

## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE 41<sup>st</sup> ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE PEI FEDERATION OF LABOUR**

Greetings Brothers and Sisters of the Labour Movement:

First off I would like to welcome you to the PEI Federation of Labour's 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Convention.

As always, 2005 has been a very busy year for the Federation and the first thing I would like to do is to thank our office secretary Marjorie Gyurus, CLC rep JC Basque, my fellow Executive Council Members and all the affiliated members who have worked so hard on behalf of the Federation over the past year.

I would especially like to wish UFCW representative on Executive Council Vimy Gregory a very happy retirement and good luck in his future endeavors. Vimy in his time with the fed has always been a very outspoken and active member of Council and he will be missed. I would also like to thank former VP (women) Michele Wright for all the hard work she put into to her role and this year.

I am very happy to welcome our newest affiliates who joined the federation this year, CUPE Local 3324 and IAM Local 2797.

In November, the executive met to develop an action plan for 2005. We determined that our main goal for this year was to expand on what we accomplished last year and make sure more groups know about fed activities. While there is always room for improvement, I think for the most part we were successful in that goal.

### **Events**

This year the federation held events to commemorate International Women's Day, The Day of Mourning and Labour Day. These events went very well and were well attended. We were also involved through our VP(women) in the planning of the Charlottetown ceremony to commemorate the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. We also worked with the CLC to organize PEI's part in the national Greet Walmart Customers event.

Once again attendance to our Labour Day event grew with between 300-400 people in attendance. I would like to thank all the Executive Council and Affiliated members who worked so hard to make the events the success they were and I hope we continue to get the support and effort we received this year so that next year's events can be just as if not more successful.

## **Political Action Federal**

2005 was a very busy year on the political front for the federation.

On the Federal level, the federation met with Island MP's Wayne Easter, Shawn Murphy, and Joe MacGuire to solicit their support for this years CLC campaign on EI, pension, and child care.

The Federation has also been very active in writing letters to all of the Island's MP's. We have written them letters on such topics as reversing the federal government's decision to close the Charlottetown Translation Bureau, in support of the establishment of an affordable public child care system and to garner our MP's support for Bill C-263 "Anti-Scab Legislation" and when this Bill was defeated we sent thank you letters to the 3 Island MP's who supported it and a letter of disappointment to Joe MacGuire for his decision not to support it. We also sent a letter to all of the Island's MP's and Senators in support of the Canadian Media Guild who were locked out by the CBC.

## **Political Action Provincial**

On the Provincial level, the federation continued its practice of presenting our annual brief to the Provincial Cabinet and as part of our action plan we also expanded it this year to include presenting it to the Opposition too.

In this year's brief we once again urged government to finally proclaim First Collective Agreement Legislation and Pensions Legislation, to remove all overtime exemptions from the Employment Standards Act, to take the three-day Waiting Period out of the WCB Act, to institute provincial fair wage legislation on provincially funded construction projects, to do what they can to make sure the federal government not only renews the current subsidy but also makes a long term commitment to the Wood Islands Ferry Service, to rescind cutbacks to the "Best Start" program and the Children's Dental Program, to offer a constructive role in promoting and building a strong national child care program, and 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.

In addition to our brief the Federation was also very active in sending submissions to the Provincial Government. This year the federation submitted submissions on the Standard Work Week Exemption Order for Community- care facilities where we asked government to remove all overtime exemptions from the Employment Standards Act and reduce the standard work week within the Act from 48 to 40 hours, to the Forest Council asking them to adopt policies which will stop "job killing", "unsustainable" harvesting practices, and to intensify value added efforts so a greater number of jobs are created on P.E.I. by processing the wood on P.E.I., on Making the Minimum Wage a Living Wage, on GMO

food where we urged caution because of the lack of knowledge of long-term effects of Genetically Modified Organisms, and on Immigration where we asked for Canadian Immigration policy to reflect the need to recognize, attract and integrate skilled professionals and tradespeople into the Canadian workforce, the Province to address the issue of out-migration of workers on P.E.I. including the youth of this province, and the provincial government to strengthen programs and policies which address prejudice, racism and discrimination in our workplaces, schools and other settings.

We also have met with Cabinet Minister Mildred Dover in both her roles. On February 4, we met with her as Minister of Education to express our concerns with the apprenticeship program on PEI and with the way both federal and provincial governments are trying to use quick fixes to solve the impending trade shortages while ignoring the real problems facing tradespeople. On February 10, we met with her as Attorney General to express our concern about PEI being the only province in Canada not to have Pension Legislation.

The Federation has also been very active in sending letters to the Provincial government on various issues including:

**Program Renewal( February)-** where we urged the provincial government not to use the program renewal process as a way to bring in privatization and job cutbacks to the Public Service on PEI.

**Child Care** - where the federation in conjunction with the CLC stressed the importance we place on having all provinces participate in a national child care system and that the P.E.I. government take the approach of community-based non-profit delivery in its agreement with the federal government,

**EI Reform** - once again in conjunction with the CLC outlining the consequences that EI cuts have had on Island workers and the Island's economy and asked Binns to join a lobby effort to get the federal government to hand over a surplus in the EI fund and make changes to the system so more people are eligible for benefits..

**The Restructure of PEI's Health Care System** - urging the provincial government to not lose sight of the impact these cost-cutting measures will have on the affected employees, their families, the public, and the Island economy and asking them to realize that any short term savings that may come from eliminating jobs in PEI's Health Care System will come with a high long-term price tag for the Island's Health Care System and economy.

## **Educationals**

In March and October of this year, we held two very successful educationals that attracted a total of 97 union members and we will hold two others for next year. Educated workers can only reinforce our movement, allow them to better defend their brothers and sisters in the workplaces and contribute more to their own locals. We also feel that the diversity of the members and their experiences that attend our courses adds immensely to the educational value of these educationals. We hope to see many of the delegates here tonight at future educationals.

### **Press Release**

The federation has also worked hard over the last year to get its message to the public. We have issued many press releases this year on topics such as the 15 Days, 15 Ways Postcard Campaign for December 6<sup>th</sup>, The Fishery Situation in Souris, the Lack of Pension Legislation on PEI, International Women's Day, In Support of the Wood Islands Ferry Service, The Day of Mourning, The Chaoulli Ruling by the Supreme Court on Medicare, on the Federation's recent book donation to the UPEI and Provincial Libraries, and our Labour Day message for this year.

### **Donations**

On behalf of the PEI Federation of Labour, I would like to thank the Island labour movement for the generosity that it has shown this year. The donation campaign for the Day of Mourning monument that we started at last year's convention was a complete success with 32 unions contributing to the campaign to help us reach beyond our goal of \$8,000 by nearly \$ 1,000.

I would also like to thank all of our affiliates and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives who donated books to our recent donation to the UPEI and Provincial Libraries. Your generosity allowed us to donate over \$2300 worth of books, videos and CD's on labour and social issues to the PEI Provincial and UPEI Libraries.

We'd also like to thank all of our affiliates who donated prizes to our annual Labour Day celebrations.

### **Day of Mourning Monument**

It has been a very frustrating year in regards to the monument. After taking over a year to secure the land we felt the monument deserved around the Coles building and looking like we had finally overcome all the hurdles, we were able to finally install the base for the monument. Unfortunately shortly after we had the base installed, we were called before the Heritage Committee who is now recommending that we not put the monument on the land we were granted by the province and Parks. As of our printing deadline, city

Council was to rule on the recommendation on November 2nd. I would like to thank all the unions who donated to the monument, the Carpenters for installing the base, Ron MacMillan for his efforts in securing the land, and the City of Charlottetown for agreeing to do upkeep and maintenance on the monument.

### **Annual Spring Luncheon for Labour Reps and Media**

In May, we held our 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Spring Luncheon for Labour Reps and Media to meet informally with representatives of affiliated and non affiliated unions and members of the media. While media attendance has been sparse, we feel the luncheons have provided us with an excellent opportunity to meet and discuss labour issues with various heads of affiliated unions and unions we hope will become affiliated with the federation in the near future.

I have had a very busy year representing the federation as vice-chair of the newly formed Sector Council Association and as a director with Growth Works.

### **After Convention**

To end out this year, there are a number of events in the works: the federation will be apart of the Yes coalition for the November 28<sup>th</sup> plebiscite on proportional representation, lobbying our Members of Parliament on this year's CLC campaign on bankruptcy and its impact on workers salary and pension and we will be holding our annual Federation of Labour planning workshop in late November.

Also we have been continuing to meet with the executives of our affiliates to discuss any concerns or suggestions they might have for the direction of the federation. We plan to continue these meetings as time and circumstances allow because we feel feedback from our affiliates is very important. If your union wishes to meet with me to discuss any concerns you might have, please just contact our office and arrange a meeting.

### **Conclusion**

My second year as President has been an interesting and challenging one and with the support and help that the Executive Council and the affiliated unions have shown me over the past year, it is my hope that the federation will continue to grow and remain a strong voice for labour on the Island in the upcoming year and beyond.

Once again I would like to thank all those who worked so hard on behalf of the fed this year and I hope that all the delegates in attendance at this year's convention will find this year's convention enjoyable and interesting.

In Solidarity  
Carl Pursey, President