



PEI Federation of Labour April Newsletter Issued on June 9, 2008

Current News In Brief

Federation to its Hold 8th Annual Labour Day Corn Boil and Barbeque

□ On Monday, September 1, the P.E.I. Federation of Labour will hold its 8th Annual Labour Day Corn Boil and Barbeque at Victoria Park in Charlottetown. So bring a lawn chair and meet your brothers and sisters as we celebrate Labour Day 2008. There will be Entertainment, Games for the Kids, Prizes, Hot Dogs, Corn, and Fun For All. If your local has union hats, shirts, jackets, etc (Especially something for kids) that you are willing to donate for prizes at the event or if you have any members interested in helping out with the serving or preparation of food or with the children's games and races at this year's event, please contact our office at 368-3068; fax at 368-3192 or e-mail at: peifed@pei.aibn.com by Friday, August 29, 2008.

Federation to Hold Family BBQ as part of the CLC Women's Economic Equality Campaign

□ On Saturday, June 21, the PEI Federation of Labour in collaboration with the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) will hold a Family BBQ on the issue of childcare on PEI at Victoria Park, Charlottetown, between 1:00-3:00 pm. There will be Speakers, Entertainment, Games for the Kids, Hot Dogs, Prize Draws, and Fun For All. This event is part of the CLC Women's Economic Equality Campaign and is in conjunction with the events being held in every province across the country. Everyone is invited to attend. If your union has members who wish to donate their time to help with the event, you wish to donate money, food or union paraphernalia (i.e. shirts, hats, frisbees, etc), or if you have any further questions please contact Stacy Delaney at 888-2191 or stacydelany@hotmail.com or Lori MacKay at 892-8951 or lorimackay3260@hotmail.com.

Federation and CURC to Hold Organizing Meeting for Retirees Organization

□ On Tuesday, June 17, the PEI Federation of Labour in conjunction with the Congress of Union Retirees of Canada (CURC) will hold a meeting to discuss the establishment of a Provincial Organisation for Union Retirees. The meeting will be held at 1 p.m. at the Best Western Charlottetown (formally MacLauchlans) in the Dalvay Room. All Union

retirees are invited to attend. If you are interested in attending this meeting please contact our office at 368-3068; fax at 368-3192 or e-mail at: peifed@pei.aibn.com by Tuesday, June 10, 2008.

Unemployment Rate For April

□ On Tuesday, May 13, it was announced that the unemployment rate on PEI for April was 11.2% up 0.8% from March's 10.4%. You currently need 525 hours to qualify for EI on PEI.

Prebuilt Structures Fined \$50,000 for the 2007 Death of a Worker

□ On Friday, April 25, it was announced that Prebuilt Structures has been fined \$50,000 in the death of a worker on a construction site at UPEI in January 2007. The company had pleaded guilty earlier in the week to violating the fall protection regulations of the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Claude Adolphus Scully, 53, died when he slipped and fell two storeys from an extension being built on the school of business. An investigation by the Occupational Health and Safety Division determined that on the day of the accident, the engineered horizontal fall protection system was not fully installed in the area where the accident occurred. The fine will go to the Workers Compensation Board and will be used for safety education.

Labour Groups Charge U.S. with Violating NAFTA Labour Standards

□ On Wednesday, April 23, Members of the Canadian Association of Labour Lawyers (CALL) on behalf of more than 40 labour organizations in Canada, the United States and Mexico, filed a charge against the U.S. under the North American Agreement for Labour Cooperation (NAALC), the labour side agreement to NAFTA. The complaint charges that the state of North Carolina and the United States are violating the NAALC with North Carolina's General Statute 95-98 which prohibits collective bargaining by state and local government employees. This Statute denies 650,000 public employees in North Carolina the right to engage in collective bargaining. The NAALC agreement requires the United States, Mexico and Canada to provide for "high labour standards" in their laws, and lists freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining among its core principles. The complaint is being filed on the eve of a high-level political meeting in Ottawa between the labour ministers for the three countries. The list of labour organizations bringing the charges include the CAW, CLC, CUPW, CUPE, CEP, NUPGE, UFCW, and USW.

CUPW Elects New National President At Their Triennial Convention

□ On Friday, April 18, it was announced that the close to 700 delegates at the Canadian Union of Postal Workers' (CUPW) 23rd National Triennial Convention elected Denis Lemelin as their new National President. Lemelin, who has been involved in various positions within CUPW for 29 years defeated the incumbent Deborah Bourque for the

position. Also elected to national office at the convention were 1st Vice President Gayle Bossenberry, Secretary Treasurer George Kuehnbaum, National Grievance Officer Philippe Arbour, 2nd Vice President Lynn Bue, 3rd Vice President George Floresco and 4th Vice President Donald Lafleur.

British Columbia Government Introduces Bill to Fix Bill 29

□ On Thursday, April 17, it was announced that the BC government has introduced a bill to bring its anti-labour legislation (Bill 29) into line with a June 2007 Supreme Court ruling that it violated charter-protected rights to freedom of association. Bill 29 introduced in 2002, removed language from collective agreements that prevented contracting out of health care services. As a result, more than 9,000 BC health care workers lost their jobs.

UPSE's Holland College Faculty Bargaining Unit Votes to Ratify New Agreement

□ On Monday, April 14, UPSE announced that their Holland College Faculty Bargaining Unit has voted 78% in favor to ratify a new, 3-year collective agreement with the College. The new agreement includes improvements to articles including; the addition of a new committee to address teaching loads/contact hours, establishment of definitive dates for March Break, inclusion of a mechanism for employees working on contract year-after-year to become full-time continuing employees, improvements to vacation and holiday pay for short-term & part-time workers, increased wages for night courses, better pay equity for employees with "certified journey person" designation, the addition of a half-step in all pay ranges effective April 1, 2010, and overall yearly pay increases of 2.5%, 2.75% and 3%. The new agreement is in effect until March 31, 2011.

PEI Government Hires Corpus Sanchez International to Examine Health-care System

□ On Saturday, April 12, the Province announced that it has hired Toronto-based consultant Corpus Sanchez International (CSI) to conduct an operational review of PEI's health-care system at a cost of nearly \$300,000. CSI has carried out work with the Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre in Toronto, Vancouver Coastal Health Authority and the Nova Scotia Department of Health. In the 103 recommendations made to the Nova Scotian government, CSI urged the government to look for "alternate sources" of funding for health care (standard code for privatization and P3's), recommended rural hospitals become nothing more than community clinics, with acute care and emergency services centralized to the larger urban hospitals, and that the government consider the privatization of non-clinical services (e.g. housekeeping, dietary, laundry and maintenance). CUPE, IUOE and UPSE have said that they will not participate in the review.

Provincial Government Releases a Five-year Economic Development Plan

□ On Thursday, April 10, 2008, the Provincial government released a five-year, \$200 million economic development plan, with a focus on bioscience, information technology, aerospace and renewable energy that it says will create hundreds of new jobs. In the plan is \$100 million to be spent on a pilot fund for early stage, high-risk projects with commercial potential and special funds for development and commercialization of products, prototype studies, and management and marketing programs to assist companies special funds. In addition to this, they will construct a \$30 million Island BioCommons Research Park to be located in Charlottetown. The Summerside area will get a new \$7 million E-Health Centre for Excellence that will test information technology health products to make sure they meet global standards. They also plan to modernize high school labs to encourage more students to go into sciences, expand the amount of wind energy produced from the current 100 MW to 500 MW, and implement an Accelerated Rural Broadband Strategy to ensure that all Islanders have access to reliable, affordable high-speed internet access. The full plan is located at <http://islandprosperity.com/index.html>

Council Of Canadians Launches Their Best Kept Secret Campaign

□ On Wednesday, April 9, the Council of Canadians launched their Best Kept Secret public health care campaign with a presentation to the Stratford Rotary Club. The campaign will see 10 volunteer speakers travelling across PEI in the next few months, making 30minute PowerPoint presentations to businesses and community groups on how public health care benefits everyone and how privatization is not the solution to health-care problems in Canada. They will also address myths surrounding Canada's health-care system, including its cost to taxpayers and the need for privatization to solve lengthy wait lists.

Provincial Government Tables Passport Office Motion

□ On Wednesday, April 9, the Ghiz government tabled a motion urging the Government of Canada to establish a devoted, public-run passport office in Prince Edward Island. P.E.I. is the only province in Canada without its own office because of this Islanders are currently forced to apply online, by mail, through their MP or by travelling to Moncton or Halifax. The PEI Federation of Labour, in association with the Public Service Alliance of Canada, has also been working hard on this issue. In July, we sent a letter to Minister of Foreign Affairs Peter Mackay which we cc'd to the 4 Island Mps , Prime Minister, and Premier, Since then, we have passed a resolution at convention and brought the issue to meetings with the Federal Minister of Labour and various meetings with members of the provincial government.

Three Provincial Cabinet Ministers Add Responsibilities

□ On Thursday, April 3, Premier Ghiz announced changes to the provincial cabinet. In the changes, the Minister of Development and Technology Richard Brown now becomes

Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning adding Post-Secondary education and the P.E.I. Lending Agency to his responsibilities. Education Minister Gerard Greenan now becomes the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development with Early Childhood development being moved to his responsibility from the Department of Social Services. Finally the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture Allan Campbell is now the Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development with the Community and Labour Development portfolio taken from the former Development and Technology department and renamed Rural Development being added to his department.

Island Pulp Producers Fined \$15,000 in Forestry Worker's Death

□ On Wednesday, April 2, Island Pulp Producers was fined \$15,000 in connection with the death of forestry worker Kenneth Duffenais last February. This comes after the company pleaded guilty in March to violating a section of the Occupational Health and Safety Act regulations that reads: "The employer and employee shall not alter the design where machines are designed with guards that interlock with the machinery control so as to prevent operation of the machine unless the guard is in its proper place." Duffenais suffered internal injuries that proved fatal after he became caught in a tree harvester's hydraulic clamps. Four charges were initially laid against Island Pulp Producers, but the Crown later stayed three of them.

CUPE Press Conference Releases Legal Opinion on Threat to Public Child Care

□ On Tuesday, April 1, CUPE held a press conference to release a legal opinion by International trade lawyer Steven Shrybman that suggests if the federal and provincial governments don't act fast, a company called "123 Busy Beavers" might make universal child care an impossibility. This company which has ties to the Australian child care company, ABC Learning Centres has been buying up for-profit child care centres in Alberta, BC and Ontario. The problem cited in the opinion is that although Canada has for-profit child care, mostly delivered by small businesses and individuals, there is little if any foreign investment. If the provincial and federal governments allow for-profit child care delivery to grow, and if the amount of foreign investment grows too, child care would be considered a commercial venture, rather than a "reserved" public service, under NAFTA.. This would mean that any new program such as the national child care program envisioned in Bill C-303 or even the Ontario government's plan for full-day kindergarten could be considered a violation of the rights of the for-profit child care sectors' investors and government would be subject to paying damages to any foreign company whose profits were affected.

Alberta's Minimum Wage Increases to \$8.40/hr

□ On Tuesday, April 1, Alberta's minimum wage increased to \$8.40/hour. In Alberta changes to the minimum wage are based on the level of the province's average weekly wage from one year to the next. If Alberta's average weekly wage increases from one

year to the next, the minimum wage will increase by the same percentage. If it remains the same or decreases from one year to the next, the minimum wage will remain the same. Approximately 70,000 Albertans work for minimum wage.

Articles for this Month

Report from the Seventh Annual Provincial Day of Mourning Ceremony

□ On Monday April 28, the PEI Federation of Labour and its affiliates in conjunction with the Workers Compensation Board and the provincial government held our Seventh Annual Provincial Day of Mourning for Workers Killed and Injured on the Job Ceremony at Province House in Charlottetown. Approximately 120 people attended this year's event.

-The solemn event started inside Province House with O Canada sung by Gaye Hood followed next by the Invocation which was performed by Leo Cheverie (CUPE).

- Next Federation President Carl Pursey spoke on the theme for this year's ceremony "Mourn the Dead, Fight for the Living - Now more than ever." In his speech he gave statistics on Canadian and PEI workplace deaths and injuries and stressed the importance of effective enforcement of the Occupational Health and Safety Act if we are to lower those numbers. He also expressed the federation's concern over the fact that PEI currently has only 5 Occupational Health and Safety Officers overseeing approximately 5000 Island workplaces and 69,300 workers.

-He also expressed the need to stop the reckless growth of foreign temporary workers as a source of cheap labour for greedy employers and the need for our governments to ensure that when these workers are brought into Canada, they are given the same wages, legislative standards and protections that all Canadians are afforded and they are not brought here as a way to keep wages and employment standards low.

-And Finally, President Pursey called on the Provincial Government to look at the Review of the Worker's Compensation Act as an opportunity to make sure that the Act truly meets the needs of injured workers on PEI.

-Provincial Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour Carolyn Bertram spoke next on behalf of the Province to those in attendance. And finally Charlene MacInnis (Injured Worker) spoke on behalf of injured workers on PEI.

-Then everyone was lead outside and down to in front of the Day of Mourning Monument

for the wreathes and roses laying ceremony by piper Wayne MacKinnon. Matt Hennessey (CEP) acted as emcee for this ceremony. This year, there were 17 wreathes and approximately 36 roses laid in memory of Islanders who have lost their lives on the job here on PEI.

-The Federation would like to thank all the speakers, all of the members of our Executive Council, and everyone else who put so much effort and hard work into this year's ceremony.

-For more information about this year's ceremony (including the President's full speech and pictures). Please visit <http://www.peifl.ca/pages/dom08/domrep08.html>. The Guardian has also posted a video on the ceremony on their site at <http://www.theguardian.pe.ca/index.cfm?main=broadcast&bcid=6840>

Report on CUPE's Press Conference to Launch Their "Public Works Best for Our Manors" Campaign

□ On Thursday, April 24, CUPE's Provincial Health Council held a press conference to launch their "Public Works Best for Our Manors" Campaign. The campaign's objective is to keep the Ghiz government from using the very flawed Public Private Partnership (P3) model to replace the Islands aging manors.

-P3's usually involves the government partnering with a private sector company to build and maintain a piece of public infrastructure. The private company builds and owns it, then leases it back to government over a period of 20-30 years. This allows the government to only show the yearly lease payments on their books rather than the full cost.

-The 2 biggest problems associated with P3's that were brought up during the press conference were that they lead to taxpayers paying more, due to higher borrowing costs and the need to generate profit, for infrastructure that ends up being privately controlled. The other major problem mentioned by the speakers is the real problem P3's bring regarding democratic accountability and transparency due to private sector commercial confidentiality which leads to details of these deals being kept secret and away from the public scrutiny.

-Speaking out against P3's at the conference were, Bill McKinnon, CUPE National Servicing Rep who lead the conference; Milo Murray, CUPE PEI President; Blair Penny, VP of the PEI Federation of Labour; Shelley Ward, UPSE President; Mary Boyd PEI Health Coalition; Leo Broderick, Council of Canadians; James Rodd, NDP, Sharon

Labchuck, Green Party; and Olive Crane PC.

-At the press conference, Bill McKinnon announced that the conference was just the beginning of phase 1 of this campaign. Other parts of this phase includes: radio ads, a website (which is located at <http://www.keepourmanorspublic.ca>), membership education and community based initiatives. Further phases will depend on the Ghiz government's actions. He also announced that CUPE, UPSE, IUOE and the PEI Nurses' Union have already formed the "Coalition of Prince Edward Island HealthUnions" and that they had a meeting that afternoon with Health Minister Currie.

-For more information on the press conference please visit <http://www.peifl.ca/pages/manpresconf08/presmanors.html>.

Federation Vice President's Statement From the Press Conference

It is time for the Ghiz government to realize that all public projects are most effectively and efficiently done when they are funded from public funds, owned by the province, and run and maintained within the Public system. It is the Provincial government's responsibility to provide Islanders with public facilities and services that most effectively and efficiently service the citizens of PEI. This cannot be done when corporate profit becomes the main goal and driver in the decision making process.

Plain and simple, study after study and experience after experience has shown that Public-Private-Partnerships cost more, make public institutions less able to manage public initiatives themselves and reduce flexibility, transparency and accountability of government.

The horror stories, some of which are documented in Flawed, Failed, Abandoned-100 P3, Canadian & International Evidence document are many and it is inconceivable to us that our government would continue to believe the widely discredited promises surrounding P3's in the face of so many failures.

Therefore the PEI Federation of Labour would like to express our full support for this campaign and we urge the Province to ignore the pressure being put on them to choose the P3 option in the construction of the new youth addictions facility and the replacement of the five provincially owned seniors care manors and find a way to bring these and all publically funded projects together through the Public system.

Highlights of this Year's Budget and the Federation's Response to it

□ On Wednesday, April 23, Provincial Treasurer, Wes Sheridan presented the Ghiz

government's second budget. He is predicting a \$34.9-million deficit for 2008-09.

Highlights of this year's budget include:

Taxes

- The 4.4 cent per litre cut in gas taxes stays;
- Freeze on owner-occupied component of residential property assessments stays;
- Basic personal tax credit will increase to \$7,708 from \$7,560 in 2008 and income tax brackets will increase by 4 per cent in 2008;
- As previously announced, the small business tax rate will decrease next year by 1.1 per cent from its current level of 3.2 per cent. It will fall to 1 per cent by 2010.

Health

- Government will spend \$17.7 million over the next year on modernizing hospitals, manors and other facilities, most of which will be spent on the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Charlottetown. It will take five years to replace the Island's manors, beginning with Prince Edward Home in Charlottetown and Summerset Manor in Summerside. No work will begin this year because the funding will only be included in this fall's capital budget. After that, Colville Manor in Souris, Maplewood Manor in Alberton and Riverview Manor in Montague will be replaced;
- A \$2 million investment will be made in P.E.I.'s Cancer Strategy, including the establishment of a Colorectal Cancer Screening Program (costing \$220,000), additional funding for mammography screening (\$216,500), a new pilot program to provide palliative care at home (\$275,000) and an increase in the cancer medication budget (\$500,000);
- Diabetic strips for insulin-dependent Islanders will be covered as a public service. It will cost \$1.5 million this year;
- An additional \$2.3 million will be spent on new physicians;
- A pilot residency program will begin this year, costing \$220,000. A full program will start in 2009, costing \$1.2 million in its first year;
- Accelerated Nursing Program at UPEI will cost \$356,000;
- An additional \$192,000 will help integrate Nurse Practitioners into the health care system, including a position at the Cancer Treatment Centre;
- Air ambulance Transfer fees for Islanders will be eliminated and ground ambulance services for Islanders going off Island will be covered.
- Digital mammography equipment at the QEH will cost \$835,000;
- A further \$2 million will be spent to reduce wait times in radiation therapy, sight restoration, diagnostic imaging and joint replacements;

Education

- Six additional teaching positions;

- A further \$2 million will be invested in the Task Force on Student Achievement, bringing the total spending to \$5 million this fiscal year. This includes \$752,000 in literacy programs;
 - Special education funding, including psychologists, is increased by \$540,000;
 - Government will begin the process of eliminating curriculum-based user fees through a \$100,000 investment;
 - New funding of \$100,000 will support school breakfast programs;
 - Best Start program will see an increase of \$219,000. The program will be expanded to assist families with children up to two years of age;
 - An additional \$389,500 will go to fund child care maintenance and child care special needs as part of the Early Learning and Child care Action Plan;
 - New funding for the P.E.I. Volunteers for Literacy will support the Let Older Volunteers Educate initiative;
 - Increase English as an additional language funding of \$500,000.
- The Treasurer also announced in the budget a thorough review of the Government's regulatory regime with a view to allowing the private sector to more easily interact with the provincial government. The "Red Tape" review will be done with input and guidance from the business community.

-In response to the budget the federation sent out the following press release:

The PEI Federation of Labour Expresses Three Concerns with the Liberal Government's Budget Unveiled Yesterday by Provincial Treasurer Wes Sheridan.

The first area that concerns and disappoints us most is that Treasurer Sheridan did not come forward and announce that they have rejected using the P3 model to fund the replacement of five provincially owned seniors care manors.

It is time for the Ghiz government to realize that all public Provincial projects are most effectively and efficiently done when they are funded from public funds, owned by the province, and run and maintained within the Public system. It is the Provincial government's responsibility to provide Islanders with public facilities and services that most effectively and efficiently service the citizens of PEI. This cannot be done when corporate profit becomes the main goal and driver in the decision making process.

"Plain and simple, study after study and experience after experience has shown that Public-Private-Partnerships cost more, make public institutions less able to manage public initiatives themselves and reduce flexibility, transparency and accountability of government." says Blair Penny, Vice-President of the PEI Federation of Labour.

The second area of concern is the rate at which the small business community has seen their corporate taxes go down especially at a time when the provincial government is the only province Canada still running a deficit. “The federation feels that it is irresponsible for this government to continue the last government’s goal of reducing corporate taxes for small businesses by approximately 87% in just 5 years considering the province’s current fiscal reality. ” says Mr. Penny.

“ Provincial Treasurer Wes Sheridan is saying to Islanders on one hand that Health care must remain the primary focus of his government and improvement to the education system must be made in tandem but on the other hand he lessens his government’s ability to pay for these public services by continuing to decrease the corporate tax” says Mr. Penny.

The PEI Federation of Labour believes that the continued ability for our government to invest in needed social programs is undermined by this Liberal government not ensuring that we have fair and equitable taxation system.

Workers have been fighting for a long time to ensure PEI has a fair and progressive tax regime where Islanders with more disposable income pay a higher percentage of that income in tax than do those with less income. . We must remember that our public tax system is the one making it possible for all Islanders to have access to our public health care system where we don’t have to pay out of our pocket to get services, a public education system where children of high and low income parents have access to the same education, public roads, public libraries, public parks, public water, etc.

PEI needs a progressive tax system in order to ensure that the financial responsibility for maintaining and expanding the public services that all Islanders rely on everyday is equally and fairly spread among all of the citizens of this province. With the budget presented yesterday, the Provincial treasurer has not taken many positive steps toward this goal.

The third area of concern is with the scope of the announced regulatory review (red tape review) and the announcement that it would be undertaken with input and guidance from island’s business community. We are asking ourselves what regulations will part of this review, where is the input from the labour movement and what kind of public scrutiny will this review receive to ensure that reducing so-called ”red tape” is not put ahead of the public interest. ” concludes Mr. Penny

National Consumer Boycott Against Horizon Milling and Robin Hood Brands

□ On Monday, April 21, the Canadian Labour Congress endorsed a National Consumer Boycott against Horizon Milling and Robin Hood brands. The boycott is in support of 61 locked out members of UFCW Canada Local 416P who work at Horizon Milling in Port Colborne, Ontario and have been locked out of their jobs since April 24, 2007. The workers have been trying to reach an agreement with Horizon Milling since their collective agreement expired on November 30, 2006, but Horizon isn't listening. In fact, Horizon hasn't met with the union negotiating committee in more than six months.

-The company, which refines flour products under the name of Robin Hood, offered its workers (whose average seniority is 22 year) a reduction in benefits, salary, pensions, removal of enhanced severance, downsizing of the workforce, as well as a wage freeze for three years.

-The PEI Federation of Labour asks all affiliated unions to please support these UFCW members in their struggle against Horizon Milling by honouring the boycott of Robin Hood products.

Highlights of the Provincial Government's 2008 Throne Speech

□ On Friday, April 4, the Provincial government announced in their throne speech that starting in 2009, PEI will be getting a new statutory called "Islander Day". The new Holiday will be observed on the second Monday of February. The Island joins Manitoba, which celebrates Louis Riel Day, and Ontario, Alberta and Saskatchewan, which all celebrate Family Day in February. With this new holiday, PEI now has 7 statutory holidays putting the Island in a tie with New Brunswick for the 2nd lowest number of statutory holidays in Canada just ahead of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador at 6 each.

-In terms of government departments, the Ghiz government announced that they plan to move two government departments by 2010. The new Department of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development is moving to Montague, while Education and Early Childhood Development will go to Summerside. The two moves will affect approximately 150 public employees. They also plan to establish an Office of Public Engagement and a new Department of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

-In health care, the Island government is planning to review the current operations and develop "deeper plans" to modernize and integrate the entire health care system. As well, there will be an accelerated nursing program at UPEI, which will result in the graduation of 35 nurses over the next two years. They also plan to develop a new health centre in Tyne Valley, and Establish a new Palliative Care Home Drug Program.

-In education the province plans to bring kindergarten into the public school system by 2011. Beginning in September 2008, the Province will provide all eligible first year, Island students registered in a full-time program at UPEI, with a \$2,000 George Coles Bursary. Eligible Island students registered in a 2-year program at Holland College or la Société éducative will receive varying amounts depending upon the rate of tuition. They also plan to Expand funding for the Best Start program to include children from 18 to 24 months in 2008-09, eliminate student fees for curriculum-based school activities, and introduce the International Baccalaureate Program. They also plan to begin development of an Island studies course for inclusion in the school system and introduce a Wind Energy Technician program at Holland College.

-In regards to the Island economy and environment, they plan to table a major new strategy to guide economic development and higher education for the next five years, establish a new Centre for Climate Change Research in West Prince, increase wind energy to more than 500 MW over the next five years and install a 200 MW transmission line from Sherbrooke to facilitate commercial wind development in West Prince. They also plan to ensure access to High speed Internet services to all rural areas of the province.

Federation's Press Release In Response to Minimum Wage Increase

□ On Wednesday, April 2, the PEI Federation of Labour put out a press release in response to the recent minimum wage increase announcement by the provincial government. The following is the press release:

PEI Federation of Labour Happy With Minimum Wage Increase But Disappointed that Livable Wage Still a Long Way Off

“The recently announced increases to PEI’s minimum wage are a step forward for workers on PEI but only a small step.” States PEI Federation of Labour President Carl Pursey

The increases of 25 cents an hour to \$7.75 on May 1 and another 25 cents to \$8 on Oct. 1. do not go near far enough to bring PEI in line with the other provinces or to finally allow minimum wage earners the ability to earn a wage that meets their basic needs.

As of May 1, 2008, PEI will still be tied for the lowest minimum wage in Canada with New Brunswick and even after the increase in October we will only move to tied for the second lowest in Canada tied with British Columbia and Newfoundland and Labrador ahead of only New Brunswick.

At 26.0% (translates to 15,000 Islanders), PEI has the second highest percentage of workers working for less than \$10/ hr in Canada. Because of this, the Provincial government needs to realize that our minimum wage level has much greater impact on workers here than it does in other provinces where average wages are higher.

It is especially disappointing that unlike many provincial governments PEI hasn't come up with a long term plan to determine where our minimum wage is going. In such a prosperous country as Canada, it is unimaginable that there is currently no province that has a minimum wage above their province's poverty line. But it is hopeful that so many provinces in Canada are planning long term commitments to increasing their minimum wages, we hope that our provincial government will join them very shortly.

These Provinces include:

- Ontario is increasing their minimum wage by 75 cents per hour annually to reach \$10.25/hr on March 31, 2010
- Nova Scotia's Minimum Wage Review Committee recently recommended going to \$9.65/hr (the expected Low Income Cut Off for a city the size of Sydney and Charlottetown) by October 1, 2010. The Committee also recommends that from 2011 on, the minimum wage be adjusted annually based on the Consumer Price Index.
- Saskatchewan will going to \$9.25/hr by May 01, 2009.
- Alberta's minimum wage will be adjusted annually every April based on Alberta's average weekly wage increases
- The Yukon increases their minimum wage on April 1 of each year, based on the annual increase for the preceding year in the Consumer Price Index for the city of Whitehorse.
- The Newfoundland and Labrador government has begun a minimum wage review with a view to achieving a minimum hourly wage of \$10 per hour by 2010.

Statistics Canada's low-income cut-offs (LICO's) are the most commonly used "poverty" indicator, and are based upon the relative proportion of family income spent on food, clothing and shelter. They vary according to family size and size of community. As we mentioned above the Nova Scotia's Minimum Wage Review Committee is expecting that the Low Income Cut Off for a city the size of Charlottetown will be \$ 9.65/hr by 2010. With October's raise, PEI is only 1 penny above 2002's LICO. It is time for us to get out of this time warp.

While we realize that raising the minimum wage above the LICO is not the magic pill that will totally eliminate poverty on PEI, it is however a major part of the solution. If this government makes a strong commitment towards increasing our minimum wage,

maintaining and expanding public services, protecting and ensuring the quality of our public healthcare system, supporting the creation of a national childcare system, and a national Pharmacare system, and ensuring all Islanders can afford to take advantage of post-secondary educational opportunities this government will go along way to ensuring the prosperity of all Islanders for now and into the future.

“Therefore we ask this government to take a very serious look at the recommendations of the Nova Scotia’s Minimum Wage Review Committee and the work that the Newfoundland and Labrador government is doing in reviewing its minimum wage and commit to coming up with a plan to raise our minimum wage to at least \$9.65/ hr as is recommended in Nova Scotia or even better to \$10/hr as the Newfoundland and Labrador government is looking at. The time has come for this government to usher in a era where all Islanders working full-time on PEI can earn a wage that at the very least covers the basics of life.” concludes Pursey

Important Dates

Solidarity Action for Public Health Care	Friday, May 2, 2008	12:00 Noon Province House (Richmond Street Side)
Life Celebration In Memory of Sister Donalda MacDonald	Saturday, May 3, 2008	1:00 P.M. at Our Lady of Assumption Church, 151 Stratford Road, Stratford, PE
28th Annual CUPE PEI Convention	Thursday and Friday, May 8 and 9, 2008	University of Prince Edward Island, Ch'town
C.L.C. Atlantic Region and P.E.I. Federation of Labour Teach-In on Women's Equality	Thursday, May 15, 2008	9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m at the Loyalist Lakeview Resort 195 Harbour Drive, Summerside, PE
The 25th Constitutional Convention of the Canadian Labour Congress	Monday, May 26 to Friday, May 30	at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. The Deadline for receiving Resolutions is March 11, 2008. The Deadline for receiving Credentials is April 25, 2008

Public Forum: The SPP of North America: From Behind Closed Doors, Into the Public Eye	Friday, May 30, 2008	7:00PM - 9:00 PM Duffy Amphitheater, UPEI Campus, Charlottetown FREE ADMISSION, ALL WELCOME
Social Evening for Past Federation President Jim Gyurus	Saturday, May 31, 2008	7:00 pm - Midnight at the Hot Shots Bar in Charlottetown
Meeting to Form a Provincial Organization of Retirees	Tuesday, June 17, 2008	at 1:00 p.m. at the Best Western Charlottetown in the Dalvay Room formally (MacLauchlan's) on Grafton Street
Triennial PSAC Atlantic Regional Convention	Friday to Sunday, June 20th - 22, 2008	Hotel Delta Beauséjour in Moncton, New Brunswick
Family Barbecue on the Issue of Childcare	Saturday, June 21st, 2008	between 1:00 - 3:00 pm.at Victoria Park, Charlottetown,
Annual Brief to Cabinet	Tuesday, June 24, 2008	at 9:45 am at the Shaw Building, 5th Floor.
PEI Federation of Labour's 8th Annual Labour Day Barbecue and Corn Boil	Monday, September 1, 2008	at 4:00 - 6:00 P.M. Victoria Park, Charlottetown
PEIFL Annual Convention	Friday and Saturday November 7 and 8, 2008	at Rodds Charlottetown Hotel