



PEI Federation of Labour February Newsletter Issued on September 2, 2007

Current News In Brief

Deadline Set for Submissions to Workers Compensation Legislative Advisory Committee

□ May 2nd, 2007 is the Deadline set for individuals or groups to forward written submissions outlining Legislative Issues they believe should be considered by the Workers Compensation Legislative Advisory Committee. Submissions may be forwarded to: Director of Legislative Review Board, PO Box 757, 14 Weymouth Street Charlottetown, PE C1A 7L7, Email: wactreview@wcb.pe.ca. If you would like to present your submission to the Committee, please contact the Legislative Advisory Committee at 902-620-3481. The Federation is currently in the process of finalizing our brief to this committee and organizing a time for us to present it. The Federation would also like to call upon all unions on PEI to submit a brief of their own on issues of concern in order to ensure that this committee hears workers concerns regarding Worker's Compensation from as many voices as possible.

Federation of Labour to Hold Sixth Annual Provincial Day of Mourning Ceremony

□ On Saturday, April 28, the PEI Federation of Labour in conjunction with the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs and the Workers Compensation Board will hold its Sixth Annual Provincial Day of Mourning Ceremony for workers who have been killed or injured on the job. The ceremony will be held at 1:00 pm at Province House with a reception to follow. Everyone is encouraged to attend. We also ask any union who wishes to lay a wreath at the ceremony to contact our office at 368-3068; fax at 368-3192 or e-mail at: peifed@pei.aibn.com as soon as possible.

CLC Atlantic Region and the Labour College of Canada Weeklong Educational

□ From April 22 to 27, the CLC Atlantic Region and the Labour College of Canada will be holding a weeklong educational at the Memramcook Institute in St. Joseph, NB. The courses for this year will be Labour Law; Advanced Steward; and Popular Economics: If People Mattered. The Registration fee will be \$775.00 single and \$625.00 shared accommodation. For more information please contact CLC Atlantic Region at (506)858-9350; fax at (506)858-9571 or e-mail at: atlantic@clc-ctc.ca. The deadline for

applications is March 28, 2007.

Public Meeting on "Atlantica: Myths and Realities"

□ On Wednesday, April 11, 2007, there will a Public Meeting on "Atlantica: Myths and Realities" with Scott Sinclair at 7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m at the Lecture Theater, Colonel Gray Senior High School, 175 Spring Park Road, Charlottetown.

Unemployment Rate For February

□ On Friday, March 9, it was announced that the unemployment rate on PEI for February was 10.1% down 0.6% from January's 10.7%. You currently need 490 hours to qualify for EI on PEI

CUPE Holds First Ever Political Action Conference

□ On Tuesday, February 27, More than 60 union activists from all over P E I participated in the first ever Political Action Conference organized on the Island for CUPE members. Among the issues the participants decided were key to put to the forefront during the next provincial election were: health care services, hours of care in nursing homes, high cost of post secondary education, childcare services, the poverty of working families and minimum wage.

Biggest Pension Trial in Canadian History Resumes in Ottawa

□ On Tuesday, February 27, it was announced that the biggest pension trial in Canadian history will resume this week to decide the fate of \$30 billion in surplus public sector pension funds confiscated by the federal government to help pay down the national debt. Lawyers representing nearly 700,000 federal workers and pensioners will argue during the Ontario Superior Court trial that the federal government has no right to the surpluses and that the money should be put back into the pension accounts of federal public employees, the military and the RCMP. The trial originally began more than a year ago but was bogged down on arguments over 128 internal and secret government documents. The material has since been deemed admissible as evidence.

Temporary Foreign Worker's Work Stay Period Extended

□ On Friday, February 23, the federal government announced that temporary foreign workers looking to come to Canada to tap into one of the many sectors short of employees can now stay for up to two years an increase from the previous period of 12 months. Nannies and others that come to Canada under the Live-in Caregiver Program will now be able to stay for three years and three months, up from a year. The application process will also be simplified, with application forms becoming available online starting April 1. The process used to be completed through mail-in applications. The BC Federation of Labour has condemned the move as just a cheap labour strategy for employers that does nothing to build our immigration system or invest in the skills

training our country needs. It also does nothing to ensure that even the most basic labour standards are monitored and enforced which means that Foreign workers have very little protection from exploitation by their employer. In 2004, more than 90,000 foreign workers came to Canada. The highest number of those came from the United States, Mexico and the United Kingdom.

Members of CUPE local 3324 Vote to Accept First Contract

□ On Wednesday, February 21, Paramedics on P.E.I. represented by CUPE local 3324 voted 57% in favour of accepting their first contract with Island EMS. The four year deal, retroactive to September 2005 closes the wage gap between Island paramedics and their Nova Scotia counterparts. Wage increases will range between 14.2% and 24.2% depending on paramedic classification. The deal also includes a shorter workweek of 48-hours down from a work week which had ranged between 48 to 60 hours. There will also be financial assistance available from the company for paramedics looking to upgrade their skills.

City of Summerside's Employees Raise Money for the United Way

□ On Tuesday, February 20, the United Way announced that the City of Summerside's employees, including members of CUPE and IBEW Local 1432 through a payroll deduction campaign have raised \$1,580.00 for the United Way of PEI. Monies raised go right back in to the Summerside and the Island community in the form of 31 Priority Programs.

Maritime Electric Employees Raise Money for the United Way

□ On Tuesday, February 20, the United Way announced that the members of IBEW Local 1432 employed at Maritime Electric were part of a recent workplace fund raising campaign that raised \$17,474 for the United Way.

Statscan Releases Study On Workplace Violence in Canada

□ On Monday, February 19, Statistics Canada released a new study on workplace violence. Respondents reported more than 356,000 violent incidents in Canadian workplaces. The majority, 71%, were classified as physical assaults. Nearly 20% of all incidents of violent victimization occurred in the workplace in 2004. The study also found that men and women were equally likely to have reported experiencing workplace violence, but men were more likely to be injured. Specifically, 27% of incidents involving male victims resulted in injuries, compared with 17% for female victims. Violence was also much more common in certain employment sectors. 33% of all workplace violent incidents involved a victim who was working in social assistance or health care areas such as hospitals, nursing or residential care facilities. The study used self-reported data from a 'general social survey' of approximately 24,000 households concerning the prevalence of violence over a 12-month period related to three offences

(physical assault, sexual assault and robbery).

Province Announces Spending On Child Care

□ On Thursday, February 15, the provincial government announced that they will finally release the \$4.2 million held in trust as part of the Early Learning and Child Care Agreements of 2005 to improve Child Care on PEI. The money will be used to boost child care in four target areas : more child-care subsidies for low- and middle- income parents, ongoing funding tied to centres meeting quality standards, a campaign stressing the importance of early education and parental involvement , and Research to measure children's development and learning.. Beginning in 2009, the Province will also increase its annual contributions to early learning by \$1.8 million from the present \$8 million.

NDP Introduce Bill to Create National Flag Day

□ On Thursday, February 15, NDP MP Peggy Nash introduced a private member's bill to declare Flag Day, Feb. 15, a federal holiday. Flag Day would celebrate the first time that the Maple Leaf Flag was flown over Parliament Hill on February 15, 1965.

Wal-Mart Faces Biggest Gender Discrimination Case in U.S. History

□ On Tuesday, February 6, the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled to allow a complaint lodged against Wal-Mart by six women in 2001 to go forward as a class-action case upholding a 2004 lower court ruling. The decision means that more than one million past and present female Wal-Mart employees may seek compensation for lost pay and damages in the biggest gender discrimination case in U.S. history , an action that could cost the company billions of dollars to resolve. The suit alleges that Wal-Mart advances male employees more quickly than female employees; denies female employees equal job assignments, promotions, training and compensation; and retaliates against those who oppose their practices. The company has denied the allegations and stated that it will appeal the ruling to a larger panel of the 9th Circuit, and the U.S. Supreme Court if necessary.

Montague Man Dies in Workplace Accident

□ On Friday, February 2, A 34-year-old Montague man, Kenneth Duffenais, was killed after being caught in the clamps of a tree harvester in Avondale. His death was the second workplace fatality on P.E.I. in less than two weeks. The Occupational Health and Safety Division of the WCB is investigating the fatality.

Articles for This Issue

The George MacInnis Memorial Scholarship

-This year the PEI Federation of Labour will be awarding two (2) scholarships of \$500.00 each for students who are graduating high school this year and attending their first year at a Holland College, Trades division course (i.e. Automotive Technology, Carpentry, Electrical - Construction and Industrial, Electromechanical Technology, Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning Technology, Plumbing, Precision Machinist, Steamfitting/PipeFitting, and Welding Fabrication).

-Besides this, there are two other criteria necessary to apply for these scholarships:

1. The applicants have to be sons, daughters, or legal wards of members in good standing of a local affiliated to the PEI Federation of Labour
2. The applicant must write an essay of approximately 250 words on **“Why Unions are Important in Today’s Society?”**

-If you wish to apply, please submit the application with written essay to: PEI Federation of Labour, 22 Enman Crescent, Charlottetown, PEI, C1E 1E6. Telephone: (902) 368-3068; Fax: (902) 368-3192. E-mail: peifed@pei.aibn.com.

-The application form and essay must be received by the PEI Federation of Labour no later than **October 15, 2007**. The application form is available through our office or online at <http://www.peifl.ca/pages/schol/aplggmschol07.pdf>.

Commons Committee Passes Two Private Members Bills on EI

□ On Thursday, March 1, 2007 the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources (HUMA) passed two private members bills on EI.

1. The first bill, Bill C-269 improves access to EI benefits by lowering the entrance requirement by 70 hours in all regions, so the qualifying period would be between 350 and 630 hours depending on the local unemployment rate, significantly down from the current range of 420 to 700 hours. The new entrant/re-entrant threshold of 910 hours would be lowered to 840 hours. It would also improve benefits considerably for those who qualify. It raises maximum insurable earnings slightly to \$41,500; eliminates the 2 week waiting period for benefits; raises the benefit rate from 55% to 60% of weekly earnings (up to the maximum); and bases benefits on the best 12 weeks of earnings. The maximum duration of benefits would also be increased, to between 18 and 50 weeks depending on the local unemployment rate. The minutes show that the Bill was carried with unanimous consent, except those provisions lowering the entrance requirement which appear to have been opposed by the Conservatives. (There was no recorded vote.)

2. The Committee also passed - against Conservative opposition - Bill C-278 which increases the maximum duration of sickness benefits from 15 to 50 weeks.

Canada's Growing Income Gap at New 30-year High

□ On Thursday, March 1, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) released a new study, *The Rich and the Rest of Us: The Changing Face of Canada's Growing Gap*, that says Canada's income gap between the rich and poor is growing, largely because the lion's share of Canada's economic growth is going to the richest 10% of families. It's not going to the majority, the 80% of families earning under a \$100,000. The study, looks at the earnings and after-tax incomes of Canadian families raising children under 18, comparing families in the late 1970s and those in the early 2000s. The study finds:

- In 2004, the richest 10% of families earned 82 times more than the poorest 10% almost triple the ratio of 1976, when they earned 31 times more. In after-tax terms the gap is at a 30-year high.
- Between 1976-79 the bottom half earned 27% of total earnings. Between 2001-04 that dropped to 20.5%, though they worked more. Up to 80% of families lost ground or stayed put compared to the previous generation, in both earnings and after-tax terms. The poorest saw real incomes drop.
- All but the richest 10% of families are working more weeks and hours in the paid workforce (200 hours more on average since 1996) yet only the richest 10% saw a significant increase in their earnings at 30%.

-The full study is available at:

http://policyalternatives.ca/documents/National_Office_Pubs/2007/The_Rich_and_the_Rest_of_Us.pdf

Press Conference to Launch Atlantica Myths and Reality Study

□ On Thursday, February 15, The PEI Federation of Labour along with CUPE PEI, UPSE, the Council of Canadians, and the Mackillop Centre for Social Justice held a press conference at the Murphy Community Center in Charlottetown to launch the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Study "Atlantica Myths and Reality". The press conference was part of the Atlantic province-wide launch of the study by Scott Sinclair. The 4 Atlantic Federations of Labour and the CLC commissioned the study.

-Attending the press conference were Leo Broderick representing the Council of

Canadians who emceed the press conference and talked a little about the environmental impacts of Atlantica, Carl Pursey President of the PEI Federation of Labour who gave a general overview of the Atlantica concept, Mary Boyd - MacKillop Centre for Social Justice who talked on the unsustainable energy policies contained in the Atlantica proposal, Donald Macdonald President CUPE PEI who talked on deregulation and the threat to our public services, Mike DesRoches - Third Vice President UPSE who talked on the threats to unions, the lower labour standards and low-wages that the Atlantica proposal will bring to Atlantica Canada if the proposal becomes reality.

-Here is the press release that Federation President Carl Pursey based his speech at the press conference on:

-Today, the PEI Federation of Labour would like to stand in full support of the well-documented study "Atlantica: Myths and Reality". We feel that the findings in this publication "should be a wake-up call for Premier Binns and the governments of the three other Atlantic provinces.

-The study "Atlantica: Myths and Reality" by Scott Sinclair was done for and is published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), following a request from the labour movement for an objective and comprehensive study of the Atlantica proposal.

-Atlantica which is 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 the region becoming a conduit for Asian goods destined for the American heartland and in accelerating energy exports to the north-eastern U.S.

-The proposal also states that:

- minimum wages are too high on both sides of the border.
- 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

-The Federation 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.

-Rather than the flawed and unrealistic Atlantica proposal, the PEI Federation of Labour would urge the Atlantic Provincial governments to consider the alternatives that Scott Sinclair suggests in his study. Which are to:

1. increase intra-Canadian trade and diversify Atlantic Canadian trade to other international markets, Europe for example. The Halifax port is closer to Europe than Asia. This port should also be looking at handling more traffic destined to and from Canadian markets. We should also be looking to improve our rail infrastructure and use our roads less often to transport goods.
2. Develop a long-term energy policy for Atlantic Canada that conserves non-renewable resources and uses them wisely in a transition to safe, renewable forms of energy. In an era where we are seeing more and more the negative impact that we are having on our environment, it would be more profitable and sustainable to look at ways that we can work with our American neighbours to decrease carbon and greenhouse gas emissions rather than moving ahead with a proposal like Atlantica that will only increase them.

-As you can see in Mr Sinclair's study, the proponents of Atlantica are trying to distort our past, dismiss our present reality, and sellout our future all in an attempt to forward their right wing agenda.

-"Working families should be very concerned about the Atlantica proposal because their best interests are not being considered. 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. We can not allow them to succeed" says Carl Pursey, president of the Prince Edward Island Federation of Labour.

-"We intend to promote the findings of this document as much as possible to our members, the public, our government and with anybody that will listen to us" concludes Carl Pursey

-We hope that all of our government leaders and economic decision-makers will read this study and join with us in putting 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.

-The Federation now has a webpage for the press conference that include the press release, a link to Scott Sinclair full study, and a picture from the conference at <http://www.peifl.ca/pages/press/presAtlantica07.html>.

-The full "Atlantica: Myths and Reality" study is available at <http://policyalternatives.ca/Reports/2007/02/ReportsStudies1549/index.cfm?pa=BB736455>

Important Dates

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| Meeting With Peter Stoffer, NDP MP Sackville - Eastern Shore | Tuesday, March 6, 2007 | At 1:00 p.m. at the Inn on the Hill, Charlottetown |
| The C.L.C. Atlantic Region and P.E.I. Federation Educational | Thursday, March 8, 2007 | 8:30 am - 5:00 pm at the Murphy's Community Center (former Basilica Rec Center) 200 Richmond Street, Charlottetown, P.E.I. |
| Federation's International Women's Day Event | Thursday, March 8, 2007 | 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm at the Murphy's Community Center (former Basilica Rec Center) 200 Richmond Street, Charlottetown, P.E.I. |
| International Women's Day Celebration | Thursday, March 8, 2007 | 7 pm, Georgian Room, Charlottetown Hotel. Reception followed by a Round table discussion and a special ceremony honouring Island women labour leaders. For information call CUSO at 892-2610 or 1 800 676-8411 |

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| Federal Budget Watch 2007 | Monday, March 19, 2007 | at 4:45 pm at the PSAC Office, Yates Building, 1 Harbourside, Charlottetown |
| Annual Brief to Cabinet and the Opposition | Tuesday, March 27, 2007 | |
| Provincial Budget | Tuesday, April 10, 2007 | |
| Public Meeting on "Atlantica: Myths and Realities" with Scott Sinclair. | April 11, 2007 | At 7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m at the Lecture Theater, Colonel Gray Senior High School, 175 Spring Park Road, Charlottetown |
| Workers Compensation Board's 8th Annual Workplace Health and Safety Conference | April 25-26, 2007 | Delta Prince Edward, Charlottetown |
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| CLC Atlantic Region and Labour College of Canada Weeklong Educational | April 22 to 27, 2007 | Memramcook Institute St. Joseph, NB Deadline March 28, 2007 |
| Sixth Annual Provincial Day of Mourning for Workers Killed and Injured on the Job | Saturday, April 28, 2007 | at 1:00 P.M. at Province House |
| Deadline for Written Submissions to the Worker's Compensation Legislative Advisory Committee | Wednesday, May 2nd, 2007 | |

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| 27th Annual CUPE Prince Edward Island Division Convention | May 17 - 18, 2007 | Loyalist Lakeview Resort, Summerside |
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