
Plebiscite On The Future Of Our Crown Corporations

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of this petition?

This petition is in the form required by *The Referendum and Plebiscite Act* to force a vote on the question of whether the Saskatchewan government must follow a public consultation process before it can privatize a Crown corporation.

If we obtain the signatures from 15% of Saskatchewan voters, we can force the government to have a province-wide vote so that we, the public, can decide whether or not to privatize Crown corporations.

The government did not consult the public before shutting down the Saskatchewan Transportation Company (STC) and has, through a roundabout amendment to *The Interpretation Amendment Act*, given itself the power to sell off just less than 50% of any Crown corporation, such as SaskTel or Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI), without consulting the public. The government amended *The Interpretation Act* deliberately, in order to avoid public consultation and the other procedures required by *The Crown Corporations Public Ownership Act* before selling off our Crown corporations.

What is wrong with the government selling off 49% of a Crown corporation and using the money to pay down debt? Wouldn't the people of Saskatchewan still be able to control the Crown corporation?

There are several major problems with partial privatization. First, if 10% or more of a Crown corporation is privatized, the corporation will have to pay federal taxes. Crown corporations that are fully publicly-owned are exempt from federal taxation. Paying taxes forever should be discounted from the selling price—which therefore means much less money to pay down debt or use for other public purposes. The current federal tax exemption

means that more money stays in the province to serve the public interest.

Second, retaining 51% ownership of the Crown corporation does not mean that the public interest would prevail over the private interests of the minority shareholders. As a matter of corporate law, the majority cannot oppress the minority shareholders by ignoring their interests, and there is a legal duty on the members of the board of directors to manage the company in order to maximize the return to investors, that is, profits. The public interest is to provide services to everyone in Saskatchewan, regardless of where they live. For example, selling part of SaskTel would likely mean that rural and northern people would have to pay more than they do now for phone service, internet, etc.

The people of the province should be able to decide whether Saskatchewan is going to make drastic decisions such as shutting down or selling off part of its Crown corporations because this will affect our identity as a province and divide us as a people.

What's the question that would be put to a vote?

It's at the top of the petition form: Should the Government of Saskatchewan be required to obtain the approval of the electors in a referendum before selling any interest in or winding-up any Crown corporation listed in *The Crown Corporations Public Ownership Act* such as SaskTel, SGI, STC, SaskEnergy, and SaskPower?

Does that mean Crown corporations could not sell property such as vehicles or land?

No, under section 6 of *The Crown Corporations Public Ownership Act*, a Crown corporation is always able to carry on its ordinary business and that specifically includes selling, exchanging or otherwise disposing of property. There is a big difference between selling a truck or a building and selling a portion of the shares in the corporation.

If the petition gets enough signatures and the public votes to require a public consultation process, will that stop the Saskatchewan government from shutting down or selling off Crown corporations?

The government could still do those things under the current laws, but we hope that the government would listen carefully to the people who elected them. It would be highly unusual in a modern democracy for a government to ignore a plebiscite result and the voices of the people who elected them.

Would a vote be expensive?

Yes, it would. However, the government could avoid the expense of a plebiscite vote by immediately stopping any plans it might have to sell off any part of our Crown corporations to private investors. With regard to STC, the government could retain the buses and buildings owned by STC and pledge to work with various communities and constituents to restore this important publicly-owned service.

Who can sign the petition?

Any elector which is defined as any person who is entitled to vote under *The Election Act, 1996* and whose name was on the voters' list in the last federal, provincial, or municipal election. If you are 18 or older, a Canadian citizen, and have lived in Saskatchewan for the last six months, you are entitled to vote. If you voted in one of the last federal, provincial, or municipal elections, your name is probably on a voters list.

Can I sign online?

No, everyone must sign on paper.

Can I sign in pencil? Can I help someone fill out the form?

The petition must be completed in pen. The signature must be that of the elector. You can help with other parts of the form.

How can I help with this effort?

Phone or send us an email. We will discuss some options with

you. Our main priority right now is to collect the signatures of electors on the petition. If you can help with that, great! However, we will eventually have other types of work available for volunteers. Feel free to contact us.

Where do I send the signatures I've collected?

Mail them to Our Crowns 2017, Suite 604, 303 5th Avenue North, Saskatoon SK S7K 2P6. We need to have original signatures for the petition to be valid.

I have already signed petitions to the Legislature about budget cutbacks and privatizing Crown corporations. Should I sign this one?

Absolutely. The other petitions will be tabled in the Legislative Assembly but they are not designed to call for a plebiscite and cannot force the government to put this important issue to a vote of the people.

Who is behind this petition?

The coordinators of this effort are a group of Saskatchewan citizens who believe strongly that our Crown corporations provide us with valuable services and help to keep the cost of living down for Saskatchewanians. We think that selling or winding up Crown corporations is short-sighted and that there are other options to improve the provincial budgetary situation that need to be considered. We are nonpartisan and are not directed by or affiliated with any other group, organization or political party.

Other questions? Contact Us.

Phone: 306-384-2000

or send us an email

ourcrowns2017@sasktel.net

