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Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union

# NEWS RELEASE

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## Government passes legislation to sell off Crowns

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Government passed legislation today that will allow it to begin selling off the province's Crown corporations without the support of Saskatchewan people, according to SGEU.

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Bill 40, the innocuous-sounding *Interpretation Amendment Act*, will create a legal definition of privatization that allows up to 49% of a Crown to be sold without requiring a referendum or election.

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"Saskatchewan people value and support their Crowns, and this government knows it," says SGEU President Bob Bymoan. "If the Sask. Party's privatization agenda actually had public support, they wouldn't be afraid to put the future of the Crowns to a vote. Instead, they're passing legislation to make sure that voters' voices won't be heard."

Selling 49% of a Crown, such as SaskTel, would hugely weaken its ability to serve Saskatchewan people. Private shareholders would pocket half the revenues that currently support public services, like education and health care. In order to increase their earnings, private shareholders would also pressure the Crown to maximize profits – instead of emphasizing dependable, affordable, and accessible service.

"Decade after decade, our Crowns have served Saskatchewan people well. They're the reason we have some of the lowest utility rates in Canada, and reliable service in remote and rural areas," says Bymoan.

"The Sask. Party wants to sacrifice those advantages for a one-time windfall, to dig themselves out of the financial mess they created – and they don't want to let Saskatchewan people tell them otherwise."

By creating an extremely narrow definition of privatization, Bill 40 sidesteps the *Crown Corporations Public Ownership Act*, which requires a high level of scrutiny and public support before Crowns can be sold off.

"Once again, this government has proved that it can't be trusted when it comes to our Crowns," says Bymoan. "They supported the *Public Ownership Act*, and now they're trying to legislate their way around it. So when they start selling our Crowns, why would we trust them to stop at 49%?"

“We urge all Saskatchewan people to tell their MLAs that they expect an open debate, and a vote, before any Crowns are put up for sale,” Bymoer adds.

“The Crowns belong to all of us, and no government has the right to sell them off without listening to the public first.”

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