

## **Protesters “greet” Jim Reiter’s Golf Tournament**

Members of SEIU- West and SGEU picketed outside Health Minister Jim Reiter’s “cash-for-access” Sask Party golf tournament fundraiser to voice their concerns over the impending 10 per cent cut to health-funded community-based organizations (CBOs).

In April, the Health Minister asked health regions to cut their \$15.7 million spending on CBOs by 10 per cent—a reduction that amounts to about \$1.5 million.

Community-based organizations provide front line support for people with mental health needs, and provide services such as the Farm Stress Line, the Crisis Suicide Helpline, counselling and referrals, advocacy services, crisis intervention, as well as addictions services, detox facilities, and youth centres.

“We need to think of funding mental health as a core service of our broader health care system. Not only does Saskatchewan lag behind other provinces when it comes to mental health spending, but our Health Minister is actually demanding a 10 per cent cut. We ask that he reconsider these cuts,” said Barb Cape, President of SEIU- West.

Pickers handed out pamphlets drawing attention to the devastating cuts in the recent budget and encouraged tournament attendees to ask Minister Reiter about the cuts to CBOs and whether they are a wise choice.

“CBOs are a smart investment in our health care system. Not only is there more and more recognition of the importance of taking mental health seriously, but that when we do, and we invest in mental health services, we see other costs go down in our hospitals, in our ER rooms, in our courts, and in our jails,” said Bob Bymoen, President of SGEU.

Last week, SGEU and SEIU- West submitted a petition with over 500 signatures that called on the Health Minister to reconsider these cuts and are awaiting a response from the Minister.

“It is cruel to cut services to some of the most vulnerable people in our province just because the Sask Party wanted to give a tax break to their friends and donors. They have options; they could reverse the corporate tax break and review their spending on consultants, they could cut down on waste and stop mismanaging our province’s finances. But they’re going to squeeze our core services at a time when we need them most,” said Bymoen.

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If you would like photos from the event supplied to you, please follow up with Chelsea Flook at SGEU.

