

NOVA SCOTIA UNION OF PUBLIC & PRIVATE EMPLOYEES

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June 8, 2007

The Honourable Rodney MacDonald
Office of the Premier
PO Box 726
Halifax, NS B3J 2T3

Dear Premier MacDonald:

Re: Proposed legislation limiting strikes

The Nova Scotia Union of Public & Private Employees (NSUPE) received your letter requesting our participation in collaborative discussions with the provincial government directed at the eventual enactment of legislation that will ban or limit strikes in the health care sector. NSUPE is opposed to any legislation that will remove the right to strike for health care workers. We believe that government should focus on improving the system, especially in addressing staff shortages. Once that defect is addressed, wait times and service delivery improvement will follow.

In our view, blaming workers for the shortcomings of the health care system avoids the real causes of our problems. We believe that Nova Scotians know that the problems in the health care system have been caused by years of government cuts, under funding and the lack of successful recruitment and retention strategies for health care professionals and support staff. These are the root problems of the system. These are the issues the government should be seeking to address.

The type of legislation you propose does not work. It serves only to encourage confrontation and worsen the labour relations climate in a system that already suffers chronic staff shortages due to working conditions. Any legislation that seeks to rob health care employees of their bargaining power will only serve to worsen problems that already exist and further damage the province's health care system.

NSUPE is a strong supporter of the right to strike for workers in the public sector. We believe the right to strike is a basic principle of free collective bargaining and that it is required for collective bargaining to function properly.

We ask that, in its legislative agenda for health care, the government turn its mind to addressing the real problems of the system and refrain from short term responses that further jeopardize those vulnerable Nova Scotians who require a working health care system.

We ask to be kept informed of the process the government has undertaken, and that we be afforded the opportunity to make presentations at consultation meetings and at the law amendments committee.

Sincerely,

John Hanrahan
President, NSUPE