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NEWS RELEASE

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Firing custodial workers won't fix the economy

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The Sask. Party's latest move to cut 251 custodial positions in all provincial buildings is an ideological move that won't fix the province's economic troubles, according to SGEU.

"Brad Wall and the Sask. Party government are continuing down their path of economic destruction," says SGEU President Bob Bymoer. "They're cutting the jobs of the lowest paid public servants in the province. Why? Because they're incapable of managing our economic situation, so they cut the jobs of these Saskatchewan people trying to make a living," says Bymoer.

The job cuts will affect 251 workers in 17 communities across the province. Of 251 jobs being cut, 139 are permanent full-time, 59 are permanent part-time, and 53 are non-permanent.

"When people think of over-paid public servants, they should think about the senior staff and advisors raking in six-figure salaries, not the custodial staff earning a living wage," says Bymoer. "Maybe Wall should look at cutting the salaries of the people closest to him, whose pay and benefits increased 74% in the last 6 years."

Although the government isn't able to say how much contracting out custodial services will save, in many cases the government will pay a contractor a similar dollar amount per hour. Meanwhile, this private company will likely pay their workers minimum wage and pocket the difference.

"It's reprehensible to fire 251 people without knowing how much this will save, or whether it will even save anything at all," says Bymoer. "What's this government's motive, then? All previous governments have found value in these workers. This move will only put more minority and female workers in our province below the poverty line. It smells of a class war led by the Premier."

Bymoer adds that this move could end up costing the province more money in the long run.

"It's such a cheap sucker-punch to some of the lowest paid civil servants in our province," says Bymoer. "If these become minimum wage jobs, the workers will apply for their own jobs at a 40% pay cut. For people currently working at what's considered a living wage in Saskatchewan, this puts them at poverty-line wages. We

might end up spending more on supporting them through our social safety net. It just doesn't make any economic sense."

The facilities affected by these cuts include the Saskatchewan Polytechnic campuses, courthouses, the Saskatchewan Disease Control Laboratory, correctional facilities—and even the Legislative Building, where 41 jobs are being cut.

"Wall's solution for everything is to cut the public service," adds Bymoer. "When times were booming, he cut 15% of the public service. Now that times are bad, he's cutting even more of the public service. Even if you cut all of the physicians' salaries or all of the salaries at SaskPower, you still wouldn't fix the deficit. That's why this move is ideological," says Bymoer.

"Brad Wall and the Sask. Party threw away huge amounts of money when times were good. They spent over a billion dollars on a science experiment at Boundary Dam, contracted out the Regina Bypass' construction for \$70 million per kilometer to a French company, and hired high-priced consultants who were, ironically, supposed to find savings in the health care system."

"And now this government wants you to believe that Saskatchewan's financial problems are the fault of custodial workers making a living wage," says Bymoer. "It's time for Wall to take responsibility for mismanaging the surplus and his government's poor economic decisions."

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