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Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union

NEWS RELEASE

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SGEU challenges Premier's false and misleading statements

False and misleading statements made by Premier Brad Wall about SGEU and its finances are an attempt to undermine the union because it has raised legitimate concerns about government policies, according to SGEU President Bob Bymoan.

"Wall has made allegations about SGEU that are simply untrue, and it is time to set the record straight," Bymoan said.

Wall, speaking to the media the day after his re-election, claimed that SGEU raised union dues by one per cent. In fact, over 200 delegates at SGEU's annual convention last spring voted to increase dues by just .4 per cent.

Wall also claimed that SGEU "quite openly said it is going to buy ads to defeat the government."

"Wall's statement is, once again, simply untrue. A letter to SGEU members informing them of the dues increase made no reference to defeating the government, and highlighted a number of areas that would be supported by an increase in dues," said Bymoan.

"A provincial premier - even one who is openly hostile to unions - has a duty to show more respect for the truth when he makes public statements," Bymoan said.

SGEU is also puzzled by Wall's claim that there is a need for new laws governing financial reporting by unions. He is apparently unaware that SGEU, like other unions, is already governed by a constitution and bylaws that ensure financial accountability and transparency.

SGEU is audited yearly by independent external auditors, and an audited financial statement is presented to delegates every year at the annual convention. Quarterly financial statements are presented to SGEU's Provincial Council, the organization's governing body between conventions. In addition, the constitution gives any member the right to receive a copy of the audited annual statement.

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Province-wide local and sector meetings are held monthly. These meetings report on union affairs. All members are encouraged to attend their local union meetings to find out more about union activities.

"Making false statements about SGEU and the way it conducts its business is a thinly-veiled attack on working people and their families," Bymoer said.

"Our members, like many other union members across the province, are losing ground as wage increases fail to keep up with the cost of living, and essential services legislation makes it impossible to engage in free and fair collective bargaining. Public service jobs are being cut and services quietly eroded. Those are the real issues that Wall is trying to obscure by making misleading statements about SGEU," said Bymoer.

"Although we were unsuccessful in our attempts to meet with the premier last term, we will continue to press for a meeting so that the premier can be better informed about our union, and the issues facing our members," added Bymoer.

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