



PEI Federation of Labour Newsletter April 2006 Issue

Current News

On Tuesday, May 2, *Prairie Giant: The Tommy Douglas* was released on DVD. Besides the movie, the 2-disc DVD offers an extra 3 hours of bonus material including deleted scenes, plus how they made actor Michael Therriault into Douglas and the town of Gravelbourg, Sask. into its 1931 equivalent.

On Saturday, April 29, the Federation's Women's Committee held a brunch to Celebrate May Day at the Dundee Arms Inn in Charlottetown. Despite a power outage, things went very well with 27 people in attendance. Guest Speaker: CLC Executive Vice President, Marie Clarke-Walker gave a very good speech on May Day, Childcare, and Pay Equity. Also at the brunch Jacinta Stewart gave a speech on the cause behind the Wraps of Love shawls that were given as door prizes at the event and on the Look Good Feel Better program which helps women living with Cancer.

On Friday April 28, there was a rally held in front of the Delta Hotel in Charlottetown to greet Prime Minister Stephen Harper as he attended the annual PEI Conservative fund-raising dinner. Approximately Fifty people from labour, environmental, and peace groups attended the rally which was hosted by the Council of Canadians. Speeches at the rally included calls for the reinstatement of the childcare deals signed with the provinces, protection of the public healthcare system, the creation of a national Pharmacare program, Global Warming, and the removal of our troops from Afghanistan. Federation President Carl Pursey gave a speech on protecting our public healthcare system, creating a national Pharmacare program, and saving the childcare deals signed with the provinces at the rally.

On Friday April 28, it was announced that the Ontario government is returning Canada's first privately-run jail to the public sector because the publicly-run jail with which it was compared to as part of the a five-year pilot project performed better in key areas such as security, health care and reducing re-offending rates.

On Thursday April 27, members of UFCW Local 864 who work at the Ocean Choice

plants in Beach Point and Souris voted 90% in favour of ratifying a new 5 year contract with the company. The contract includes a total increase of \$1.36 /hour, the addition of Thanksgiving Day as a paid holiday, and 5% vacation pay for workers on the seniority list.

On Saturday, April 22, Dean Constable defeated Mike DesRoches by a vote of 29 to 19 to become the new leader of the Island New Democrats at the party's annual convention in Summerside.

On Saturday, April 22, as part of the top 10 resolutions passed at the Island Liberal's policy convention, they passed a resolution in support of creating a dedicated Minister of Labour.

On Friday, April 21, Representatives of the Federation and CLC met with MP Wayne Easter as part of the CLC's Spring MP Lobby. The issues brought before Wayne Easter were protecting our public healthcare system, creating a national Pharmacare program, saving the childcare deals signed with the provinces, Anti-Scab legislation, and Canada Post. Mr Easter was generally supportive of our positions on these issues. He did express that he feels it will be a very hard fight to change Harpers mind on Childcare and that there maybe some opposition within the Liberal Party as far as Anti-Scab legislation goes.

On Thursday, April 20, in a show of public recognition for the Canadian Labour Congress's accomplishments and service to Canadian working families Canada Post will issue a commemorative 51-cent stamp to celebrate the CLC's 50th anniversary.

On Tuesday, April 18, it was announced that Ocean Choice is moving ahead with its plan to bring in foreign workers from eastern Europe for the 2006 season to offset staff shortages at its fish processing plants in Souris and Beach Point.

On Monday, April 17, it was announced that a poll conducted by Public Interest Alberta (PIA) and the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL) shows that only 35 % of Albertans agree with the Harper child care program. Under the former government's national child care program, The province was using the new federal money to fund a five point plan that will help to create new child care spaces in Alberta; provide subsidies for parents and subsidize the wages and training of child care workers. The poll also found that 61% of respondents said they want to see the Alberta government step up and fund the programs that would have been enabled by the previous agreement if Prime Minister Harper cuts Alberta's funding and a full 85 % agreed that the "provincial government should continue to support wages and training for childcare workers so that trained workers can keep providing high quality, affordable care to Alberta children.

On Thursday, April 13, the province filed a leave to appeal which opens the door for the P.E.I. government to challenge a Supreme Court of Prince Edward Island Appeals Division ruling calling changes to P.E.I.'s Human Rights Act a violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Eleven Islanders challenged the province's efforts to cap the compensation they received after they say they were fired because of their Liberal connections after Premier Pat Binns took office in 1996.

On Thursday, April 13, it was announced that the Quebec Superior Court has rejected Wal-Mart's effort to overturn the union certification of its store in St-Hyacinthe. St-Hyacinthe became the second unionized Wal-Mart location in North America when the employees were certified by the province's labour relations board on Jan. 14, 2005.

On Thursday, April 13, it was announced that A new book Merchandizing Prisoners: Who Really Pays for Prison Privatization ? by Byron E. Price has just been published. The book analyses the impact of private prisons in the US says mandatory minimum sentences, such as those planned by Canada's new Conservative government, are fueling a multi-billion-dollar private prison industry led by profit-motivated companies whose shares often trade on stock exchanges and have no real interest in rehabilitation. In the end, he concludes that lower cost is not the primary reason for state prison privatization. Rather, political and ideological factors such as the (political) party of the governor and the overall political and ideological culture of the state drives the privatization.

On Wednesday, April 12, it was announced that the Province is launching an extensive consultation process to see what the public, healthcare workers, and municipal governments in West Prince think of the idea of one hospital replacing the two in O'Leary and Alberton. The first public meeting will be held on April 20 at the O'Leary Lions Hall. Other meetings are scheduled for West Point, Alberton, Tignish and Palmer Road. The project committee is expected to complete their report for the Province by the end of May.

On Tuesday, April 11, it was announced that the province won't make the National Building Code the law province-wide. Currently on PEI, only Charlottetown and Summerside require construction to meet national building code standards.

On Friday, April 7, it was announced that the unemployment rate on PEI for March was 12.0% up 1.1% from February 's 10.9%. You currently need 490 hours to qualify for EI on PEI.

On Friday, April 7, it was announced that a group of ethical investors, led by the As You Sow Foundation, has asked Wal-Mart to end its history of violating fair labor laws in the United States and Canada. Citing nearly 100 formal complaints charging violation

of federal labor laws at Wal-Mart Stores, As You Sow has filed a shareholder proposal asking the company to adopt a formal policy banning all intimidation of company employees for simply exercising their right to freedom of association. Wal-Mart has been accused of spying on and firing employees suspected of being sympathetic to unions, and unlawful interrogation of employees to dissuade them from organizing. If the proposal survives an expected challenge by the company, it could be voted on by Wal-Mart shareholders in June.

On Wednesday, April 5, members of the UPEI Faculty Association voted nearly 98 % in favour of a new contract to end their two-week old strike. Under the 5-year agreement, their salaries will increase by about 15 % over the term of the contract and their workload will also be reduced by requiring professors to teach one less class over the course of the school year.

On Saturday, April 1, the Province announced that it has no intention of privatizing any of its liquor stores in spite of a recommendation from the Auditor General. The Auditor General said in his report that the government could save money if it sold off the Woods Islands, Tyne Valley, Wellington, and Borden-Carleton stores to the private-sector.

Effective April 1, 2006, the Minimum Wage in Prince Edward Island will increase from \$6.80 per hour to \$7.15 per hour.

On Friday, March 31, it was announced that the Canadian Auto Workers have won an important case in the Ontario Court of Appeal about the termination pay rights of employees who are on “temporary layoff” under the Employment Standards Act, 2000. In the judgement, the Ontario Court of Appeal ruled that recall rights in a collective agreement cannot stand in the way of a laid-off employee’s termination pay entitlement. The case came about, when an arbitrator ruled that an employee of London Machinery Inc who had been laid off for almost 9 months was not entitled to termination pay because of the recall rights provided to him in his collective agreement.

On Friday, March 31, it was announced that CUPE’s national executive board has recently passed a resolution in support of the Code Blue for child care campaign. The resolution says that CUPE will: contribute \$100,000 to the Code Blue campaign, work with Code Blue campaign organizers to bring child care advocates to CUPE meetings and CUPE members to child care campaign activities, be part of the CLC's spring lobby of MP s, and add 50,000 CUPE member signatures to the campaign’s online letter. The letter is at http://www.buildchildcare.ca/BE_petition.php/honourthem.

On Wednesday, March 29, the International Labour Organization ruled that two laws Bills 7 and 8 passed by the Quebec government in 2003, removing the union status of

25,000 residential care workers, were clear violations of ILO freedom of association principles. The UN body has also recommended the Quebec government amend the Bills to bring them into line with international standards and specifically the right to join an union. While the ILO was considering the complaint against Bills 7 and 8, the Quebec government also rammed through a separate law imposing an unprecedented seven-year contract on 500,000 hospital workers, teachers, civil servants, school support staff and other provincial public sector workers. This law has now become the subject of another ILO complaint filed by Quebec public sector unions. The ILO is responsible for monitoring and upholding international labour standards and safeguarding workers' human rights. Canada and all provinces are signatories to many ILO Conventions,

On Wednesday, March 29, it was announced that a new analysis Standing Up For Which Families? published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives finds that high-income families will receive a disproportionate share of the benefits from the Conservatives' tax-cut promises. According to the analysis the 5.4% of families earning over \$150,000 a year will receive 27.9% of the benefits from the Conservatives' tax cuts modeled in the report--an average of over \$2,010. While the (48.6%) of Canadian families that earn less than \$40,000 will receive only 20.3% of the benefits of the Conservative tax cuts, an average of just over \$163. In particular the 1% cut in the GST will only give families earning less than \$40,000 under \$129 while families with incomes over \$150,000 will receive an average of over \$900. The big thing in the analysis is that these expensive tax cuts could set the stage for cutting programs which will have a far greater effect on low-income Canadians than the relatively little they might see from these tax cuts.

On Wednesday, March 29, it was revealed that a new Statistics Canada study has looked at the working hours of 25- to 54-year-olds between 1997 and 2001 and found that only 32% of them, worked a "standard" full-year, full-time work year in every year between 1997 and 2001, and only 20 % of men and 15 % of women worked the exact same hours during the period. The study also reports that workers with unstable hours felt more stress and reported worse health than those with more stable work hours.

On Tuesday, March 28, Jim Bagnall, MLA for Montague-Kilmuir, was made minister of agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture replacing Kevin MacAdam who resigned to take a position with the new Conservative federal government. MLA Cletus Dunn will replace Bagnall as government house leader.

Effective as of March 25, the Employment Standards Act has been amended to specify that tips and gratuities are the property of the employee for whom they are intended and cannot be treated as wages or partial wages of that employee.

Report from the Fifth Annual Provincial Day of Mourning Ceremony

On Friday April 28, the PEI Federation of Labour and its affiliates in conjunction with the Workers Compensation Board and the provincial government held our Fifth Annual Provincial Day of Mourning for Workers Killed and Injured on the Job Ceremony at Province House in Charlottetown. Approximately 100 people attended this year's event.

-The solemn event started inside Province House with O Canada sung by Gaye Hood followed next by a speech on the theme for this year's ceremony "**Organizing for Healthier and Safer Workplaces**" by CLC Executive Vice President, Marie Clarke Walker. Next Provincial Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs Elmer MacFadyen spoke to those in attendance on behalf of the Province.

-Bagpiper Gord Ripley then led everyone outside for the Day of Mourning Monument Dedication and Unveiling Ceremony. Reverend Frank Gosbee a long time member of the Island Labour movement gave the Dedication Prayer. Next Federation President Carl Pursey gave a short unveiling speech then he, Marie Clarke Walker, and Elmer MacFadyen removed the covering to officially unveil the Day of Mourning Monument.

-The wreath and rose laying ceremonies came next . There were 20 wreathes laid this year including the one laid by loved ones in memory of Eric Murray who died in a farm accident in February and 18 roses were laid by loved ones in honour of workers who died on the job in previous years.

-Charlene MacInnis (Injured Workers Organizational Committee) provided the closing remarks for the ceremony, after this there was a very nice reception at the Coles Building supplied by the Provincial Government.

-The fed would like to thank everyone who helped make the event the success it was, especially Federation Secretary Donna Murphy-MacInnis, Executive Council member Leo Cheverie, and Office Secretary Marjorie Gyrus who put a lot of effort into organizing the event. A report on the ceremony with pictures and speeches will be available shortly on our website (www.peifl.ca).

Premier's Response to the Federation's Open Letter on Childcare

In a letter dated April 5, 2006, Premier Binns gave the federation his response to the open letter we sent out in early March in relation to the public stance he and his government have taken towards the recently signed childcare agreements. (See March's

Newsletter for the Federation's letter.)

Here is the letter the Premier sent us:

Dear Mr. Pursey:

-The Province of Prince Edward Island has long supported what research confirms: the long lasting impact of quality early childhood experiences for children, and its positive influence on success in school, literacy, and lifelong learning. Through our Healthy Child Development Strategy, Islanders are working to improve outcomes for children, and achieve a society and an economy that are strong and healthy.

-The Province of PEI has consulted over the last number of years with stakeholders in the early childhood sector regarding a long-term plan for investment in regulated programs, and participated in developing a national vision for early learning and child care. This was important work for the sector and for families. We are concerned that the work to date not be lost, but certainly see opportunity with the federal government to create a balanced system that can support parents choice and address the needs of the early learning and child care sector.

-This government remains committed to the \$8.2 million annual investment in regulated early childhood development initiatives. The current Early Learning and Child Care Agreement signed with the Government of Canada in December remains in effect until March 31, 2007. During this time we will evaluate progress and determine needs for a new agreement with the Government of Canada.

-The Province of PEI has a continued role in promoting quality early learning environments, and supporting parents to balance work and family responsibilities. Sustainable funding will be required to ensure all children get the best start in life. We therefore encourage ongoing consultations from our federal counterparts to ensure that new initiatives meet the early learning and child care needs of our unique province.

Sincerely,

Pat Binns
Premier of Prince Edward Island

The New Federal Accountability Act

On Tuesday, April 11, the federal government introduced its Federal Accountability Act claiming it will "put an end to the influence of money" in national politics and protect

public employees who blow the whistle on wrongdoing in their workplaces.

-The government says the legislation, if passed, will protect whistleblowers in the following ways. It will:

-(a) establish a Public Servants Disclosure Protection Tribunal and empower it to make remedial orders in favour of victims of reprisal, and to order disciplinary action against the person or persons responsible for the reprisal;

-(b) provide for the protection of all Canadians, not just public servants, who report government wrongdoings to a Public Sector Integrity Commissioner;

-(c) remove the cabinet's ability to exempt crown corporations and other public bodies from the scope of the legislation;

-(d) require the prompt public reporting by chief executives, and by the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner, of cases of wrongdoing;

-(e) permit the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner to provide access to legal advice relating to the legislation; and

-(f) authorize the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner to make awards to persons who have shown courage in defending the public interest by reporting wrongdoings.

-Public-sector employees who expose wrongdoing would be eligible for a "recognition award" of as much as \$1,000.

-The legislation will also change how political parties raise funds by banning secret donations and those by corporations, trade unions and associations. Individual donations would be capped at \$1,000. The current limit is \$5,000. It would also make it an offence to give or receive a cash donation of more than \$20.

-The Public Service Alliance of Canada welcomed the bill but expressed concerns that it may not go far enough, the government may not put in place the staff and resources needed to administer and enforce the Act efficiently, and there are limitations placed by the legislation on access to information. The union plans to conduct "a thorough analysis" to assess the real impact that the bill will have on the lives of federal employees.

Highlights of the 2006 Provincial Budget

On Thursday, March 30, Provincial Treasurer, Mitch Murphy delivered the provincial government's Budget Address to open the spring session of the legislature. Here are some of the highlights:

Finances

- Small business tax rate will be cut from 6.5 % to 1 % at a rate of 1.1% per year over the next 5 years. With the first cut to be effective on April 1, 2006.
- The 2006-07 deficit is expected to be \$12.5 million

Education

- Commit \$9 million over the next three years to implement Task Force on Student Achievement recommendations. That includes \$1 million this year, \$3 million in 2007-08 and \$5 million in 2008-09,
- Six new teachers and maintaining 30 teachers as student enrolment declines;
- UPEI gets \$1.25-million increase in their operating grant and \$1 million for the Building A Legacy campaign for capital projects.
- Holland College gets \$750,000 more
- And there was \$220,000 allocated for library collections

Health

- \$2.7 million for physician services, including recruitment in 2006-07
- \$913,000 for the reinstatement of the nurse recruitment programs.
- Increase funding by \$275,000 to the Oncology Centre.
- \$14 million for the development of the Clinical Information System.

Social Services and Seniors

- \$669,00 for a series of oral diabetes and two new oral cancer drugs to be added to the Provincial Drug Program.

- Provide \$2 million in support of rate increases at community care facilities.

Important Dates

PEI Federation of Labour's Spring Luncheon for Labour Reps and Media.	Monday, May 1, 2006	at Noon at the Inn on the Hill in Charlottetown (Quality Inns)
26 th Annual CUPE PEI Division Convention	May 11- 12, 2006	Brackley Beach North Winds Motel
Forum on Municipal Issues	June 20, 2006,	
Labour Day	Monday, September 4, 2006	
PEIFL Annual Convention	Friday and Saturday November 3 and 4, 2006	