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NEWS RELEASE

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Closing rural liquor stores a blow to communities

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Government's decision to close four small town liquor stores is a blow to rural communities that rely on public services and public service jobs to meet local needs and keep local economies vibrant, according to SGEU.

Four full-time and eight part-time employees of the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority (SLGA) will be affected by store closures in Langenburg, Ituna, Ponteix, and Kerrobert.

"Losing good jobs hurts small towns and rural communities," says SGEU President Bob Bymo. These staff members live and work in these communities. They have families, children who attend local schools, keeping enrollments up. They support local businesses, pay local taxes, and are part of the recreational and social life of those towns."

Research shows that public service jobs in rural Saskatchewan have a positive impact on the local economy. For every two public service jobs in rural Saskatchewan, a third spin-off job is created.

The government plans to license franchises in the affected towns, but since most rural franchises are located in already-established businesses, the jobs that are being lost will likely never be replaced.

"The staff at SLGA liquor stores are trained professionals who are experienced in ensuring that liquor is sold in a socially-responsible manner. SLGA is committed to checking the ID of anyone who appears to be 25 years of age or less, to reduce the incidence of underage drinking.

"The government is licensing four new private liquor stores in Regina and Saskatoon, and now is closing four SLGA stores in rural Saskatchewan. This is the shift from public to private liquor sales we have been expressing concerns about for years," according to Bymo. "It is an ill-conceived strategy that puts private profit ahead of the needs of families and communities."

Public liquor stores generated \$232 million in net revenue for the people of Saskatchewan last year.

“Closing the liquor stores in Langenburg, Ituna, Ponteix and Kerrobert undermines the well-being and economic security of those towns and surrounding rural areas. We ask the government to reconsider this decision for the good of the families and communities affected,” Bymoer adds.

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