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**For Immediate Release**

## Harper Conservatives Cost Island Taxpayers Millions

The PEI Union of Public Sector Employees (PEI UPSE) argues that the Harper Conservatives did not consider the costs of implementing the Truth in Sentencing Act before it was passed. As a result, the provinces are expected to assume significant costs to build, upgrade and maintain their prisons. The legislation which came into effect in February 2010 limits the credit a prisoner receives for time served while in custody. It also increases minimum sentencing in some cases and removes the option for house arrest in others.

The President of the PEI Union of Public Sector Employees says “in some correctional facilities inmates are at times quadruple-bunked and sleeping in the hallways. Overcrowding creates safety issues for the Correctional Officers we represent and for the inmates themselves. Passing legislation that will keep more people in jail longer will only exacerbate the problem. And if more jails need to be built to accommodate more inmates, the federal government should provide the funding.”

“The Parliamentary Budget Officer’s report estimates the new legislation will cost Island taxpayers up to \$65 million to build new prisons, and as much as \$41 million per year to operate them,” says Ward. “Ottawa has changed a law that will require more jails on PEI, and they have done so without assuming the costs. We fully support Minister Doug Currie in his call for the federal government to provide funding to help build and operate new prisons on Prince Edward Island.”

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Please contact Mark Barrett at 892-5335 (or toll-free at 1-800- 897-8773) to arrange an interview.