



THE Accent

Prince Edward Island Union of Public Sector Employees

Public service wages should rise

“We are sitting very, very pretty coming out of this downturn”

Wes Sheridan, Finance Minister

The provincial government had an \$84.2 million deficit in 2009-10, and in classic scapegoat fashion, argued that the public service should put its “collective shoulder to the wheel” to fix things. Since Health has moved to arbitration and as Civil Service, IRAC and WCB begin negotiations, the government has once again stated its position publically. This time the message was directly aimed at negotiations, i.e., if the public sector expects wage and benefit increases then they can also expect cuts to programs and services.

The truth is that the Ghiz government has been providing Islanders a one-sided, negative account of the province’s financial condition in order to make the argument that the public service must pay for the deficit! However, as we have seen recently with the release of the provincial budget, things aren’t looking as bad as they were made out to be. In fact, Finance Minister, Wes Sheridan, is now saying that “we are sitting very, very pretty coming out of this downturn” (CBC News).

Prince Edward Island Union of Public Sector Employees
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Not only did we actually avoid a recession in 2009 (PEI Budget), but the “economy of Prince Edward Island grew in 2009 by 0.6%,” making it the only province to do so. “Increased output in aquaculture and higher lobster landings more than offset a decline in agriculture” (CBC News). But what about 2008, surely things were worse then? Actually, the economy grew in 2008 as well by 0.7%. The government has been handing us a sob story for months when in reality they have been taking in more money each year than any government in PEI history!

- **2009-10 = \$1.43 billion**
 - **2008-09 = \$1.35 billion**
 - **2007-08 = \$1.25 billion**
- Revenue figures from Budgets since Premier Ghiz took power*

Sheridan also points to indicators that show PEI is in good economic shape moving forward:

- **total labour income grew 4.4% in 2009 (fastest in country)**
- **growth is forecast at about 2% for 2010**
- **employment and wages are expected to grow in 2010**
- **the projected deficit for 2010-11 is \$30,000,000 less than expected**

We also see independent studies backing up Sheridan’s optimistic economic indicators such as the latest poll from Corporate Research Associates (CRA) on consumer confidence in Atlantic Canada.

cont ...

The Accent is an internal publication of the Prince Edward Island Union of Public Sector Employees. Comments, questions, concerns and suggestions should be sent to: Mark Barrett, UPSE Communications and Campaigns Officer, at mbarrett@peiupse.ca.

Note to members distributing The Accent:

Because the material contained in this publication is often of a time-sensitive nature, please post or distribute it as soon as possible.

UPSE is proud to represent over 5000 members in the public and private sectors.

CRA's findings show that consumer confidence is rising in Prince Edward Island. Don Mills, President of CRA, reports that consumer confidence in Atlantic Canada "is likely the highest in Canada." And in Atlantic Canada the consumer confidence index for Prince Edward Island stands at 106.1, which puts Island confidence ahead of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Further, if we consider that "consumer spending is closely aligned to consumer confidence" (Don Mills, CRA) then we can expect increased spending in Prince Edward Island in 2010, as we saw in 2009. Indeed, **PEI was the only province to have increased housing starts in 2009**, and our **population grew 1.1% in 2009** which was the fastest growth in the region.

There is no question that the future is bright on Prince Edward Island. The government continues to bring in more and more money, the economy is continuing to grow, and Island consumers are among the most confident in the country. It's time for Premier Ghiz to honour his word and compensate public service employees fairly. The Premier himself said "we have less staff than any other jurisdiction in the country ... and our civil servants ... are the lowest paid civil servants in the country" (Hansard, Spring 2009). He pledged that his administration would negotiate wage increases:

We know that our civil servants work very hard and we're going to do our best to reward them into the future by making sure that we continue to negotiate to bring them up closer to the national average.

Premier Robert Ghiz
(Hansard, Spring 2009)

The Ghiz government knows how difficult it is to attract quality public service employees to our province, and Premier Ghiz knows that they are underpaid. In fact, real wages for government employees have actually fallen by 1.22% since 1991. With negotiations now upon us, let's hold the Premier to his promise, as we continue to negotiate in good faith for wages and benefits that are fair and well deserved.

Shelley Ward,
President, PEI UPSE

Grass Cutting

Members invited to submit tenders

PEIUPSE is calling for tenders regarding grass cutting services for the union office located at 4 Enman Crescent, Charlottetown. Services are required from June 1 to September 30, 2010.

Please submit tenders marked "Grass cutting tender" to:

Union of Public Sector Employees
c/o Kevin Gotell, Secretary Treasurer
4 Enman Crescent, Charlottetown
PE, C1E 1E6



Please submit tenders by May 21, 2010

Liberals Cut Pay

May 17, 1994

The Liberal government cuts pay to all provincial public workers.

Pay rates are reduced by
3.75% for those who earn
\$28,000 a year or less and
by 7.5% for those who
earn more. The Liberal
government does not get
re-elected.



National Nurses Week

May 10-16, 2010

The theme for this year's national nurses week is:

Nursing - You Can't Live Without It!

The P.E.I. Union of Public Sector Employees wishes to acknowledge and express their appreciation to all Island nurses for their dedication and professional service in our hospitals, nursing homes and in the community.

Congratulations to all RN's, and LPN's