

**News release: Policy Forum to be held at University of Regina
“Whatever happened to a Representative Workforce in Saskatchewan?” June 10, 2010**

A public policy forum titled “Whatever happened to a representative workforce?” will be held at the University of Regina on Thursday, June 10 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. The forum will be held in room 623 in the Education Building on the main campus. The purpose of the forum is to reflect on the policy implications of the cancellation of the representative workforce initiatives by the Province of Saskatchewan.

The forum is being organized by researchers at the University of Regina specializing in aboriginal health human resources. The research team has expressed concern about recent decisions by the Province of Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations (SAHO) to terminate representative workforce initiatives in the province.

“A representative workforce is crucial to the economic and social health of Saskatchewan,” said Eber Hampton, a professor in the faculty of business at the University of Regina and principal investigator for the research team. “These initiatives by both the federal and provincial governments were starting to make a difference and losing them now is a real blow.”

The researchers expressed concern that the representative workforce initiative at SAHO, which was focused on increasing aboriginal participation in the health sector, has been terminated with no plan or replacement strategy. The province has also terminated the aboriginal employment development program in the Ministry of First Nations and Métis Relations, with no indication that anything else will take its place. That program had spent many years developing local partnerships in all sectors of the economy to increase aboriginal participation in the labour force.

Real barriers to Aboriginal participation in the workforce continue to exist. For example, Aboriginal participation rates in the health sector stood at under 4% in 2006, far below the percentage of aboriginal people in the province, which stood at 15% in 2006 according to Statistics Canada. “The provincial government may be assuming that indirect measures such as education will improve aboriginal participation in the province’s labour force,” says Hampton. “But history has shown that such indirect measures, on their own, are not sufficient. Direct initiatives such as the representative workforce programs were starting to make an important difference for aboriginal people and for the Saskatchewan economy. The economic and social benefits of these programs far exceeded their cost. Understanding the real successes of representative workforce initiatives and dealing creatively with their loss is vital for Saskatchewan.”

The forum to be held June 10 will also be broadcast live on the Internet, so people and organizations who want to watch and e-mail in questions from across Saskatchewan can participate. To log into the live broadcast online on June 10, go to: **www.schoolstreamsports.com**

For more information, contact:
Larry Sanders, Research Associate
University of Regina
Phone (306) 337-2437
Cell (306) 541-3132
e-mail: larry.sanders@uregina.ca