



26 January 2023

To: Premier Hon. Scott Moe; Minister for Agriculture Hon. David Marit; Minister for Government Relations Hon. Don McMorris; Environment Minister Hon. Dana Skoropad

From: Living Skies Regional Council, The United Church of Canada, 60A Athabasca St. E. Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan S6H 0L2. livingskies@united-church.ca

Re: We call for an immediate halt to the sale of Saskatchewan Crown land

Dear Premier Moe and Ministers David Marit, Don McMorris, and Dana Skoropad,

I am writing on behalf of Living Skies Regional Council, the United Church of Canada in Saskatchewan, to express our continued opposition to the selling of Crown lands entrusted to the province and held under Treaty agreements.

As chairperson of the Executive of our Regional Council, I was fortunate to learn of the [Onion Lake Cree Nation's presence at the Legislative Building](#) on Monday, January 22, and so I attended along with many other Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

I listened to their concerns about the Saskatchewan Government auctioning off Crown lands where First Nations hold ceremony, hunt, fish, trap and gather, and have done so for thousands of years.

In 2021, Living Skies Regional Council of the United Church and in 2017 the former Saskatchewan Conference of the United Church of Canada wrote a letter to the provincial government, joining many other groups in expressing strong concern about exactly the same issue, and reminding the government of our shared Treaty responsibilities and our commitment to healthy lands and waters. Yet these sales have continued unabated.

Now, the Treaty Land Sharing Network notes that, “Since 2007, the Saskatchewan government has sold nearly 2 million acres of Crown land that previously belonged to the people of this province. This land – totalling an area twice the size of Prince Albert National Park – includes formerly protected grassland, wetlands, and aspen parkland that are the territories of the Cree, Saulteaux, Nakota, Dakota, Lakota, and Métis Peoples.”

On September 30, 2021, Premier Scott Moe posted on Facebook the following words: “Our government is committed to working with the Indigenous peoples of Saskatchewan in advancing cultural and economic reconciliation in our province.”

The provincial government's First Nation and Métis Consultation Policy Framework (CPF) sets out government's commitment to fulfilling its legal duty to consult and accommodate First Nation and Métis communities in advance of decisions or actions that have the potential to adversely impact the exercise of:

“Treaty and Aboriginal rights such as the right to hunt, fish and trap for food on unoccupied Crown land and other land to which a community has a right-of-access for these purposes; and

Traditional uses of land and resources such as the gathering of plants for food and medicinal purposes and carrying out ceremonial and spiritual observances and practices on unoccupied Crown land and other land to which a community has a right of access for these purposes.”

How does the sale of Crown land, which is also Treaty land, support these stated commitments, especially when Indigenous nations and groups have protested such sales again and again? Our Executive suggests to you that it is impossible for Government-initiated sales of Crown land to respect either Treaty obligations and the government’s own commitments.

We, the Living Skies Regional Council Executive of the United Church of Canada, call on the Saskatchewan government to halt the liquidation of public land immediately and to enter into agreed upon consultation processes with Indigenous peoples.

It is our commitment as the United Church to honour the Treaty relationship, protect natural landscapes, and ensure that all people have access to land for both leisure and livelihood. We long for the government of Saskatchewan to do the same.

Sincerely,

Rev Darrell Reine, Convenor of The Living Skies Regional Council, The United Church of Canada, and Executive members: Ron Brandow, Linda Gunningham, Rev Kathleen James-Cavan, Deborah Springer, Rev Piotr Strzelecki, Dave Whalley; and Executive Minister Rev Shannon McCarthy.