



# The United Church of Canada

## Saskatchewan Conference

418A McDonald Street  
Regina, SK. S4N 6E1  
Phone: (306) 721-3311  
Fax: (306) 721-3171

[www.sk.united-church.ca](http://www.sk.united-church.ca)

e-mail: [ucskco@skconf.ca](mailto:ucskco@skconf.ca)

May 9, 2017

The Honourable Brad Wall  
Premier of Saskatchewan  
226 Legislative Building  
Regina, Saskatchewan  
S4S 0B3

Dear Mr. Wall, Mr. Stewart, Ms. Harpauer and Mr. Moe:

Re: Support for FSIN's Call for a Halt to Auction of Crown Lands

I am writing this letter as the President of Saskatchewan Conference of The United Church of Canada to urge you to halt the auction of Crown Lands, announced in your recent budget.

The United Church has 36,186 members and many thousand more adherents in 265 churches across Saskatchewan. In addition, from the latest census we know that 19.5% of people in Saskatchewan claim affiliation with the United Church.

We make this appeal on behalf of all who benefit from the careful management and protection of these lands, but in particular the Indigenous Peoples of the Province.

In a statement issued on March 3, 2017 by the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Peoples, Chief Bobby Cameron is quoted as saying:

*"The proposed auction sale of Crown lands by the Saskatchewan government is a serious breach of its legal obligations to First Nations that have been struggling against economic and legislative hurdles to purchase and attain an adequate and viable economic land base."*

A key issue is the lack of meaningful consultation with First Nations prior to the



**Mission and Service Fund**

auctioning of public lands. Another is the failure to provide first right of refusal to First Nations with Treaty Land Entitlement. As stated by FSIN Vice-Chief Dutch Lerat:

*“First Nations must always be meaningfully and adequately consulted and have the right of first refusal on these Crown lands in the current and future fulfillment of TLE and specific claims. The Saskatchewan government is completely disregarding its TLE obligations by selling off Crown land to the highest bidder and not allowing the First Nations the time they need to weigh their options on the selection and purchase of Crown lands.”*

We support the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Peoples Chief Bobby Cameron’s call for a halt to the sale of crown lands. Working in a spirit of reconciliation requires all of us to take seriously the calls of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It also requires of us to not just speak words of reconciliation, but to put them into action. As leaders we need to diligently work towards improving relationships and providing a better way forward for everyone. We all benefit from careful management and protection of crown lands, and as such we should all listen to the wisdom of those around us.

Noted Saskatchewan environmentalist Trevor Herriot observes in one of his online columns (March 23, 2016) that Saskatchewan already outstrips every other province and territory in Canada, apart from the Maritimes, in the ratio of private to public land. The national average is 11% privately owned. In Saskatchewan, south of the Boreal forest, it is 80% and rising.

Herriot writes in his post:

*“Once we privatize Crown land, easements or not, we severely weaken our ability to create and enforce the laws, regulations and policies required to meet any priorities for sustainable grassland management for the wider public interest: climate change mitigation and carbon management, species at risk, biodiversity, soil and water conservation, heritage conservation, access for education and recreation....and so on.*

*Our Crown lands—so scarce in the south—are the last shadows of the prairies we were entrusted to share and protect together under treaty, the closest thing we have to land held in common for the benefit of all treaty people.*

*If we stand by and let this government sell them off, we will be abandoning any possible renewal of the spirit in which the treaties were signed, and inviting a new form of colonization taking us even further from any legitimate social contract with the land and its first peoples.”*

The United Church of Canada has pledged, along with other Churches, the federal government, and other levels of government, to enact the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report that are applicable to that particular organization

or jurisdiction. The issue of preserving the remaining Crown Lands and fully involving the Indigenous people of the province in decisions that affect them is a clear opportunity for the Government of Saskatchewan to act in the spirit of reconciliation and to honour its obligations under the Treaties and under the law.

We urge you to do so.

In Peace,

Rev. Krystal Sheremeta

President, Saskatchewan Conference, United Church of Canada