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**For Immediate Release**

## Government singles out public service

The Union of Public Sector Employees (UPSE) argues that government is using the public service as a scapegoat for its own poor decision making and mismanagement of public funds.

The President of the Union of Public Sector Employees, Shelley Ward, said “the easiest way for government to distract Islanders about an \$85.4 million dollar deficit is to point the finger at the public service. We have seen this tactic used time and time again. The Liberal administration is doing it now and the Conservatives did it in 2005 with the Workforce Renewal Program that coerced over 700 public service employees to leave their jobs against the threat of layoffs.”

Ward explained that “government’s recent warning to public service employees is misplaced. The Provincial Treasurer, Wes Sheridan, argued that the private sector alone has experienced hard times and so now the public sector must do the same. What he fails to consider is that the public sector has been under attack for years whether through wage rollbacks or through the continual threat of program renewal and or layoffs. Sheridan’s rationale that the public sector must now suffer too is little more than an appeal to spite designed to move critical analysis away from key decisions the government has taken.”

“Sheridan might do well to remember that Islanders are questioning government decisions on a daily basis that are resulting in the loss of millions of tax dollars. Case in point, the Liberal’s \$1.2 million write off for Food Trust, a company purchased by Mid-Isle Farms and co-founded by the Agriculture Minister, George Webster. And what about Entegrity Wind Systems? This bankrupt company still owes Islanders \$350,000,” asserted Ward.

“Further, we see government ‘propping up’ the private sector with a \$630,000 payoff to Irving for employee training at Cavendish Farms, and now the province is talking to McCain Foods about a similar deal. The idea to support workers at these companies is good, however, Irving and McCain should be doing this themselves. These are companies worth billions of dollars and hardly require cash infusions from the public purse.”

Ward concluded that “there are countless instances of government involvement in the private sector that result in a permanent loss of funds for Islanders or where government has created unfair advantages for one business over another. Perhaps government should respect the free hand a little more and focus on providing essential funding for the public services it has committed itself to deliver. Perhaps then Mr. Sheridan would have a few more suggestions on how to deal with the looming deficit other than threatening the livelihoods of public employees and the services they provide Islanders.”

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