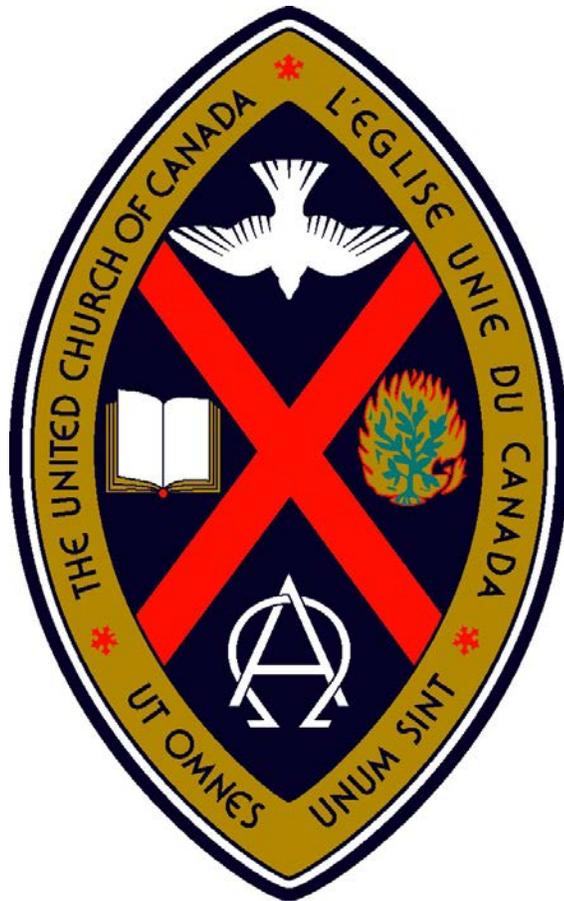


**BRIEF**  
**PREPARED FOR**  
**THE GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN**  
**BY**  
**SASKATCHEWAN CONFERENCE**  
**OF**  
**THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA**



March 2012



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## **INTRODUCTION**

This brief of Saskatchewan Conference of The United Church of Canada is based on proposals passed at the 2011 Annual Meeting of Saskatchewan Conference, held in Tisdale, May 26-29, 2011. The text of proposals adopted by Annual Meeting delegates is appended to this brief. This brief was reviewed and approved by Conference Executive at its December 1st & 2nd, 2011 meeting.

This brief deals with the following Conference proposals from 2011:

- Saskatchewan Assistance Plan Reform
- Preventing And Effectively Addressing Issues Of Neglect And Abuse Of Children In Saskatchewan Families
- High Level Nuclear Waste And Uranium Mining
- Affordable Housing
- Eliminating The Transitional Employment Allowance (TEA)
- Rent Control
- Resource Revenue Sharing With Aboriginal Peoples

We appreciate the opportunity to share the concerns and views of our Conference and its delegates with representatives of the Government of Saskatchewan and the Opposition. This introduction describes the governance of The United Church of Canada and our faith rationale for addressing issues with government.

### **The United Church of Canada**

The United Church of Canada was formed in 1925 following an Act of Canadian Parliament through a union of Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches across the country. The Evangelical United Brethren joined this union in 1968. Today in Saskatchewan, our 2010 Year Book & Directory of The United Church of Canada statistics report 42,956 members in 288 congregations. Our members are in almost every city, town and village in the province. Statistics Canada tells us that 19.5% of Saskatchewan individuals claim United Church affiliation, a significant portion of our population.

The United Church is governed by a series of “courts.” The basic unit is the Pastoral Charge which consists of one or more congregations. The next court, reflecting a wider jurisdiction, is the Presbytery, which has oversight of all pastoral charges and ministry personnel in a region. Meetings of Presbytery include the ministers in that region, and at least an equivalent number of

lay representatives. The conference has oversight of a number of presbyteries, and again is comprised of all the ministers in that region, and lay representatives who are at least equivalent in numbers to the ministers. The boundaries of Saskatchewan Conference correspond almost exactly with the provincial boundaries. Saskatchewan Conference meets annually, with about three hundred voting delegates in attendance.

General Council, the national court which meets triennially, consists of equal numbers of ministry personnel commissioners and lay commissioners, elected by the 13 Conferences.

### **Faith Rationale**

The United Church of Canada has a long history of involvement in societal issues. It is our conviction that faith is public as well as private, social as well as personal, corporate as well as individual. Since political, economic and environmental policies can have great consequences for both individuals and society, they should be subject to critical, ethical scrutiny.

While Government represents and is accountable to the whole community, it has a special responsibility to listen to those who are marginalized by race, ethnic origin, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, gender or any number of other factors that can cause groups or individuals to be ignored and disenfranchised by mainstream society. Our faith perspective calls us to raise concerns about such marginalization with the government of the day. Saskatchewan Conference of The United Church of Canada has presented a formal brief to the government of the province on an annual basis since the early 1970s.

As members of The United Church of Canada, we believe that our faith requires that we seek the common good. As the Old Testament prophets Amos and Micah reminded their rulers of the social and economic injustice of their day, we too are called to this task. We remember that the God of the Bible shows a special concern for the poor and that the Reign of God for which Jesus called would prevent excessive accumulation of wealth at the expense of human and environmental needs. It is this prophetic role that places us, at times, in a minority position together with others working for a just, equitable, and compassionate society.

The following is “A New Creed” of The United Church:

*“We are not alone,  
we live in God’s world.*

*We believe in God:  
who has created and is creating,  
who has come in Jesus,  
the word made flesh,  
to reconcile and make new,  
who works in us and others  
by the Spirit.*

*We trust in God.*

*We are called to be the Church:  
to celebrate God’s presence,  
to live with respect in Creation,  
to love and serve others,  
to seek justice and resist evil,  
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,  
our judge and our hope.*

*In life, in death, in life beyond death,  
God is with us.*

*We are not alone.  
Thanks be to God.”*

Our faith calls us to care for one another and for the rest of creation. We believe this to be the essential message of scripture and of Christian tradition. We would hope that government shares our desire to help shape our society so that it is more closely in tune with what God would want for this world. Out of this perspective is born our vision of what society could be.

## **SASKATCHEWAN ASSISTANCE PLAN REFORM**

**As members of The United Church of Canada we believe that our faith compels us to seek social and economic justice. We remember that the God of the Bible shows a preferential option for the poor and we are called to do the same.**

Saskatchewan Conference of The United Church of Canada has long promoted broad social policy changes that would significantly increase the income levels of low-income Saskatchewan residents. Along with such changes we believe that there is a need to reform the present regulations and policies of the Saskatchewan Assistance Plan (SAP) in order to improve the quality of life of those who are dependent on social assistance.

When a person on social assistance reaches the age of 60 they must take out their Canada Pension Plan (CPP) benefits or they will be cut off of assistance. This means that they will have fewer CPP benefits after they turn 65. Anti-poverty and senior's groups have raised concerns with this policy as it unfairly penalizes the lowest income seniors. We agree that the chance to take early CPP payments should be optional for all Canadians and not just for some.

We have long called for significant increases in the basic adult and shelter allowance rates for those on SAP and an indexing process to ensure that they keep up with the Consumer Price Index. This should also be the case for special needs benefits such as disability allowances, special diet costs, clothing and furniture grants, and travel coverage. Most of these rates have remained stagnant for many years.

We commend the Government of Saskatchewan for raising the wage exemption levels for those on SAP and encourage the Government to raise them further. We are also concerned that the gift exemption is only \$200 in gifts per year and that the exemptions on assets and inheritances have remained at the same level for far too long. Furthermore, we disagree with the claw back of child support and income tax refunds from SAP benefits. It is time to raise all of the exemption levels, and to continue to do so on a regular basis.

**Saskatchewan Conference of The United Church of Canada asks that reform be made to the Saskatchewan Assistance Plan in order to ensure a decent floor of income security for the most economically vulnerable citizens of the province.**

## **PREVENTING AND EFFECTIVELY ADDRESSING ISSUES OF NEGLECT AND ABUSE OF CHILDREN IN SASKATCHEWAN FAMILIES**

**Our interest in child welfare stems in part from our Christian beliefs. Jesus clearly stated that he valued and cared about children (Mark 10:13-16) and vulnerable, marginalized persons.**

Along with many others who care about children in Saskatchewan, the United Church has grave concerns about a child welfare system in our province that for decades now has been growing less adequate as it becomes more overburdened. Issues which impact so severely on the lives of many children in Saskatchewan are not about to go away until strong actions are taken to address them.

The Child Welfare Review panel in 2010 found a need for broad, systemic changes that go to the roots of how the system is designed and operated, and by whom. It also stressed the need for government to name and to address wider social, economic and cultural factors, such as poverty, youth crime and inadequate housing, which drive the child welfare system and other related systems.

The government- appointed panel also emphasized the importance of collaborative approaches to child welfare and preventive family support services within the Ministry of Social Services, (MSS) across Ministries, and with community partners, First Nations and Metis governments and their agency leaders.

### **MAJOR CONCERNS OF THE CHILD WELFARE REVIEW PANEL:**

**OVERCROWDING:** The risks of serious harm to children, or even death as a result of placing vulnerable, high needs children in crowded foster homes have been thoroughly explored, but a significant number of children in care still live in crowded homes. (Progress update from MSS in August 2011: the number of homes with more than four children has been reduced from 874 in March 2009, to 467 in March 2011.)<sup>1</sup>

**FIRST NATIONS AND METIS LEADERSHIP:** Most children in care of MSS are Aboriginal. Safe, culturally appropriate care for all Aboriginal children and youth through a transition to First Nations and Metis control of child welfare and preventive family support services.

### **UNDERLYING FACTORS AND FAMILY SUPPORTS - VS APPREHENDING:**

"The Ministry of Social Services cannot stand alone in solving the challenging social factors underlying neglect, such as poverty, addictions and mental health issues, which must be addressed prior to children and youth being removed from their families." (Saskatchewan Children's Advocate office, August 2011)<sup>2</sup>

Along with the need for social policies, including increased income support, affordable housing and disability service systems to address and prevent poverty which results in so much stress for families, there is a need for support services to strengthen families and address risks to children. Moderate to low risk families can often be helped with supports such as in-home

services and treatment for addictions and mental health issues offered in a timely manner, and so many child apprehensions can be prevented. One benefit of this pro-active approach is the need for fewer foster homes when child apprehensions are reduced.

**ACCOUNTABILITY:** All government and non-government agencies involved in carrying out child welfare, including all child protective programs must be held to the highest standards of public accountability. We believe accountability in child welfare is extremely important - and that the neglect of children in care, highlighted in recent reports could not have continued over decades, if our child welfare programs had effective public accountability. The people of Saskatchewan must be kept informed and up-to-date regarding the welfare of our children.

**Saskatchewan Conference of The United Church of Canada is strongly urging the Government of Saskatchewan to take immediate action and commit the necessary resources to right this situation for the sake of the children and all of our society, by implementing the 12 recommendations from the government-appointed Child Welfare Review Panel's 2010 report, For the Good of our Children and Youth.<sup>3</sup>**

*"Over a generation of children in the care of the Minister have suffered harm as a result of being placed in overcrowded foster homes without any sense of urgency to respond to the crisis and solve the root causes demonstrated by any government during that time. . . How many more empty promises, studies, panels and projects will have to take place before we all stand up and say, "enough is enough -- not one more child will be harmed by the system responsible to protect them."*

(Child Advocate's 2009 report A Breach of Trust)<sup>4</sup>

## HIGH LEVEL NUCLEAR WASTE

**As Christian people, we believe that the earth and all of creation belong to God and that we are called to be the stewards of this gift. As people of reconciliation, we believe that we are called by God to the work of healing and mending creation. For this reason, Saskatchewan Conference of The United Church of Canada continues to be concerned about the possibility of the transporting and storage of nuclear waste in our province.**

Jim Harding, Ph.D. writes “Over 80% of the thousands of people who participated in the Uranium Development Partnership (UDP) consultation in 2009 supported a non-nuclear, renewable energy policy for the province. One of the main reasons Saskatchewan people didn’t want nuclear power was because they didn’t want to create nuclear wastes.<sup>1</sup> And in December of 2009 the Saskatchewan Party government rejected the nuclear power option promoted by Bruce Power along the North Saskatchewan River because it was inappropriate for our needs and “too costly”

It’s never been established that burying millions of spent fuel bundles in the Canadian Shield will accomplish safe “disposal”. No such plan has been successfully accomplished anywhere, though several have been tried, and there are many good reasons to reject this notion. Geology is not a predictive science and past geological stability in the Canadian Shield doesn’t mean that such stability will continue for the hundreds of thousands of years that nuclear wastes will be radioactive.<sup>2</sup> The fission in nuclear reactors splits atoms to release high energy and radiation, and it also reconfigures molecules in the uranium fuel rods to form 211 other residual chemicals which are radioactive for thousands of years.<sup>3</sup> Geologists have found that there is salt water under extreme pressure underlying the rock of the Pre-Cambrian Shield, as evidenced by the inflow of water in all the deep-rock gold mines across Canada.<sup>4</sup>

We do not want the long term toxic poisons of radium, thorium and plutonium to get into the water of Saskatchewan, since we already have a dangerous store of radium in the JEB pit, at FEB mine in McClean Lake and at the Tailing Management Facilities at Key Lake, all in Saskatchewan, filled with uranium mine wastes.<sup>5</sup> The USA after 20 years of research and the expenditure of 13.6 billion has cancelled the Yucca Mountain Repository because of (concerns about underground water containment), waste containment, and the opposition of the citizens of Nevada.

The risk to the health of the people of Saskatchewan and to God’s creation in transporting and storing nuclear waste in our province would be great if at any time the Government of Saskatchewan allowed this to happen.

**For these reasons, Saskatchewan Conference of The United Church of Canada calls on the Government of Saskatchewan to pass laws prohibiting the:**

- 1. Transport of high level nuclear waste across Saskatchewan;**
- 2. Storage of high level nuclear waste in Saskatchewan**
- 3. Predicted storage of toxic uranium tailings in Saskatchewan.**

## **AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

**As people of faith, we are called by God to ensure that everyone has their basic needs met. Quality and affordable housing is one of the most basic needs for individuals and families.**

There has long been a problem in regard to the lack of affordable housing for low-income people in Saskatchewan. Since 2007 this problem has become a widespread crisis as rents have risen drastically and housing availability has shrunk across the province.

Affordable housing is a particularly critical issue for the most marginalized members of our communities – those on social assistance, the working poor, those who have been deinstitutionalized and left without community support, women fleeing abusive relationships, persons with disabilities, many First Nations and Metis peoples, the elderly, youth and street kids.

Lack of affordable housing contributes significantly to poverty. A single man or woman working full-time at a minimum wage job would spend approximately 73% of their monthly income on rent and food costs alone, [Saskatchewan Food Bank December 2010 report: Access and Affordability]. Many households have been spending 80% or more of their income on shelter related costs over the course of the past two years. The problem has moved from one of lack of affordability to lack of availability and outright homelessness.

Adequate housing is an internationally recognized human right to which the governments of Canada and Saskatchewan have committed themselves under the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The Health Disparities in Saskatoon Report authored by Dr. Mark Lemstra and Dr. Cory Neudorf cites many disturbing statistics including 6,400 homeless people in Saskatoon and the need for 5,900 new affordable housing units in that city alone. According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), Regina's vacancy rate was 0.7% in April 2011. This means very few vacant units are available in Regina at any given time and this is true for other Saskatchewan communities. When the vacancy rate reaches three per cent, CMHC considers this to be a balanced market, thus this would be considered an unbalanced market not meeting the needs of the community.

The growth of affordable housing for low-income people has numerous and far reaching benefits. These include substantial job creation opportunities through construction and renovation; reduced costs for social assistance shelter allowances; directing shelter allowances into home ownership and community investment instead of to absentee slum landlords; removing slum facilities from the market; improving the health and well being of low-income people and over time, reducing the burden on our health, justice, and social support systems.

**In the light of the above, we request the Government of Saskatchewan to partner with the Government of Canada and urban municipalities in order to provide substantial additional funding and initiate programs to facilitate the acquisition and creation of a large number of affordable housing units, including community-owned and non-profit, for low-income individuals and families in Saskatchewan.**

## **ELIMINATING THE TRANSITIONAL EMPLOYMENT ALLOWANCE (TEA)**

**As members of The United Church of Canada we believe that our faith compels us to seek social and economic justice. We remember that Jesus was dedicated to bringing good news to the poor.**

There are two financial assistance programs in Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan Assistance Plan (SAP) created in 1966 and the Transitional Employment Allowance (TEA). While TEA had been in place since 2003, prior to May 1, 2005, clients were only on the program for three months before being transferred to SAP if they did not obtain employment. Afterwards, it was extended and the criteria expanded so that potentially employable people eligible for financial assistance would be placed on TEA indefinitely.

Since TEA was expanded the application process for financial assistance has taken place over the phone through the Contact Centre. This takes away face to face contact and as such is an inadequate assessment tool for identifying special needs and barriers to employment.

There are many problems with TEA. Unlike SAP it pays capped rate amounts for the basic utilities of power, energy and water. We believe that there is no better formula for covering basic utilities than paying actual cost.

The general living allowance on TEA is identical to the combined amount of the basic allowance and shelter allowance for those on SAP. While there have been increases in these rates over the years they continue to fall thousands of dollars below the annual poverty line and do not meet the most basic needs of individuals and families. In the spring of 2006, the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights criticized Canadian provinces for the third time for having inadequate social assistance rates. They have identified this as a basic human rights issue as opposed to simply a matter of public policy.

While we continue to call for higher wage exemptions for SAP, TEA has no wage exemption whatsoever. It is ironic that a program aimed at transitioning people into employment actually claws back every dollar of earned income. Furthermore, TEA does not provide for necessary special needs with special diet, disability, travel and moving allowances. Neither does it guarantee security deposits for rental accommodations. Although TEA may have been created for cost saving purposes, there is a significant difference in the average benefits received by SAP and TEA clients.

**For these reasons we continue to call for the elimination of TEA. We also call upon the Government of Saskatchewan to ensure that any provincial income security program will have adequate benefit and wage exemption rates, full coverage of basic utilities, guarantee of rental security deposits and additional benefits to provide for special needs.**

## RENT CONTROL

**Since Jesus' conviction was to bring good news to the poor (Luke 4:18) we, as Christians, are called to seek justice and resist evil. Therefore our faith in the Reign of God requires that we seek the common good particularly for the poor and vulnerable.**

The province of Saskatchewan is experiencing an economic boom which has contributed to excessive increases in rents throughout the province. Rental rates are increasing at a rapid rate and exceeding the ability of people with low and fixed incomes to pay. In Regina, for example, from October 2006 to October 2010 the average one bedroom rent rose 43% or 10 % per year, increasing from \$559 to \$802 per month. [Queen City Tenants Association, Rights & Responsibilities pamphlet, 2011]

At present landlords must give six months notice for rental increases but they are able to give notice in January for July and then again in February for August and so on. Individuals and families report that their rents are doubling or being increased by hundreds of dollars in a single rent increase. A single man or woman working full-time at a minimum wage job would spend approximately 73% of their monthly income on rent and food costs alone. [Saskatchewan Food Bank December 2010 report: Access and Affordability]

The Premier of Saskatchewan has stated that the government does not condone "...increas[ing] rents at an unacceptable level." [CBC news, April 4, 2011, 7:51pm ET] However, we currently have no mechanism put in place to control housing markets that are so out of control that people are finding it difficult to be able to afford to live in our communities anymore.

What is really needed is a system that caps the amount rents can be increased in a given year. The low income housing market is shrinking. Rent controls cannot be blamed for this given that we have been without them for decades. Rents are presently excessive and tenants need protection.

**In light of the above, we request the Government of Saskatchewan to institute a policy of rent control in consultation with community organizations dealing with the effects of today's realities in housing, and create and enact rent controls that limit the amount rents can be increased each year on rental accommodations in the province of Saskatchewan.**

## **RESOURCE REVENUE SHARING WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

**The foundations of our theology are love and justice. As we stated in our introduction the most important aspect of justice is a preferential option for the poor. Poverty for Aboriginal people is often rooted in our failure to share appropriately resources that are theirs by treaty.**

Treaties were created between equal nations – indigenous peoples and settler communities who have always believed that the treaties were about the sharing of the land with the new peoples, not a selling of the land. Furthermore, they have believed that the treaties were only about using the land to the “depth of the plough”, what we might call surface rights; thus, the issue of resource revenues, both surface and sub-surface remains an ongoing issue.

The federal government transferred natural resources to the western provinces in 1930 through the Natural Resources Transfer Act. There is some question whether that action was and is appropriate, according to treaty. However, equitable sharing of resources is now in the hands of Provincial Governments.

The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that in dealing with the treaties governments should be liberal in their interpretations. For example, the written documents should not be understood as the final determinant, but that First Nations oral interpretation of the treaties needs to also be fully considered. Therefore, the negotiations respecting public policy should reflect the governmental status of both Aboriginal communities and the provincial government. Furthermore, the negotiations need to include the Supreme Court’s ruling about liberal interpretation of the treaties. Consistently, Aboriginal communities have asked for a fair sharing of resource revenues so that they might share in the social, political, and economic life of this province.

**We are asking that the Government of Saskatchewan enter into an agreement around resource revenue sharing with the aboriginal nations of Saskatchewan. We are suggesting that, at the least, it be based on the Aboriginal proportion share of the population.**

**APPENDIX 1:**

**PROPOSALS TO THE 2010 ANNUAL MEETING OF SASKATCHEWAN CONFERENCE**

**PROPOSAL NO. 1**

**Title: SASKATCHEWAN ASSISTANCE PLAN REFORM**

**Origin: WASCANA PRESBYTERY**

**Financial Implications: \$0.00**

**Conference Action: CARRIED**

WHEREAS, Jesus' conviction was to bring good news to the poor; and

WHEREAS, our faith calls us to seek social and economic justice; and

WHEREAS, social assistance recipients must take out their Canada Pension Plan (CPP) benefits at age 60, meaning they will have fewer benefits after they turn 65; and

WHEREAS, the choice to take early CPP payments should be optional for all Canadians and not just for some; and

WHEREAS, just as basic allowances for social assistance have not kept up with the cost of living, neither have allowances for special needs such as special diets, disability needs, clothing, furniture, and travel; and

WHEREAS, those on social assistance are allowed to keep very little in the form of wages, gifts, inheritances, and assets before it is clawed back dollar for dollar; and

WHEREAS, child support, income tax refunds, and most other forms of income are clawed back dollar for dollar from those on social assistance; and

THEREFORE BE IT PROPOSED that Saskatchewan Conference of The United Church of Canada call upon the Government of Saskatchewan to reform the Saskatchewan Assistance Plan (SAP) in order to:

1. Ensure that SAP recipients do not have to take out their CPP benefits until age 65.
2. Increase all SAP basic and special needs allowances in order to meet actual costs and then index them to the Consumer Price Index.
3. Raise the SAP exemption levels on wages, gifts, inheritances, assets, and other forms of income.

## PROPOSAL NO. 2

**Title: PREVENTING AND EFFECTIVELY ADDRESSING ISSUES OF NEGLECT AND ABUSE OF CHILDREN IN SASKATCHEWAN FAMILIES**

**Origin: LOCAL/GLOBAL ADVOCACY COMMITTEE  
SASKATCHEWAN DIVISION OF MISSION**

### **Financial Implications:**

**Conference Action: CARRIED** (after a change in the wording of the proposal by the Proposals Committee)

WHEREAS, Jesus clearly said he valued and cared about children (Mark 10:13-16) and vulnerable, marginalized persons, and

WHEREAS, two recent reports and the death of a child from a treatable chest infection while in foster care (December 2009) have brought to our attention a child welfare system in Saskatchewan inadequately resourced and funded for a number of years, so that it has become increasingly unsafe and unable to meet the needs of growing numbers of children at risk.<sup>1</sup> Some children in care of the Ministry of Social Services are at risk due to the conditions in their foster homes. The inquest into the 2009 death reported that prior to the death, concerns about the conditions in the foster home had been raised but not addressed, and

WHEREAS, The Child Welfare Review panel's comprehensive 2010 report found: "Caseloads of children in care keep growing, and the outcomes for children and families are not acceptable. Lack of confidence in the system is at a very high level. Child welfare workers are stressed and frustrated and the foster care system is in crisis. The situation is deteriorating and cannot continue as it exists.", and

WHEREAS, this panel found a need for broad systemic changes that go to the roots of how the system is designed and operated, and who operates it. It also stressed the need for government to name and address wider social, economic and cultural factors, (such as poverty, youth crime, inadequate housing) which drive the child welfare system and other related systems.

THEREFORE BE IT PROPOSED that Saskatchewan Conference of The United Church of Canada call upon the Government of Saskatchewan to act upon the *following* recommendations:

1. Implement fundamental changes to the child welfare system: create an easily accessible preventive family support stream for all families who need it and a much smaller formal child welfare stream for families where the authority of the courts is required;
2. Make safe, culturally appropriate care for all Aboriginal children and youth a priority through a planned and deliberate transition to First Nations and Métis control of child welfare and preventive family support services;
3. Develop and implement a *Saskatchewan Child and Youth Agenda* that guarantees children and youth become a high priority in the province and that all children get a good start in life;

4. Acknowledge at all levels of government that poverty-related conditions drive child neglect and other social problems, and make significant improvements to the income support, affordable housing, and disability service systems used by Saskatchewan families;
5. Emphasize collaborative approaches to child welfare and preventive family support services within the Ministry of Social Services, across Ministries, and with community partners including specifically First Nations and Métis governments and their agency leaders;
6. Establish adequate family violence, mental health, and substance abuse services, available without delay, for families receiving child welfare and preventive family support services;
7. Ensure the court system works better for families by minimize the number of child welfare cases that go before the courts, move cases to resolution more quickly, and ensure that families, children and youth have accessible legal advice;
8. Take appropriate measures to ensure children and youth in foster care and other specialized resources are safe and well cared for.
9. Develop court-recognized adoption processes for First Nations and Métis children and youth in accordance with cultural customs;
10. Develop and implement a strategy to attract and retain child protection workers to deliver the new vision for child welfare and preventive family support programs.

**PROPOSAL NO. 3**

**Title: HIGH LEVEL NUCLEAR WASTE AND URANIUM MINING**

**Origin: SASKATCHEWAN CONFERENCE DIVISION OF MISSION**

**Financial Implications: \$0.00**

**Conference Action: CARRIED**

WHEREAS, the fission in nuclear reactors splits atoms to release high energy and radiation, and it also reconfigures molecules in the uranium fuel rods to form 211 other residual chemicals which are radioactive for thousands of years,<sup>(1)</sup> and

WHEREAS, geologists have found that there is salt water under extreme pressure underlying the rock of the Pre-Cambrian Shield, as evidenced by the inflow of water in all the deep-rock gold mines across Canada,<sup>(2)</sup> and

WHEREAS, we do not want the long term toxic poisons of radium, thorium and plutonium to get into the water of Saskatchewan, since we already have a dangerous store of radium in the JEB pit, at FEB mine in McClean Lake and at the Tailing Management Facilities at Key Lake, all in Saskatchewan, filled with uranium mine wastes,<sup>(3)</sup> and

WHEREAS, the USA after 20 years of research and the expenditure of 13.6 billion dollars has cancelled the Yucca Mountain Repository because of underground water movement, geological fault systems, and the opposition of the citizens of Nevada, and

WHEREAS, the 2011 Fukushima nuclear reactor accident resulted in the uncontrolled release of radioactive contaminants into the global environment clearly demonstrating the lethal nature of spent fuel,

THEREFORE BE IT PROPOSED that Saskatchewan Conference of The United Church of Canada request the Provincial Government of Saskatchewan to follow the lead of the Manitoba Legislature<sup>(4)</sup>, and pass a law prohibiting the transport of high level nuclear waste across, or storage in Saskatchewan and that the Provincial Government of Saskatchewan stop licensing Companies that make and store toxic uranium tailings in Saskatchewan.

Linda Anderson, Wascana Presbytery, as Parliamentarian, requested the vote be done in Seriatum:

1. pass a law prohibiting the transport of high level nuclear waste across Saskatchewan;  
**CARRIED**
2. pass a law prohibiting storage of high level nuclear waste in Saskatchewan  
**CARRIED**
3. that the Government of Saskatchewan not allow companies to produce or store toxic uranium tailings in Saskatchewan.  
**CARRIED**

**PROPOSAL NO. 4**

**Title: AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

**Origin: LOCAL GLOBAL ADVOCACY COMMITTEE  
SASKATCHEWAN DIVISION OF MISSION**

**Financial Implications: \$0.00**

**Conference Action: Ruled Out of Order** as dealt with in Proposal 2.

WHEREAS, Jesus' conviction was to bring good news to the poor; and

WHEREAS, we are called to seek justice and resist evil; and

WHEREAS, our faith in the Reign of God requires that we promote the common good; and

WHEREAS, the alleviation of poverty should be a priority in the setting of public policy; and

WHEREAS, adequate housing is an internationally recognized human right to which the governments of Canada and Saskatchewan have committed themselves under the United Nations Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and

WHEREAS, the vacancy rate for rental accommodations in several Saskatchewan cities is less than 1%; and

WHEREAS, the rental accommodations available for low-income people are often sub-standard, rundown and ill-maintained properties; and

WHEREAS, rental rates have increased far in excess of the shelter allowance provided by social assistance and beyond the means of individuals and families on low wages; and

WHEREAS, this proposal was presented to the Government of Saskatchewan in the BRIEF PREPARED FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN BY SASKATCHEWAN CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA, October 2009, and we believe that there has been insufficient action on the part of the government to address this situation;

THEREFORE BE IT PROPOSED that Saskatchewan Conference of The United Church of Canada call upon the government of Saskatchewan to:

1. Partner with the Government of Canada and urban municipalities in order to provide substantial additional funding to facilitate the acquisition and creation of a large number of affordable housing units, including community-owned and non-profit, for low-income individuals and families.
2. Enact rent controls that limit the amount rents can be increased each year on low and mid range accommodations.

**PROPOSAL NO: 5**

**Title: ELIMINATING THE TRANSITIONAL EMPLOYMENT ALLOWANCE (TEA)**

**Originator: LOCAL GLOBAL ADVOCACY COMMITTEE  
SASKATCHEWAN DIVISION OF MISSION**

**Financial implications: \$0.00**

**Conference Action: CARRIED**

WHEREAS, Jesus' conviction was to bring good news to the poor; and

WHEREAS, we are called to seek justice and resist evil; and

WHEREAS, our faith in the Reign of God requires that we promote the common good; and

WHEREAS, the alleviation of poverty should be a priority in the setting of public policy; and

WHEREAS, an adequate standard of living for all citizens is an internationally recognized human right to which the Government of Saskatchewan has committed itself under the United Nations Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and

WHEREAS, since May 1, 2005, potentially employable people eligible for social assistance have been placed on the Transitional Employment Allowance (TEA); and

WHEREAS, TEA benefit levels are equivalent to the inadequate Saskatchewan Assistance Plan (SAP) rate; and

WHEREAS, unlike SAP, TEA does not have a wage exemption to allow for any additional earned income; and

WHEREAS, TEA pays a flat rate for utilities rather than covering actual basic utilities costs; and

WHEREAS, TEA does not guarantee security deposits for rental accommodations which makes it difficult for homeless clients and those with unstable living arrangements to access housing; and

WHEREAS, TEA does not provide for special needs such as special diet, disability, travel and maternity allowances;

WHEREAS, this proposal was presented to the government of Saskatchewan in the BRIEF PREPARED FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN BY SASKATCHEWAN CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA, May, 2008, and there has been no movement on the part of the government to address this situation,

THEREFORE BE IT PROPOSED that Saskatchewan Conference of the United Church of Canada call upon the Government of Saskatchewan to replace the Transitional Employment Allowance Program with a provincial income security program that has the following components:

1. Adequate benefit and wage exemption rates

2. Full coverage of basic utilities
3. Guarantee of rental security deposits
4. Additional benefits to provide for special needs

**PROPOSAL NO. 6**

**Title: RENT CONTROL**

**Origin: LOCAL GLOBAL ADVOCACY COMMITTEE  
SASKATCHEWAN DIVISION OF MISSION**

**Financial Implications: \$0.00**

**Conference Action: Ruled Out of Order** as dealt with in Proposal 2.

WHEREAS, Jesus' conviction was to bring good news to the poor; and

WHEREAS, we are called to seek justice and resist evil; and

WHEREAS, our faith in the Reign of God requires that we promote the common good, and

WHEREAS, the province of Saskatchewan is experiencing an economic boom which has contributed to excessive increases in rents throughout the province; and

WHEREAS, quoting Marc Spooner in Planet S Magazine "In 2009, 3,618 separate individuals accessed emergency shelters in Regina," he says. "And that doesn't reflect the hidden homeless who are eking out an existence through whatever means they can. A lot of families are doubling and even tripling up. I heard of one instance where 19 people were living in a two bedroom home." ["Out of Control", April 7-20, 2011, Vol. 9, Issue 15]; and

WHEREAS, it has been brought to our attention by individuals' and families' that their rents are doubling or being increased by hundreds of dollars in a single rent increase; and

WHEREAS, from October 2006 to October 2010 average monthly rents in Regina increased 43% [CMHC Rental Market Report: Saskatchewan Highlights Fall 2007 and Fall 2010]; and

WHEREAS, a single man or woman working full-time at a minimum wage job would spend approximately 73% of their monthly income on rent and food costs alone, [Saskatchewan Food Bank December 2010 report: Access and Affordability]; and

WHEREAS, the Premier of Saskatchewan has stated that the government does not condone "...increas[ing] rents at an unacceptable level." [CBC news, April 4, 2011, 7:51pm ET]; and

WHEREAS, we have no mechanism put into place to control markets that are so out of control that people are finding it difficult to be able to afford to live in our communities anymore; and

THEREFORE BE IT PROPOSED that Saskatchewan Conference of the United Church of Canada call upon the Government of Saskatchewan to consult with community organizations dealing with the effects of today's realities in housing, and create and enact rent controls that limit the amount rents can be increased each year on rental accommodations in the province of Saskatchewan.

**PROPOSAL NO. 7**

**Title: RESOURCE REVENUE SHARING WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

**Origin: LOCAL GLOBAL ADVOCACY COMMITTEE  
SASKATCHEWAN DIVISION OF MISSION**

**Financial Implications: \$0.00**

**Conference Action: CARRIED** (after two friendly amendments in relation to the working of the proposal)

WHEREAS, the aboriginal peoples of Canada have been oppressed by the settler governments and peoples since shortly after settlement; and

WHEREAS, they have suffered and continue to suffer negative social and economic consequences because of the oppression; and

WHEREAS, the treaties were consummated to allow both the aboriginal and settler communities to dwell together in peace and harmony, and live off the fruits of the land; and

WHEREAS, the National Resources Transfer Act (1930) transferred control of natural resources to the provincial government; and

WHEREAS, the aboriginal peoples have consistently asked for a share of the bountiful wealth of this province which is derived from the resources of the land, to no avail; and

WHEREAS, the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that the treaties and their interpretation are to be done in a liberal fashion, taking account of the oral tradition of aboriginal peoples; and

WHEREAS, aboriginal peoples have consistently stated that they believe the treaties only allowed for the use of the top part of the land (to the depth of the plough); and

WHEREAS, the Government of Saskatchewan has refused to enter into meaningful negotiations respecting sharing the natural resource revenues with aboriginal peoples,

THEREFORE BE IT PROPOSED that that Saskatchewan Conference strongly urge the Government of Saskatchewan to enter into an agreement with the Aboriginal peoples for resource revenue sharing, using the starting principle of sharing, at least on the basis of Aboriginal people's percentage of the population.

## **APPENDIX 2:**

### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

#### **PREVENTING AND EFFECTIVELY ADDRESSING ISSUES OF NEGLECT AND ABUSE OF CHILDREN IN SASKATCHEWAN FAMILIES**

1 Leader Post, 'Boy's Death prompts change', Regina, Saskatchewan, February, 10, 2011

2 Marvin Bernstein - Children's Advocate, Saskatchewan, *A Breach of Trust: An Investigation into Foster Home Overcrowding in the Saskatoon Service Area*, Regina, Saskatchewan: Saskatchewan Children's Advocate special report released to Saskatchewan Legislature, Feb. 25, 2009.

3 Child Welfare Review Panel, SK, *For the Good of Our Children and Youth*, Regina, Saskatchewan: report of the Child Welfare Review panel appointed by SK government. Presented to Minister of Social Services, June Draude, December 16, 2010.

4. (Child Advocate's 2009 report *A Breach of Trust*) <http://www.saskcao.ca/> \* Appendix -- 12 Recommendations - 2010 report of Child Welfare Review - For the Good of our Children and Youth - (see website of Saskatchewan Children's Advocate for the report in full with recommendations. )

#### **HIGH LEVEL NUCLEAR WASTE**

1. Jim Harding, "Why Saskatchewan Should Ban Nuclear Waste", May 2011
2. Jim Harding, "Why Saskatchewan Should Ban Nuclear Waste", May 2011
3. CBC News, "storing nuclear waste a #24 billion problem," August 18, 2009
4. P. Fritz and S.K. Frappe, *Saline Water and Crystalline Rocks*, published by The Geological Association of Canada, 1987
5. The Globe and Mail, "Search for a Nuclear Graveyard – 40,000 metric tonnes of radioactive waste stored in sites across Canada," by Anna Mehler Paperny, August 24, 2009. P. A 7