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NEWS RELEASE

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Saskatchewan residents speak out against liquor privatization

The people of Saskatchewan are wasting no time accepting an open invitation to send a powerful message to Brad Wall to stop the train of liquor privatization.

In just a few weeks, over 5,000 residents of Saskatchewan took the time to sign a petition telling the government they want to Keep Liquor Public as part of an ongoing campaign designed to protect public liquor retailing in Saskatchewan.

“We were moved by the immediate response to this initiative,” says Donna Christianson, chair of SGEU’s Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority (SLGA) negotiating and Keep Liquor Public committee. “We heard from people across this province telling us this government is stepping on sacred ground in its full-steam-ahead plans to dismantle the fabric of this province piece by piece. This tells me people feel strongly about this issue and that they need an ongoing voice because otherwise they feel powerless in stopping this process.”

The petitions were a response from the people of Saskatchewan to the government’s recent promise to open up the discussion around the topic including a formal consultation process.

In just two weeks alone, alongside the petitions signed and returned, the campaign received over 4,300 Facebook clicks and over 1,500 Twitter engagers.

“What people are telling those of us on the front lines of this issue, is that now is not the time to be dismantling a mainstay of public revenue in an oil-producing part of the world like Saskatchewan,” says Christianson. “Oil prices are continuing to fall, and this province is already slowing down to adjust to new global economic realities. It’s reckless for the government to not reconsider its plans for privatization and the resulting loss of revenue considering the increasing local economic pressures on the province.”

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Public liquor sales generated over a billion dollars in the last five years alone. That revenue is crucial for providing the fundamentals of Saskatchewan living to all residents, including roads, education and healthcare.

The government has already licensed four new private liquor stores, two in Regina and two in Saskatoon, and closed public stores in four rural communities, turning the business over to private retailers. It has also determined that any new liquor stores built in the province will be private.

The Keep Liquor Public group, supported by SGEU and a consortium of groups in support of public liquor service in the province, has submitted the petitions to the government as part of a broader ongoing campaign to continue to pressure the government not to sell off its liquor stores.

Christianson says part of that campaign includes continuing to accept petitions in an effort to force the government to listen to the people it was elected to serve.

“We will continue to be the voice protecting public liquor sales in this province, so we are urging all residents to consider what a private system would look like in terms of revenue and job loss as well as the social implications and if they don’t want that scenario for their families, we will make sure they are given the opportunity to have a say in this important issue.”

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