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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

2018 Education budget fails to pass the grade for Saskatchewan kids, say K-12 Support Workers

With \$54.2 million cut from K-12 education funding last year, the restoration of \$34 million in last week's budget maintains a \$20 million cut to K-12 education, despite increased student enrollment. The operating funding for school divisions remains \$10.5 million below 2015/16 levels, despite an increase of almost 9,000 students and 18 new schools opened.

"In addition, the government built 9 joint P3 schools between 2015 and 2017, even though both Alberta and Manitoba have found P3 schools cost far more than the traditional route. The maintenance costs and interest costs for the new P3 schools, meanwhile, is up 39% in this budget, from \$9.7 million to \$13.5 million. This will be a line item in the budget for the next 30 years and there is no way of knowing how much these costs will increase over that period," says Jackie Christianson, chairperson of the CUPE Saskatchewan Education Workers Steering Committee, which represents over 7,000 education support workers across the province.

The provincial budget also eliminated the General Proficiency Award program, erasing rewards for 500 promising students. At the same time, increased funding was allocated to private (Independent and Associate) schools. Since 2012, public funding has increased 90% for Independent schools and 29% for Associate schools. "Budget decisions such as this make you wonder why these schools are getting significant increases while public schools are suffering," says Christianson.

Although tax payers will pay an additional \$83.9 million in property taxes since the 2016/2017 fiscal year, the money won't be seen in any public schools. Last year the Saskatchewan government changed how education tax dollars were allocated. Although collected as education taxes, the revenue goes into to the General Revenue Fund.

"We have property taxes being hiked under the guise of education funding when the added revenue isn't going into education. How is that appropriate?" asks Christianson.

"The government's education budget is said to be focused on keeping Saskatchewan 'On Track' by controlling spending but is this budget 'On Track' for our children's safety and educational needs?" asks Christianson. "It's time for our government to pull up their sleeves and work together with their partners in education to prioritize our children's futures."

CUPE is the largest union in Saskatchewan, representing 30,000 members including more than 7,000 K-12 education support workers.

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