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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

K-12 Education Support Workers Call on Premier Moe to Reinvest in Saskatchewan's Future

Despite increased student enrollment, K-12 Education in Saskatchewan has been underfunded for years. Last year's Saskatchewan Party budget doubled down with a dramatic \$54.2 million in cuts to Saskatchewan schools and classroom supports. Annual funding was slashed by \$500.00 for every student. At the same time, the government raised \$67 million in education property taxes that was funneled into general revenue instead of into education.

"After last year's budget, programs for intensive needs pre-school children were eliminated, teachers and support staff positions were cut, student transportation was reduced, and the days and hours of work of many support staff, who already had low wages, were slashed," says Jackie Christianson, Chair of the CUPE Saskatchewan Education Workers' Steering Committee, which represents over 7000 education support workers across the province.

There have been cuts and/or reduced hours for front-line staff across school divisions including Chinook, Good Spirit, Horizon, Prairie South, Prairie Spirit, Prairie Valley, Regina Public, Saskatchewan Rivers, Saskatoon Public, St Paul's RCSSD, and Sun West.

"The government has been starving schools of resources while student enrolment has climbed rapidly," says Christianson. "Between 2010 and 2017, the number of students in K-12 education increased 10 per cent. Saskatoon Public Schools saw a 21 per cent increase in enrolment over the same period."

In advance of the April 10th budget, Premier Scott Moe has acknowledged that "people are concerned with... investment in education, both K-12 as well as post-secondary." But he has still promised a "challenging budget" with cuts and wage rollbacks.

"Communities across Saskatchewan value quality education and parents want to see a real investment in front-line staff. It's long overdue, especially in light of increased enrolment, more students with intensive needs and many new Canadians who need English as an Additional Language supports. Moe's partial restoration of some funding is still a deep cut," says Christianson.

Wages for education support staff have not kept up with inflation in the province and are low in the sector to begin with, forcing many to work multiple jobs just to make ends meet.

“Meanwhile, the costly P3 model was used to open 18 new schools in September, when traditional builds allow for five schools to be built for the cost of four. That’s what the Manitoba government recently found,” says Christianson.

“We are hoping Premier Moe’s government will really listen to the people of Saskatchewan and to the hardworking front-line workers that students depend on,” says Christianson. “Recommit to local democracy and give school divisions the ability to adjust mill rates. Stop funneling public money into private (or independent) schools and international P3 consortiums. Pay workers a fair wage. Ensure proper health and safety in schools for all students and workers alike. It’s time to invest in Saskatchewan’s future.”

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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