



**Health and Wellness
Office of the Minister**

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August 27, 2024

Karen Oldfield,
Interim President and CEO
Nova Scotia Health Authority
90 Lovett Lake Court, Suite 201
Halifax, NS B3H 0H6

Dr. Krista Jangaard,
President and CEO
IWK Health Centre
5850-5980 University Avenue
Halifax, NS B3J 3G9

Dear Ms. Oldfield and Dr. Jangaard:

I am writing regarding the ongoing bargaining between the two Health Authorities and the Council of Health Care Unions, led by the NSGEU.

As the funder of the Health Authorities, the Province is committed to ensuring that the parties reach a settlement. This is always our approach. Over the last three years, we have overseen a period of labour stability. This peace was possible because, under this government, 288 public sector collective agreements have been settled through free, unfettered collective bargaining. These 288 agreements are proof that we respect the collective bargaining process.

Our approach this time is no different. Tough but fair and focused on a negotiated settlement. The current negotiations have been difficult but talks continue and Thursday's conciliation date will be the fourth day the parties have worked with a conciliation officer. This follows five months of discussions, including nine full days since March 2024.

The Province is focused on the interests of patients and employees - which means we want to ensure a settlement is reached. I am hopeful that the parties will have a productive day and ultimately reach a recommended tentative agreement. That said, hope is not a strategy and, sadly, I find myself compelled to urge you to begin to plan for labour disruption. It shouldn't come to this, but it might.

This is uncharted territory for our Government. The 288 agreements reached were the result of tough, but fair dealings between willing parties. We remain a willing party.

Each negotiated settlement and wage and benefit investment we have made has resulted in higher wages. Once again significant wage increases are on the table. At the same time, we have to be mindful of the taxpayer and make sure that we only commit to what

is affordable to taxpayers, now and into the future. The Health Care table is no different. As you know, this table is unique in terms of the number and variety of classifications with over 184 different classifications, which adds complexity to the negotiation.

It was never going to be easy but rest assured, we will be fair. In some cases, more than fair. We fully expect our negotiating partner to understand that a deal must be fair for all Nova Scotians, as well as the employees. The reality is that with a staggering provincial deficit, there is just no more to offer. We simply can't sweeten the offer because the taxpayer is already stretched to their limit.

We have been steadfast in our commitment to address the issues that have long plagued our health care system, and we are making significant progress.

Like you, we deeply value all health care workers and want them to have an equitable and fair deal that is also affordable for Nova Scotians. It is my sincere hope that the parties will be able to work together to reach a mutually acceptable agreement.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michelle Thompson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Honourable Michelle Thompson
Minister of Health and Wellness