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MEDIA RELEASE

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Social Workers concerned about budget measures

The Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers (SASW) today expressed its concern over the provincial government's budget to address issues related to addictions and income support programs.

SASW is pleased to see an increase in funding for Mental Health and Addictions, including a \$1M investment in response to the Drug Task Force Consultations and additional treatment beds. "However, SASW is deeply disappointed in the decision to not fund safe consumption sites and family treatment programs. Safe consumption sites have proven to prevent deaths by overdose, along with supporting individuals to access services and supports" said SASW President Erin Beckwell.

Beckwell added that social workers serve in a variety of roles to support Saskatchewan residents who are using substances or are being impacted by substance use, which provides added insight into this issue. "Saskatchewan has limited options for families to remain together while parents and guardians enter residential or substance use treatment. Support for family-based treatment can have positive impacts that reduce children experiencing traumatic events, and reduce children being taken into care," she said.

Increases to the Saskatchewan Income Support program and the Seniors Income Program are welcome and needed investments. However, these increases will not go far enough to meet rising costs of food, utilities, and shelter. SASW also noted that Saskatchewan's child poverty rate is well above the national child poverty rate and that the minimum wage is the second lowest in Canada. This has led to many residents struggling to make ends meet, especially with the rising rate of inflation.

"The last two years have taken a toll on everyone but particularly those who were receiving income support programs prior to the pandemic. The province must make meaningful investments in social programs," said Beckwell.

SASW represents more than 2,400 registered social workers in the province.

For more information
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