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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2010**

**CUPE Health Care Worker Talks Break Down – File for Conciliation  
Government Seeking Concessions affecting Casual and Injured workers**

Charlottetown – “After six (6) days of bargaining with the Department of Health and Wellness, over a nine (9) month period beginning on April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2010, we have been unable to reach a negotiated settlement to finalize a new collective agreement for our 950 health care workers here on Prince Edward Island,” says Bill McKinnon, National Representative for the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE).

CUPE represents approximately 950 health care workers in four (4) CUPE Locals on P.E.I. CUPE health care members work in the Dietary, Laundry, Housekeeping, Laboratory, Maintenance and other support services in the health sector across the province.

“The part we find most disturbing about the last few days is the fact that the Government’s strategy at the bargaining table is to try to get our team to negotiate concessions that target our most vulnerable members; Casual employees who have no guaranteed hours of work; and injured workers on Workers Compensation Benefits.

First, the Government negotiators want our Casual employees to be able to be dismissed from their employment without cause even though, today, they cannot do that.

Second, the Government wants to be able to cut injured CUPE workers loose after 24 months of WCB and deny our members all their rights they presently enjoy in our collective agreement. That would include the requirement of the Government to continue to pay the pension and health benefits for these vulnerable employees while they are off work. Presently, under our collective agreement, the Employer is obligated to pay the pension and health and dental benefits for workers injured on the job until they retire or return to work, whichever occurs first.

Frankly, we cannot understand why this Employer would target injured and/or disabled employees at time when they need their Employer’s support the most. It defies logic!

The consequence is that CUPE’s negotiating committee refused to concession bargain in any form on these issues and talks broke down as a result. We will be filing for conciliation with the Minister responsible for Labour today. If that does not bring a settlement we will be moving our issues on to Interest Arbitration for settlement,” concluded McKinnon.

**Mr. McKinnon may be reached for further comment at (902) 566-4006**