

Group calls on Premier Wall to adopt five-point plan to improve government accountability

Regina/Saskatoon: A group of labour researchers and writers is calling on Premier Wall to adopt a five-point plan to improve access to information and government accountability in Saskatchewan.

The group, *Open Up*, released the five point plan today in conjunction with Right to Know Week, September 24-28.

“Premier Wall and the government need to be much more open about sharing information with Saskatchewan citizens,” says CUPE researcher Cheryl Stadnichuk. “One of the ways to support the public’s right to know is to adopt an ‘Open Government’ approach to information – the first point in our plan,” she says.

Along with making a commitment to Open Government, the group wants Premier Wall to support sweeping changes to the Freedom of Information Act and Protection of Privacy Act.

“The 20-year-old Act is in urgent need of renewal,” says Heath Smith of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour. “We need much better access to information, reduced fees and quicker response times,” he says, adding lengthy delays and excessive fees are two of the major barriers.

The five point plan also calls for more resources for the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner (OIPC), which oversees the Act.

Citizens now wait an average of 15 months to have their case files reviewed by the OIPC. Although Commissioner Gary Dickson has repeatedly requested more resources to carry out their work, the government cut the OIPC’s budget this year.

The group also wants the government to bring the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations (SAHO) and 3sHealth under the Act. The implementation of a Lobbyist Code of Conduct and Registry rounds out the five point plan.