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Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union

NEWS RELEASE

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SGEU members rally to stop privatization

www.sgeu.org

1440 Broadway Avenue
Regina, SK S4P 1E2
(p) 522.8571
1.800.667.5221
(f) 352.1969

1114-22nd Street West
Saskatoon, SK S7M 0S5
(p) 652.1811
1.800.667.9791
(f) 664.7134

33-11th Street West
Prince Albert, SK S6V 3A8
(p) 764.5201
1.800.667.9355
(f) 763.4763

Hundreds of SGEU members and supporters took to the streets today to voice their opposition to the sell-off of Saskatchewan public services.

Government has recently announced its intention to privatize food services in corrections and young offender facilities, and to close four rural public liquor stores in order to hand over that business to private franchises.

“The government’s plan is to quietly dismantle the public services Saskatchewan people have built over generations,” according to SGEU President Bob Bymoen. “They are doing it bit by bit, one program and one service at a time - thinking that Saskatchewan people won’t notice.”

Bymoen was speaking at a noon-hour rally in front of the Office of the Premier in downtown Saskatoon.

Premier Brad Wall may be pursuing privatization in a different way than former Progressive Conservative Premier Grant Devine, but “he has the same game plan for Saskatchewan,” Bymoen said.

Government’s rationale for contracting out food services in corrections is that feeding inmates is not a core function of the Ministry of Corrections, an argument which doesn’t make sense, he added.

“Obviously, inmates need to be fed. This service needs to be provided in a safe and secure environment by staff experienced in safety management and handling potentially violent situations. It needs to include skills training and rehabilitation for inmates. It is obviously an essential and core function of the corrections ministry.”

Government even admits that privatizing corrections and young offender food services may not save a dime, he noted.

“The most recent privatization scheme – selling-off small town liquor stores in Ituna, Ponteix, Langenburg and Kerrobert – will mean the loss of good jobs and good services.”

“This is just another way to transfer public services to private interests. It puts profit ahead of the needs of rural families and communities,” Bymoer said.

“It’s these bad decisions – driven by ideology and not good common sense – that recall the mistakes and mismanagement of the Devine era.”

“We know from the 1980s that once a public service is gone – we will never get it back. Once we hand public services over to private businesses to make a profit at the expense of citizens and taxpayers, it will cost us more. It is the kind of financial mismanagement that racked up massive debt and damaged our economy for a decade,” Bymoer pointed out.

He urged people to tell their local Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) to stop the quiet sell-off of Saskatchewan public services.

“We are on the front lines in this struggle. We are committed and we will take action. Working together, we will keep our province and our public services strong,” he concluded.

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For more information, contact:

Susan Dusel
Communications Officer
(306) 775-7249 (bus)