

Saskatchewan Surplus Should be Invested in Public Services

Saskatchewan – The Saskatchewan government yesterday released its mid-year financial report for the 2022-23 fiscal year. The report forecasts a \$1.1 billion surplus, mainly due to a spike in non-renewable resource revenues. SEIU-West encourages the Government of Saskatchewan to not fritter away this windfall on \$500 giveaway cheques and tax breaks for gym memberships, instead, they should be investing in the care workers and public services that keep this province running.

“All of us—citizens and corporations—depend on public services,” said Barbara Cape, President of SEIU-West. “These have been neglected for years. They’ve been struggling to keep up with the needs of our growing and aging population. They have been battered by the pandemic. It’s time to focus on investing in them.”

The report claims that Saskatchewan is “back on track”, but the measures used do not accurately reflect the lived experiences of ordinary Saskatchewan people. “Ask the senior stuck in a hospital bed because there’s no room in long-term care if they are back on track,” Cape continues. “Ask the young person going through a severe mental health crisis who is sent home from the ER after waiting 9 hours because there’s no bed for them—are we back on track?”

Instead of picking pointless fights with Ottawa, sowing division, and rewarding its friends, the government should get back on track in building a province that invests in and cares for its people, especially its most vulnerable.

The report touts the province’s new health human resources plan, but the plan focuses mainly on poaching workers from overseas and not enough on retaining the skilled and experienced professionals we already have. “The lab technologists, tradespeople, nursing staff, maintenance, housekeeping...all these members of the health care team held the system together through decades of short staffing and a pandemic,” Cape continues. “Now is the time for us to send a strong message to them: we’ve got your back like you had ours.”

The government’s neglect and misplaced priorities is not confined to health care. The education sector has been struggling to meet the growing needs of an increasingly diverse student population. Our social safety net has been made threadbare by a lack of attention for homelessness, social income supports, affordable housing, group homes, and addiction treatment centers.

Service Employees International Union West (SEIU-West) represents over 13,000 people across Saskatchewan. They include people who work in health care, education, municipalities, community-based organizations, retirement homes, and other sectors. They are joined by one colour – purple – and one union – SEIU-West. Visit PurpleWorks.ca to find out more about SEIU-West members.

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