

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Dangerous Saskatchewan Government Policy Harmful to Students**

SASKATOON – Without meaningful consultation from experts in the education sector, the government has introduced a policy driven by political ideology, which will harm 2SLGBTQIA+ students. Similar policies in other provinces have been analyzed by child advocates and deemed to be unconstitutional. This policy raises questions of human rights and is in opposition to the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation is calling this new Ministry of Education policy a massive overreach and an attempt by the government to react to recent by-election losses.

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation; Saskatchewan School Boards Association; League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents; Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials; and even representatives from the Ministry of Education, have been working together with an organization called the ARC Foundation to plan a pilot program for some Saskatchewan schools utilizing their resources in a program called SOGI 123 (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity). This program supports inclusion for all people and focuses on resources for supporting sexual orientation and gender identity. With the stroke of a pen, the Minister has unilaterally cancelled this program for Saskatchewan students.

“This is a political response to a government losing support in a by-election to a far-right party, following an isolated incident,” said Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation President Samantha

Becotte. “Once again, as with this government’s recent advertising campaign on teacher salaries, we are seeing education issues being tossed around like political footballs.”

In a letter to the Minister of Education dated August 15, the STF cautioned the Minister on making “political knee-jerk reactions to a one-time event that might affect approved resources,” and that politicizing the classroom is a dangerous path to take. Today’s announcement further indicates that the Saskatchewan Party is using education as a political weapon. Research from organizations like Egale Canada is clear; when students do not feel safe and supported in schools, they face a higher instance of issues ranging from anxiety and depression to self-harm, suicidality, addiction and homelessness. This is in addition to bullying, shame and discrimination they may experience while in school.

“Parents and guardians must always play a role in the educational lives of children. However, to suggest this is the motivation for these announcements stretches the Minister’s credibility considerably,” said Becotte. “Government states that they believe in safe and caring schools, and yet student safety and quality of education are being sacrificed to meet this government’s political needs.”

Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation policy, written and approved by teachers, is explicit about gender expression and sexual orientation being inherent human rights within both policy and legislation. STF policy also promotes safe schools free of discrimination, hate speech, physical abuse and other types of bullying based on actual or perceived assumptions around sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. The Federation is calling on the government to reverse this policy decision and engage in meaningful consultation with its sector partners and expert teachers.

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