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## **Budget disappoints with priorities and cuts**

REGINA - Increased costs for children, students and seniors & cuts in public sector jobs concerns province's largest union

The provincial budget released on Wednesday, March 21 did not deliver on all the pressing social priorities with increased costs for children, students and seniors and further cuts to public sector jobs according to Tom Graham, President of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) – Saskatchewan.

“While the budget was not the full vision of austerity the government first lead us all to believe, the cuts to jobs that deliver vital public services and actions that will make life more expensive for children, students and seniors just does not make sense in a strong economy,” said Graham.

Children and seniors face increased costs as the maximum prescription drug payment is increased by 33 per cent, long-term care hygiene supply costs are increased for seniors and even the cost of taking an ambulance will increase as a result of the budget. Post-secondary students may see a rise in tuition with cuts to the Student Aid fund for bursaries. Those struggling to cope with increasing rents will also see little relief as much of the funds dedicated to housing does not focus on curbing excessive rental rates or provide a large enough boost to affordable housing stock to meet the needs of Saskatchewan’s renters.

“Our population is growing and the cost of living continues to rise, yet the government is choosing to forgo revenues to help fund social spending priorities by handing over more tax rebates to the already booming construction industry and refusing to review resource royalty rates,” said Graham.

Despite refusing to review royalty rates, Graham notes that the government is already relying more heavily on the revenue generated with resource revenues accounting for more than 26 per cent of the province’s total revenues and predicted to rise to nearly 30 per cent by the Fiscal Year 2014-2015. Graham also noted that the population growth rate also means more demand for public services and affordable rental units.

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