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Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union

# NEWS RELEASE

**For immediate release**

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## **Sask Finance Minister could “make ends meet” by curbing wasteful spending on consultants, GTH and more**

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The Sask Party government's attempt to make public sector workers pay for its financial mismanagement and waste must stop, according to SGEU.

Attempting to justify her government's proposed 3.5% compensation cut and wage freeze for government workers, Finance Minister Donna Harpauer told media that the Sask Party government has “to somehow... make ends meet.”

“Maybe this government should have curbed its wasteful spending on the GTH land deal or on the \$2 billion Regina Bypass,” says SGEU President Bob Bymoer. “The Sask Party government could have avoided the financial mess *they* created. Instead they're trying to direct the public's anger over the deficit at public sector workers. It's wrong. Government is villainizing SGEU members instead of facing the truth.”

Between 2010 and 2014, when oil revenues were exceptionally high, the Sask Party government cut 1,900 government jobs. And due to low wage increases under the Sask Party government, public sector wages have barely kept up with inflation. A 3.5% wage cut would mean that public employees would earn substantially less now than they did a decade ago. Following that with a three-year wage freeze, as the government wants to do, would cause public sector workers' real incomes to drop by almost 10% in total.

“Premier Wall keeps saying that we had a decade of prosperity,” says Bymoer. “And yet, during that decade, there were cuts to the public sector. Public sector employees didn't benefit from the boom and now they're being forced to pay when times are tough – because this government poorly managed the province's finances. Why are our members expected to end a decade of prosperity worse off than they were before?”

The Sask Party government wasted millions of dollars on Lean, the Regina Bypass, the smart meter fiasco, and the GTH scandal – and it continues to waste millions more by hiring contractors who are paid several times the wage of public sector employees to do the same work.

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“When the finance minister says she is hoping that public sector workers would follow the example that the Sask Party government has set,” says Bymoer, “does she want public sector workers to mismanage public money like this government has, and refuse to follow fair hiring practices, like the minister did, as revealed by her own emails?”

SGEU has put forward solutions for generating revenue and paying down the deficit. For example, government could ditch its costly megaprojects, roll back pay hikes for political staff, eliminate the three new MLAs that they added, keep revenue-generating public assets like public liquor stores, and stop spending millions on private consultants.

“It seems this government’s only plan to address the budget is to take money out of working people’s pockets, and we’re not going to stand for it,” says Bymoer. “We’re standing up for Saskatchewan people – because for too many in this province, life is getting harder and less affordable. This government’s cuts and wasteful spending are hurting families in every corner of this province, and it’s not right.”

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