

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Mini Rally for Public Education Gathers at Minister of Education's Door**

NORTH BATTLEFORD – Today, about 1,000 people brought their concerns for public education to the constituency office of the Honourable Jeremy Cockrill, MLA for The Battlefords and Minister of Education. They are calling for the Minister to reverse nearly a decade of underfunding in public schools and invest in the resources that students across Saskatchewan desperately need to support their learning.

In 2022-23, there was one social worker for every 2,588 students; one psychologist for every 2,904 students; and one speech language pathologist for every 1,413 students. Between 2007-08 and 2018-19, the number of students requiring intensive support grew by 38 percent, while the number of specialists decreased. Due to underfunding and budget cuts, caseloads for these professionals have become unmanageable and the support that many students rely on is inaccessible.

“While Minister Cockrill is busy attending the Saskatchewan Party convention today, we made so much noise that they are going to hear us all the way in Regina,” said Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation President Samantha Becotte. “Thousands of people from all walks of life have come out for our mini rallies across the province this fall. That’s in addition to the 3,500

who attended our Rally for Public Education at the Legislative Building in the spring, and thousands more who have written emails to their MLAs, the Minister and the Premier. It must be very difficult for this government to continue pretending not to hear the profound concerns their constituents have about the crises in our publicly funded schools.”

Cheryl Dunits attended the rally with her son Connor, who needs some additional supports with language due to his Down syndrome. She detailed his education journey and the shortcomings he has experienced in school with inconsistent educational supports.

“At an early age, Connor needed speech therapy, as kids with Down syndrome typically have difficulty in this area. As he got older, access to this support became less and less,” she recalled. “In larger communities such as Saskatoon, parents and caregivers do have some other options, but this is not available to all in Saskatchewan who may benefit from it. It was simply not an option for us to travel into Saskatoon for appointments.”

This was the fourth and final mini rally in a series held throughout Saskatchewan this fall. Along with the first three rallies in Moose Jaw, Humboldt and Saskatoon, estimates place the number of supporters at 4,200 people.

*Editor’s Note: Footage of the North Battleford mini rally is available for media upon request.*

– 30 –