



PEI Federation of Labour Newsletter April 2005 Issue

Current News

- ❑ On Thursday, April 28, the PEI Federation of Labour will hold its Fourth Annual Provincial Day of Mourning Ceremony for workers who have been killed or injured on the job. The ceremony will be held at 7:00 pm at Province House with a reception to follow in Province House. Everyone is encouraged to attend.

- ❑ On Wednesday, April 27th from 10:30 am to 3:30 pm, a roundtable meeting will be held at the Confederation Centre of the Arts, to solicit input on Canadian public health goals from advocacy groups, associations, public health stakeholders, elected officials, and others. This meeting is a collaborative federal, provincial and territorial (FPT) initiative to raise awareness about the importance of public health. For more information visit www.healthycanadians.ca.

- ❑ On Tuesday, April 26, it was announced that a total 764 people will be leaving their civil service jobs as part of the Binns government's workforce renewal program. The 764 includes 191 seasonal workers who will not be getting government jobs this summer. The government still will not guarantee that the civil service won't be the target of lay offs in the future.

- ❑ On Thursday, April 21, it was announced that the unemployment rate on PEI for March was 10.4% up 0.2% from February 's 10.2%. You currently need 525 hours to qualify for EI on PEI.

- ❑ On Thursday, April 14, it was announced that Canada Post made \$147 million in net income for 2004 from the post office and its companies, its tenth consecutive year of profits. CUPW is calling on Canada Post to re- invest some of those profits in the health and safety of workers, public post offices, government and financial services, and increased door-to-door delivery.

- ❑ On Thursday, April 14, representatives of the fed met with Sue Folinsbee who is doing a research project for the CLC on labour's involvement and experience with essential skills. This meeting was mainly focused on how essential skills fit into apprenticeship training and the current state of the construction industry and apprenticeship on PEI.

- ❑ On Wednesday, April 13, Bill C-263, an amendment to the Canada Labour Code that would make it illegal for employers to hire replacement workers during strikes or lock-outs in federally regulated workplaces was narrowly defeated in the House of Commons. The Bloc Quebecois-sponsored bill lost by just 12 votes as Liberal cabinet ministers joined Conservatives to defeat the measure 143-131.
- ❑ On Wednesday, April 13, Health Minister, Chester Gillan announced that it will take at least six months to overhaul administration of the health care system in P.E.I. as it moves towards a central authority. Around 25 pieces of legislation will have to be changed to allow for the changes. The government has stated that the changes will save \$9 million a year.
- ❑ On Saturday, April 9, the Premier confirmed that the 52 wingmen who operate the wing and act as a second pair of eyes for the operators on provincial snow plows will see their jobs eliminated as part of the more than \$ 3 million in cuts to the Transportation and Public Works Department announced in the recent budget.
- ❑ On Wednesday, April 6, UPSE took out a full page ad in the Guardian chiding the Binns government for not discussing program renewal at the bargaining table and being less than forthcoming with details on its affects so UPSE can answer all of their members concerns. They also asked their members to carefully consider everything before signing up for the government's offer. And Finally, they ask the government to slowdown the process and use the collective bargaining process to negotiate the proper direction for the Island Public Service rather than unilaterally imposing something that could erode public services and jeopardize those that are trying to provide them.
- ❑ On Wednesday, April 6, an arbitrator in Toronto ruled that the 11 members of the CAW who are currently employed by Air Canada at the Charlottetown Airport will remain under the same terms as their present agreement once Air Canada transfers the PEI route to its regional carrier Jazz.
- ❑ On Tuesday March 29, CUPE on behalf of their PEI members placed an ad in the Guardian asking Premier Binns and other appropriate individuals to meet with them and clear up questions they have about the renewal process and how it will affect their members. The questions mentioned in the ad concerned: the impact voluntary retirement or severance options will have on their member's pensions, how conflicts between program renewal and collective agreements will be resolved, what happens if target numbers are not reached through program renewal, and the purpose of the 10-day transitional period.

□ Recently the National Union of Public and General Employees and UFCW Canada released a new study that states that the basic human right to freedom of association has been abused and eroded by Canadian governments at all levels over the past two decades. The study entitled *Collective Bargaining in Canada: Human Right or Canadian Illusion* cites 170 pieces of legislation that have denied or undermined these basic rights since 1982. The study also examines Canada's embarrassing record of compliance with the International Labour Organization's (ILO) freedom of association principles. In releasing the study, the unions announced a national labour movement campaign to restore the right to freedom of association. The campaign will include a national lobbying effort to persuade legislators that the time has come to change direction and make progressive labour law reform a top priority. The study and related documents can be found at www.labourrights.ca

Update on UFCW's Walmart Unionization Drive

□ On Saturday, May 7, from 10 am till noon in approximately 43 cities across the country including Charlottetown, the CLC will hold an event to try to put as many people as possible in front of a Wal-Mart store to greet shoppers and inform them of Wal-Mart's "every day low standards" and "race to the bottom" practices. This will be a **peaceful** day of action and is not an attempt to boycott or blockade stores. There will be key spokespersons at each location to answer media's questions in an attempt to raise awareness locally and nationally. The long-term goal is to organize Wal-Mart workers. Many Wal-Mart workers, across the country, have expressed a need and want to join a union so we as the labour movement will be supporting them. All members are urged to attend.

□ On Thursday, April 7, The Supreme Court of Canada rejected the Weyburn, Saskatchewan Wal-Mart store's application to appeal an order to hand over internal anti-union strategy documents to UFCW Local 1400. One of the company documents to be handed over is called Wal-Mart — A Manager's Toolbox to Remaining Union-Free. The union's request to the Saskatchewan Labour Relations Board to proceed with hearing an application to unionize the store is now expected to go ahead.

□ On Saturday, February 9 it was announced that Wal-Mart Canada Corp. has pleaded guilty to 25 charges of failing to notify the Ontario Workplace Safety and Insurance Board within three days of learning of injuries to its workers. Wal-Mart was fined a total of \$500,000, and ordered by operation of statute to pay a Victim Fine Surcharge of \$125,000 by the Ontario Court of Justice in Brampton.

Highlights of the Recent Provincial Budget

□ On Thursday, April 7, Provincial Treasurer Mitch Murphy delivered the government's 2005-2006 provincial budget. The highlights of this year's budget are:

- The treasurer confirmed earlier in the week, 500 jobs would be trimmed from the Island's Public Service. The budget says the jobs will be eliminated by early retirement but didn't rule out layoffs.
- The Four regional health authorities, and the Provincial Health Services Authority will be eliminated. They will be replaced by a single board to administer all health care facilities in the province. The changes are expected to eliminate approximately 200 jobs.
- The Department of Health and Social Services will be split into two separate government departments creating a new Department of Social Services and Seniors.
- Funding to the Best Start program will be restored.
- \$6.5 million will be raised this year by charging the provincial sales tax on gasoline and diesel fuel which will increase their prices by 2.3 cents per litre as of April 9.
- The corporate tax rate will drop 1% to 6.5 percent.
- The tire tax will increase to \$4 per tire.
- The Georgetown Youth Centre will be closed and the Prince Edward Island Youth Centre in Summerside will be designated as both an open and closed custody facility.
- The budget of the Human Rights Commission will be reduced by \$75,000.
- Funding for the Dental Public Health Program will be reduced by \$250,000
- Funding will be delayed for one year for the Montague Family Health Centre renovation, the Seniors Home Repair program, and the Nursing Recruitment and Retention Strategy.
- The present teacher complement will be reduced in 2005-2006 in accordance with declining enrolments.
- The operating grant to the Confederation Centre will be reduced by 5 per cent.
- The Campbell's Cove and Strathgartney campgrounds; the Fisherman's Haven and

Victoria day parks; and the Brackley and Poole's Corner Visitor Information Centres will be closed.

-The special corporate tax rate reduction for manufacturers and processors has been eliminated.

-Program renewal now be a permanent part of the provincial government bureaucracy. This year reviews will be launched to review the utilization of health professionals by examining scope of practice and to review who does school bus maintenance.

-\$600,000 for the Early Learning and Child Care initiative.

-\$1 million for UPEI and \$500,000 for Holland College.

-Government-wide services will be streamlined, including pension administration, payroll, finance, human resources, policy and planning services.

-\$2.5 million for a new French first language school in West Prince.

Highlights of the Fed's Submission on Making the Minimum Wage a Living Wage

□ On Friday, April 8, the fed sent in a Submission to the PEI Employment Standards Board in response to its annual review of the minimum wage. Here are the highlights of the 6 page submission:

-We urged the Board to create a minimum wage that is a living wage and would be reflective of the needs of the workers and their families. We set the living wage we want to see at \$10.00/hr.

- PEI workers continue to be the lowest paid in Canada and as 2002 were on average making \$50.33/ week less than the next lowest province in Atlantic Canada.

-We reminded them that 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.

-According to the 2002 Analysis of income in Canada done by Stats Canada, PEI families earn an average \$49,400/year of after-tax income which is \$11,000/year lower than the national average of \$60,500.

- Health Canada's Report entitled "The Tides of Change" links health issues to poverty. A healthy population is created by ensuring everyone has a reasonable standard of living otherwise poverty is a huge factor in low birth rates, addictions, cancers, and chronic diseases.
- We question some business advocacy groups claim that it will force some small businesses to close shop and ask what are we saying about the value of workers if we agree that in order for businesses to be successful, workers must be paid a wage that does not provide them with even a modest standard of living?
- We also question large highly profitable companies such as McDonalds and Tim Hortons that choose to reward executives, share holders and owners rather than pay workers a living wage.
- In 2003, Prince Edward Island recorded the lowest per capita disposable income in the country below each of the other Atlantic Provinces.
- Of the fifteen categories of occupations listed by Statistics Canada which included statistics from each Province with average weekly earnings in 2003, Prince Edward Island placed last among all the Provinces and Territories and well below the national average on all of these occupations.
- We questioned the myth that wages are lower on Prince Edward Island because the cost of living is so much cheaper here. We provide figures that show the cost of living on PEI is very comparable to rest of the Atlantic region and Canada.
- The long term health care costs for maintaining a low wage workforce will be borne by government and the public not by businesses which may locate to locations where pay is even less if they could. The cumulative costs of having Islanders retire into poverty after working a lifetime of low wages are also costs which will be borne by all of us.
- We also questioned the government's current attitude of allowing employers to bring in migrant workers or hire retirees to take care of so called labour shortages to avoid dealing with the real issues of wages, quality of working life and health and safety issues that make the jobs unappealing to Canadian workers.
- We also ask them to add Victoria Day and Thanksgiving Day to the list of statutory holidays for all workers on Prince Edward Island and to increase vacation pay for workers who have worked for their employer for more than eight years be increased to 6% rather than remaining at 4%.

- These are just the highlights of the submissions for the full versions please visit our website (www.peifl.ca).

Update on the Fed's Labour Movement Donation Drive to Establish a Day of Mourning Monument

□ On Saturday, November 6, 2004, at our annual convention the federation kicked off its labour movement donation drive to pay for a Day of Mourning Monument to honour all workers who have been injured or have died on worksites across PEI to be installed around Province House hopefully by the next Day of Mourning ceremony. We feel that it is very important for labour to come together and supply this very important monument to workers who paid the ultimate price. The goal for the drive is \$8,000.

- On Monday, January 10, 2005, Charlottetown City Council passed a resolution at their regular monthly Council meeting to provide upkeep and maintenance on the Day of Mourning Monument.

- Thus far, the fed has received donations from:

Union	AMOUNT
Bricklayers Local 1	\$100.00
Canadian Labour Congress	\$500.00
Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 501	\$100.00
Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 805	\$500.00
Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 1145	\$100.00
Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 1770	\$200.00
Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 1779	\$185.00
Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 1870	\$287.00
Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 2523	\$50.00
Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 3324	\$50.00
Canadian Union of Postal Workers Charlottetown Local	\$150.00
Canadian Union of Postal Workers Summerside Local	\$100.00

Communications, Energy & Paperworkers Union Local 61	\$10.00
Communications, Energy & Paperworkers Union Local 401	\$100.00
International Association of Machinists Local 1934	\$100.00
IATSE Local 906a	\$40.00
International Union of Operating Engineers Local 942	\$500.00
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 1432	\$500.00
PEI Nurse's Union	\$150.00
PEI Teacher's Federation	\$100.00
PEI Union of Public Sector Employees	\$1,500.00
Public Service Alliance of Canada Area Council	\$50.00
Canada Employment and Immigration Union PSAC Local 90154	\$50.00
Union of Canadian Transport Employees PSAC Local 60905	\$100.00
Union of Parks Canada PSAC Local 90023	\$80.00
Union of Taxation Employees PSAC Local 90002	\$200.00
Union of Veteran Affairs Employees PSAC Local 90001	\$750.00
United Brotherhood of Carpenters & Joiners of America - Local 1338	\$300.00
United Food and Commercial Workers - Local 864	\$1,000.00
Total	\$7,852.00

- The Federation of Labour would like to thank all of the affiliated, and nonaffiliated locals and the CLC who have donated to the cause so far and we hope that the rest of the Island Labour movement will show their support for this very important cause.

- So far the average contribution has been approximately a dollar per member but any contribution would be greatly appreciated.

- The commitment that has been shown to this important project thus far has been overwhelming with all the pieces coming together very nicely. With the City of Charlottetown's generous offer of upkeep and maintenance on the monument and the Island Labour movement showing tremendous support for our donation drive, the only piece that remains is securing the land for the monument and at our recent brief to cabinet we were assured by the province that the deal for the land should be completed shortly.
- If you wish to receive copies of our brochure or want to arrange for a fed representative to come to your meeting to discuss the monument. Please contact the fed's office. If you wish to keep up on what is happening with our drive please visit <http://www.peifl.ca/pages/dom2/dom.html>

Important Dates

Canadian Public Health Goals Roundtable Meeting	Wednesday, April 27, 2005 from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.	Confederation Centre of the Arts
Day of Mourning for Workers Killed and Injured on the Job	Thursday, April 28, 2005 _____	At 7:00 pm at Province House
Globalization Workshop	Saturday, April 30, 2005 from 9:00 am – 4:00pm	Has Been Cancelled due to Lack of Registrants
CLC Day of Action on Wal-Mart	Saturday, May 7, 2005 from 10 am till noon	At the Charlottetown Wal-Mart
Labour College of Canada Graduate Program	May 9 - June 3, 2005	Algonquin College ,Ottawa
25th Annual CUPE Convention	May 19 - 20, 2005	Slemon Park, Summerside
PEI Federation of Labour's Spring Luncheon for Labour Reps and Media.	Wednesday, May 25, 2005	at Noon at the Inn on the Hill (Quality Inns)
24th CLC Constitutional Convention	June 13 - 17, 2005	Credential Deadline May 13, 2005

Labour Day	Monday, September 5, 2005	
CLC Atlantic Region and P.E.I. Federation Educational	October 13 - 14, 2005	