

# COOPER INSTITUTE ACTIVITIES REPORT 2018



*With the support of many generous donors Cooper Institute has been active in the community for 34 years.*

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## Social Justice Symposium 2018

Cooper Institute hosted its fourth Social Justice Symposium, *PEI Lands Protection Act: The Spirit and the Letter*, at the Milton Community Hall on Saturday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018.

The Social Justice Symposium is an annual event in memory of Father Andrew Macdonald (1933-2013), a founder of Cooper Institute. He wrote and performed a song in 1981 as part of the community lobbying effort in favour of passing the Lands Protection Act. His song, *No! No! No! Don't Sell PEI* was featured at the Symposium, led by Tony Reddin. Another well-known Island singer and songwriter, Teresa Doyle performed some of her songs about protecting the land.



Debbie Theuerkauf, Edith Ling, Reg Phelan, Douglas Campbell

A four-person panel discussed various aspects of the spirit and the letter of the Lands Protection Act. Gary Schneider shared insights into the meaning of the spirit of the act. Reg Phelan covered the history of Islanders' struggle to keep control of and protect the land. Douglas Campbell spoke about goals and approaches of those who oppose and misinterpret the intent of the act. Edith Ling identified major loopholes which facilitate the violation of the spirit of the act.

Sixty-six people from a wide area of interests and varied opinions were engaged in high-spirited discussions, identifying possible, positive actions to enhance the intent of the Lands Protection Act. At seven tables participants grappled with the question:

*What actions can you take with others now to strengthen the Lands Protection Act?* It was clear that the majority of those in attendance believed that some action must be taken.

The proposals varied: forcing the identification of capital at the source of land accumulation; engaging in self-education and community awareness endeavors; taking a stand as citizens by lobbying for new public policy directions.

### *Tracing the source of capital*

The diversity of the group was evident in the fact that getting at the source of unbridled land accumulation was not expressed by many table groups. Those who did recognize it identified that the bottom-line corporate business model governing PEI is closely related to land transactions and the centralization of ownership and control of the land. The transient nature of capital flow creates uncertainty about what interests are actually behind land transactions. There is a need to follow the money. It is especially important to identify that capital interests and the need for safe investment are at the root of the global land grabbing. It is essential to be able to identify these characteristics in the current land transferrals in PEI.

### *Self-education and community awareness*

Some of the symposium participants made it clear that they lack sufficient knowledge of the Lands Protection Act and of the opportunities for possible violation of the spirit of the act. Many had not yet seen or read the act nor the reports of various land commissions, including that of Horace Carver. There was therefore a great emphasis on education in general, their own, that of the wider community, and that of government and other elected officials. There was a consensus on the need to be aware of, and to promote, the knowledge of PEI's history of struggle for lands protection. They suggested searching out information on the Lands Protection Act and setting up community-based study meetings and keeping in mind that what happens to the land affects both rural and urban populations. They identified the importance of searching out what is happening to the land in their own local communities, using community land-mapping. There is an urgent need to engage youth in

the history of land use and the current and future impact of the concentration of control of the land. All need to be involved in keeping the land issue in the media. They suggested bringing up the land issue wherever possible in social media (by creating a Facebook page) and in conversations.

#### *Taking a stand: Lobbying for sound public policies*

The participants saw their role as citizens to make serious demands of the PEI Government: to demand transparency on land transferrals and acquisitions; to pressure government to compile and make public accessible information on multiple corporations and ownership over the limits of the Act; to demand the closing of loopholes in the Lands Protection Act; to enact land zoning; to shame government for promoting mono-cropping and for all other policies and programs which neglect the protection of PEI lands from corporate speculators; to challenge the government to implement the Horace Carver recommendation (28d) for a “3-year review”; to engage MLAs re: imposing minimum standards for organic matter and taxing those who operate below the minimum; to lobby all politicians and potential politicians regardless of political stripe; to support the NFU who are knowledgeable on the Lands Protection Act; to promote Basic Income Guarantee for farmers tied to “steadfast stewardship” of the land; to urge government to develop and implement policies to strengthen family-based farming.

The symposium ended with one of the organizers challenging the participants to form a coalition for the protection of PEI lands. This proposal resonated especially with one of the table groups, which became committed to this as a long-term collective action.

A critical quote from one participant: “There is too little attention to the urgent need to have land socialized, held in common”.

## **Trade Justice**

### *People's Forum on Just Trade & Development*

In November, Gavin Fridell, Research Chair in International Development Studies at Saint Mary's University was the guest speaker at a forum organized by Trade Justice PEI, of which Cooper Institute is an active member. Dr Fridell's specialty is examining the political economy of fair trade, free trade, global trade governance and how trade issues play out among social movements and states. In his presentation, he made the point that because corporate interests have so much power, trade agreements are about much more than tariffs and moving goods back and forth across borders. They contain all sorts of protections for investors. He stressed the need for grassroot movements to make their voices heard and to envision and push for alternative models of trade.

After Gavin's presentation, participants talked in small groups about the broad social policies they felt trade should support. In general, they said, trade should benefit people and the environment and reduce inequality. There was a call to abandon the idea that “free trade brings prosperity to all” and to imagine new models for trade. Here are a few of the policies that participants said should be supported, not hindered, by international trade agreements:

*Indigenous Rights:* Indigenous peoples should not only be consulted; they should be the first at the table. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People should be a governing set of principles for all trade and development.

*Food sovereignty:* Systems that ensure producers get a fair share of the profits (e.g. supply management) should be protected, and trade agreements should include enforceable standards for sustainable production and support policies that favour local suppliers. Trade in food products that don't meet Canadian standards should be prohibited.

*Peace:* No trade in weapons and trade that promotes militarization.

*Environment:* Communities must be able to say no to pipelines, fracking, mining and the misuse of water. Preference should be given to products that are sustainably produced, with a low carbon footprint. Water should not be a part included in trade agreements.

*Labour Rights:* Trade agreements should be based on economic policies that put workers' rights and fair distribution of wealth at the centre, including policies that support migrant workers' rights.

*Human Rights & Equality:* A tribunal & penalties for countries that violate human rights.

*Democracy:* Inclusion and respect for civil society and grassroots movements: trade deals must not be negotiated and agreed upon behind closed doors.

*Public Services & Regulation:* Governments should have power to regulate in the public interest and create public services such as transit and pharmacare.



## PEI Working Group for a Livable Income

In its 16-year history, the PEI Working Group for a Livable Income (WGLI) has been consistent in its advocacy in the community and with policy makers. We believe that every person has the right to a livable income which includes having enough to pay rent or mortgage and monthly utility bills, to buy nutritious food and medicine, to use transportation, to continue learning, to access childcare and eldercare, to participate in the community, and to cover emergencies. A livable income supports people to live in good health and with dignity. This means that the following must provide livable income while preserving the dignity of the person: social assistance; pensions; supplements; disability support, and wages.

Referring to livable wages, their adequacy and protection of rights and dignity in the workplace, the Working Group concentrated a good deal of time and energy in 2018 on the PEI Employment Standards Act, the need to open it up to in-depth review and revision to correspond to changing employment realities. The actions involved a media conference in early January followed by an opinion piece in the print media. Later the Working Group made a formal submission to the Employment Standards Board. Then finally in December we participated in a consultation about the Employment Standards Act with Brad Colwill, Deputy Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning and Patricia MacPhail, Director of Labour Relations. (See the essay, *Need for Revision of the Employment Standards Act*, later in this report).



Marcia Carroll, Marie Burge and Jillian Kilfoil at WGLI's media conference, January 2018

The Working Group for a Livable Income and its members dedicated an enormous amount of time and energy contributing to the PEI Government's Poverty Reduction Plan. In one way the group's time and talents were well-spent as the Plan initiated actions to improve the life of many impoverished Islanders. The Working Group acknowledged publicly the hard work and

dedication of the Poverty Reduction Advisory Council. However, the Council was tied to *reduction* with no space for long term plan for the *elimination* of poverty. It is clear that government's current lack of flexibility and its lack of long-term vision obstructs a future in which Basic Income Guarantee for all would be the norm.

The *2017 PEI Children's Report*, commissioned by Dr. Heather Morrison, Chief Public Health Officer, created an opportunity for discussions on children's health and wellness, and how children in PEI experience poverty. A community forum with Dr. Morrison as presenter was organized for the fall of 2018, but due to bad weather was postponed and will be presented in early 2019. The report gives evidence of poorer outcomes for children in families with lower income. It uses social determinants of health and gender analysis very effectively but tells a very sad story. The WGLI has always made it clear the children are impoverished because their parents or caregivers are poor. In the proposed forum the Working Group will lead a discussion about how Basic Income Guarantee, as a right, addresses adults' lack of income to cover basic needs and improve the situation for children.

### Basic Income Guarantee

From the perspective of the advancement of Basic Income Guarantee (BIG) in PEI as a long-term program to ensure livable income as a right for all people, 2018 was a comparatively dismal year. The prospect of a province-wide demonstration project, which seemed like a real possibility in 2017, seemed to fizzle out. What appeared to have been federal government openness to promoting BIG became a closed door. What appeared to have been PEI government willingness to lobby the Federal Government for a demonstration project in PEI dissolved into thin air. It took just one "no" from the federal minister responsible to prompt PEI policy makers to back down on an all-party election promise in 2015 and for the PEI Government to turn its back on a motion, unanimously passed in the Legislature on December 6, 2016.

In late 2018 when the PEI Poverty Reduction Action Plan was unveiled it was obvious that the many references to BIG which came out in the consultations had been ignored. Furthermore, the Poverty Reduction Advisory Council did not fulfill one of its own major goals: ***to overcome poverty today and prevent poverty tomorrow***, a goal which seemed compatible with basic income guarantee.

To make the prospects even dimmer, the Ontario experiment was rather brutally discontinued by newly-elected Premier Ford. This fuelled some of the BIG opposition which has claimed that a change of government is enough to dismantle the program, making many at-risk people even more vulnerable.

There was some good news for 2018. **C-BIG PEI**, the campaign for BIG, as part of the work of the PEI Working Group for a Livable Income, was invited to attend and make a presentation at the **North American BIG Congress** in Hamilton Ontario. We have maintained close relationships with various BIG organizations in Ontario. Members of those organizations have openly promoted PEI as the reasonable site for a possible future Federal-Provincial basic income demonstration project. They refer to the advantage of PEI's population size and the status of full provincial jurisdiction which would provide a manageable demonstration.

### **Coalition for the Protection of PEI Lands**

The Coalition for the Protection of PEI Lands originated from a proposal at the Cooper Institute Symposium on the Lands Protection Act. Its membership includes farmers, environmentalists and individuals and groups concerned with social justice, food sovereignty and democracy.

It was formed to “promote steadfast stewardship, respecting the spirit of the PEI Lands Protection Act, for the protection of Prince Edward Island’s fragile ecology, environment, watersheds and lands”.

The Coalition sees the continuing trend of concentrating large acreages in the hands of a few corporate interests as a major problem for PEI. This accumulation is consistent with the demands of the industrial model of food production, the goal of which seems to be profit, regardless of the damage to land, water, and family farms. The Coalition supports the family farm model of food production and will advocate for prosperity for island farm families and new farmers.

The immediate goal of the Coalition is to ensure that the PEI Lands Protection Act is strengthened in order that the accumulation of land by corporate interests is stopped. Our research has shown that current patterns of implementation and administration of the Act undermine its purpose, spirit and intent. Further, the Coalition found it next to impossible to follow the convoluted trail of land transfers. There is an urgent need for government transparency and consistency in making relevant information available regarding land ownership, its use and abuse.

People in rural communities have voiced concern about land transfers taking place at an alarming rate and that loopholes in the Lands Protection Act make that possible. The government needs to acknowledge the existence of these loopholes and close them as soon as possible.

The Coalition will aim to inform Islanders about the crises facing all aspects of the land and to engage members of the community and Government in learning about the current land ownership crisis.

### **Housing Issues**

As the vacancy rate in Charlottetown plummeted to almost 0% late in 2018, a small group, including a member of Cooper Institute, started to plan how to bring people in the community together to discuss the impacts of the lack of affordable housing and identify some ways to take action. Under the banner of *The Fight for Affordable Housing*, they organized two well-attended community events, which allowed people to share their experiences and come up with ideas for taking action.

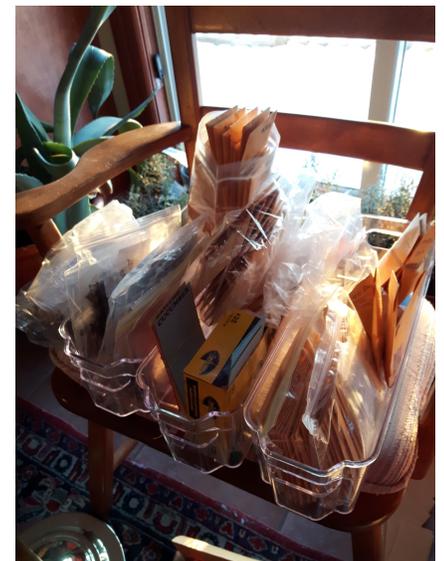
In 2018 the federal and provincial governments released housing strategies, and the City of Charlottetown released a housing framework. The three levels of government were remarkably similar in their approaches, relying on the market to take care of the crisis, preferring rent subsidies and support for private developers to build affordable housing (without really defining affordable) over investment in publicly owned and operated, social housing.

Given the acuteness of the situation, and the implications for people especially people who rent their homes and those on low incomes, it's crucial to find ways to engage people and ensure their voices are heard as decisions are made, and as plans are developed and programs put into place.

### **Seeds of Community**

Seed saving is one aspect of food sovereignty; in part, it's about maintaining local control of the food system. In 2018, Cooper Institute helped to organize community seed exchanges at the public libraries in Charlottetown, Montague, Summerside and Souris. These “Seedy Saturdays” are popular events; they are a chance for experienced gardeners to share the seeds they've saved and an affordable way for new gardeners to obtain seeds as they venture into growing their own food. We also supported the Summerside and Charlottetown libraries to organize and maintain seed libraries, which serve to make seeds more accessible to people with an interest in growing food.

The generous and enthusiastic support of several PEI librarians has been essential to the success of our seed exchanges. As has been the involvement of several farmer and seed producers. A big thank-you to everyone involved!



## Proportional Representation

To date, Cooper Institute's engagement in advocacy for proportional representation (PR) has been in two phases.

The first phase began in May 2015. Acknowledging the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 2005 Mixed Member Proportional representation (MMP) plebiscite, Cooper Institute took the initiative to form a reference group which would help develop a proportional representation coalition based on democratic principles. This meant identifying the necessary structures, program design, timelines, and guidelines for relationships and communications and to identify the resources (finances and knowledge) needed. The reference group would bring together NGO's and individuals, currently showing interest in PR. The goals from the beginning were "to develop effective plans (content and process) for community engagement and communication with appropriate policy makers". The new community-based organization was called the PEI Coalition for Proportional Representation. All PEI political associations were invited to participate.

The beginning of the second phase was marked by the dissolution PEI Coalition for Proportional Representation, of which Cooper Institute had remained an active member over the three-year lifespan of the Coalition. The dissolution should be marked as an inglorious moment in the history of community democracy in PEI when the esteemed provincial legislature chose to dishonour a people-movement. Two members of the Coalition, publicly belonging to a political organization were named and shamed in the Legislature. This was not the first appearance of the ire of some MLAs who mouthed thinly-veiled, false complaints about the Coalition. This seemed to have been prompted by the Coalition's MMP success in the 2016 Plebiscite. Some legislators even implied questionable sources of funding for the work of the Coalition.

In this second phase, Cooper Institute is a member of the new PEI PR Network. Within that Network, the Institute authorized the printing of brochures, "8 Reasons We Need MMP" and "8 Raisons pour lesquelles nous avons besoin de RPM" and coordinated the distribution of over 9,000 brochures to many communities across PEI. Cooper Institute wrote an opinion piece for the media entitled "Referendum Still in the Works" and continues to support the organized promotion of MMP as the preferred electoral choice for PEI in the Referendum.

## Seniors Engaging in Electoral Democracy

Cooper Institute designed, coordinated and implemented for the Voluntary Resource Council (VRC) its 2018-19 project called *Seniors Engaging in*

*Electoral Democracy*. The project aimed to prepare seniors to encourage other seniors and soon-to-be seniors to delve into the proposed options in P.E.I. for electing politicians which will be voted on in the Electoral System referendum. This referendum is to take place at the time of the next provincial election.

The participating seniors in 5 three-hour interactive training sessions, heard about and shared knowledge about the following: the history of Islanders fearlessly accepting many radical changes in the electoral system since 1720; the strengths and weaknesses of the two electoral options to be considered in the referendum; the many questions people ask about the new option, Mixed Member Proportional, to be presented in the referendum. The seniors were also introduced to ways and means of engaging other seniors in the issue of electoral democracy and encouraging seniors to vote in the referendum.

The seniors from the training program are organizing a public, interactive symposium for late January of 2019 entitled, *Electoral Referendum Choices: What Do Seniors Want to Know?*

## Cinema Politica



The screening of Bluefin attracted over 150 people.

In 2018, Cinema Politica collaborated with the PEI Action Team for Migrant Worker Rights, the UPEI Environmental Society, the Mawi'omi Centre at UPEI and Save our Seas and Shores PEI to show some excellent documentaries. One of the most successful screenings was of Bluefin, which was filmed in PEI and deals with the status of bluefin tuna. John Hopkins, the director of the film is from PEI and was present at the screening.

Later in the year, another Island filmmaker, Eliza Starchild Knockwood introduced the film Sacred Water, Standing Rock, and showed a trailer for her own film, The Water Protectors Journey - Along the Sipekne'katik River.

## **Migrant Workers**

In 2018 Cooper Institute continued to work for the social inclusion of migrant workers and to lower the barriers that workers face by offering support, education, and advocacy.

This year we established contact with several new groups of workers. We also increased our knowledge of the problems they face each day and the different realities they are exposed to. We successfully carried out our fourth public forum and facilitated the participation of groups of workers in several community events across the Island. We updated the TFW Information Guides and had them translated to Chinese and Spanish. We also produced a guide for Seasonal Agricultural Workers and had it translated into Spanish. These guides are currently available on our website.

### ***Outreach, Advocacy, & Education***

In 2018, Cooper Institute connected with 9 new groups of workers - 5 groups of agricultural workers and 4 new groups of fish plant workers from Mexico, China, and the Philippines. We are currently in contact with 16 groups of workers. We learned about the different experiences that workers have had while they are in Canada; the barriers and issues they encounter and their struggle for social inclusion. We helped 6 agricultural workers to participate in national consultations on the agricultural stream of the TFWP.

We also held several workshops and meetings to introduce our information guides. And, although it is not part of our core mandate, Cooper Institute responded to requests by migrant workers for individual advocacy on different issues relating to their status in Canada, work conditions, health, and taxation. During 2018 our staff worked on about 24 such cases.

Lastly, during this period we had several meetings with representatives of provincial government departments including Employment Standards and Immigration, as well as with Ministers of Health & Wellness, and Workforce & Advanced Learning. We also met with Members of Parliament, and with members of the PEI Legislature. We met with federal government departments such as the Employment and Social Development Canada. Our objective was always to raise awareness of migrant workers' issues and advocate for policy changes to improve conditions and protect their rights.

### ***Living and Thriving: Supporting Migrant Workers***

In April, 70 people from the community, government as well as a group of migrant workers participated in our forum on food sovereignty and the role migrant workers play in our food system. Out of the conversations there emerged many ideas for advocacy and actions to support migrant workers to be treated fairly and recognized for the important roles they play in our economy. Speakers representing CCR, Kairos, Justice

for Migrant Workers, migrant workers, and our organization discussed local and nation-wide issues.

### ***Public Outreach***

With the help of volunteers from the PEI Action Team for Migrant Worker Rights, we organized a screening of the film "In the Shadows of Borders" and had booths at 4 DiverseCity Multicultural Festivals and at Farm Day in the City in Charlottetown.

### ***PEI Action Team for Migrant Worker Rights***

The PEI Action Team for Migrant Worker Rights has continued to grow and support Cooper Institute staff in different ways. They directly supported workers and helped them to advocate for their rights. They have also advocated for workers with the government and raised awareness of migrant worker issues in the community. Currently, the PEI Action Team for Migrant Worker Rights has a diverse volunteer base and some members provide support to workers in their own language.

### ***National Solidarity & Collaboration***

During this year we worked with the Coalition for Migrant Workers Rights and the Canadian Council for Refugees to advocate on national issues. We also attended a forum of the Canadian Council for Refugees in November in Montreal, and a volunteer from the Action Team participated in a national meeting of the Coalition for Migrant Worker Rights Canada in Toronto.

### ***UPEI Nursing Student Community Internship***

This year we had the pleasure of hosting a nursing student for the fall semester. Marie Antoinette Pangan was in her fourth year at UPEI. While at Cooper Institute, she chose to focus her attention on increasing migrant workers' awareness of healthcare services in PEI. She prepared accessible information about services and helped to organize a forum attended by more than 60 workers at which she presented information and documented workers' concerns including around dental services, access to PEI health cards, appeal processes and labour rights. **Thank-you Marie Antoinette!**



At Diverscity with Marie Antoinette (far left)

## Organizational Support

Members of the Cooper Institute collective work with and support many organizations in various ways:

**Société Saint-Thomas d'Aquin**

**Parkinson Society Maritime Region (PEI)**

**Breaking the Silence Maritimes-Guatemala  
Solidarity Network**

**P.E.I. Supported Decision-Making Coalition**

**Voluntary Resource Council**

**National Farmers Union**

**Save Our Seas and Shores PEI**

**PEI People First**

**Atlantic Council for International Cooperation**

**Coalition for the Protection of PEI Water**

**Latin American Mission Program (LAMP)**

**Canadian Council for Refugees**

**Lennon House Association**

**Partners for Change**

## About Coalitions

Cooper Institute is fortunate to be able to carry out our work in collaboration with many groups and people who are also committed to social justice. This style of work promotes cooperation and provides opportunities for sharing knowledge and strategies. It is an environment in which we learn with, and from, each other. And it is an efficient use of time and energy.

In this way we are privileged to work with organized labour, and migrant workers. We are united with equality-seeking women, who fight for reproductive rights for women. We are with people with disabilities seeking fairness. We are with environmentalists and with food producers who value the ecosystem and who work toward people-centered food systems. We appreciate and thank all our associates. Together we can contribute to the creation of new and equitable solutions.

## Cooper Institute Lending Library

In our office on the second floor of the Voluntary Resource Council, you'll find several shelves full of books on every imaginable social justice issue or theme. These books are available to any interested person.

## Connect with Cooper Institute

You can find us on [Facebook](#) or visit our website – [www.cooperinstitute.ca](http://www.cooperinstitute.ca). Better still, come and visit us at 81 Prince Street in Charlottetown!

## Fundraising Committee Launched

Two prominent supporters of Cooper Institute's work in the Island community, Des Duffy and Rick Gallant, encouraged Cooper Institute to form a Fundraising Committee. The committee was launched in December 2017 with the two original supporters, along with Irene Burge and Marie Burge of Cooper Institute.

It was decided that the committee would be a promotional voice to raise the profile of Cooper Institute and be a team of campaigners soliciting financial support for the work of Cooper Institute with Islanders. In particular the first goal of the Cooper Institute Fundraising Committee is to raise enough money annually to cover the cost of running Cooper Institute's programs with priority on livable income for the staff (who currently volunteer over 50% of their work time). Another goal is to encourage donors, preferring long-term sustainability donations, to contribute and/or make bequests to the Cooper Foundation.

At the beginning of this new endeavour we thank again our ongoing donors who over the years make many generous donations. We invite other interested people to donate. Almost one third of the funding for our work in the community comes from private sources. The Cooper Institute Fundraising Committee encourages long-time donors to continue with their generosity and is seeking to expand the Institute's financial capacities.

Donations can be made by using the "donate" button on our website. Contributions can also be made in the following ways: pre-authorized monthly donations; an annual contribution; a memorial for a deceased family member or friend; a bequest in your Last Will and Testament. Cooper Institute is a charitable organization (Registration #10114 4541 RR0001).

## Members of the Cooper Institute Collective:

Paola Flores

Irene Burge

Marie Burge

Joe Byrne

Eddie Cormier

Irene Doyle

Ann Wheatley

Maureen Larkin

Leah MacLeod

Reg Phelan

Selvi Roy

Debbie Theuerkauf



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## CLOSING THOUGHTS

### Revision of the Employment Standards Act

The PEI Employment Standards Act, administered by the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, is designed to protect workers' rights, clarifying "the rights and obligations of employees and employers and setting minimum standards to ensure that individuals are treated fairly in the workplace". Employment Standards outline labour rules and responsibilities in areas such as wages and work hours, special leave, and protection from injury, discrimination and sexual harassment. The Act serves especially as a protection for non-unionized workers.

In its original form the Employment Standards Act was passed in 1992 (literally and figuratively in the last century). In 2006, the Act was opened up to the community for comprehensive re-assessment. For this purpose, the 2006 PEI Employment Standards Review Panel was given the mandate to hold extensive consultations. Many community organizations, including the PEI Working Group for a Livable Income, workers and employers invested significant energy and expertise in that major revision of the Employment Standards Act.

This positive process produced an interim report in 2007 which finally resulted in the 2009 major revision of the Act. Many of the groups involved in the 2006-2009 process have been insisting for a number of years that another comprehensive review is long overdue. A recommendation of the Poverty Reduction Action Plan, released late in 2018, added weight to that insistence. The review process is in its beginning stages. It is essential that meaningful and transparent consultations be the hallmark of this review. The consultation plans should be refined by recent positive processes such as those followed for the Water Act and the Poverty Reduction Action Plan, as well as the experience of the Horace Carver Commission. A review process in two phases is productive: consultations followed by an interim report, after which there would be a second round of consultations to refine the final report.

The community will be forceful in demanding that persons chosen to lead the review must be (and be seen to be) independent. It is important that it not be a single person and that the review be led by a panel of people with different backgrounds and interests, including workers and employers from various-sized operations, and that the panel reflect the diversity of PEI's population. It is strongly suggested that all consultations be held in community style and that private meetings be avoided. The value of open meetings is that participants hear, clarify, and learn from each other. The use of the internet for sharing information and developments is important, being aware though that many key people do not have access to the internet.

The review of the Employment Standards Act must take the following into consideration:

- an employee-centred and inclusive general framework
- creation of a workplace culture based on mutual respect
- the changing face of work in the digital age; re-defining work in all its aspects; the mobility of work and of workers
- the inadequacy of minimum wage to address the basic human needs of workers
- the need for a long-term vision of livable wage for all, alleviating the income gap and inequality which exists in the workplace and in the wider community
- the vulnerability of many workers e.g. women, people of various ethnic origins, especially migrant workers, persons with disabilities, workers living in grinding poverty, and workers without voice or power
- the need for secure, non-threatening complaints processes e.g. allowing for (non-legal) advocacy
- a system of monitoring workplaces
- structures for educating employers and employees concerning their rights and responsibilities.

It is important to note that when a new act is passed, it will be open to changes over the coming years. Important revisions were recently made to the current Act. These were the result of constant community vigilance. The changes are: a) The qualification period for unpaid sick leave was reduced from six to three months; b) Compassionate care leave for employees who have a family member with a serious medical condition was increased from eight weeks to twenty-eight weeks; c) Parental/adoption leave was increased from up to thirty-five weeks to up to sixty-two weeks. The combined aggregate for maternity and parental/adoption leave is increased from fifty-two weeks to seventy-eight weeks (effective December 29, 2018).