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SASKATCHEWAN

Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union

# NEWS RELEASE

**For immediate release**

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## **Labour and community leaders sign “October Declaration”**

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On the day our legislature opened for the fall sitting, hundreds of concerned Saskatchewan residents rallied in opposition to the far-reaching consequences of the 2017 provincial budget. Protestors call on government to reverse the cuts and stop the privatization of Crowns and public services.

Community and labour leaders also signed the “October Declaration,” a pledge to work together to protect our Crowns and public services from privatization and cuts, and to stand up for vulnerable community members who are most affected by these cuts.

“We need to remember that Saskatchewan was built on the values of mutual aid and support, and we must protect these values from attacks — which take the form of tax breaks for the rich and cuts to social supports and programs that the poorest among us depend on,” said SGEU President Bob Bymoan. “These Saskatchewan values are here to stay, and they will outlive any government of the day that tries to say otherwise.”

Speaking on behalf of the union that represents SGI workers, COPE 397 President Kim Wilson reminded government that our Crowns were created to provide affordable services to everyone in the province, including rural and remote areas.

“The Sask Party government has realized that they hastily passed Bill 40 against the will of Saskatchewan people, but they need to walk back a lot more from their budget in order to square with Saskatchewan values,” said Wilson.

Stacey Strykowski boarded a bus from Preeceville to sign the declaration on behalf of the Preeceville & District Health Action Committee.

“I’m here today to tell the Sask Party government that rural voters are upset about the decline of health care services in their communities. On top of this, people in rural communities have been deeply affected by the closure of STC. Not only are our health care services being cut, but many in rural communities can’t access their medical appointments now without STC.”

CUPE President Tom Graham said government’s decision to download services and programs onto municipalities was ideological and poor management.

“There’s nothing as cowardly as forcing municipalities to raise taxes for programs the provincial government used to provide,” said Graham. “For the past decade we have watched the province download services and programs onto municipalities while increasing the provincial education tax, and then government turns around and spends that revenue on general operations, and not on education. It’s unfair to school kids, parents, and educators.”

April Chiefcalf, a former NORTEP instructor and resident of northern Saskatchewan drove over 6 hours to sign onto the declaration.

“If our provincial government can afford to give tax breaks to corporations, it can afford to invest in northern communities – which are suffering from years of underfunding and neglect,” she said. “I’d like to see Premier Wall follow through with reversing the corporate tax break and use that money to pay for the programs and services his government cut.”

Barbara Cape, President of SEIU-West, welcomed the opportunity to sign the declaration. “Now is time for the Sask Party to reverse the damages caused by their funding cuts within the health sector,” she said. “Our members have experienced hiring freezes, layoffs, unsafe staffing levels and fewer resources to deliver service during a time when patient, client and resident needs are increasing. It is challenging for health care providers to put patients first when government continues to put them last. Members have communicated directly with their MLAs over the last five months – their message has been clear: cuts and rollbacks are not acceptable or affordable. Health care providers offer a full range of professional skills that ought to be respected, otherwise hard to recruit classifications will continue to grow unchecked.”

Emily Barber from Students Mobilizing Against Cuts (SMAC) said it’s time for government to stop making students pay for their mismanagement.

“Treating post-secondary institutions as a piggy bank that the government can cash in on in troubled times goes beyond this budget,” said Barber. “They have leaned on post-secondary institutions and made cuts for years now and as a result our tuition has gone up. Borrowing from future generations to pay for past mistakes, like the GTH, is wrong.”

Peter Gilmer of the Regina Anti-Poverty Network called the Premier’s record on alleviating poverty abysmal.

“The 2017 budget picked on already vulnerable and desperate people and we are so glad to see so many individuals and groups standing up and fighting back.”

The following groups and organizations signed the declaration:

Students Mobilizing Against Cuts  
Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry  
Regina Anti-Poverty Network  
Council of Canadians – Regina chapter  
Council of Canadians – Saskatoon chapter  
Council of Canadians – Prince Albert chapter  
Preeceville & District Health Action Committee  
Regina Public Interest Research Group  
Stop The Cuts – Saskatoon  
Stop The Cuts – Regina  
Mobilize Saskatoon  
Climate Justice SK  
Canadian Union of Public Employees  
Service Employees International Union – West  
Saskatchewan Government and General Employees’ Union  
Canadian Office and Professional Employees Union 397  
Saskatchewan Federation of Labour  
Unifor 649  
Why Tower Road

Full text of the declaration can be viewed at:

<https://www.rallytoreversethecuts.org/october-declaration>

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