

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Government Blindly Pushing Ahead with Distance Learning Crown Corporation**

SASKATOON – The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation is expressing frustration and growing concern as the Government of Saskatchewan pushes ahead with plans to develop a new Distance Learning Crown Corporation without meaningful consultation.

"It seems government is proceeding blindly. The announcement and aggressive timelines of this project suggests a lack of awareness of the current state of public education in Saskatchewan. I hear the word "triage" regularly from teachers. It's clear to me kids aren't getting the help they need. There are very real and urgent issues that need to be addressed now," says STF President Samantha Becotte.

A month ago, the Federation and sector partners raised concerns about the process and requested an opportunity to provide input on a number of important issues. The partners, including the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents, and the Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials, still have not received a response. Becotte says the approach this government is taking raises doubts about their intent and objectives.

"I don't understand why the Minister is disregarding our advice on such an extremely complicated and important issue. What's the rush? And further, why is he hiring an out-of-province consultant with a passion for privatization rather than working with the education partners here who know our Saskatchewan communities?"

Recent cuts to education, combined with years of chronic underfunding, have created a situation where students are not receiving enough one-on-one time with their teachers or no longer have support from an educational assistant or access to other professionals who support learning. In addition, a Distance Learning Crown Corporation will direct funds away from local supports.

"First and foremost, teachers and parents want students across the province to succeed," says Becotte. "This is a large and complicated project that is being rushed. If it fails, students are the ones who will hurt. The government's track record is poor when comes to introducing centralized IT systems. Look no further than the losses experienced with the SHA and eHealth."

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