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Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

February 14, 2017

Government proposes massive cuts to service delivery

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Requiring public employees to take monthly unpaid days off would amount to a pay cut that would send shocks through Saskatchewan's economy, according to SGEU.

"We need to be clear that what government is proposing is a pay cut, not just a day off once a month," said SGEU President Bob Bymo. "And what do people do when they are making less money than they were last year? They hold on to their paychecks and hold off on renovations, retail and service spending, charitable giving – they spend less in our local economies and at small businesses. How is that going to improve Saskatchewan's economy? It's not."

SGEU is also concerned about a decline in public services should the government require all public sector employees to spend an extra day away from their jobs each month.

"I don't know how you can expect to eliminate that many hours of work time and claim that everything will be ok and that service levels won't go down," said Bymo. "Are they asking social workers to just not show up for a day, when their workloads are already unmanageable? Are children who need protection, or patients who need treatment, or drivers who need plowed roads supposed to just wait an extra day?"

SGEU strongly suggests that there are alternative measures available to the government other than wage cuts and layoffs.

"While economists recommend against austerity as a remedy to deficits, the Sask. Party won't even entertain alternatives to public sector cuts, layoffs, and further privatization," said Bymo. "It's time for government to take a serious look at its spending on high-priced consultants and expensive privatization schemes. It's time to end the liquor privatization process before we lose out on millions in annual public revenues. It's time to provide some serious ideas to address the deficit that don't involve an attack on public sector workers."

“For all government’s talk of how ‘everything is on the table,’ the only proposals that they’ve offered in any kind of detail are the ones that harm unionized workers,” adds Bymoer. “Our members didn’t benefit from the boom, and they didn’t cause the deficit, so why are they the first ones targeted for cuts?”

The government’s consideration of unpaid days off first reached SGEU through the media, which shows that government lacks respect for the collective bargaining process.

“They keep saying they want to have a constructive dialogue, but then they float all these ideas in the media instead of at the bargaining table,” said Bymoer. “You want to have a constructive dialogue? Meet us at the table and put forward some actual proposals that we can take to our members. They deserve better than to live in uncertainty while their employer calls press conferences and tries to bargain through the media.”

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