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Canadian Union of Public Employees **CUPE.ca**

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## **CUPE launches P3 ad campaign:**

### **Saskatchewan government support for P3s cause for concern, CUPE says**

**Saskatoon:** The Saskatchewan government needs to rethink using public private partnerships (P3s) for large-scale infrastructure projects because there is mounting evidence to show these controversial schemes are “a horrendous waste of money.”

That’s the message CUPE Saskatchewan delivered at a Regina news conference today, where it unveiled the results of its research project on P3s – and a television ad.

P3s, which are the latest way to privatize public assets like hospitals, schools and bridges, have been embraced by both the Harper and Wall governments, even though the credit crisis is causing many P3 deals to collapse.

“The Saskatchewan public has good reason to worry about the Wall government’s support for P3 projects,” says Tom Graham. “It appears to be a case where ideology has trumped common sense because with P3s you pay more and get less.”

In January, the SaskParty government established a “P3 Secretariat” to explore the possibility for P3 projects in the province. Schools, a university student residence, and a hanger facility for the air ambulance program are some of the P3 projects under consideration.

Although the Wall government claims P3s “accelerate construction, provide on-time and on-budget delivery and shift risk to the private sector,” these assertions are not supported by the facts, says CUPE researcher Guy Marsden.

Research released today by CUPE paints a disturbing picture of P3 projects – projects characterized by much higher costs and much less public accountability. A few examples:

On cost-overruns:

- In December 2008, Ontario’s auditor general released a damning report on the Brampton Civic Hospital P3 project. Among other things, the auditor general found the Brampton P3 hospital costs ballooned from an initial projection of \$357 million to a final construction cost of \$614 million, even though the building was significantly smaller than projected with fewer beds.

On the lack of public accountability:

- In January 2009, forensic chartered accountant Ron Parks and chartered accountant Rosanne Terhart evaluated four P3 projects in BC. In their report, they criticized Partnerships BC – the government-owned company pushing P3s – for denying critical information in response to freedom of information requests. “In our view this suggests a general lack of transparency and public accountability.”

Although the SaskParty continues to support P3s for large-scale infrastructure projects, a recent poll suggests the majority of Saskatchewan residents don't.

The Viewpoints Research poll, commissioned by CUPE Saskatchewan in November, found 50 per cent of respondents flatly rejected using P3s for schools, hospitals and bridges, while 35.7 per cent supported it.

CUPE says the Wall government must reconsider its support of P3s in light of the facts, not ideology.

The union's television ad campaign, which began this week, encourages residents to learn more about P3s by going to: **[www.cupe.ca/public-private-partnerships](http://www.cupe.ca/public-private-partnerships)**

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