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Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union

NEWS RELEASE

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Public service workers shouldn't be asked to pay for government's wasteful spending

Premier Brad Wall should take responsibility for the deficit that he and his Sask. Party government created, instead of proposing wage rollbacks and layoffs for public servants, according to SGEU.

"The premier wants public service workers who provide vital services to the people of this province to pay the price for his government's mismanagement and wasteful spending," says SGEU President Bob Bymoer. "But the public service didn't cause this deficit. Public employees have not been a major contributor to rising government expenditures. In fact, public service jobs were cut by 15% in the middle of the economic boom."

Wall and his Sask. Party government created the financial troubles the province is now in, Bymoer says.

"Wall has asked provider unions to show 'good will' and 'good faith,' but wages for the workers we represent haven't even kept up with inflation," says Bymoer. "If this government wants to cut costs, Wall should look within his own circle of senior staff, where compensation costs have skyrocketed."

The payroll for Executive Council, which is the agency that includes the premier's senior advisors and political staff, grew from just over \$5.5 million in 2008-09 to just over \$9.7 million in 2015-16 – a 74% increase. In comparison, the increase that government employees have received is minimal.

"Public service workers raise families in our communities and contribute to our economy," says Bymoer. "The fact that Wall wants public service workers to sacrifice their wages while he spends generously on his inner circle is unjustifiable. And it's exactly this type of mismanagement that got us into this mess in the first place."

"We could have a balanced budget today if this government had managed the public finances properly," says Bymoer. Instead, he says, Saskatchewan has seen example after example of the Wall government mismanaging billions of dollars that could have been used to balance this year's budget. "Maybe the

government shouldn't have handed over more than \$2 billion to a corporation in France to build the Regina P3 bypass," he says.

"Or what about the money this government squandered when it purchased land for the Global Transportation Hub for two to three times its assessed value?" asks Bymoer. "Where was the Wall government's 'good will' and 'good faith' when it spent public money on this shady land deal that warrants a forensic audit?"

Bymoer questions the \$40 million squandered on LEAN, the \$15 million wasted on replacing flawed smart meters, and a massive increase in payments to private consultants, who pocketed over \$120 million in 2014. The Sask. Party also added three new MLAs to the Legislature, at a combined cost of roughly \$700,000 per year.

Bymoer adds that Wall continues to mismanage the public purse by privatizing liquor stores and giving away the profits.

"Why, at a time when the province's finances are in dire straits, is this government giving away profitable liquor stores?" asks Bymoer. "Why are millions in annual profits being handed to out-of-province businesses, like Sobeys, instead of supporting public services in Saskatchewan?"

A financial analysis of liquor privatization in Saskatchewan shows that the province stands to lose \$115 million in just the first five years of privatization alone, and will forgo more than \$25 million per year after that.

"This province had a significant surplus when Wall took over the public purse," says Bymoer. "It was Wall and his government who squandered it, not Saskatchewan people. Public service workers, and the people they serve, shouldn't be asked to pay for a problem they didn't create."

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