



# PEI Federation of Labour Newsletter October 2006 Issue

## Current News

- ❑ On Friday, November 3, it was announced that the unemployment rate on PEI for October was 11.1% up 0.3% from September's 10.8%. You currently need 525 hours to qualify for EI on PEI.
  
- ❑ On Tuesday, October 31, it was announced that delegates at the recent bi-annual Conference of Canadian Compensation Unions held in Barrie, Ont. have endorsed an universal set of principles that clearly state how all workers and all types of workplace injuries and illnesses should be covered. The principles call for a comprehensive public system, which includes universal coverage, prevention of injury and illness programs, including education programs for young workers, indexed pensions and benefits, and coverage of all workplace injuries and illnesses. They also launched a national campaign calling for the reform of the workers' compensation systems in all jurisdictions across Canada.
  
- ❑ On Monday, October 30, The Final Report by Commissioner Harry Arthurs on the Review of Part III, Federal Labour Standards (Canada Labour Code) was released. One of Arthurs' main recommendations is that Ottawa re-establish a federal minimum wage. He stopped short of formally recommending a specific rate but noted that he had received many recommendations suggesting \$10 an hour. The report also calls for fairer treatment of temporary, part-time and contract workers, tighter rules on overtime and regulations to ensure decency at work and a balance between work and family time. One major concern in the report is a recommendation contained in Chapter 7 which would allow employers to "seek approval for adjustments to certain statutory standards directly from their workers. This is the first thorough official review of working standards at the federal level since 1965. The full 324 page report is available on the net at <http://www.fls-ntf.gc.ca/doc/fin-rpt-e.pdf>.
  
- ❑ On Monday, October 30, as part of their ongoing campaign to raise public awareness concerning the low wages and benefits being paid Island tradespeople by most non-union contractors here on PEI, the Carpenter's Union held an information picket at UPEI.

Island tradespeople consistently rank as the lowest paid in Canada in most trade occupations. Approximately 50 people attended the picket.

❑ On Monday, October 30, The province announced that it has signed a 10 year, \$3,924,340. contract with Island EMS which will cover the period between April 1, 2007 to March 31, 2017 with a possible extension of five additional years. Over the next few months Island EMS will also negotiate a collective agreement with CUPE Local 3324.

❑ On Saturday, October 28, approximately 35 people gathered to debate whether PEI would benefit from a citizens assembly. Those in attendance at the electoral reform meeting in Charlottetown agreed that a citizens assembly would be a valuable vehicle in moving forward on electoral reform. They also decided to start a working group to try to develop contacts with the government as well as other interest groups to promote the idea. A citizens assembly is an independent, randomly selected group of citizens used to examine proposals for electoral reform. Both Ontario and British Columbia have created citizens assemblies.

❑ On Thursday, October 26, in their throne speech the Saskatchewan government officially announced that they are planning to add a new statutory holiday, Family Day, which will be added to the calendar in February. If the legislature accepts it, the new holiday could be in place for next February .Alberta has had a Family Day celebrated on the third Monday of February since 1990.

❑ On Thursday, October 26, it was announced that The House of Commons finance committee will hold hearings on the elimination of the visitor GST rebate program. Opposition MPs on the finance committee successfully pushed through a motion in favour of examining the impact of the cuts on the Summerside economy and the tourism industry. Conservative members voted against it. The Union of Taxation Employees Local 90006, which represents 700 employees at Summerside Tax Centre, are concerned about the possible loss of 140 jobs at the Summerside Tax Centre. The visitor GST rebate program, which was axed by the federal Conservatives late last month, provided rebates to tourists from outside the country for taxes they paid while in Canada.

❑ On Thursday, October 26, it was announced that the Ontario government tabled a new law requiring that 60% of all voters endorse any changes to the way the legislature members are elected before the current system is changed. A Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform is to report to the government by May 15, 2007. Many are expecting the assembly to propose a new voting system. The McGuinty Liberals say any new proposal would be voted on in a referendum on Election Day, which by law will take place on Oct. 4, 2007. The Ontario government's threshold is similar to the one set by the Binns government during last November's plebiscite on PEI. The PEI government

also added 60% or 16 of the 27 districts must vote in favour of mixed-member proportional representation before the government would consider making changes to the electoral system.

□ On Wednesday, October 25, the House of Commons voted 167 to 101 in favour of Bill C-257, a law that would make it illegal for employers covered by the Canada Labour Code to hire scabs. While the bill, sponsored by the Bloc Québécois, has many steps to go before becoming law, yesterday's second reading vote is an important step. Normally government members use second reading to defeat private members bills they oppose. The Bill will now be sent to a committee for review before a final vote. 3 out of 4 (Murphy, Easter, and MacAulay) Island MP's voted for the Bill. The other Island MP, Joe McGuire was not present for the vote.

□ On Tuesday, October 24, the Provincial government announced that they were now in the planning stages to build a new hospital in Bloomfield that would replace the Community Hospital in O'Leary and the Western Hospital in Alberton. Planning for the new hospital is expected to take about two years with construction expected to start in the summer of 2008 on the Mill River East Road at Bloomfield Corner, so it could be 2010 before the two older hospitals are closed down. The two current hospitals are expected to be converted into manors to replace the Maplewood Manor in Alberton.

□ On Tuesday, October 24, the P.E.I. Health Coalition held a town hall style public meeting in the lecture theatre of Colonel Gray high school in Charlottetown as part of the cross Canada 'medicare works' campaign. The event attracted 78 people and Mary Boyd (PEI Health Coalition) hosted the meeting. Guest speakers at the meeting were Michael McBane, the national co-ordinator of the Canadian Health Coalition, Dr. John Gillis, an emergency room doctor in Halifax and a member of Canadian Doctors for Medicare, and Dr. Cathy Bigsby representing the PEI Medical Society. The guest speakers spoke on the true state of our public health care system, the myths that those whose want to privatize our health care system for their own profit are trying make Canadians believe, why we need to keep healthcare under the public system and answered questions from the public. Earlier in the day, Mary Boyd and Michael McBane held a press conference to talk about the cross Canada 'medicare works' campaign and publicize the town hall meeting.

□ On Tuesday, October 24, the Provincial government announced that they were now in the planning stages to build a new hospital in Bloomfield that would replace the Community Hospital in O'Leary and the Western Hospital in Alberton. The Government cited attracting enough doctors as the main problem with having two hospitals. They also said having only one hospital will lessen the amount of time a doctor has to be on call which should make recruitment of new doctors easier. Planning for the new hospital is expected to take about two years, and building one to two years after that, so it could

be 2010 before the two older hospitals are closed down.

- ❑ On Friday, October 20, CUPE members and supporters of Canada's Public Medicare System served cake at five Island hospitals to celebrate not only Tommy Douglas's (the father of the Medicare system) 102<sup>nd</sup> birthday but also to celebrate and push for the preservation and expansion of Canada's Public Healthcare system . This event was part of CUPE's cross-Canada 'Thanks Tommy' events that were also held in St John's, Halifax, Winnipeg, Regina, Vancouver and other centres.
  
- ❑ On Thursday, October 19, it was announced that the Federal government had turned down N.S. Premier Rodney MacDonald's proposal for federal backing of a proposed \$400-million Atlantic Gateway, including improvements to the Port of Halifax and highway upgrades stretching almost as far as New Brunswick. However discussions will continue. This comes less than a week after, Harper announced plans to invest \$591 million over the next eight years to build a Western Gateway for trade through British Columbia to improve trading access to Asia-Pacific markets.
  
- ❑ On Thursday, October 19, the New Brunswick Court of Appeal released a decision that upholds the New Brunswick Council of School District Unions claim that school custodians are not essential to the health, safety or security of the public in the event of a strike and therefore they retain the right to strike that is provided for under the Act. This decision comes after, the Labour and Employment Board (LEB) ruled in 2005 that if custodians were to strike, the schools would become unhealthy, and therefore a large number of custodians should be designated as essential. In its ruling the court found that the LEB made a mistake in assuming that schools must remain open in the event of a strike.
  
- ❑ On Friday, October 13, it was announced that Wal-Mart has been ordered to pay \$78 million for violating labor laws in Pennsylvania. A jury found hourly workers at Wal-Mart stores were forced to work through more than 33 million rest breaks between 1998 and 2001. The class action affects some 187,000 workers at the retail giant employed between 1998 and 2001, and is similar to a case in California in which \$172 million was awarded.
  
- ❑ On Thursday, October 12, PSAC Local 90140 filed for the appointment of a conciliation officer in their two year battle with the employer, the Corps of Commissionaires to achieve a first collective agreement for 130 commissionaires working in P.E.I. The commissionaires first joined PSAC in 2000 and have faced relentless opposition from the Corps who challenged the application for certification all the way to the Supreme Court of PEI. Many commissionaires receive only the basic pay of \$7.50 an hour with no benefits, such as vacation leave, sick leave, bereavement leave,

health and safety training and lunch or coffee breaks. The commissionaires work in various locations federally, provincially, municipally and in the private sector. They protect the premier's office and provincial courts and provide security services at airports, hospitals, and nursing homes.

□ On Thursday, October 12, The C.L.C. Atlantic Region and P.E.I. Federation held a one day educational at the Howard Johnson, Dutch Inn. The Educational which consisted of 2 courses (Shop Steward Level 3 and Mobilizing the Membership) attracted 25 participants. The next educational will be coming up on March 8, 2007.

□ On Wednesday, October 4, the Nova Scotia government announced that it will not appeal the province's Supreme Court ruling that sided with two grocery chains and it will clear the way for Sunday shopping. In its ruling, the Court said the government went beyond its powers with regulations introduced in June that prevented Sobeys and Atlantic Superstore from selling products seven days a week. Retail stores of all kinds in Nova Scotia can now open on Sundays and other holidays, starting this weekend. The only exception is Remembrance Day, which is covered under a separate law. The Government promised new legislation in the fall to protect the rights of workers on Sundays.

□ On Wednesday, October 4, the federal Conservative government announced that it will no longer fund women's groups that do advocacy, lobbying or general research. The drastic change to the mandate and operation of Status of Women Canada also drops the word "equality" when listing the agency's goals. Previous objectives such as helping women's organizations participate in the public policy process and increasing the public's understanding of women's equality issues have also been eliminated from government literature. The new, shorter stated objective is to "facilitate women's participation in Canadian society by addressing their economic, social and cultural situation through Canadian organizations."

□ On Tuesday, October 3, the provincial government announced that federal funding for the Community Access Program has been extended until the end of March 2007 and negotiations will begin immediately toward a long term agreement. Federal CAP funding was scheduled to end on September 30th and would have resulted in the closure of 41 Island CAP sites. The CAP program ensures that Islanders have access to the Internet and new technologies, as well as broadband access, in their own community. More than 120,000 Islanders used Island CAP sites last year.

## National, Consumer Boycott against Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company

□ In October 2006, Goodyear Tire and Rubber forced 15,000 members of the United Steelworkers to engage in strike action to demand a guarantee from Goodyear not to

close manufacturing plants in North America and export their jobs overseas.

-In response to this and at the request of the USW, on November 27, 2006, the Canadian Labour Congress endorsed a National, Consumer Boycott against Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company.

-If the strikers are not successful in achieving plant security language once again more good paying manufacturing jobs will be permanently lost in Ontario, Quebec and Alberta. Goodyear needs to get the message that exporting manufacturing jobs overseas will not be tolerated by Canadians.

**-Therefore the PEI Federation of Labour urges all our Affiliated members to observe this boycott and not put Goodyear or Motomaster tires on your car until the dispute is settled.**

-For more information on this boycott go to  
[http://www.usw.ca/program/content/overview\\_sub.php?modules2\\_ID=638&modules\\_ID=638&sub=638&lan=en](http://www.usw.ca/program/content/overview_sub.php?modules2_ID=638&modules_ID=638&sub=638&lan=en)

## **Press Release In Advance of the Federation's 42nd Annual Convention**

□ On Thursday, November 2, the Federation released a press release on our upcoming annual Convention. Here is the release we sent out.

-Fighting Privatization and Contracting out Theme of the PEI Federation of Labour's 42nd Annual Convention

-“Privatization and Contracting out is a scourge to all workers. It removes good jobs and replaces them with insecure employment at lower pay, that are generally setup to be outside of existing collective agreements, and lead to increased costs, safety issues, and a reduction in services offered to the public. That is why the fight against privatization and contracting out has been chosen as our theme for this year.” states Carl Pursey President of the PEI Federation of Labour.

-On November 3 and 4, approximately 100 delegates from 45 affiliated union locals here on PEI will participate in the PEI Federation of Labour's 42nd annual convention at the Howard Johnson's Dutch Inn in North River.

-Patty Ducharme National Vice President of the Public Service Alliance of Canada will address the delegates on this year's theme.

-We will also have Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives Researcher, Scott Sinclair speak on his research on Atlantica. Atlantica is Big Business's idea to economically, socially and politically integrate Atlantic Canada and eastern Quebec with Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and upstate New York to form a single coherent trade zone.

-Other guest speakers this year will include: CLC Secretary-Treasurer, Hassan Yussuff; NDP Provincial Leader, Dean Constable; United Way Executive Director, Clair Smith; Executive Council Member Leo Cheverie who will speak on Poverty on PEI; Eileen Leclair, Silent Witness Project; and Minister responsible for Labour Elmer Macfadyen.

-The delegates will be debating 15 resolutions at this year's convention on a wide range of topics including: Atlantica, Public Healthcare, Privatization and Contracting Out, Growthworks, Pharmacare, Post Secondary Education, Federal Tories' Tax Cuts, Livable Wages, the PEI Labour Management Relations Council, the Student Attendant Pilot Project, UPS/NAFTA, Wal-Mart, Universal Public Post Office, and Public Private Partnerships

-On the election front, our President, Secretary, and VP (woman) positions will all be up for election at this year's convention.

## **Some Findings from the NAFTA Revisited Report**

□ On Monday, October 2, it was announced in a new three-country report that NAFTA has not lived up to its promise of better jobs and faster growth for Mexico, Canada, and the United States. Instead it has promoted an integrated continental economy with rules set by and for the benefit of the political and economic elite. NAFTA Revisited, a report released today by the Economic Policy Institute, details the trade deal's effects on the economies, working people and the labor markets of all three nations.

-Under NAFTA's rules, Canada has lowered the government's spending on individuals and social programs while real incomes have virtually stagnated, except for those at the top. Average income has registered the worst performance of any comparable period since World War II, and inequality (after taxes and transfers) has grown for the first time since the 1920s. The report also details the broken promises that are the hallmarks of the NAFTA free trade era in Canada: the growth of precarious employment, the undermining of unions as a countervailing power to transnational capital, the erosion of the Canadian social state, and heightened economic dependence on the United States.

-In Mexico, employment has become ever more precarious: of all new salaried positions generated between the second quarter of 2000 and the second quarter of 2004, only 37% have full benefits, and 23% have no benefits at all. NAFTA increased employment in the

low-wage “maquiladora” industries of Mexico, with the benefits flowing mainly to large companies, the financial sector, and a thin layer of administrative and professional workers earning high salaries. Despite steady growth of investments in maquiladoras, the flow of account balances between firms does not translate into real technology transfer that would strengthen and stabilize Mexico’s industrial sector – one of the great promises NAFTA held out for Mexico. Meanwhile, the agricultural sector has suffered a large and steady loss of employment due to NAFTA. The share of the population engaged in agricultural activities fell from 26.8% in 1991 to 16.4% in 2004, a significant decrease.

-In the United States, Growing trade deficits with Mexico and Canada after NAFTA took effect in 1994, reduced employment in high-wage, traded-goods industries, resulting in a substantial loss of income for such workers and have also displaced production that supported 1,015,291 U.S. jobs since NAFTA took effect The displacement of 1 million jobs from traded to non-traded goods industries reduced wage payments to U.S. workers by \$7.6 billion in 2004 alone.

The full report is available at

[http://www.policyalternatives.ca/documents/National\\_Office\\_Pubs/2006/Revisiting\\_NAFTA.pdf](http://www.policyalternatives.ca/documents/National_Office_Pubs/2006/Revisiting_NAFTA.pdf)

## **Municipal Campaign Endorsement Press Conference**

-On Thursday, November 2, 2006, the PEI Federation of Labour together with the MacKillop Center for Social Justice wrapped up our Municipal Campaign with a press conference at the former Basilica Rec Centre in Charlottetown. The purpose of the press conference was to announce to the candidates in the November 6 Charlottetown election that we were prepared to endorse. The endorsements were based on the candidates' responses to questions asked in interviews that were held from Oct 20 - 24. 14 of 22 Candidates accepted our invitation to be interviewed.

-CLC representative for PEI Jean Claude Basque opened up the press conference and introduced Federation President Carl Pursey and MacKillop Center representative Mary Boyd. Carl and Mary read a prepared press release and answered questions from the assembled media.

-Here is the prepared press release that was read:

-Good morning and thank you for joining us today.

-We called this press conference to unveil the names of municipal candidates the PEI Federation of Labour and the MacKillop Centre for Social Justice are asking the public

to support in the upcoming election.

-First of all, we thank all the candidates who took time to meet with us to discuss their positions on the issues we raised. We appreciate the openness of their responses and the time they took from their busy campaigns to respond to our questions.

-Fourteen of the twenty-two candidates accepted our invitation. We interviewed candidates from each Ward except Ward 3 (where no candidate accepted our invitation) and Ward 7 where the candidate was elected by acclamation. Both candidates for mayor also accepted our invitation.

-The interviews were based on the issues identified by participants at our June Community Forum. Candidates were asked questions on our five (5) main issues: Democracy, Public services, Environment, Newcomers and Poverty.

-Our endorsement of candidates was based on their answers to these questions.

**-Ward 1:** We could not endorse any of the two candidates. Fred Quinn had good answers for contracting out and the CARI complex but we felt he did not fully understand some of the questions and was weak on poverty and the support for public disclosure of campaign contributions. While we felt good support from Kim Divine on environmental issues and the public disclosure of campaign contributions, however we are concerned that she does not support the CARI complex being taken over by the City. We also felt that her answer on privatization and contracting out was weak.

**-Ward 2:** We are endorsing Ronald Lee. He is strong on an accountable city council, against privatization and contracting - out and on the City taking over the CARI complex. Mr. Lee is also in favour of a ban on cosmetic pesticides and more help for newcomers. He made concrete suggestions on alleviating poverty. These include affordable housing, better access to the trades, industry and more literacy training. He would also lobby the provincial government to increase the minimum wage. Finally, he is open to work with labour and community groups and favours public disclosure of campaign contributions.

**-Ward 3:** No candidates accepted our invitation.

**-Ward 4:** We are not endorsing anyone. We interviewed Nora Bagnall but we don't feel we can endorse her. She was not fully aware of the issues brought before her.

**-Ward 5:** We are endorsing Ghassan Kassouf. This was probably the most difficult decision our committee had to make. Both candidates are very well versed on the issues

and support most if not all of them. The deciding factor was our concern with Ron Jenkins' position on poverty.

**-Ward 6:** We are endorsing Bruce Garrity with the reservation that he was weak on the issue of Privatization, contracting out and somewhat uncertain about how to handle the problem of the CARI complex. Mr. Garrity was very strong on the issue of accountability, Charlottetown transportation plan, Environmental issues (banning pesticides, limit number of cruise ships), Poverty and Newcomers. Dave MacDonald did not answer our invitation.

**-Ward 8:** We are not endorsing anyone. (Peter McCloskey did not accept our invitation). Mr. Gillis believes councillors are presently accountable and will only accept public disclosure of campaign contributions for future campaigns. He is not in favour of the City taking over the CARI complex, is not for a ban on cosmetic pesticides and feels he does not know enough about the cruise ships issue to take a position. On the positive side, he is interested in liaising with labour and community groups.

**-Ward 9:** We are endorsing Melissa Trainor. Ms Trainor believes in an accountable City Council and public disclosure of campaign contributions. She considers that city workers should always come first on the issue of contracting out and privatization. She agrees that the CARI complex should be taken over by the city. On the Poverty issue, she is for social housing, a liveable income of \$10.00 an hour and tax breaks for seniors. However, she is not for an all out ban on pesticides. We do consider this to be a weak point. On the other hand, she believes there should be a limit on cruise ships.

We did not feel that Kathy Moase had a good grasp of the issues. Melisa Hilton was weak on the CARI complex, on the environment ( not for a ban of cosmetic pesticides and weak on the cruise ships issue), newcomers and poverty.

**-Ward 10:** We are not endorsing anyone. Allan Poulton had good positions on contracting out and the CARI complex but was very weak on some of the other important issues such as a Transportation plan, Environment and Newcomers.

**-The Mayoralty Race:** We cannot endorse either of the two candidates but we feel that Tex Macdonald had some very good points. In his favor he is saying that City Council has to be accountable but unfortunately is not prepared to disclose his campaign contributions. He is against contracting-out and favors the City taking over the CARI complex. He is weak on cosmetic pesticides and hasn't got a clear picture of the cruise ships issue. Clifford Lee was against contracting-out and privatization and in favour of a transportation plan. He was weak on most of the other important issues. He believes the present council is accountable and does not support public disclosure of campaign

contributions. He is against the City taking over the CARI complex and does not support a ban on cosmetic pesticides or a limit on cruise ships. Both had good answers on poverty and newcomers

-Our goal in undertaking this democratic process is to provide more information for workers and citizens to assist them to make a better choice next Monday. We believe that our involvement in this municipal election will have an impact on the way citizens view municipal elections now and in the future. The Federation would like to thank (Jean Claude Basque (CLC), Mary Boyd (MacKillop Centre for Social Justice), and Eileen Brown-Wilt (UPSE) for all the hard work they put in during the endorsement process.

The Questionnaire used is available at  
<http://www.peifl.ca/pages/muncamp/Questionnaire.pdf>

### **Important Dates**

<b>PEIFL Annual Convention</b>	<b>Friday and Saturday November 3 and 4, 2006</b>	<b>Howard Johnson, Dutch Inn</b>
<b>UPSE's Annual Convention</b>	<b>Friday and Saturday November 17 and 18, 2006</b>	<b>Delta Hotel, Charlottetown</b>
<b>National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women</b>	<b>Wednesday, December 6, 2006</b>	
<b>Round Table on Atlantica</b>	<b>Thursday, December 7, 2006</b>	<b>Citadel Inn, Halifax.</b>
<b>The C.L.C. Atlantic Region and P.E.I. Federation Educational</b>	<b>March 8, 2007</b>	