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STATEMENT FROM JOAN JESSOME

NSGEU President Joan Jessome responded today to the release of a statement co-signed by the province's 10 health CEOs:

I am disappointed the province's health CEOs are working together to prevent collective bargaining and keep their employees from achieving a wage that keeps up with the cost of living.

I can't believe they would be so irresponsible. They're pitting worker against worker, telling them that the work of some employees is more valuable than the work of others."

In their release, the health CEOs assert that Nova Scotians do not believe cost of living wage increases are sustainable. It's an assertion that has touched a nerve across NSGEU's health care locals; we've been receiving emails and phone calls from members all day. These are people who care about what they do, but they're feeling hurt and angry by what the CEOs are saying.

There's nothing wrong with health care workers asking for a 5.1 per cent. Over the past two years, the cost of living has gone up by more than 6 per cent. These workers accepted two years of one per cent increases and they've been falling behind on the cost of living.

Over and over, I'm hearing from them that they're struggling with the rising cost of groceries and the rising cost of fuel.

It's difficult to hear the health CEOs crying poor when they can afford to spend millions on consultants. And I'm disappointed they would treat their employees – the very heart of the health system – with such disrespect.

The morale of these employees is already low. Positions are going unfilled. Just because the worker disappears doesn't mean the work disappears. It certainly doesn't mean the public's expectation for good health care disappears.

So these are a group of employees whose workload is too high, who are watching the care they can offer patients decline and now they've got their CEOs telling them their work isn't valuable.

Our NSGEU Local 42, which represents 3,800 health care professionals at Capital Health, exchanged its bargaining proposals with the employer on Monday, Feb. 6, and they are scheduled to bargain on Feb. 14, 15 and 16.

I was hoping that we'd be able to get a deal next week. In light of this release, I'm not feeling very optimistic.

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The Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union represents over 30,000 women and men who provide quality public services Nova Scotians count on everyday.

For more information or to arrange an interview with NSGEU President, Joan Jessome, please contact: Deedee Slye, NSGEU Communications Officer – dslye@nsgeu.ca 424-4063 (office), 497-6761 (cell)