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Cory Kolt: Anchor

Bill 80 is among them; it is expected to pass by the end of this week. For those of you who may not know what Bill 80 is, it is a hotly contested issue that would end the requirement of workers joining the union specific to their current trade. It could also open the door to unions currently not allowed to organize in the Province of Saskatchewan's construction sector. To talk a little bit more about the pros, the cons, and the all-around of Bill 80, here is NewsTalk Business Analyst Paul Martin. Paul, so this thing has led to protests, led to some pretty heated conversation. So is there anything good to it?

Paul Martin: Business Analyst

It's been an awfully noisy one, hasn't it? I mean, it's been very controversial, and it's one of those ones that sometimes the level of noise, you have to try to dig behind it a little bit and figure out what's really at the heart of it, and I think that at the end of the day, probably the biggest issue related to this one is one of, somebody once said, monopolies are no good until I've got one, and this does break the monopoly in terms of who represents who in the construction trade. On the unionized side of construction, it needs to be said that about the majority of construction work that gets done in the province is not unionized; it's a minority that is unionized, and that's the (inaudible) hearing about in Bill 80, but Bill 80 has been certainly a lot more difficult to get through the Assembly than I think most people would have anticipated in the beginning. There's been a kind of an arrangement in the House that says we'll introduce a bill in one session and we'll pass it in the next. They couldn't get this one passed last fall, so this one's actually taken the full year instead of a half a year to get passed. So that probably speaks volumes to how much controversy has been associated with it, but if you're really trying to take a dispassionate look at it, if you step back a little, I think probably it's fair to say not much has changed. If

you are a unionized construction worker and you want to be represented by the Building Trades, you can still do that. All that's happening now is they're opening the door to some other unions to come in, and those new guys come onto the block, they've got to push the old guys off, and it's very difficult to knock out an incumbent, and they have to come and make a case that's better for workers to make the move across. So it's far from being some arbitrary imposition of new rules on anybody; it's really just more options that are available, exactly the same kind of debates that you'd see in communities where you have things like, you know, communities trying to stop Wal-Mart from coming in because they're the new guy and they're gonna disrupt the marketplace. That's really what's behind all this.

Cory Kolt:

In the end, Paul, put all the union stuff aside and all the vitriol that has been spewed over the last couple of months over this, will this, in the end, get more construction underway in the Province of Saskatchewan?

Paul Martin:

You know, that's been one of the arguments, that it will, and if I'm building a building, I don't know that I would ever consider Bill 80 as one of the considerations that I would look at whether or not I would decide to go ahead or not. So I don't know how it will have any impact on that. Builders are different than owners, and owners who decide they're gonna construct something, I doubt that they're weighing whether or not it's CLAC or this union or that union that's representing the workers who might potentially get the job, because I put it out to tender and I'll take the low bid, whoever that comes from, union or non-union.