax low income cut-off for a community with Charlottetown's population of \$17,784. A couple with two children would need to make \$33,046 a year.

As Table 3, which we got from the Alberta Government's Minimum Wage Profile, shows, PEI has one of the highest percentage of employees earning minimum wage in the country at 8.0% . The Island also has many more making wages below the \$8.55/hr it would take to bring a full-time worker above the low income cut-off point.

There are also a significant percentage of Island workers who are in precarious forms of employment such as seasonal, part-time, and temporary jobs that are earning an income below the low income cutoff . A good percentage of them are women (a lot are single parents) and young people. Most of these workers have the extra problem of having to rely on the 55% of their already low wages that EI supplies for some part of the year. These workers are in even greater need of a higher minimum to help make ends meet.

Our province needs to increase our minimum wage in order to help these workers and their families have at least a basic living standard. A higher minimum wage would also

help businesses because more money would be available to workers to spend in Island businesses.

A perfect example of this is what has been found in Washington State. Their minimum wage at \$8 /hr US (\$9.28 Can), is much higher than neighboring Idaho's, which is just \$5.15 (\$5.97 Can).

But instead of harming small businesses, small-business owners in Washington say they have prospered far beyond their expectations. Businesses have in fact found that the minimal raises that have occurred in prices to compensate for higher wages do not lead to losses in business, jobs or profits.

Washington's robust economy, which added nearly 90,000 jobs last year, is proof that even with the United States' highest minimum wage small businesses are not suffering.

Another experience between the two states that has significance here in PEI is that many low wage paying businesses near the state-line in Idaho were having real difficulty filling job positions because many Idaho residents were taking jobs in the nearby Washington State because of the much higher rate of pay.

A study by economist, David Holland at Washington State University backs Washington's experience. The economist, said job loss was minimal when higher wages were forced on all businesses and about 97% of all minimum-wage workers were better off when wages went up.

These findings are similar to the recent experience in the United Kingdom, where the government has raised the minimum wage quite rapidly to over £5/hour (over \$11 Can). The raise has showed no negative effect on jobs but has demonstrated that a higher minimum wage can have a positive impact on productivity.

The federal government's own review of Canada's labour standards released last October calls for the restoration of a federal minimum wage that would be set at the poverty line as a way to address the growth of precarious, low-wage jobs across the country.

So what kind of a increase are we talking about? The minimum wage needs to increase to at least \$ 8.55 an hour just to lift individual workers out of poverty and to \$10.00 an hour to move it to a livable wage. Such a move would benefit not only those most in need but contribute to healthy communities and a vibrant productive economy.

We urge the government to move the minimum wage on PEI as quickly as

possible to a liveable wage of \$10.00 /hr to help eliminate the working poor on PEI and ensure that all Islanders working full-time can afford to live on the wages they work so hard to earn. We also urge this government to look beyond bandaid solutions such as food banks and work towards finding real and permanent solutions to the problems facing low income Islanders.

Table 2 Minimum Wage Across Canada

Jurisdiction	Current Hourly Rate	Rate Will Change to	Effective Date
Nunavut	\$8.50		March 3, 2003
Northwest Territories	\$8.25		December 28, 2003
Yukon	\$8.25		May 1, 2006
British Columbia	\$8.00		November 1, 2001
Quebec	\$7.75	\$8.00	Current (May 1, 2006) Change (May 1, 2007)
Ontario	\$7.75	\$8.00	Current (February 1, 2006) Change (February 1, 2007)
Manitoba	\$7.60	\$8.00	Current(April 1, 2006) Change(April 1, 2007)
Saskatchewan	\$7.55	\$7.95	Current (March 1, 2006) Change (March 1, 2007)
Prince Edward Island	\$7.15	\$7.50	Current(April 1, 2006) Change(April 1, 2007)
Nova Scotia	\$7.15		April 1, 2006

New Brunswick	\$7.00	\$7.25	Current (January 1, 2007) Change (July 1, 2007)
Alberta	\$7.00		September 1, 2005
Newfoundland and Labrador	\$7.00		January 1, 2007

Table 3 Percentage of Employees Earning Minimum Wage (from Alberta's Minimum Wage Profile)

Province	July 2005 – June 2006
Alberta	2.9%
New Brunswick	5.1%
British Columbia	5.2%
Québec	5.3%
Ontario	5.6%
Manitoba	7.6%
Prince Edward Island	8.0%
Saskatchewan	8.7%
Nova Scotia	9.9%
Newfoundland & Labrador	10.4%

Student Attendant Pilot Project -The Federation would also like to express its concern over the Student Attendant Pilot Project in the Eastern School District. Students with special educational needs are the most vulnerable in the school system and require consistency in their day to day scheduling. They also require someone to teach them daily life skills, which is presently being done by Educational Assistants with special training to teach these skills. To replace these trained professionals with what amounts to a low paid sitter will have a devastating effect on these students.

Therefore we urge you to stop wasting government funds on the Student Attendant

Pilot Project and commit more funds to properly finance the Special Education program and allow for the hiring of more Educational Assistants.

First Collective Agreement Legislation- At our 2006 convention the Minister Responsible for Labour raised our hopes by saying that he was prepared to bring forward some issues that have been brought to him by the PEI Federation of Labour on a regular basis. First Contract Legislation was one of the issues mentioned by the Minister. You can imagine how extremely disappointed we were when we recently received word that this government was not prepared to move forward on First Contract Legislation and thus continue to deny Island workers basic protection from unscrupulous employers who would do anything to deny them their basic human right to unionize.

As we just stated, it is a basic right of all Canadians to choose to join an union, PEI recognizes this right in it's Labour Act, and fortunately, most employers when certified recognize this right and bargain in good faith to reach a mutually acceptable first contract.

Unfortunately this is not the case with all employers. There are still a small but still significant number of employers who would do anything to deny their employee's right to unionize. 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.

Besides Polar Foods, the recent situation between Commissionaires on PEI and their employer the Corps of Commissionaires shows how necessary First Contract Legislation is here on PEI. The Commissionaires through the Public Service Alliance of Canada fought for 5 years through appeal after appeal all the way to the Supreme Court to gain union certification only to have the Corps drag out negotiations for another 2 years before settling.

As we said earlier, the right to unionize on PEI is protected in PEI's Labour Act yet as the Corp of Commissionaires have shown this basic right cannot be truly protected without First Contract Legislation. The fact that employers on PEI can deny workers like these the benefits of their right to unionize for so long, especially after the fight they had to win this right through the certification process, is reprehensible.

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 and in a vast majority of cases they will but for times when they can't it is important for First Collective Agreement Legislation to be there. British Columbia (1973), Quebec (1977), Federal (1978), Manitoba (1982), Newfoundland and Labrador (1985), Ontario (1986) and Saskatchewan (1994) have all realized how important First Collective Agreement Legislation is. It is time for this government to realize this too.

Therefore, we ask the government to reconsider it's recent decision and finally proclaim First Collective Agreement Legislation into law on PEI.

Pension Benefits Legislation- Although it is has taken 17 years to get back on track, we are very happy that the government is finally starting to move forward on Pension Benefits Legislation.

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 17 years of waiting, they deserve the same basic piece of mind that all other Canadians have. They need the Province to act quickly to ensure 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.

To that end when you get to updating the legislation, we ask the provincial government to ensure that the updated legislation that comes up for proclamation contains protections in these 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 legislation that was never proclaimed, included these kinds of protections for plan members and in updating the legislation these protections need to continue to be there because pension benefits legislation needs to recognize 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.

Therefore we ask the provincial government to work hard and quickly to remove all of the obstacles in the way of finally enacting Pension Benefits Legislation on PEI.

Employment Standards Review- In addition to the Brief, the Federation has provided you with our response to the recently released report from the Employment Standards Review Panel.

In the response, you will see that even though we feel that in general the panel's recommendations will start to move Employment Standards Legislation in the right direction there is definite room for improvement and we have some definite concerns about what is in and left out of the recommendations.

Therefore, we ask the provincial government to truly consider the recommendations in the accompanying document before you bring any legislative changes to PEI's Employment Standards Act before the legislature this Spring.

Public Healthcare-The PEI Federation of Labour would like to express its extreme concern over comments made in the press by your Health Minister, Chester Gillan during the Canadian Medical Association's meetings in Charlottetown that he is willing to look at private options for healthcare on PEI.

How ironic, it is that approximately one week later by a 43-30 vote, the California State Assembly approved a bill inspired by Canada's national medicare system, that would eliminate private medical insurance plans and establish an universal health-care plan that would provide free medical, dental, vision and prescription drug coverage for all California residents by 2009 through a state-run agency. Although the bill was later vetoed by Governor Schwarzenegger for ideological reasons, the problems in California's Health Care System that caused the Assembly to approve that bill still exist. The problems are:

- 20 % of Californians are uninsured. Millions more are just one premium increase or a layoff away from losing coverage.

- Insurance premiums, driven by insurer and drug company bloat, are increasing two to three times faster than underlying medical inflation, such as hospital and doctor fees.
- HMOs and health insurers waste 25% of Californians' money on overhead and profit. Including duplicative administrative tasks forced on doctors and hospitals, as much as 50 percent of every dollar spent on health care is wasted.
- According to a state study, Californians could save \$8 billion dollars a year by eliminating waste, even after insuring everyone in a nonprofit and publicly accountable insurance pool.
- Emergency rooms are overloaded and underfunded because they are the provider of last resort for uninsured people who are forced to wait until illness is critical before seeking care. When the uninsured are finally allowed through the hospital doors, their conditions are more expensive to treat and good health outcomes are less likely.

It amazes and deeply disappoints us that even though the facts like these keep on proving again and again that private health care is more expensive, less accessible, less accountable, more wasteful and provides a lower level of health care, more and more the Provincial and Federal governments in Canada seem to promote the privatization of our health care system as a magic cure for all that ails it.

There is no magic cure. Governments in Canada need to stop wasting much needed resources on private health care, recommit to our public healthcare system and work with healthcare unions and their members to find real solutions to the problems within our public healthcare system.

Therefore, the PEI Federation of Labour, urges you to not take badly needed public monies away from our public system to waste exploring private options that have been shown time and time again not to be in the best interest of Islanders.

What we would like to see is this government put more public health care funds towards a long term strategy to provide for better training, recruitment, and retention of health care professionals. The Province needs to do more to expose our young people to healthcare career opportunities at a young age and provide better funding to lessening the training costs to those interested in pursuing careers in healthcare especially in areas of shortage. You also need to make sure that everything possible is done to provide Island Healthcare workers with working

conditions, benefits, and wages that are competitive with the rest of Canada.

Conclusion: This government needs to do more to change the idea of PEI of being a low wage and low employment standards economy. PEI's low wages have even been used by the provincial government to promote the Island to potential businesses. This government must start to realize that PEI is no longer just competing to attract businesses to PEI, we are also competing to retain and attract workers to meet our present and future labour needs.

PEI workers are as skilled and hard working as any workers anywhere in Canada.. This government needs to do more to bring in companies that pay wages that are comparable to the rest of the country and to offer Island workers the same protections that workers across the country receive. We are tired of every company that comes to PEI stating in the press that their main reason for coming here was the low wages. As we are seeing, PEI will not be able to build its future on the exploitation of its workers. This government needs to start asking itself if we continue to allow the Island to rank the lowest in wages(see Table 4), Employment standards, and labour legislation will PEI have the work force it needs to bring it into a future we can be proud of.

The Province also needs to do more to ensure that Islanders can afford and have access to the training and education that will create the competitive and skilled workforce that PEI will need as we move forward. It is unbelievable to us that governments have underfunded and largely ignored the training and educational needs of Canada's workforce.

A little while back the political buzzword for solving workforce shortages was immigration. What did that end up being in reality. It appears to have been political rhetoric to embark on a shortsighted scheme to allow businesses to bring in easily exploitable temporary foreign workers while doing nothing to ensure even the most basic labour standards are monitored and enforced for these workers.

If we are to truly deal with labour shortages, we need first and foremost to look within Canada through education and training, better utilizing our current workforce, and not allowing companies to bring in temporary foreign workers to simply avoid improving wages, benefits and working conditions for Canadian workers. If we do truly need to look outside this country for workers, we need to get away from temporary foreign workers and develop a real and realistic Immigration policy to bring new workers into this country as citizens.

PEI and Canada in general will be facing many challenges as we move forward into the

future and governments need to stop looking at shortsighted schemes developed only to further fund corporate greed at the expense of average citizens and look at real long term solutions that will provide everyone with a bright and prosperous future not just the powerful few.

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 urge you to act on the issues that we have brought forth in this year's brief.

Table 4 - Earnings, average hourly for hourly paid employees, by province and territory for 2005 from Statistics Canada

Jurisdiction	Average Wage
Northwest Territories	\$22.63
Nunavut	\$19.71
Alberta	\$19.18
Ontario	\$19.06
Yukon	\$18.83
British Columbia	\$18.10
Newfoundland and Labrador	\$17.47
Saskatchewan	\$17.22
Quebec	\$17.04
New Brunswick	\$16.67
Nova Scotia	\$16.57
Manitoba	\$16.53
Prince Edward Island	\$14.65