

On April 12th, 2005 Swift Current City Council held a news conference to announce. The following is the text of Mayor Sandy Larson's comments.

I want to thank you all for coming here today for this news conference. I will make a few opening comments then take questions.

Today is not a happy occasion, as we are here to announce that the City of Swift Current is filing a lawsuit against SaskPower, the Crown Investments Corporation, and the Government of Saskatchewan.

As some of you know, there have been a number of longstanding issues between Swift Current Light and Power and SaskPower. These issues have and continue to have a negative impact on the city and ultimately the taxpayers of Swift Current.

We have worked diligently, and in all good faith to resolve these issues. Our staff has done all they could to find a resolution.

But unfortunately, we now find ourselves in a position where we have no choice but to take the next step to defend the interests of our city and our taxpayers.

The statement of claim filed yesterday alleges that for nearly a decade SaskPower has been engaging in systematic discrimination for the purpose of forcing the sale of Swift Current's utility at a depressed price.

By way of background for those of you not familiar with this issue, our predecessors on council had the foresight to keep our utility when most cities sold their power utilities to the government.

Swift Current Light and Power has financially benefited the city for years and is a legacy that belongs to every citizen in our city.

However, even though we own our power utility, we must purchase our power in bulk from SaskPower, and we have no say in how the rates for that power are set and have no say in how the rates are set for our customers.

This is a very complex issue, but put simply – when our cost for power is manipulated it has two impacts.

First, it increases the amount that the taxpayers of Swift Current are called on to pay for city services.

Second, it reduces the overall value of our utility.

We don't feel that SaskPower is setting a fair rate for Swift Current, and have been unable through all other means to get SaskPower to provide the documents to support the rates they are charging our city.

The rates are just one aspect of this issue. In many ways and on many occasions, the City of Swift Current feels it has been intimidated – intimidated by a government owned monopoly that has abused its dominant position to the detriment of Swift Current and its citizens.

This is not a decision we take lightly. However, we have no choice. When Swift Current Light and Power is threatened by predatory business practices it hurts the owners of that utility – the citizens of Swift Current.

We believe it is our duty to defend our citizens. We have a responsibility to respond on their behalf.

I will now take questions. Our legal council Murray Walter, and Chief Administrative Officer Matt Noble will also be available to provide background information.