

NEWS RELEASE

For Information Contact:

Lynn Redl-Huntington
Manager, Communications
306-221-4209
lynn.redlhuntington@stf.sk.ca

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STF Cautiously Optimistic About New Government MOU

SASKATOON – The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation is encouraged by the latest discussions with the Minister of Education regarding a memorandum of understanding to address issues raised in bargaining regarding classroom supports for class size and complexity.

“I want to thank Minister Cockrill for bringing this novel idea forward,” says STF President Samantha Becotte. “We have engaged in plenty of back and forth, including this morning, on the MOU and we are cautiously optimistic. This is the closest we have been to returning to the table, and we are willing to work through the weekend to make that a reality.”

Despite Minister Cockrill's claims the STF has targeted students and specific activities, Becotte stresses that the STF has done everything possible to reach a new agreement with the least impact on students and families. This includes:

- Requesting to open bargaining in May 2023, several months earlier than the usual start date of September.
- Requesting that bargaining continue through the summer months; **the first time this has ever happened.**
- Engaging in 15 days of bargaining – 10 of those through regular bargaining meetings and five through conciliation. Conciliation is facilitated bargaining and is part of the bargaining process.
- At the onset of bargaining, the STF requested and agreed to not bargain in the public.

Unfortunately, the Saskatchewan School Boards Association and government did not adhere to

this agreement. Billboards appeared in June, just one month after bargaining began, and had a significant impact on the tone and progress of negotiations.

Further, Becotte confirmed that having language in contract that provides guarantees and ensures accountability is of significant importance to teachers.

“I am deeply disappointed by the comments Jaimie Smith-Windsor, president of the SSBA, made in today’s news conference. She purports to want to collaborate, but her words do not match her actions. As recently as February, we brought forward the issue of violence in the classroom. Instead of working with teachers, the SSBA struck a committee and began working without any teacher involvement,” states Becotte. “She also claims the SSBA has policies and strategies to address class size and complexity. Yet, over the course of 10 years it has failed to address class size and complexity. The SSBA is either unable or unwilling to address this issue.”

The STF also clarified that it has never put forward the B.C. model for class size and complexity and does not expect that model to be enacted in Saskatchewan. The Teachers’ Bargaining Committee remains steadfast that the best model to address challenges in Saskatchewan is one made in Saskatchewan and implemented by locally elected decision-makers, in consultation with teachers.

“Teachers do not have, and have never wanted, control of funding. We are asking for an agreement that guarantees funding for school boards and provides assurances that school boards will spend the funding on resources to directly support students, such as EAs, speech language pathologists, psychologists and other professionals,” says Becotte.

Nearly 400,000 emails have been sent to decision-makers in government and local boards of education, urging them to bargain in good faith with teachers and work together to address the critical issues impacting Saskatchewan schools. To join this call, supporters are encouraged to sign up at www.tellthemtuesday.com.

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