



**Nova Scotia Government and  
General Employees Union**  
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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

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## **Rodney MacDonald Responsible for IWK Strike** ***Talks Break Down When MacDonald Government Refuses Fair and Reasonable Proposal on Retiree Benefits***

NSGEU President Joan Jessome said the failure to settle a contract for 600 IWK Healthcare workers in mediation is a result of the MacDonald Government's decision to refuse to extend retiree benefits to people who spend their whole working lives caring for children and women.

"Government's own figures, provided in mediation, show the annual ongoing cost of retiree benefits costs approximately \$300,000," Jessome said. "Premier Rodney MacDonald just put the healthcare of children and women in peril over \$300,000. This raises serious questions about the competence of the MacDonald government."

Jessome said that during the mediation process the employer tabled new information indicating the actual cost of retiree benefits on an ongoing basis for the healthcare bargaining unit would be about \$300,000. The Employer indicated that accountants would require a one-time upfront cost of \$2 million to implement retiree benefits for Local 22.

Jessome said retiree benefits which are 65 per cent cost shared by the Employer are common. "What we are seeking is fair and reasonable," Jessome said. "This very same benefit is in place for 9,000 employees at the Capital District Health Authority, more than 5,000 civil servants across the province and 10,000 teachers in Nova Scotia."

Jessome also expressed her dismay that the Government would appoint a mediator without giving the Employer the opportunity to negotiate a settlement. "We came to the table prepared to bargain a deal," Jessome said. The Union Committee worked hard for more than 24 hours while Government and the Employer huddled trying to decide what to do. In the end, government sent the Employer back to the table with virtually no change in their original positions."

"The Government entered into the mediation process with no plan," Jessome concluded. "That and their decision to put the IWK on strike over \$300,000 a year must raise more serious questions for Nova Scotians about the competence of Mr. MacDonald and his government. Cabinet pays half that amount to lease their vehicles."

The Strike will begin 6:30 .m. on Monday, April 30.

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***For more information, please contact:***

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