

## ***“Right Balance” Budget Ignores Front Line Needs***

**Regina** – The Saskatchewan government’s budget, released yesterday, ignores a growing crisis that threatens Saskatchewan’s ability to meet the needs of patients, long-term care residents, students, and their families.

“The government is trying to sell this as a good news budget, but the money they’re sprinkling around is not reaching the front lines of our vital public services,” said Barbara Cape, President of SEIU-West. “This budget does not address the unsafe staffing levels and critical recruitment and retention issues that our public services are facing. Buildings and infrastructure are important, but they are nothing without front line staff to do the work.”

Front line SEIU-West members have regularly been contacting and meeting with their MLAs to highlight the struggles they face day-to-day in the workplace. SEIU-West is calling for a provincial working group involving the Health Ministry, the SHA and unions to resolve unsafe staffing levels.

“Safe care needs safe staffing levels. Our members in the health care sector continue to work short and work injured while the number of positions on the Saskatchewan Health Authority’s ‘hard to recruit’ list keeps growing. We have come to a point where patient, client, and resident care is suffering,” continued Cape. “The government has been ignoring this crisis for years. The 2019 provincial budget continues this pattern. We hope this is not a deliberate strategy to starve the public system so private care looks attractive or inevitable. Such a strategy puts us all in danger.”

Unfortunately, health care is not the only public sector suffering from SaskParty fiscal mismanagement.

“Though we applaud the restoration of \$26 million to our Education system that sum only brings us back to 2016/17 funding levels,” added Cape. “Student numbers and needs have grown since then and require people to provide support in the schools.”

The budget’s promised investments in child care and mental health services are welcome, but there are concerns that much of the money depends on the Federal government.

“The Community-Based Organizations who provide those services need secure, multi-year funding agreements,” Cape asserted. “So they can focus on helping their clients without the uncertainty of having to beg the province for funding each year. We’ll be watching closely to ensure that Minister Harpauer keeps her promises to target this money to the front line. In the past such promises have not been kept.”

“This government needs to invest in the front line of all of our public services,” added Cape. “The funding cannot be held hostage to the whims of private companies or the political will of one party. Added funding to fortify front line services is what we need.”

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. Purple works in our communities! Visit [PurpleWorks.ca](http://PurpleWorks.ca) to find out more about SEIU-West members.

- 30 -

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