

October 30, 2007

To the Editor, Saskatoon Star Phoenix

Sir,

You recently carried a column by David Seymour comparing the telephone systems in Manitoba and Saskatchewan in which he portrayed SaskTel as being at a disadvantage in the marketplace because it is a Crown Corporation.

Mr. Seymour and your newspaper have done a major disservice to the people of Saskatchewan by misrepresenting what has happened in Manitoba since our publicly owned telephone company was privatized.

I would urge both you and Mr. Seymour to talk to the workers at Manitoba Telephone and to the subscribers in Manitoba to discover the reality of privatization. As the elected union representative of more than 1,000 Manitoba telephone workers, I can tell you that privatization of our system has not been good for anyone in the province and I would caution the people of Saskatchewan against following Manitoba's example.

Consider this:

- The MTS reality for workers is that many hundreds of jobs have been eliminated or shipped out of the province. Investment and other crucial management decisions are no longer made in Winnipeg but in Toronto and elsewhere;
- The MTS reality for dozens of communities across the province is that operator and business offices have been closed; and,
- The MTS reality for subscribers is that they are paying 37% more for telephone service today which is worse than it was ten years ago.

And the final reality for Manitoba taxpayers is that the profits from what was once a vibrant system are being drained out of Manitoba instead of being re-invested in our own province.

SaskTel may not be perfect but residents in Saskatchewan should know that Manitobans would love to have the world class service being offered there with its 95% household penetration, innovative new technologies available system wide, and a nation leading television offering (MaxTV).

Most of all, Manitobans would love to have THEIR telephone company back in public hands where crucial decisions about investment, employment, research, and service to subscribers were made for the benefit of Manitobans and not for investors in Toronto, New York and elsewhere.

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