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Taxpayers dollars wasted on Government initiative

Shelley Ward, president of the PEI Union of Public Sector Employees says that she is not at all surprised by the Auditor's findings in regard to Program Renewal.

"We are glad to see that the Auditor has confirmed what UPSE members had said three years ago when Program Renewal (removal) was put in place. Well over 400 UPSE members were affected by this most destructive initiative. It had to be the worst case of abuse of authority that any employer could impose on its employees. Many employees went months without knowing if there were going to have a job at the end of the day. IT employees were humiliated and degraded as government officials escorted them out of their workplaces. The stress and inconvenience that Program Renewal caused for our members was an injustice, not only to the employees, but also to their families. Our members are still feeling its effects today. Many departments were reduced to a bare bones staff causing increased stress in the workplace," states Ward.

"In 2005 the UPSE Civil Service Bargaining unit was in negotiations with the province. Our Team offered some solid suggestions on ways to reduce expenses but these suggestions went without heed. This would have been a perfect opportunity for the two sides to negotiate an early retirement incentive, but the government of the day preferred to legislate – not negotiate. In fact saving taxpayers money never seemed to be a real issue when it came to this hastily put together, ill planned initiative. The expenses that Island taxpayers incurred as a result of Program Renewal far outweigh any savings that may have been realized. The costs related to the services of the Honourable Judge George Adams alone would be cause for alarm for many. The Government had to contract his services to deal with the issues that arose as a result of this hideous program. Many Unions were affected, as members were forced to move from one Union to another as a result of an arbitrated decision.

"An important lesson to be learned here is that labour's input is valuable. Front line workers know better than most, what works well and what doesn't. Government bureaucrats would be wise to consider it. The view from the Ivory Tower may not always reflect the clearest picture."