

Union calls for proper funding and staffing to support public service workers

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Every day Islanders rely on assets and services upheld by public service workers including roads, schools, health care, democratic governments, relative peace and safety and avenues to seek justice.

This is why Karen Jackson, President of PEI's Union of Public Service Employees, believes fighting to address workers' pressing challenges is worth the effort.

"These workers, they are the cornerstone of government functioning and delivery of essential services," she said.

But their workloads have grown with the Island's population, she noted.

Administrative and procedural requirements



Karen Jackson of Strathcona is president of the PEI Union of Public Sector Employees. Submitted photo

**Public service workers have
been committed to
service for Canadians.**

**But this
government has
not shown up for
public service
workers.**



**are here for Canada.
Respect us.**



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have increased in many public sectors, workers are dedicated and expected to serve the Island's increasingly diverse population and to meet a broader variety of needs. They are pressured to continually adapt to technological advances.

All of these changes have created more work, and more challenging work, she said.

Public service employees in some sectors are regularly expected to accomplish their workloads on short deadlines while short staffed, she said adding this can seriously impact workers' health and wellbeing.

"Ultimately, (the solution) is properly funding and staffing our public services to meet the demand."

She emphasized moving toward privatization is not a fix that will benefit workers or the public in the long run.

It will lead to less transparency and accountability, she said.

The sectors where she sees the most prominent shifts toward privatization on PEI are in transportation and infrastructure where work is increasingly contracted to private companies as well as in healthcare where pharmacy chains are profiting by expanding pharmacists' service offerings and where Health PEI is relying more on travel nurses and Maple a privately owned App.



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UPSE one of multiple Island unions which represent public service workers serves approximately 5,000 members.

Occupational Health and Safety Officers, Environmental Health Officers, Correctional Officers, Conservation Officers, Highway Safety Officers, and regulatory inspectors work to promote safe and sustainable communities.

Equipment operators, plow drivers, construction workers, maintenance workers, welders, HVAC techs and other trades people put their skills to use to build and maintain public roads, bridges, schools, hospitals as well as municipal and provincial offices.

Information technology workers and health information officers work to promote efficient use of evolving technology and to securely co-ordinate information.

Library assistants and education officers support literacy and access to the education Islanders need to succeed in life.

In health facilities, Licensed Practical Nurses, Resident Care Workers and Personal Care Workers provide essential care to Islanders in need.

Daily functioning in these facilities relies on food service, housekeeping and maintenance workers.

Social workers, youth workers, home support workers, social service workers, family service workers and community support workers all step up to the task of keeping Islanders healthy in their homes and communities.

Occupational therapists, speech language pathologists, audiologists, pharmacists, psychologists, dietitians, dental hygienists and assistants offer their specialized skills and services.

"I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to all PEI public service workers for their unwavering dedication and contributions to the well-being and prosperity of all Islanders," Ms Jackson said.