



## News Release

For immediate release

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### **Sask. Party government destroys organization that relies on business and labour co-operation.**

Despite supporting its creation while in opposition, the Brad Wall government has announced that it has eliminated funding for the Saskatchewan Labour Market Commission (SaskLMC). [www.sasklmc.ca](http://www.sasklmc.ca)

The SaskLMC, a collaborative and cooperative organization which included representatives from business, labour, training Institutions, aboriginal organizations, the social economy and government, was originally established through legislation supported by the Sask. Party while opposition in 2007. Its mandate included providing advice to government on labour market issues, trends and strategies.

The SaskLMC was co-chaired by Holly Hetherington, first Vice-President of the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce and Larry Hubich, the President of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour.

The Sask. Party government killed the SaskLMC in its March budget, for what appears to be purely partisan political reasons, according to labour representatives from the SaskLMC.

“It was an important vehicle for business and labour to work together. We all know that these two constituencies are often at odds with each other, so what possible reason could the government have for scrapping it?” said Larry Hubich, SFL President.

“When the Sask. Party was elected they said they would reach out to labour. This latest action is not ‘reaching out’, it’s more like ‘shutting out’ the contribution of labour from planning and policy,” added Hubich.

The dismantling of the SaskLMC actually began in the fall of 2008, when the Sask. Party government introduced unilateral amendments to the SaskLMC act. Bill 46 reduced the size of the Commission and removed the legislative requirement for government to “consult” with business and labour in the appointment of the business and labour members on the Commission.

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In addition, the amendments eliminated the position on the SaskLMC dedicated to the "social economy". "The role of the social economy representative had been to bring forward the perspective of the working poor who need access to skills training in order to climb out of poverty. The Sask. Party clearly signaled at that time that they were not interested in addressing the needs of more disadvantaged workers when developing a labour market strategy," said Hubich.

"It appears to us that this government is only interested in a labour force development strategy that addresses the needs of a certain segment of business. Well what about the rest of us?" said Gord Hunter, labour representative on the SaskLMC, and former representative with the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union.

The SaskLMC was also a key opportunity to facilitate women entering non-traditional work in order to meet skills shortages. "We had begun to make some progress on this issue in the key areas and now the government is telling us that our work is done, when we've only just begun," said Val Overend, labour representative for the SaskLMC and Executive Director of Women in Trades & Technology.

"All of these amendments, including the final blow to the SaskLMC, occurred with absolutely zero consultation with key stakeholders of the Commission. These were top-down decisions made in the back-rooms of the government's inner circle, and delivered as a *fait accompli* to the people who have spent the past two years laying the ground work for a truly industry driven and collaborative initiative. That's incredibly frustrating for those of us who believe in the organization and in the need to work in co-operation where we can," concluded Hubich.

For more information, contact Larry Hubich at (306) 537-7330.