



# PEI Federation of Labour Newsletter March 2006 Issue

## Current News

On Saturday, April 29, the Federation's Women's Committee will be holding a brunch to Celebrate May Day at 10:00 am at the Dundee Arms Inn in Charlottetown with Guest Speaker: CLC Executive Vice President Marie Clarke-Walker. Tickets will be \$10.00. If you are interested in attending please contact our office at 368-3068; fax at 368- 3192 or e-mail at: [peifed@pei.aibn.com](mailto:peifed@pei.aibn.com). The deadline for people interested in attending will be April 24, 2006.

On Saturday, April 29, there will be a public forum to discuss electoral reform. The public forum will be held at St. Peter's Church Hall in Charlottetown, with registration at 9:30 a.m. The \$20 registration covers the cost of lunch and facility rental. Those interested are urged to register early, since space will be limited. For information or to register, contact planning committee member Harry Baglole at 675-4134 or [harry@theIRISgroup.ca](mailto:harry@theIRISgroup.ca).

On Friday, 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 Fifth 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 at the Coles building. At this year's ceremony, the Day of Mourning Monument will be officially unveiled and CLC Executive Vice President Marie Clarke Walker will be in attendance. 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](mailto:peifed@pei.aibn.com) as soon as possible.

From April 23 to 28, 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; Communications et Medias (Francais); Health & Safety - New Strategies for Building Activism and Democracy, Safety and Environment; and Leadership. The Registration fee will be \$750.00 single and \$600.00 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](mailto:atlantic@clc-ctc.ca). The deadline for applications is March 29, 2006.

On April 20 and 21, the Workers Compensation Board will be holding its 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Workplace Health and Safety Conference at the Delta Prince Edward Hotel in Charlottetown. Cost of the two day conference will be \$150/person. The deadline for registrations is April 13, 2006. For more information Phone: 368-5697 toll-free: 1-800-237-5049. The brochure for the conference is available on the WCB website at [http://www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/wcb\\_whscon06.pdf](http://www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/wcb_whscon06.pdf).

On Thursday, April 20, the CLC and the PEI Federation of Labour will be holding a workshop to teach union members how to lobby politicians on issues of concern to our members at 7:00pm at the Best Western in Charlottetown. There is no registration cost for the workshop and the deadline for application is April 18, 2006. If you are interested in attending please contact our office.

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 24, Newfoundland Premier Danny Williams announced that his government will make a \$24-million payment to five public sector unions to resolve a long standing pay-equity battle. In 1991, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the province's pay package was discriminatory to those in female dominated job classes. It also held, however, that the province had justification because of its serious financial position at the time. Now that it is in better shape officials from (NAPE/NUPGE), the Association of Allied Health Professionals, CUPE, IBEW, and the Labrador Nurses' Union called for the issue to be revisited. The \$24 million will be applied to close to 20,000 members of all five Unions who were affected during the 1988-1991 period.

On Thursday, March 23, it was announced that the spring session of the legislature will open March 30 at 7 p.m. with the delivery of the Budget Address by the Provincial Treasurer, Mitch Murphy.

On Wednesday, March 22, it was announced that UPSE has sent out the Island Light a four-page newsletter to all Island households in which they defend the services that public employees provide and protest the heavy-handed manner in which the Conservative administration has tried to dig itself out of a self-imposed financial hole by dumping employees from its payroll. The newsletter also encourages Islanders to contact the premier's office with their concerns about the way the government has treated the public service. The newsletter is available on their website at <http://www.peiupse.ca/Publications/Householder.pdf>.

On Wednesday, March 22, CUPW launched a new campaign called "Operation Transparency," with the delivery of a public ultimatum to Canada Post. They have asked Canada Post to disclose the plans for postal services by May 15, 2006, or face escalating actions that could go as far as non-violent civil disobedience. The campaign was developed amid the furor surrounding Canada Post's announcement, last summer, that it would close its mail sorting plant in Quebec City and review its entire network of post offices and plants. Over 800 municipalities, more than 130,000 petitioners, thousands of postal workers, many federal MP's and the Federation have expressed concern about plans to dismantle other post offices and plants.

On Tuesday, March 21, the 375 members of UPEI's Faculty Association started a legal strike against UPEI after talks to try and hammer out a deal between the association and the university broke down late Monday evening. The striking faculty members are demanding wage parity with other universities, and reduced workloads. Other issues at the table include job security for part-time sessional instructors and the elimination of mandatory retirement.

On Tuesday, March 21, it was announced that a KPMG study has found that Canada is still the cheapest place to do business among G7 countries, even though the rising dollar has eroded some of its advantage over the United States which is used as a benchmark. In 2006, the cost of setting up and running a business in Canada for 10 years is 5.5-per-cent lower than in the U.S. thanks to lower wages, lower employer costs for private medical coverage, electricity and facility costs. KPMG's bi-annual study measures 27 cost components, such as labour, taxes, utilities and real estate.

On Monday, March 20, Progressive Conservative candidate Olive Crane defeated Liberal candidate John Cameron by 183 votes to win the Morell-Fortune Bay byelection. In the vote, Olive Crane (PC) got 1,233 votes, John Cameron (Lib) got 1050 votes, and J'Nan Brown (NDP) got 35 votes. The riding, which was recently held by the former minister of agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture Kevin MacAdam, has been PC for more than 45 years. MacAdam recently resigned to accept a position with the federal government.

On Friday, March 17, it was announced that Island hog producers are preparing to buy out the majority shareholders of Garden Province Meats. This comes after Maple Leaf Foods, the majority shareholder, announced on Thursday that they were pulling out of the facility. Maple Leaf Foods is willing to sell its 51 per cent share of the plant for a one dollar, the same price that the company paid for the shares in 1994. Most Island hogs are sent to the plant which employs more than 100 Islanders. Without the plant, farmers would have to ship their hogs off the Island for slaughter.

On Thursday, March 16, it was announced in a study by the Canada research chair in Island Studies at U.P.E.I. that people move to PEI for its quality of life but they leave if they cannot find work. The study was based on 320 people who moved to the Island from 1998 to 2003 to find out why they came and why they left. The study also stated that many immigrants felt that they were discriminated against as people who come from away and that most immigrants to the Island come from other provinces mainly Ontario, not other countries. The results will be given to the provincial government and used to help design a new strategy to attract and retain immigrants.

On Wednesday, March 15, Roy Adams, emeritus professor of industrial relations at McMaster University in Hamilton, launched his new book “Labour Left Out: collective bargaining as a human right” which reports on his research into the failure of Canadian governments to protect and promote the collective bargaining rights of both unionized and non-unionized workers in this country. Labour Left Out is published by the Canadian Centre of Policy Alternatives (CCPA).

On Wednesday, March 15, it was announced that Prairie Giant: The Tommy Douglas Story attracted very respectable numbers with 950,000 viewers on Sunday against the much-hyped return of The Sopranos and an original episode of Desperate Housewives, and 750,000 coming back for part two on Monday.

On Monday, March 13, it was announced that the unemployment rate on PEI for February was 10.9% up .1% from January’s 10.8%. You currently need 525 hours to qualify for EI on PEI.

On Thursday, March 9, The C.L.C. Atlantic Region and P.E.I. Federation held a one day educational at the Howard Johnson, Dutch Inn and even though the Global Solidarity course had to be cancelled due to lack of registrants, the Shop Steward Level 2 course went ahead and was well attended with 30 participants. In honour of March 8<sup>th</sup> ‘s International Women’s Day, the Federation’s Women’s Committee asked UPSE President, Sandy MacKay and PSAC Regional Rep in PEI, Mary Macneill to speak to the participants during the lunch break on child care. Sandy MacKay spoke on UPSE’s efforts to unionize PEI’s childcare workers and Mary MacNeill spoke on the CODE BLUE for Child Care Campaign. Also In honour of International Women’s Day, the Federation’s Women’s committee distributed and got signatures on approximately 300 postcards as part of the CLC’s “Women are (still) waiting” postcard campaign in the days leading up to March 8<sup>th</sup>.

On Tuesday, March 7, it was announced that Aliant plans to convert its telephone and Internet divisions into an income trust this summer, adding on Bell Canada's land-line customers in rural Ontario and Quebec effectively doubling Aliant’s size.

Meanwhile, Montreal-based BCE will take over Aliant's mobility cellphone division and its DownEast Communications retail outlets. Aliant says there will be no layoffs as a result of this restructuring but the Communication, Energy and Paperworkers union have expressed scepticism about this claim. The Province has also expressed serious concern over this restructuring due to losses in corporate tax revenue because of the income trust structure. The newly formed company is expected to be up and running by this fall with its headquarters in Halifax.

On Monday, March 6, provincial treasurer, Mitch Murphy announced that the province has decided to achieve a \$3 million savings goal largely by slashing staff in its information technology services. As a result, the number of employees who provide IT services will decline from the current level of 182 to "below 140 positions" by 2007. UPSE has expressed surprise and disappointment that the government will use layoffs to achieve this goal and has also expressed concern over the affect the layoffs will have on service levels.

On Thursday, March 2, it was announced that the Island NDP will choose a new provincial leader on April 22 at the Linkletter Inn and Convention Centre in Summerside. The party has been without a leader since Gary Robichaud resigned last year to battle cancer. Federal NDP leader Jack Layton is expected to attend the leadership convention. Michael Desroches 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President of UPSE and Dean Constable are the only declared leadership candidates thus far.

## **The Fight to Maintain Federal-Provincial Childcare Agreements**

On Thursday, March 23, it was announced that in a survey, conducted between Feb. 16 and March 9 of 150 Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) across Canada, only 9% believe that ending the child care agreements should be a priority for the new Conservative government. Also in the survey, more than 20 per cent of top executives said the government should not cancel the federal-provincial child care agreements signed last year. A further 37 per cent said the cancellation should be a low priority.

On Tuesday, March 21, it was announced that a new report by the YWCA Canada says that most Canadian parents – whether they work in or outside of the home – want a publicly funded national child care program rather than the child care allowance proposed by Canada's new Conservative minority government. The community task forces established to gather views for the report concluded that both at-home and working parents, irrespective of whether they live in urban, suburban or rural Canada, value early learning for their children and support an affordable and accessible national child care program. The panels were comprised of business, labour, aboriginal, ethnic, community, women's and parent groups, profit and non-profit service providers and

municipal and provincial officials from 4 representative Canadian communities Halifax, Cambridge, Ont., Martensville, Sask., and Vancouver . The Participants met over the course of a year to examine child care service frameworks. According to experts the Harper government's plan will see some middle income parents realize as little as \$8 per week after taxes. The 63 page report is available at [http://www.ywca.ca/public\\_eng/online\\_catalog/downloads/Childcare\\_Analysis Recommendations.pdf](http://www.ywca.ca/public_eng/online_catalog/downloads/Childcare_Analysis_Recommendations.pdf).

On Friday, March 17, the Saskatchewan legislature unanimously passed a motion to support a made-in-Saskatchewan child care plan, and to express their dissatisfaction with the federal Conservatives' plan to axe child care agreements signed with the provinces last year. Copies of the motion were sent by the Legislature to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, the federal Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, and the leaders of the federal opposition parties.

There is an open letter to Stephen Harper and the provincial premiers urging them to honour the federal-provincial agreements on child care available online at [http://www.buildchildcare.ca/BE\\_petition.php/honourthem](http://www.buildchildcare.ca/BE_petition.php/honourthem). Currently over 26,000 Canadians have signed it.

On Friday, March 3, In response to the comments Premier Binns made about the recently signed provincial-federal child care agreements at our recent brief to Cabinet and the public stance he and his government have taken in media releases. The Federation sent out an open letter to Premier Binns and the Media.

- Here is the letter we sent:

An Open Letter to Premier Binns and the Media on Child Care

-As we expressed in our recent brief to cabinet, the P.E.I. Federation of Labour is very concerned with Premier Binns' support of Prime Minister Harper's so-called child-care plan and we urge him to reconsider his position.

-Harper's plan simply rehashes the child-care platform of the former Harris government in Ontario, which failed dismally. Harris provided a child-care supplement that produced no child care and a tax initiative for child-care construction that did not build a single space.

-To say that P.E.I. will be better off with Harper's plan is ludicrous. The national system of early learning and child care is in its infancy. The foundation is barely in place. It would be a terrible pronouncement on our society if, after years of trying to build a

system of early learning and child care, that the premier would support this new minority government in its attempt to wipe out with the stroke of a pen efforts to help strengthen families and advance women's equality, not to mention the plans provinces have put in place on the faith of a signed agreement with the Government of Canada.

-These agreements were signed with the Government of Canada and not with a particular political party. We believe it is important that this government be held accountable and that these agreements and investments in our children continue.

-In terms of money, we are very concerned with the way the Binns government is trying to continue the myth that Islanders with children of child-care age will actually receive \$1,200 per year. As a taxable allowance, there is a good chance that very few Islanders will receive the full \$1,200 and even if they were to receive the full allowance, not only is it just a drop in the bucket as far as child-care expenses go, but it also does very little to provide Islanders with the quality and accessible child care-system Islanders need and deserve.

-While we welcome any form of income support for Island families and we hope that this can be integrated with the current plan, there is no way that this allowance can be viewed as a replacement for a national early learning and child-care system.

-Another big problem built into Harper's child-care plan is that with little to no accountability built into the plan, there is no guarantee of how much of the money will be actually used for child care.

-What Island families need most from our provincial and federal governments is to work together to start to build towards an affordable, public-funded, non-profit, child-care system based on the QUAD principles (quality, universally inclusive, accessible and developmental) that affords the workers who work with our children the wages and benefits they need to provide for their families as they care for ours. While we will not say that the current agreement is perfect, it is a start towards building a child-care system that truly serves Island families.

-Supporting Prime Minister Harper's child-care plan is truly a large step backwards for the Binns government and the Island child-care system. Once again, we urge Mr. Binns to reconsider his position on this issue.

Sincerely Yours,  
Carl Pursey,  
President of the PEI Federation of Labour

## **Highlights of the Federation's Submission to the Employment Standards Review**

On March 10, The federation sent in its submission to the Employment Standards Review Committee. The federation did its presentation before the committee on March 30 at 9:00 am.

-Here are the highlights of the Submission. A full copy of the Submission will be available shortly on our website.

**Importance of Employment Standards** -The Federation expressed the importance of having employment standards to set a socially acceptable minimum floor of labour rights and standards for workers. Especially since, Islanders live in an economy with significant unemployment (including high levels of disguised unemployment in involuntary part-time and very precarious, insecure and badly paid jobs), that allows employers to pay very low wages and provide substandard working conditions.

**Changing Realities and Key Challenges** - Next, we rejected the view of many employers and policy-makers that promotion and enforcement of basic standards is dated and somehow out of tune with the needs of the new economy; expressed our belief that decent standards must be seen as a central part of a modern, highly productive economy based upon skilled and knowledgeable workers; and expressed the fact that there is no contradiction between promoting high labour standards and building a highly productive economy.

-Next we got into some specific areas in the legislation that need to be improved such as:

**Overtime Exemptions** - We urged the Provincial government to remove all overtime exemptions from the Employment Standards Act.

**Standard Work Week** - The Federation urged the Provincial government to change overtime rules in the Employment Standards Act from requiring overtime be paid after 48 hours have been worked to requiring overtime be paid after over 8 hours per day or 40 hours per week have been worked in order to bring PEI more in line with the majority of Canada.

**Right to Refuse Overtime** - We asked the provincial government to add an employee's right to refuse overtime into PEI's employment standards similar to Saskatchewan's provisions.

**Statutory Holidays** - In order to bring PEI more in line with all other Canadian jurisdictions outside of Atlantic Canada, we requested that the provincial government add Victoria Day and Thanksgiving Day as statutory holidays.

**Minimum Duration of Vacations** - We recommended that after 5 years of continuous employment on Prince Edward Island that employees be granted three weeks of annual vacation with pay or 6% vacation pay to bring us more in line with most Canadian jurisdictions.

**Maternity and Parental Leave** - We urged the provincial government to adjust maternity/parental leave rules to allow continuation of benefit plans during their leave and to add provisions for pregnancy, birth and post-partum complications.

**Bereavement Leave** - the Federation asked the government to change PEI's bereavement leave for an immediate family member from 3 days unpaid leave to add one day of paid leave (as in Newfoundland and Quebec) and 4 days unpaid leave. 5 days of unpaid leave total is standard in most provinces in Canada.

**Minimum Wage Should Be a Living Wage** - We urged the government to do what it can 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.

**Notice of Termination** - Since PEI is the only jurisdiction in Canada which does not require a minimum notice period prior to any permanent layoff of a group of employees, The PEI Federation of Labour suggested that if a company intends to layoff 10 or more employees in an establishment within 4 weeks of each other there should be a layoff notice of 8 weeks for 10-99 employees, 12 weeks for 100 to 299 employees, and 16 weeks for layoffs of over 300 employees. If the company does not give the proper notice, the employee shall be paid their regular wages for the number of required notice weeks in lieu of notice.

**Compliance and Effective Enforcement** - We stressed that a central priority for the Federation in this review is to ensure that measures are put in place so that there is effective employer compliance with and enforcement of the Act because there is little ultimate point in proposing or legislating substantive improvements in employment standards if they do not become the lived reality of our workplaces. It is incumbent upon the Province, not just to set a decent minimum floor of rights and standards in law, but also to ensure that the law is effectively communicated and enforced. we urged them to do this by getting away from the current system of complaint enforcement to a more proactive system of enforcement and education.

## **Federation President's Speech From the UPEI Faculty Strike Rally**

On Thursday, March 30, the striking faculty members at UPEI held a rally at the Confederation Center in Charlottetown. Approximately 300 people attended the rally including members of various other unions who attended to show support for the strikers. Federation President Carl Pursey spoke on behalf of the Federation at the rally. Other union speakers at the rally included Sandy MacKay (UPSE), Kim Coles (PSAC), Bill MacKinnon (CUPE), Noel Pauley (CEP) and Seana Evans-Renaud (P.E.I. Teacher's Federation). At the rally, Wayne Peters, president of the UPEI Faculty Association, expressed appreciation for the support they are receiving from other Island union members.

- Here is the speech Carl gave:

-On behalf of the PEI Federation of Labour and its 10,000 members here on PEI, I would like to thank you for inviting me here to speak to you today and offer you our support in your struggle.

-Wage Parity is an issue that faces too many Island workers. As we just expressed to the Employment Standards Review Committee this morning, we are tired of seeing Island workers being treated as second class citizens. Workers on PEI are as educated and skilled as any worker elsewhere in this country and should be paid accordingly.

-I would also like to express our deep concern with Premier Binns saying in the media that his Government is even contemplating bringing back to work legislation against you. Workers on the Island and all Across Canada have fought hard for years for the right of free collective bargaining and this very basic labour right should never be tampered with by our elected officials.

-Education Workers such as yourself have a very important role to play in our society, educating students who will determine the competitiveness and economic success of PEI in the future. Because of this, all our students need and deserve to be taught by the best educators available. The only way that this will be possible is if University Administrators realize that you deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.

-Our government, be it Federal or Provincial, have not made education the priority it needs to be which is shameful considering the importance education will play in securing our future. Our Federation has lobbied our provincial government on numerous occasions for them to put more money into education and we will certainly continue to do so.

-In closing, again I would like to want to thank you for inviting me to speak to you today and if there is any support the Federation can offer you please don't hesitate to ask.

## **Important Dates**

<b>Presentation to Employment Standards Review</b>	<b>Thursday, March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2006</b>	<b>at 9:00 a.m.</b>
<b>Provincial Budget Address</b>	<b>Thursday, March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2006</b>	<b>at 7 p.m.</b>
<b>Workshop on Lobbying</b>	<b>Thursday, April 20, 2006</b>	<b>7:00pm at Best Western Charlottetown Deadline for application: April 18, 2006</b>
<b>WCB's 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Workplace Health and Safety Conference</b>	<b>April 20 and 21, 2006</b>	<b>at the Delta Prince Edward, Ch'town Deadline for registration is April 13, 2006</b>
<b>Island NDP Leadership Convention</b>	<b>Saturday, April 22, 2006</b>	<b>Linkletter Inn and Convention Centre in Summerside</b>
<b>CLC Atlantic Region and Labour College of Canada Weeklong Educational</b>	<b>April 23 to 28, 2006</b>	<b>Memramcook Institute St. Joseph, NB Deadline March 29, 2006</b>
<b>Workplace Partners Panel Atlantic Task Force</b>	<b>Thursday, April 27, 2006</b>	<b>Charlottetown</b>
<b>National Day of Mourning for Workers Injured or Killed on the Job</b>	<b>Friday, April 28, 2006</b>	<b>at 7:00 pm at Province House</b>

<b>Let's Celebrate May Day Brunch</b>	<b>Saturday, April 29, 2006</b>	<b>10:00 am at Dundee Arms Inn, Charlottetown \$10.00/ticket (limited number) Deadline: April 24, 2006</b>
<b>PEI Federation of Labour's Spring Luncheon for Labour Reps and Media.</b>	<b>Monday, May 1, 2006</b>	<b>at Noon at the Inn on the Hill in Charlottetown (Quality Inns)</b>