

# Education

**What's  
Happening  
in Saskatchewan?**



# The government is making to our public education system

## Educational Assistants

The government is moving to a new special education philosophy, one that will see more specialists in school divisions, but fewer educational assistants (EAs) in the classroom.

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The government's document *Enhancing Opportunities through Full-Service School Divisions* calls for the number of EAs to be reduced in a prescribed manner, with ratios and timelines.

The government circulated the document to school divisions in November 2009.

**The plan is to eliminate 75 per cent of the province's 3,400 educational assistants over the next seven years.**

These workers offer front-line supports to students with special needs and learning disabilities. Having an EA in the classroom benefits all students and also assists teachers in implementing curriculum.

*Below: Billboard from CUPE campaign expressing concerns over cuts.*



**School shouldn't  
look like this.**

**Stop the cuts  
to education assistants**

**CUPE** / Canadian Union  
of Public Employees

# serious changes and cuts that target vulnerable children ...

## **The Ministry of Education denies directing school divisions to trim 75 per cent of EA positions.**

The fact is there has been a reduction of EAs. For example, in the 2010-2011 school year, Prairie Spirit School Division lost 41 EA positions and Regina Public School Division lost 26 positions. Significant cuts have also been experienced in school divisions across the province, including Chinook, North East, North West, Prairie Valley, Good Spirit, Prairie South, and South East Cornerstone.

# CUT

## **The Ministry of Education's Solutions?**

**"Reduce educational support and increase professional support."**

*(Saskatchewan Ministry of Education Provincial Meeting Working Agenda, December 9, 2009.)*

**Professionals do make important diagnoses and recommendations for children with special needs. But it is the Educational Assistants who implement those recommendations on a day-to-day basis.**

**"Continue utilizing research-based ratios of appropriate supports."**

*(March 2009-2010 Funding Guide, p. B7.)*

**This directive was attached to the funding guidelines that the government distributed to every school division. The government is linking decisions about hiring ratios to the availability of funding.**

**Teachers are being told to use other students as 'buddies' to support those who have difficulty in school.**

*(The Golden Rule of Providing Support in Classrooms, Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, November/December 2009.)*

**Will this plan for assisting students with special needs meet the needs of all students?**

## Did you know?

**In the last eight years, students in Saskatchewan requiring intensive supports due to special needs have more than doubled. These numbers do not include students who require behaviour supports or mild to moderate academic supports.**

*(Frequently Asked Questions: Transformation of Special Education to Student Services in Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, November 2009).*

# Government changes and cuts are hurting Aboriginal

## Did you know?

- By 2016, more than 23% of 20-30 year olds in Saskatchewan will be First Nations. This is a valuable human resource given a growing but aging population
- A high school graduates' earning potential rises exponentially with post secondary education
- As a direct result of this earning potential, social assistance, health-care and unemployment costs drop
- A post secondary degree will allow approximate lifetime earnings of (2002):
  - \$1.25 million for an Aboriginal woman
  - \$1.38 million for an Aboriginal man

Source: Eric Howe, "Education and Lifetime Income for Aboriginal People in Saskatchewan," in J.P. White, P. Maxim and D. Beavon (eds.), *Aboriginal Policy Research: Setting the Agenda for Change, Volume 1*, Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, 2004, pp. 175-191.

## First Nations University of Canada (FNUC) funding cut

Saskatchewan Indian Federated College was established in 1976, and evolved into the FNUC in 2003, with campuses in Saskatoon, Regina, and Prince Albert. FNUC was an initiative of Saskatchewan First Nations elders and leaders who wanted a post secondary institution that would mirror their philosophies, languages, history and concepts of government. Unique in Canada, FNUC serves approximately 500 students.

In February 2010 the federal and Saskatchewan governments pulled over \$12 million in funding from the university. Due to the fact that FNUC has taken steps to address the governments' requested changes (including a shared management agreement that gives the University of Regina financial control over the university), the Saskatchewan government has agreed to provide \$5.2 million, but only on a short-term basis.

The lack of ongoing funding and FNUC deficits has resulted in the loss of 46 faculty and administrative jobs, the centralization of administration at the Regina campus and the reduction of academic departments from nine to two.

*("Massive job losses at FNUC disappointing: U of R Faculty Association" Leader-Post August 19, 2010.)*

## Aboriginal Employment Development Program cut

This program built partnership agreements between First Nations and Métis peoples, employers, governments and unions. The agreements provided education and training to build representative workplaces. It worked with unions and employers to link training and career opportunities to qualified workers. The government scrapped the program.

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# to our public education system people and students

## Tuition freeze lifted

The government lifted a five-year freeze on tuition. In 2009, University of Saskatchewan students faced an average of three per cent tuition increase, with law and pharmacy students paying 7.5 per cent more and engineering students paying four per cent more. Undergraduate students will pay \$100 to \$200 more in tuition each year on average. The Canadian Federation of Students and the Canadian Association of University Teachers are calling for a national strategy to reduce tuition fees.

## The Graduate Tax Exemption Program

Under this program, new post secondary graduates were able to earn \$100,000 in tax-free income during their first five years of employment in Saskatchewan. The tax credit applied to graduates of post secondary certificate, diploma, degree and journeyman programs. It was also available to graduates from outside of Saskatchewan, as way of encouraging out of province graduates to make a career in Saskatchewan.

The government cut this program in 2008 and passed *The Graduate Retention Program Act*. The *Act* gives tuition rebates to graduates, but the amount varies widely from program to program and year to year. It also applies to only eight professions when it comes to out-of-province graduates.

## Where's the funding?

- School contingency funding? Cut by \$3 million in 2010.
- School capital funding? Cut by \$35.8 million in 2010.
- The government also cut the capital grant to the University of Saskatchewan by eight million dollars, or 40% from last year. The University had asked for a 50 per cent increase to meet its needs. The government reduced the operating grant by two million dollars and removed 1.1 million dollars for the Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Program.

## Student debt

- Average student debt for members of the 2005 graduating class climbed to \$18,800 up from \$15,200 ten years earlier.
- The majority of students, 57%, were forced to borrow money to finance their post secondary education, up from 49% from a decade earlier.
- The proportion of students with heavy debt loads of \$25,000 or more rose to 27%, up from 17% in 1995.
- Recent grads with student loans were found less likely to have savings and investments and to own their own homes than non-borrowers.

(Statistics Canada, January 29, 2010)

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# What happens to the quality of education when it's handed to private business?

## Lessons from B.C.

In B.C., the public training commission was turned over to a private employer-controlled authority resulting in lower quality education. Certificates are now granted to students who complete only segments of a trades program, which reduces their employment and mobility options.

**FAILED**

## Quality doesn't make the grade

The quality of education in private career colleges just doesn't make the grade, according to a recent Globe and Mail investigation.

"High tuition fees and an inability to secure well-paying jobs after graduation – combined with what some former students and teachers identify as lax teaching and entrance standards – resulted in 40 per cent of career-college students missing loan payments between 2006 and 2008, compared with 20 per cent of students at public colleges and universities. Average tuition at a career college is \$14,000, a recent study found."

*(Globe & Mail, May 3, 2010.)*

## SIAST cuts courses

SIAST has stopped delivering some key training courses, which are now being offered by private companies. These include first aid and safety training, truck driver training, and heavy equipment operator instruction.

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In Saskatchewan, a truck driving program when offered through SIAST was a seven week course. A private trainer has reduced the curriculum and content of the program so that it now takes only five days to learn to drive semi-trailers and transports.

## Students pay the price

Last year, two private vocational schools run by the Academy of Learning in Regina and Swift Current were shut down because they failed to meet provincial standards. Students faced the possibility that they would lose their tuition, as well as the time they had spent in the program.

## Regional college system threatened

The government's recent move to dismantle the Carleton Trail Regional College points to the privatization of public post secondary education in Saskatchewan.

The Carleton Trail Regional College, which serves a wide range of towns and rural communities in east-central Saskatchewan, is being acquired by St. Peter's College in Muenster.

This move signals a fundamental re-structuring of the province's public post secondary skills training network, and is being done behind closed doors.

# What happens to public health and safety when the government downgrades skills training?

## Government reduces quality of apprenticeship training

The government amended the regulations that set out the required ratio of apprentices to journeypersons on the job. In the past the ratio was one-to-one. Now it will be two-to-one in 27 of the 47 trades, and 16 of the 23 sub-trades.

The regulations exclude final level apprentices from the apprentice to journeyperson ratio requirement in all trades and sub-trades.

Minister Rob Norris says the changes are to meet the needs of the economy and labour market.

The building trades unions have serious concerns. "These are substantial changes to the very foundation of trades training. Now it is nearly impossible for young people to get the high-quality, one-on-one training needed to succeed in the construction industry. Because of these changes, the health and safety of everybody involved is at risk."

*Terry Parker, Business Manager, Saskatchewan Provincial Building Trades Council*

# COMPROMISED

## Lifeguards qualifications may be down-graded

The Ministry of Health is proposing a new training standard for lifeguards, outside of the national training standard recognized by a number of water safety bodies and Saskatchewan municipalities. They recommend a relaxation of licensing and testing requirements for recreation facilities.

Ontario and Manitoba are going in the opposite direction and have raised the standards for lifeguard qualifications.

## School boards face reforms

In 2009, the government took the power away from school boards to access property taxes for funding education in Saskatchewan. School boards are concerned about the autonomy of democratically-elected school board trustees to fund local priorities.

"This is a profound change in the history of funding education in Saskatchewan. Boards have historically looked to the property tax base to ensure they were able to meet the needs of their students and local communities."

*(Roy Challis, President of the Saskatchewan School Board Association, March 18, 2009.)*

**Education does not belong to any politician, political party  
or government – it belongs to the people.  
If you don't consent to the cuts in education  
and the shift to the private sector ...**

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- ✓ Call or write your MLA [www.legassembly.sk.ca/members/mla\\_list.htm](http://www.legassembly.sk.ca/members/mla_list.htm)  
Share your concerns about what is happening in education
- ✓ Talk to your co-workers, family and friends about the negative impacts of these changes and the urgent need to invest properly in the public system
- ✓ Talk to your union or community group about arranging a presentation on education, or any of the other issues in the SFL's Labour Issues campaign, including:
  - **healthcare**
  - **Crown corporations and public services**
  - **labour rights are human rights (Bills 5, 6, 43, 80)**
  - **anti-CLAC (Christian Labour Association of Canada) ([thetruthaboutclac.ca](http://thetruthaboutclac.ca))**
  - **the environment**
  - **the economy**
- ✓ Book a presentation on **Labour Rights are Human Rights** or **anti-CLAC**  
Call the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour at 525-0197 or [sfl@sfl.sk.ca](mailto:sfl@sfl.sk.ca)
- ✓ Book a **Save Our Saskatchewan Crowns** presentation at  
[soscrowns@gmail.com](mailto:soscrowns@gmail.com) or visit [www.soscrowns.ca](http://www.soscrowns.ca)
- ✓ Visit [www.keephealthcarepublic.ca](http://www.keephealthcarepublic.ca)
- ✓ Visit [www.saynotobill80.ca](http://www.saynotobill80.ca)

**We can come for lunch meetings or evening meetings... no matter the size!**



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[www.sfl.sk.ca/labour\\_issues.php](http://www.sfl.sk.ca/labour_issues.php) or e-mail [sfl@sfl.sk.ca](mailto:sfl@sfl.sk.ca)

