

May 21, 2024

Saskatchewan: Hiding Political Wrongdoing Through The Use/Abuse Of The Federal Justice System

This is a classic example of egocentric politicians taking a small issue and turning it into a very large one. The government of Saskatchewan chose to use the Federal justice system as a political weapon, not just once but many times against citizens who identified wrongdoing, dishonesty and incompetence and brought the information forward to the appropriate oversight bodies, Ministerial and other.

The Broken Or The Breaker?

Canada consistently ranks in the top five countries in the world in which to live; it is often ranked number one. That's not good enough for you Premier Moe. You parrot the federal Conservative mantra that everything is broken, but what have you done in seven years to fix it? Are you the broken or the breaker?

Rather than defend fairness and create meaningful legislation you choose to be more litigious and use your power to protect plastic drinking straws while stripping seniors of their assets. You seem intent on placing Saskatchewan in a different time zone where, upon arrival, one must set their watch back 50 years.

Where's Your Sign?

This document outlines your role in initiating seven court applications which ultimately stripped seniors of homes and assets in actions that grievously tarnished political and judicial careers. The resulting elevation of distrust in government lands squarely on your shoulders; that's what being a leader means. You often indicate that we should be more like our neighbors to the south; with that in mind we'll quote former USA President Harry S Truman, who had a sign on his desk that said, "*The Buck Stops Here*". Where's your sign Premier Moe?

In the spirit of full disclosure, you were not alone in pursuing the ill-intended course of action that began with our concerns regarding Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming irregularities and culminated in the exposure of province-wide Education Property Tax frauds. You had plenty of help from your current House Leader, Jeremy Harrison (who as a proud member of the Saskatchewan Bar Association should have known better) and your former Deputy Minister and SLGA President/CEO, Cam Swan, who also played an initiating role. You are stellar examples of why politicians are now among the least trusted professionals in our country.

On Your Watch and With Your Full Knowledge

Political decisions to hide incompetence and management errors at SLGA spawned the circumstances we are now discussing. The succeeding ill-conceived tactics of your

office turned a dispute over a few hundred dollars into seven court cases which has had a negative outcome for you as they revealed government corruption. You had many opportunities to step in and right the ship, but your consistent choice has been to “*shoot the messenger*”.

Ongoing Abuse: Federal Court Actions #6 and #7

When you appointed your current Justice Minister, you expressed satisfaction that she would be more litigious. You were serious: an agent of your government recently re-opened 2021 lawsuits seeking a “*clarification*” of the judgements rendered in 2022. Both cases were heard December 2023 in Chambers by the Judge who wrote the original decisions – he provided no insights and approved an adjournment ensuring he would never have to re-address his rulings as his retirement was slated for the of the month, and in January hearings, the Judge dismissed both cases stating the Plaintiff had provided no legal or evidentiary basis for their application.

Those were Federal Court appearances numbers six and seven. Government oversight should have stopped this farce long ago, but Premier Moe you were front and center in 2018 for the first filing. In fact, your correspondence indicated you were aware we were being served before we were even notified.

Act One 2017, Final Act 2024

May 18, 2024, saw the final act of the political farce drafted and directed by you, former Premier Brad Wall, Jeremy Harrison and Cam Swan. The Suffern Lake Regional Park Authority actioned 2022 Writs of Possession (which named us as Respondents) on cottages no longer owned by us and sold them by tender. Both properties had been purchased in October 2022 in accordance with conditions set out by Justice Lyle Zuk in his judgment. The Park Authority resurrected those cases seeking clarification and claiming our sales were fraudulent. As noted, Madam Justice Haff dismissed their claim and disregarded in its entirety their supporting affidavit material. In Chambers, she commented to the Park Authority’s counsel that, “*it is unclear whether your client is even entitled to a Writ*”.

Your agent, the Park Authority operates under legislation and Ministerial oversight primarily held by Parks, Government Relations and Environment. The Park Authority: acknowledged our sales in January 2023; denied leases to the new owners; lost a court action claiming fraudulent sales and failed in their request for clarification; then initiated Writs of Possession based on the premise that the structures, which used to belong to us, were on Park land without lease approvals. Who sanctioned the Park’s actions or, alternatively, who failed their oversight role?

In The Beginning...

In early 2017, our working group of cottage owners and friends at Suffern Lake Regional Park raised valid questions about the Park Authority’s operation of Regular

Raffles/Lotteries; primarily financial reporting that literally didn't add up, and conflicts of interest where those operating the raffles were participating in prize winnings. We have discovered that over a four-year period, the Park Authority reported \$17,250 more in ticket sales to SLGA than it had to its own stakeholders in annual financial reporting. In their oversight role of regional parks, the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport and the Minister responsible for SLGA have consistently failed to request the applicable financial reports.

We made two well-spaced official requests for the information; the second triggered the Deputy Minister for Parks to petition the Privacy Commissioner to deny us FOIP privileges stating that we were frivolous and vexatious. Mr. Kruziniski's prompt review determined that our requests were "*reasonable*" and "*the intention to use information obtained from an access request in a manner that is disadvantageous to the government institution does not qualify as bad faith. To the contrary, it is appropriate for requesters to seek information "to publicize what they consider to be inappropriate or problematic decisions or processes undertaken" by government institutions*" ([OIPC Disregard Decision 285-289 2020 January 18, 2021](#)).

Taking actions that would protect SLRPA from penalties related to regulatory infractions and hide their own failed oversight processes, SLGA Senior Licensing Manager and SLGA Director for Integrity Services provided false information regarding the licenses SLRPA had been operating under (SLGA FOI-18-535).

Back On The Local Scene

In May 2017, at a public meeting attended by some 40 people, the Park Authority's Chairman stated we were backstabbers and troublemakers who had cost the Park \$6000 in lost lottery revenue. This was false and defamatory as the Park had not applied for that type of license for over two years.

Only days after that outrageous meeting, the SLGA Director for Integrity Services provided a letter laden with false information regarding licensing (letter from Donna Brewer to Lisa Wildman, May 26, 2017). She made no mention of SLRPA being denied licenses and wished us well in sorting out our community problems. A few months later, the Vice President of SLGA advised us their investigation was closed. We advised that while theirs might be closed, ours continued due in large part to misinformation provided by their integrity department until we determined who was misleading us and why (letter to SLGA members, Premier Moe, NDP, & cc'd to Jeremy Harrison, April 13, 2019).

Ask, But You Shall Not Receive

Information requests disclosed that SLGA had produced two investigative reports, one for the Park Authority and its oversight bodies and one for us (SLGA FOI 19-55 & SLGA FOI 21-578). We really haven't seen either as the initial FOIP materials provided us a fully-redacted version citing law enforcement potential as their rationale. Time passed and we felt any law enforcement action would have been concluded, so we again

requested the report. Access was not approved but we got the surprising response that “*in the spirit of full disclosure*” please be advised here’s the second report that was generated. FYI, also fully-redacted.

Road Trip

On June 29, 2017, members of our team were in Swift Current Saskatchewan at 8:00 A.M. to deliver an information package to Premier Brad Wall’s constituency office. We thought perhaps Mr. Wall was unaware of the SLGA actions taken under the guidance of Mr. Harrison and Mr. Swan. We provided Mr. Wall with a considerable amount of sensitive information and advised him that our goals were not political so only his copy of the material would ever be generated. We have honored that commitment.

We clearly stated our efforts were not related to NDP interests and explained that two of us had worked directly with Conservative governments in the past. Current Minister of Health, Everett Hindley, was Mr. Wall’s assistant at the time, he should recall receiving our document.

We encouraged Mr. Wall to review the situation, activate oversight and stop the local and Ministerial bullying. It had the opposite effect; the bully team sprang into overdrive and five weeks after our visit Mr. Wall announced he was leaving politics.

The Race Is On!

The leadership race was promptly underway. Mr. Harrison speedily joined the race card and in doing so left his position of Minister Responsible for SLGA. Mr. Cheveldayoff, Minister of Parks Culture and Sport also joined the race and left his contentious portfolio behind.

End of August, Mr. Wall appointed MLA Gene Makowsky Minister of Parks and Minister responsible for SLGA. Two days later, Mr. Harrison withdrew from the leadership race. What a handy way for him to leave the corrupted SLGA portfolio without enduring a potentially messy political removal.

And The Winner Is

Premier Moe, when you won the leadership, we promptly advised you of our escalating concerns regarding the SLGA fiasco and other operational/management issues at our regional park. No one responded. Certainly not Cam Swan whom you had removed as SLGA President/CEO to serve as your Deputy Minister.

Let’s Approach The Opposition For Help

We expanded our government correspondence to include the official opposition and in mid-March 2018, were invited to Regina to meet with the NDP Issues Manager. Prior to our meeting, we were introduced to two long-serving NDP MLAs who indicated they had

read our materials. We presented the Issues Manager with a complete portfolio of our SLGA information including the FOIP materials that showed we had been lied to by senior officials at SLGA. We were told that the NDP would use that file of information as leverage. They have not mentioned it publicly since.

About two weeks after our Regina meeting, the Park Authority's Secretary Treasurer circulated correspondence claiming that the Park had been audited by SLGA and no wrongdoing was found. We responded immediately saying that was not true and that we had FOIP documents to prove it.

Harsh Repercussions

Within a week of that exchange, cabin owners in our group were advised their cabin leases had been terminated because taxes had not been paid; taxes were being disputed and were only 90 days in arrears.

FOIP records show there was internal government concern within Parks Culture and Sport about the leases being terminated (FOI PCS 26/19-G). Dominique Clincke, personally appointed by Brad Wall to review taxes in Regional Parks, explained that nonpayment of taxes was a breach of lease and they would use that to justify terminations. No consideration was given to the reality that the Park Authority had no taxation authority which is the mandated responsibility of one of their Municipal oversight members; nor was there acknowledgement that the Chairman's extended family was years in arrears.

Political Theatre

In May of 2018 we were again contacted by the NDP issues Manager who advised us that Mr. McCall would be raising Suffern Lake concerns in Committee ([Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs & Justice, May 14, 2018](#)). 37 minutes was dedicated to our concerns. 13 times in those 37 minutes Minister Makowsky parroted the phrase "*issues will be resolved at the local level*". He stated there was an ongoing offer of mediation, so we immediately contacted his office to accept the offer of a mediated resolution. Our acceptance was refused with the Ministerial response claiming they could not force participation. Interestingly, subsequent FOIP requests do not verify that the Park Authority was ever presented with the offer and refused it.

The SLGA issues tied to the lease terminations were not addressed even though Mr. Makowsky was Minister Responsible for both Departments.

This bit of political theatre accomplished nothing and within a few weeks of the meeting, the NDP Critic for Parks Culture and Sport blocked emails from one of our group members as did one of the NDP members we had been introduced to at the legislature.

Party Politics

Perhaps the NDP did *leverage* our investigative SLGA materials. If they did it was not to our advantage. Their use of our materials to further their own political purposes while completely disregarding the impact on our day-to-day wellbeing and investments told us everything we needed to know about Party politics and what we could expect in the future.

As of this writing, the NDP has not addressed a single SLGA issue, nor have they addressed the issues around the implementation of their hated Education Property Tax and the associated evasion in regional parks and resort communities. It begs the question, “which party actually held the leverage?”

Trusting politicians on any side of the table proved to be a very costly lapse of judgement. The idea that political parties who claim to be sworn enemies would collude to harm people who brought a problem forward and exposed wrongdoing is appalling. We contacted the Federal Justice Minister/Attorney General, David Lametti, to [request a public inquiry](#) into the abuse of the justice system in Saskatchewan. He said he couldn't interfere in provincial matters and directed us to the Office of the Ombudsman. They couldn't help us because they don't address concerns that have been or are before the courts. So, we are still asking, “Who can help? Who will help?”

Tire Fires

Interestingly, about the time our documents found their way back to Saskatchewan, Deputy Minister to the Premier, Cam Swan, abruptly left office. He reappeared about a year later in some dubious Government-sponsored tire recycling program that has now found its way right out of the province and country.

Provincial Justice Ministers

Provincial Justice Minister of the day, Gordon Wyant, who also told us he couldn't interfere, was whisked off to a new portfolio when the Lametti papers showed up in Saskatchewan.

That brings us to the current, more litigious Justice Minister, Bronwyn Eyre. We don't know if she will address wrongdoing or not; she has not responded to any of our communications since being appointed two years ago. She appears to be following the path of former Justice Minister, Don Morgan, who also seemed intent on ignoring our existence even though the *take-us-to-court* miniseries was already heading into reruns.

Since Minister Harrison and President/CEO Swan started the process to eliminate us in 2017, SLGA is on its third CEO and fifth Minister (Harrison – Makowsky – Reiter – Ross – Duncan). Very convenient for using the canned response, “*misinterpretation of regulations by the previous administration*”.

A Recap

Initially, cabin owner leases were terminated ostensibly for 90 days of tax arrears; but in reality, to allow SLGA to exit stage left leaving the spotlight on taxes. That meant we needed to learn a lot about law and taxes. Counsel for SLRPA inadvertently exposed how assessments and Education Property Tax were being manipulated within Suffern Lake Regional Park.

Help Along The Way

That led to a strong, supportive working relationship with the CEO of Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency, Irwin Blank. He was forthcoming and set out to address the effects of the wrongdoing including proposing legislative change to forestall further tax frauds. Mr. Blank unexpectedly retired as CEO of SAMA in early 2022.

Saskatchewan's Privacy Commissioner, Ron Kruzeniski and his staff are no nonsense, principled professionals whose reviews provide clear, helpful recommendations. Sadly, a recent article in a national newspaper explained how the Office of the Privacy Commissioner in Saskatchewan is suffering from the actions of a government that has no interest in transparency or accountability.

In our SLGA misadventures we dealt with Vice President, Jim Engle one man who was professional, honest and prompt to provide us with relevant FOIP responses. He left SLGA shortly after assisting us.

Only one politician on the SaskParty side of government took proactive steps to sort out issues at Suffern Lake. In late 2016 Parks Minister, Ken Cheveldayoff, intervened in an attempt by the Park Authority to evict a senior from his prime and only residence at Suffern Lake. Mr. Cheveldayoff also indicated that he was initiating inquiries into taxation concerns but in February 2017 he wrote to inform us that at the direction of Premier Brad Wall, the review of our concerns including taxation would be undertaken by Ministry staffer, Dominique Clincke, a Park Planner with no expertise in tax considerations.

Long-term Tax Fraud Cheats Education Funding

The Clincke regime justified the termination of leases because of disputed taxes being 90 days late. That decision segued into a multi-year stream of court cases initiated against us by the Park Authority, a publicly funded body performing a function of government.

Taxation administration in Regional Parks does not conform to practices in the rest of the province. We have identified that some \$50 million worth of Saskatchewan seasonal residential properties enjoyed Education Property Tax breaks unavailable to the rest of

the province. The bulk of these inappropriate exemptions are found in constituencies with strong ties to SaskParty leadership.

In Conclusion

A minor violation of raffle regulations by an agent of the Saskatchewan government led to diversionary court cases intended to take eyes off SLGA administrative blunders. The initial steps taken by senior staff at SLGA to hide Park Authority conflicts of interest and financial mismanagement could not and would not have been taken without the knowledge of leadership, primarily Minister Harrison and President/CEO Swan. Had staffers made such damaging decisions on their own they would not have kept their jobs.

That attempted coverup, using the judiciary as a weapon against us, was a critical political error which eventually allowed us to discover and expose the broader and more serious systemic Education Property Tax evasion schemes.

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