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Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union

NEWS RELEASE

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Budget 2018 does not undo the harm inflicted on families in last year's budget

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“Saskatchewan people want to move forward, to see improvements in their lives and better opportunities for their children. But we are still mired in the financial mess created by the Sask Party government’s waste and mismanagement,” says SGEU President Bob Bymoer, in response to the 2018-19 budget.

This year’s hold-the-line budget does not begin to undo the harm done to Saskatchewan families and communities by the disastrous 2017-18 budget, according to Bymoer.

“Saskatchewan people are still paying the price for the deep cuts inflicted by government’s financial decisions last year. Those unprecedented and heartless cuts are still hurting special needs kids, seniors, post-secondary students, and working families,” says Bymoer.

“While we welcome the news that no one in the provincial public service will be losing their job as a direct result of this budget, we need to bear in mind that future job loss through attrition will result in understaffing and gaps in services. We also need to remember that the government workforce has sustained devastating cuts over the last decade,” Bymoer says.

Between 2008-09 and 2016-17, the Ministry of Social Services lost 266 full-time equivalent positions (FTEs), while Highways lost 337 positions and Environment lost 175. During the same time period, the province’s population grew by 12.6 per cent.

“It’s not reasonable or responsible to cut public services when there are more people living here who need services and are paying for them through their taxes,” Bymoer says.

“Budgets are about numbers, but we need to remember that there are real people behind those numbers,” he adds. “Public employees are on the frontlines, providing the services that Saskatchewan people rely on, such as keeping at-risk children safe, fighting wildfires, keeping highways clear of snow and ice, and ensuring public health and safety in countless ways.”

"We have concerns about the decision to eliminate the Rental Housing Supplement for low-income and disabled people. This appears to be a cut that will hurt some of the province's most vulnerable people," adds Bymoer.

"The Sask Party government's record of waste and mismanagement is largely responsible for the financial shortfall, and there are no real signs that they have learned their lesson," adds Bymoer.

"The government is paying billions of dollars to a French multinational corporation to build the Regina P3 bypass, and have squandered millions in the GTH land scam. They are giving away tens of millions in annual profits from public liquor sales, and are now the only province to completely privatize the cannabis industry, forgoing millions in yearly profits," Bymoer adds. "Handing money to overpriced consultants has resulted in skyrocketing costs. For example, using private highways consultants resulted in a 58 per cent increase in the cost of highway repair between 2007 and 2015."

"Budgets are about choices, and the Sask Party has chosen to give hand-outs to the wealthy," says Bymoer. The 2017 cuts to personal income tax rates, which benefit the highest income earners most, cost \$82 million last year, and will cost \$110 million annually going forward.

"Instead of charting a new direction, this budget continues to make everyday families pay for government's short-sighted decisions. It looks like Scott Moe is not veering far from the path of his predecessor. There is a better way: invest in Saskatchewan families through strong, quality public services, to keep communities safe, healthy and growing toward a prosperous future for all," Bymoer says.

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