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**For Immediate Release**

## Government must continue to fund early learning

The Union of Public Sector Employees (UPSE) is arguing that government needs to do more to ensure that the early childhood education system on Prince Edward Island is sustainable.

The President of the Union of Public Sector Employees, Shelley Ward, said that “the provincial government is scrambling to keep early childhood development centres open on Prince Edward Island. Early childhood centres require at least two certified instructors to operate and with many instructors leaving to teach kindergarten in 2010, centres find themselves faced with possible closure.”

Ward stated that “the government erred when it failed to include the early learning sector in its comprehensive review of kindergarten. Kindergarten and early childhood education were part of the same package. Reviewing Kindergarten in isolation from early learning on Prince Edward Island was an oversight that is becoming more apparent every day.”

“Early childhood centres require at least two certified early learning instructors to keep their doors open. The government’s realization of this comes late in the game. They are now funding an accelerated program for early childhood diplomas in hopes of preventing closures, however, this is not enough. Government needs to step forward with a comprehensive plan to ensure that quality care and education for our young children is here now and in the future,” asserted Ward.

“Families on Prince Edward Island need to know that the provincial government will provide the necessary funding to keep early childhood centres open right across the Island. This means making a commitment to Islanders that the \$3 million in federal funding for early childhood development will not be redirected to help cover the \$5 million price tag for implementing kindergarten. It means ensuring a wage subsidy is in place so that certified instructors will earn more than minimum wage, and that non-certified staff will have an incentive to complete their accelerated diploma in early childhood care and education. Finally, it means continuing to lobby the federal government to institute a national child care program,” concluded Ward.

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