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**For Immediate Release**

## LPN Shortage Harming Island Health Care

The President of the Union of Public Sector Employees (UPSE), Shelley Ward, is concerned about the shortage of Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) on Prince Edward Island. Ward said that “the shortage of LPNs creates stress on a healthcare system that is already over burdened.” UPSE met with the province about the shortage in 2006; since then, no measures have been announced to address the problem.

Ward explained that “more full time LPN positions are needed to replenish the current shortage of nurses and to ensure that LPNs trained on the Island have an opportunity to work here as well. LPN graduates from Holland College are fully qualified to work in any Canadian jurisdiction and often leave the province to take full time nursing positions instead of working in casual or part time positions typically available in PEI.”

“The shortage is real.” said Ward, “The casual, part time and temporary lists are depleted to the point where there is nobody to call when staff are sick. As a result, our members are overworked and more susceptible to burnout. It’s a vicious circle and unfortunately the end result is compromised health care for Islanders.”

The Union of Public Sector Employees wants the province to create more permanent LPN positions and to ensure that the practical nurse profession is fully utilized within the health care system on Prince Edward Island. Currently, LPNs are not permitted to provide the full range of services that they are trained and qualified to deliver. Ward asserted that “health care workers should be encouraged to work to their full potential and be recognized for their education, training and dedication to providing care for Islanders.”

Progressive thinking will help restore our health care system. “For too long our front line workers have been held back by policies based on a dated model for delivering health care. The provincial government has set aside tax dollars to help address the recruitment and retention of health care workers, however, we have not seen any initiatives as of yet for the LPN. It’s time to show these fully qualified nurses that their work is key to building a strong health care system on Prince Edward Island,” concluded Ward.