



**WORKING
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SASKATCHEWAN**

For immediate release

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Government not listening to northerners

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The government of Saskatchewan continues to ignore the needs and interests of northerners and is failing to take meaningful steps to address the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, according to SGEU.

“It has been a tough year for northern communities in Saskatchewan,” said Bob Bymoan, President of SGEU. “With the closure of Buffalo Narrows Community Correctional Centre, the severe understaffing in the Ministry of Social Services northern service area, and now the recent decision about the future of NORTEP, the Saskatchewan government just isn’t listening to northerners.”

SGEU represents workers at NORTEP and is disappointed that staff learned about the decision to integrate NORTEP into Northlands College (rather than NORTEP’s preferred partner, the Gabriel Dumont Institute) through the media, instead of through proper representational channels.

“The government can do better to listen to students, workers, and northern communities, and to work with various representatives to communicate decisions. Instead, they just surprise everyone through media announcements. It’s inconsiderate and inappropriate,” said Bymoan.

SGEU is concerned that the cuts to the north take Saskatchewan in the opposite direction from what the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has recommended. Recommendations in the TRC regarding provincial services focus on access to culturally specific education, efforts to reduce Indigenous incarceration by offering culturally appropriate services, and action on child welfare.

“With the release of the TRC calls to action, now is certainly not the time for the government to continue down the road of indifference and neglect. Our province lost a community-based rehabilitation program that was tailored for Indigenous people, families just aren’t getting the supports they need in social services, and students and staff were ignored when it came to northern educational interests. This is not what reconciliation looks like,” said Bymoan.

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“If government has any respect for northerners’ right to make choices about northern education, this is the time to show it. Imposing decisions that run contrary to the needs of local people is not a responsible way forward,” said Bymoan.

“Dictating to Indigenous peoples how they will be educated and who will run their programs are exactly how we got into this mess in the first place. Continuing to make these decisions, rather than listen to people’s needs takes us down the wrong path and definitely away from the spirit of reconciliation.”

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