



PEI FEDERATION OF LABOUR NEWSLETTER MARCH 2004 ISSUE

CURRENT NEWS

- The PEI Federation of Labour now has a website located at www.peifl.ca.
- On April 28, 2004 at 7:00pm at Province House, the PEI Federation of Labour and its affiliates will hold its third Annual Provincial Ceremony "National Day of Mourning" for Workers Killed and Injured on the Job. There will be a reception following at the Coles building. Everyone is encouraged to attend.
- The P.E.I. Federation of Labour Executive Council currently has a vacancy on our board for Vice President (Woman.) Any female affiliate member who would like to volunteer her time and energy to this position would be greatly appreciated. This position will be up for election at our annual convention this November. Please contact our office at 368-3068; fax at 368-3192 or e-mail at: peifed@pei.aibn.com.
- On Saturday, March 27, 2004, it was announced that Malpeque MP Wayne Easter has tabled a private members bill calling for Canada's flag to be lowered to half mast at all federal premises every April 28th to honour the 700 Canadians who are killed annually on the job. The bill will hopefully be approved and in place by next month.
- On Wednesday, March 24, 2004, it was announced that Newfoundland seafood processor OceanChoice will takeover all of the eastern PEI assets of Polar Foods saving the jobs of an estimated 600 workers. The UFCW which represents workers at the Souris and Beach Point plants has said that all conditions in their contract will remain the same.
- On Tuesday, March 23, 2004, PSAC Held Budget Watch 2004 at their offices. The 1st Vice President and the Treasurer attended on the Fed's behalf. The 1st Vice President's picture was in the March 24, 2004 edition of the Guardian. The next day, the Fed sent a letter to thank PSAC for inviting us to their event and to express interest in working with PSAC on a future event to coincide with the federal election.

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- On Tuesday, March 23, 2004, The Fed's Organizing Committee met to discuss the planned Fed organizing drive. A kit to be passed out at meetings with nonaffiliated locals was worked on and will be passed out for Executive Council perusal and comments at the March 31, 2004 meeting. The Fed will start contacting nonaffiliated locals in the near future.
- On Saturday, March 20, 2004, Stephen Harper was elected to be the first federal Conservative Party leader. Harper received 55.5% of the votes with Belinda Stronach second at 35% and Tony Clement in third with 9.5%.
- On Thursday, March 18, 2004, it was announced that Prime Minister Paul Martin has renewed the mandate of the parliamentary task force on seasonal workers. PEI is represented on the task force by Senator Libby Hubley. The task force will report to the PM by November 2004.
- On Wednesday, March 17, 2004, it was announced that the City of Charlottetown has passed a resolution to protect sick leave and retirement pay of city employees in case the city corporation ever went bankrupt. The resolution authorizes the transfer of \$689,736 to a separate investment account from the cash account.
- On Monday, March 15, 2004, it was announced that the Council of Atlantic Telecommunications Unions, composed of CEP and the Atlantic Communication and Technical Workers Union which represents about 4,300 Aliant telephone workers in Atlantic Canada will hold a strike vote after negotiations broke down last week. "The contract offer we have from Aliant falls seriously short in the areas of pension, money and contract language," CEP spokesman Ervan Cronk said in a statement.
- On Friday and Saturday, March 12 and 13, 2004, the Carpenter's Union Local 1338 held information pickets at the new hospital during the new hospital's "Open House". The reason for the pickets was to inform the public and look for their support in their fight to recover from East Prince Partnership the \$32,000 in back wages, health and welfare, and pension owed to their members due to Atlantic Drywall going bankrupt while working at the new Prince County Hospital. So far, attempts to recover the monies owed have been unsuccessful.
- On Saturday, March 13, 2004, it was announced that the unemployment rate on PEI for February was 11.7% up .9% from January's 10.8%. You currently need 525 hours to qualify for EI on PEI.

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- On Friday, March 12, 2004, IRAC announced that rate reductions of between 8-15%(most people will see between 12-15%)will take effect on April 1, 2004 for 77% of insured vehicles in PEI. The remaining 23% will have their rates review completed within the next few weeks. The main reason cited for the reduction is the \$2500 liability limit recently put on minor personal injury claims. Customers who renewed their policies before April 1 should see rebates by the end of June.
- On Thursday, March 11, 2004, UPSE, CUPE, IUOE, the PEI Teachers Federation, and the PEI Nurses Union held a confidential meeting with Premier Pat Binns to discuss the province's current fiscal situation. Binns has stated that he has not ruled out wage freezes, which outraged union leaders who vowed to fight any plans to side step the collective bargaining process. UPSE, CUPE and the Teachers are going into negotiations with the province next month.
- On Wednesday, March 3, 2004, the WCB released its first employer survey. The results of the survey of 500 Island employers were generally favourable. However, the employers did indicate the need for improvement in areas such as fairness, frequency of contact, young worker education, website information, and involvement in decision making. The WCB will be surveying employees later this year.
- On Friday, February 27, 2004, it was announced that Charlottetown finished second lowest to Sherbrooke, Que in the KPMG cost of doing business study. The study looked at the cost of doing business in 98 international cities.

PRESS RELEASE FROM THE FED ON EXCESSIVE INSURANCE PROFITS

- After complaining about how bad 2003 was going to be for the the Canadian Insurance Industry , duping several provincial governments into reducing payouts to injured car crash victims, and increasing premiums by large amounts, the Canadian Insurance Industry announced a record \$2.63 billion profit in 2003. A 673% increase over 2002.
- The Federation felt this was ridiculous and sent out this press release to Island media. The release appeared in the Saturday, March 20, 2004 edition of the Guardian.
- “The recent announcement of record profits by Canadian insurance companies is just disgraceful” stated Carl Pursey,

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President of the PEI Federation of Labour

- These enormous profits will hopefully show Canadians how much control business has over all levels of government in Canada and how easy it is for business to dupe governments into decreasing protection for the public while allowing companies to gain excessive profits off them.
- “We feel that the excessive profiteering that has occurred in the insurance industry illustrates so perfectly why a public run insurance system is so desperately needed on PEI. At the very least, we urge the provincial government to take strong action against all companies offering insurance on PEI to make sure that Islanders are paying a fair rate for their insurance and are getting the kind of coverage they need and deserve..” says C. Pursey
- We hope that this embarrassment for the government makes them realize that it is their job to make sure Islanders are treated fairly and not to make sure that companies make big profits.

PRESS RELEASE ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY

- In March, the Fed released a press release on International Women’s Day. The press release appeared in the Saturday, March 6, 2004 edition of the Guardian.
- International Women’s Day is a day to celebrate the achievements of women as well as a time to fight for greater equality. The P.E.I. Federation of Labour joins with other groups and voices on the issue of women’s access to unemployment insurance and parental benefits.
- The change from UI to EI “has had a profoundly negative impact on insurance protection for women of all ages” states the second CLC study on UI coverage released in March 2003. The gender gap between men and women doubled between 1994 and 2001 with only 33 % of unemployed women able to access employment insurance. The largest gap is for women aged 25 to 44 years of age. On P.E.I., 11% fewer unemployed women are able to collect unemployment insurance compared to men.
- This has also meant that many women are ineligible for parental benefits. This is very unfair and it means that women who cannot afford to live on low benefits do not have the opportunities of other women. As stated by the Women’s Network study “The most vulnerable and marginalized women” are least likely to be eligible for benefits including teenaged new

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mothers, immigrant women, low income women, single mothers, visible minority women, Aboriginal Women and women with disabilities.

-Women working full-time also earn 73% of what men employed full time made in 1997. This means that many women cannot afford to remain on low benefits for a longer period of time. Also, many women need to return to seasonal work when it is available as they do not have long term job security. Women and their families should not be penalized for child bearing and raising children by how they are discriminated against in the workplace.

-The chair of the P.E.I. Federation of Labour Women's Committee invites all women to take part in International Women's Day activities on P.E.I. She also stated "The P.E.I. Federation of Labour adds its voice to those that want to improve the Employment Insurance System so it benefits those unemployed, particularly women who need to access parental benefits." Carl Pursey, President of the P.E.I. Federation of Labour states "that Paul Martin has taken billions from the EI Fund which have helped fund billions of dollars of tax breaks to the rich. We ask him to return the money to working women in Canada who want access to employment insurance and parental benefits."

LETTER SENT BY THE FED IN RESPONSE TO ELMER MACFAYDEN'S LETTER

-On February 17, 2004, the Fed received a letter back from the Minister regarding our meeting. At our February meeting it was suggested that the Fed send a letter in response to Barry Curley's negative attitude towards labour at the meeting.

-The letter we received.

-Dear Mr. Pursey:

-As Minister Responsible for Labour, I want to thank the PEI Federation of Labour for the presentation of February 4, 2004. I found the meeting informative and provided me with a better appreciation of the Federation's labour agenda. As indicated, I will follow up on the issues raised at the meeting. They Include:

1. Seek from Cabinet a date for the Federation to present a brief;
2. Ask the Workers Compensation Board for a list of formal Occupational Health and Safety training sessions conducted in

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the past year;

3. Discuss with Workers Compensation Board concerns regarding the need for more safety inspections on residential construction sites;
4. Engage in discussions to identify a suitable location for a "monument" recognizing workers critically injured at the work site. The location cost and upkeep would require mutual agreement between the parties; and,
5. Meet with representatives of the Department of Development & Technology and the Department of Education to discuss the Apprenticeship Program and the reasons for the shortages of qualified journeymen and the use of the Labour Market Development Fund to assist apprentices.

-Once I have obtained responses to your requests. I will forward you the information.

-The letter we sent to Elmer Macfadyen, the Premier, and Robert Ghiz.

-Dear Mr MacFadyen

-I am writing this letter in response to your letter of February 13, 2004. While we at the Fed are glad to see that you will be looking into some of the issues brought before you at our recent meeting and we are hoping to work with you to resolve these issues, we are very disappointed by the fact that you fail to mention any actions you will be taking on two of the major issues we brought before you namely Anti Scab and First Contract Legislation. We hope that this omission is simply an error and not an indication of your disregard for the importance of these issues.

-Other areas of your letter that we found disappointing were: we feel that safety inspections should be increased on all job sites not just residential and we would like to see you discuss the impending shortages in the construction trade not only with Apprenticeship but also with the Building Trades to get a more real world view of the impending shortages in the trades.

-Also, during the meeting our members were very disappointed by Mr. Curley's remark that employers didn't like first contract legislation and that's why it wasn't proclaimed. Last time we checked, your government is supposed to represent the best interests of all Islanders and not just employers and **Mr Curley,**

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as Director of Labour, should be an advocate for workers. If he is not then who in the "Labour Department" is?

-Finally, we are looking forward to discuss these and other issues with yourself and Cabinet during our meeting to discuss our brief on April 13th _

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2004 FEDERAL BUDGET

-Here are some of the highlights of the 2004 Federal Budget:

-1.An additional \$2 billion for the provinces and territories for health.

-2.Establishment of a new Canada Public Health Agency as a focal point for disease control and emergency response.

-3.Introduction of a new Canada Learning Bond, which will provide up to \$2,000 for children in low-income families born after 2003 for post-secondary education.

-4.Enhancement of the Canada Education Savings Grant matching rate for low- and middle-income families.

-5.Extension of the education tax credit to employees who pursue career related studies at their own expense.

-6.Increase in the ceiling for Canada Student Loans to \$210 a week from \$165.

-7.Increase in the income thresholds used for determining eligibility for student loan interest relief.

-8.Commitment of a further \$605 million to address security issues.

-9.A reduction in the Air Travellers Security Charge.

-10.Increase in the capital cost allowance rate for computer equipment to 45 per cent from 30 per cent, and in the rate for broadband, Internet and other data network infrastructure equipment to 30 per cent from 20 per cent.

-11.\$7 billion in GST/HST relief for municipalities of all sizes over the next 10 years.

-12.Acceleration of the \$1-billion Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund, with spending over the next 5 years instead of 10.

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- 13. Funding of \$4 billion over 10 years to clean up contaminated sites.
- 14. The government will sell off its interest in Petro-Canada.
- 15. Exemption from tax of the income earned by Canadian Forces personnel and police on high-risk international missions.
- 16. The Cabinet Committee on Expenditure Review is examining all programs to identify at least \$3 billion annually in savings within four years for reinvestment in the priorities of Canadians while improving government management.
- 17. A new plan for better spending management and oversight is being introduced under the leadership of the President of the Treasury Board, which includes re-establishing the Office of the Comptroller General of Canada, strengthening departmental comptrollers and internal audits.

UNIONS CARE

- Maritime Electric employees and the company recently donated \$24,139 to the United Way.
- The PEI Teachers Assistants and Youth Services Workers Group (CUPE Local 3260 recently donated \$5,000 to the annual equipment fund drive at the Prince County Hospital and \$2,000 to the Special Olympics.
- UPSE recently donated over \$10,000 to 27 local groups as part of its UPSE Has A Heart campaign.

IMPORTANT DATES

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| WCB 2003 EMPLOYER SURVEY | WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3, 2004 | 1:30PM STANHOPE ROOM, BEST WESTERN, CHARLOTTETOWN |
| NDP CONVENTION | SATURDAY, MARCH 6, 2004 | AT 1:15 P.M. AT KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS HALL |

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| INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY | MONDAY, MARCH 8, 2004 | |
| CARPENTER'S UNION HELD INFORMATION PICKETS | FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, MARCH 12 AND 13, 2004 | AT THE NEW PRINCE COUNTY HOSPITAL STARTING AT 1:00 PM |
| BENEFIT FOR PROVINCIAL NDP LEADER GARY ROBICHAUD | SATURDAY, MARCH 20, 2004 | 7:30 AT THE WELLINGTON LEGION |
| FEDERAL BUDGET | TUESDAY MARCH 23, 2004 | |
| STEWARD LEVEL 3 TRAINING | TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY MARCH 23 AND 24, 2004 | AT HOWARD JOHNSON, CHARLOTTETOWN |
| PROVINCIAL BUDGET | TUESDAY MARCH 30, 2004 | |
| BRIEF TO CABINET | TUESDAY, APRIL 13, 2004 | 9:15 AM |
| WCB'S 5TH ANNUAL WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY CONFERENCE | WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY APRIL 14 AND 15, 2004 | DELTA PRINCE EDWARD, CHARLOTTETOWN |
| LABOUR COLLEGE OF CANADA WEEK LONG EDUCATIONAL | APRIL 25 TO 30, 2004 | MEMARAMCOOK INSTITUTE, ST. JOSEPH, N.B. DEADLINE MARCH 26, 2004 |
| DAY OF MOURNING FOR WORKERS KILLED ON THE JOB | WEDNESDAY, APRIL 28, 2004 | 7:00pm AT PROVINCE HOUSE RECEPTION FOLLOWING AT THE COLES BUILDING |
| LABOUR COLLEGE OF CANADA 4 WEEK GRADUATE PROGRAM | MAY 10 TO JUNE 4, 2004 | OTTAWA DEADLINE MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2004 |

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| TOPSHEE CONFERENCE ON GLOBALIZATION | MAY 15 AND 16, 2004 | IN ANTIGONISH, NOVA SCOTIA. ON THE 14 THERE WILL BE A FAREWELL PARTY ON BEHALF OF EVERETT BAKER |
| LABOUR DAY | MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2004 | |
| 2004 PEIFL ANNUAL CONVENTION | FRIDAY AND SATURDAY NOVEMBER 5 AND 6, 2004 (TENTATIVE) | |
| NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN | MONDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2004 | |