

For immediate release
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Government needs to accept responsibility and address the issue of school bus safety

Shelley Ward, president of the union that represents the province's school bus mechanics feels that Government officials should make it clear to the public that they and not the mechanics are responsible for the current problem with the Island's aging school bus fleet.

"Our members are qualified professionals who maintain and inspect these buses as per the direction of their employers. If the Employer (Government) had knowledge of a problem that may not be picked up following the inspection guidelines that existed, then they should be ready to accept full responsibility; not doing so is an insult to the mechanics that work under their direction. To listen to the Minister of Transportation and the Opposition's Transportation critic blaming each other for the problem is something that should not be tolerated by the taxpayers of this province. The fact that neither of them acted on what was a potential safety issue, until a mechanic made the issue public, is cause for concern. Both the current and former Ministers say that their respective governments were addressing the issue by increasing the number of new busses to be purchased annually. While this is an important factor in ensuring school bus safety, it needed to be partnered with a more comprehensive inspection and maintenance routine for the existing fleet," states Ward.

The PEI Union of Public Sector Employees is the largest labour union in the province representing over 5000 members in both the public and private sectors.