

Karen Jackson, President of the Union of Public Sector Employees (UPSE), has publicly expressed disagreement with Health PEI's CEO, Melanie Fraser, regarding her recent comments advocating for healthcare privatization.

High Cost of Privatization

"UPSE firmly opposes the privatization of healthcare, arguing that it does not offer 'good value for money' for taxpayers," stated Jackson. She highlighted a concerning trend where Health PEI has hired private travel nurses/Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) who perform the same roles as UPSE members but at significantly higher wages. "Private travel nurses/LPNs earn upwards of \$100 per hour, in addition to benefits like accommodation, food, and per diem. This practice is costing taxpayers millions more each year compared to employing public sector staff," Jackson explained.

Lack of Accountability

Jackson further emphasized that private healthcare often lacks the transparency and accountability inherent in public healthcare systems. "The public deserves access to clear information regarding the quality, costs, and treatment outcomes of healthcare services. Privatization undermines these principles and leaves taxpayers in the dark."

Impact on Recruitment

Jackson also addressed the impact of privatization on the nursing workforce. "Many nursing graduates are lured by the higher wages offered to travel nurses, leading to a diminishing talent pool for permanent public sector positions. This exacerbates existing shortages in our healthcare system," she said.

Advocating for Sustainable Solutions

In her closing remarks, Jackson urged for a shift in strategy. "Rather than relying on privatization to fill gaps in our healthcare system, we believe that investing in public sector staff and addressing wage disparities would create a more stable and sustainable workforce. This approach is ultimately more cost-effective and accountable to the taxpayers," she concluded. UPSE remains committed to advocating for a public healthcare system that prioritizes the well-being of both patients and the dedicated healthcare professionals who serve them.