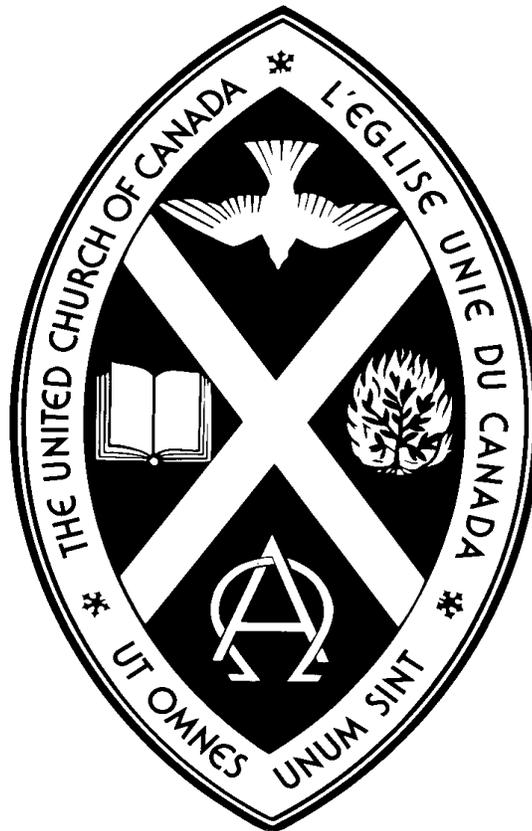


BRIEF
PREPARED FOR
THE GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN
BY
SASKATCHEWAN CONFERENCE
OF
THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA



October 2010

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INTRODUCTION

This brief of Saskatchewan Conference of The United Church of Canada is based on proposals passed at the 2010 Annual Meeting of Saskatchewan Conference, held in Moose Jaw, May 27-30, 2010. 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 October 15th & 16th, 2010 meeting.

This brief deals with the following Conference proposals from 2009:

- Action For A Poverty Free Saskatchewan
- National Aboriginal Day
- High Level Nuclear Waste
- Adequate Benefits Program For People With Disabilities
- Policy on Telephone Rates For Prisoners

We appreciate the opportunity to share the concerns and views of our Conference and its delegates with representatives of the Government of Saskatchewan. 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 statistics report 26,825 resident members in 293 congregations. Our members are in almost every city, town and village in the province. Statistics Canada tells us that 187,450 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 thirteen 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 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 preferential option 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.

ACTION FOR A POVERTY FREE SASKATCHEWAN

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.

Poverty Free Saskatchewan is a new provincial network that is bringing together low-income people with a broad cross-section of concerned groups and individuals from around Saskatchewan to develop a strategy to eliminate poverty. The Government of Saskatchewan will eventually have to be a part of the process and certainly the implementation.

At present, three provinces have anti-poverty laws: Quebec, Ontario and New Brunswick. Six provinces have poverty reduction strategies. In Newfoundland and Labrador, Manitoba and Nova Scotia these poverty reduction strategies are enshrined in legislation. Unfortunately, Saskatchewan has neither laws nor strategy.

We too need a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy with poverty reduction targets for both the rate and depth of poverty and ultimately we need to commit ourselves to eliminating poverty by ensuring economic security for all.

We cannot eliminate or even combat poverty without a comprehensive strategy. At the same time there are certain ingredients to such a strategy that will be essential for its success. The six components for a strategy reflect positions we have passed as resolutions and proposals in previous years. This is not an exhaustive list but it would move us a long way toward ending legislated poverty. That is poverty related to incomes and costs set by public policy.

1. We need adequate benefit levels for income security programs. The Saskatchewan Assistance Plan, Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability and Provincial Training Allowance should see significant rate increases in order for recipients to meet basic needs. They should then be indexed to the Consumer Price Index.
2. A living wage and quality labour standards are needed to ensure that all working people have a decent standard of living. We have long taken the position that the minimum wage should be set at or above the Low-Income Cut-Off (or LICO line) and then indexed with LICO. We are disappointed that the minimum wage has recently been frozen.
3. On the cost side of poverty is the desperate need to deal with the housing crisis in Saskatchewan. We need considerable expansion of affordable rental stock and rent controls that provide a percentage cap on Annual Rental Increases for low and mid range accommodations. There should also be effective regulations to ensure the upkeep and maintenance of rental units.

4. Another key investment is quality childcare. Quality and affordable childcare is an essential ingredient in the workplace participation of parents with young children - especially mothers. In Scandinavian countries, a single mother and her children are not much more likely to live in poverty than any other household. In Saskatchewan, almost half of single parent families live in poverty.

Quality childcare is also an excellent way to provide better early childhood education that ensures that all children have an equal chance at good development. We are still in need of a national childcare program. In the meantime, there should be increased public funding for more high quality childcare spaces and enhanced childcare subsidies for families.

5. There continue to be groups who disproportionately bear the brunt of poverty in Saskatchewan. That is why we must work for greater equity for First Nations and Metis peoples, visible minorities, women and persons with disabilities.
6. Finally, we need a system of fair taxation that raises the necessary revenues and is based on the principle of the ability to pay. It should also create a better distribution of wealth and income.

A recent study on income inequality by Paul Gingrich for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives shows that Saskatchewan now has the widest gap in Canada between the incomes of the richest and poorest ten percent of families.

Growing economic inequality in our society must be recognized as one of the most serious problems we face in Saskatchewan because its consequences are so far reaching. The gaps between us tear the social fabric, break down community and are very costly. Reducing inequality is not only morally and socially right, it is fiscally responsible. It would be far less expensive to reduce economic inequality, eradicate poverty and ensure economic security for all than it is to continue to pay for the costs of poverty and economic insecurity in our health, justice, education and social support systems.

Therefore Saskatchewan Conference of The United Church of Canada calls upon the Government of Saskatchewan to act as quickly as possible to develop an effective and sustainable poverty elimination strategy for all Saskatchewan citizens.

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY

God reminds us that we are many parts of one body (1 Corinthians 12); and that we should celebrate the gifts found in creation, and in all people.

In many countries around the world, the longest day of the year holds special cultural and spiritual significance. In Canada, this special time is when we observe National Aboriginal Day. This is an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the diverse cultures and outstanding contributions to Canada of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

Celebrating Saskatchewan's past and present is deeply connected to the culture, history and traditions of First Nations and Métis people. Stories of Saskatchewan's past include tales of legendary chiefs like Poundmaker and Big Bear, and Métis leaders Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont. Today's modern Saskatchewan Aboriginal culture is one that honours the past while building toward an exciting future.

Canada's National Aboriginal Day gives many people the chance to learn more about Aboriginal people and their contributions to the country's development and progress. First Nations, Métis and Inuit people have the opportunity to showcase their cultures and achievements throughout Canada on this day

The traditional territories of our First Nations people in Saskatchewan have yielded fruit plentifully for the benefit of all persons in the province. The indigenous peoples of this land have a rich culture which is a gift to non-first nations and future generations; other historical and cultural events and gifts are celebrated in Saskatchewan with a statutory holiday such as Victoria Day, Remembrance Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas. These arise primarily from a European cultural tradition.

It is to be noted that National Aboriginal Day is a paid holiday for employees in the Northwest Territories (except those in the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association).

In developing this proposal, we consulted extensively with First Nations and non- First Nations groups as follows:

- First Nations People within Saskatchewan Conference of The United Church of Canada, including Plains Presbytery
- First Nations people within the United Church nationally such as the All-Native Circle Conference
- The Métis Federation of Saskatchewan
- Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN)
- Non-First-Nations people within the Saskatchewan Conference of The United Church of Canada

In light of the above, we request the Government of Saskatchewan to declare National Aboriginal Day (June 21) a statutory holiday in Saskatchewan to celebrate the culture of our First Nations peoples, their contributions to our province and the well-being of all its peoples.

HIGH LEVEL NUCLEAR WASTE

As members of The United Church of Canada, we believe that the earth belongs to God, and that we are called to be stewards, to participate in God's work of healing and mending creation. For this reason, Saskatchewan Conference of The United Church of Canada is deeply concerned about the transportation and storage of nuclear waste in this province.

The Dan Perrins Report, "Future of Uranium," gave a clear signal about what the people of Saskatchewan think about more nuclear activity and more nuclear waste in their backyard. The report states "Overall, while there is some support for nuclear power generation, the overwhelming response to this public consultation was that nuclear power generation should not be a choice for Saskatchewan, whether it is intended to serve the needs of Saskatchewan people only, or for a combination of Saskatchewan people and other provinces or states."

The danger from the burnt fuel rods and high level nuclear waste is enormous. A handful at arm's length would kill a person in five minutes. The radioactive disintegrations from these chemicals continue on into perpetuity. The "half-life" of uranium-235 is 700 million years; of cesium 2,300,000 years; of plutonium-239 some 24,000 years; of thorium some 77,000 years.

Saskatchewan already has the legacy of nuclear waste from mining: 1,762,967 (m³) or 1,804,366 (tones) in the JEB Pit alone. That dangerous collection contains enough radium and arsenic to overdose and kill thousands of people, if those chemicals, and others, leach out into our water systems and aquifers. Our environment cannot afford to undertake the additional burden of transporting, receiving and storing the nuclear waste from the production of electricity in Ontario.

The Government of Manitoba had a problem with nuclear waste. Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd. spent 17 years and millions of dollars in developing the Whiteshell Experimental Deep Rock Depository and Research Laboratory at Pinawa, Manitoba. Finally, the shaft was closed down and decommissioned because of a continuous inflow of water, as has happened in all the deep rock gold mines in Canada.

The Government of Manitoba took decisive action on July 17, 1987. When it passed a short, concise, clear legislative bill prohibiting the transport of nuclear waste across Manitoba borders. Saskatchewan needs to take a cue from Manitoba, and also take concrete, swift action, thereby preventing nuclear waste from passing outside the borders of Ontario into our own region.

For these reasons, Saskatchewan Conference of The United Church of Canada calls on the Government of Saskatchewan to pass a law prohibiting the transport of high level nuclear waste across Saskatchewan, and prohibiting the siting of a deep rock disposal system within the boundaries of Saskatchewan, in order to protect our aquifers, our water systems, and our people, for the future.

ADEQUATE BENEFITS PROGRAM FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

In John 10:10, Jesus said “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” This abundant life, intended for all, does not extend to those living in poverty and particularly those living with disabilities.

Welfare, also called the Saskatchewan Assistance Plan, (SAP) was never meant to be a long term financial benefit program for anyone, but over time has become the default program for people with disabilities. In October 2009, the Government of Saskatchewan launched a new program for people with disabilities, called the Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID). At the time this new program was launched, approximately 3000 people were moved from welfare (or SAP) on to the SAID program. These people were living in residential care facilities, in family homes that have been assessed level 2 or higher, and in a Community Living Division or mental health group home. However, a large number of people with disabilities still remain on welfare, and there has been no indication of when these people will be moved over to SAID. All people with disabilities deserve to have an independent economic benefit program that meets their needs when employment is not an option, whether that is for a long term or for short periods, and that also treats them with dignity and respect. The way to accomplish this is through intentional actions, and the development of social policies that put people first.

This change in program from SAP to SAID has been in name only, as there have been no increases in funding. The community has called for the benefits for this program to be at least equivalent to the Low Income Cut-off Line (LICO). The money given to provide for basic needs (i.e. food, clothing, household needs, personal needs, and travel) at this time remains the same as the SAP benefit rates, and are substantially lower than the LICO (see attached Low Income Cut-off Lines for 2007, 2008). The amount of money people receive on welfare to cover their basic needs is inadequate to cover the actual cost of living in all communities in Saskatchewan. Today, a single person with a disability falls well below the \$19,094 of the 2008 LICO. Over the decades as the cost of living has gone up, SAP benefit rates have not kept up with these increases. This has meant that all people on welfare and particularly people with disabilities have experienced a drastic impact on their quality of life. Even though people with disabilities receive slightly more for shelter, many people cannot find adequate affordable housing to meet their needs (i.e. Single Unemployable - \$459, Childless Couple - \$511). Families with children all receive the same shelter allowance, regardless of any disabilities. Not all people with disabilities are able to access the Rental Housing Supplement program that could help to supplement the inadequate welfare shelter rates, and struggle to obtain housing. In some cases these are the people who are homeless, and depend heavily on charity. Charity is meant to be a stop gap when in need, not a lifelong way of survival. People with disabilities who depend on welfare do so due to social policies over which they have no control and into which they have no input.

We believe our government should treat people with disabilities with dignity, and ensure that they are not homeless or impoverished. The way to do that is through strong and just social and economic programming and policies, including the implementation of phase two of SAID, and the indexing of SAID benefits to the consumer price index.

POLICY FOR TELEPHONE RATES FOR PRISONERS

The United Church of Canada believes in restorative, not punitive justice. The Saskatchewan Conference of The United Church of Canada strongly believes that providing positive role models and increasing non-institutional human contact for Saskatchewan inmates is an effective part of preparing them for healthy reintegration in society upon their release. While we recognize the need to prevent telephone contact from being used for criminal purposes, we do not believe that inmates, who are among the poorest and most marginalized in our society, should shoulder the financial burden of the new monitoring system.

Almost every inmate in provincial custody will be returning to the community, and it is for this reason we should strengthen ties between inmates and the community, which have obviously been broken in the past.

We have observed through reports from volunteers involved in prison visitation programs that high telephone costs inhibit healthy contact with family and friends, further isolating the inmates and making reintegration much more difficult.

The Government of Saskatchewan's policy, implemented on June 14, 2010, allows that any profits from the new rates will be used to purchase books or exercise equipment for the inmates' use. This shows that the Provincial Government is making a profit from the new phone rates. We believe that the cost of purchasing of books and exercise equipment should be borne by the Government and not the inmates.

The inmates need and require contact with positive role models, family, and friends if there is to be any hope of their successful reintegration into society. There should not be roadblocks to hinder people from making positive changes in their lives. Society has a duty to support people who are most marginalized in our society and who are attempting to make these positive changes in their lives, even those who have committed crimes.

Saskatchewan Conference of The United Church of Canada strongly believes that rather than imposing high telephone calling costs on inmates, the Government of Saskatchewan should implement a system similar to that used in our federal institutions. It is our understanding that federal inmates are issued phone cards which allow them to call family and friends that are on their calling list, for a reasonable rate. The goal of this plan is to ensure inmates maintain this contact without undue hardship.

There have been some difficulties with the present telephone calling system. The process of inmates phoning out is very complicated. When a person receives a call from an inmate, there is a protocol that is followed before the actual call is put through. The inmate cannot leave a message if the person does not answer. If a person finds that they have missed a call and suspects it may have been from a Correctional Centre, they cannot return the call.

The Saskatchewan Conference of The United Church of Canada strongly urges that the Government of Saskatchewan reconsider the imposition of higher fees for inmate telephone calls, thus removing this roadblock to restorative justice, and further, that the Government of Saskatchewan implement a phone system that will more fairly allow inmates to maintain contact with family and friends and that will more readily enable a healthy reintegration into society.

APPENDIX 1:

PROPOSALS TO THE 2010 ANNUAL MEETING OF SASKATCHEWAN CONFERENCE

PROPOSAL NO. 1

Title: ACTION FOR A POVERTY FREE SASKATCHEWAN

Origin: WASCANA PRESBYTERY

Financial Implications:

Staffing Implications:

Sources of Funding:

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 elimination of poverty should be a priority in the setting of public policy; and

WHEREAS the elimination of poverty in Saskatchewan requires a comprehensive plan; and

WHEREAS the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has shown that everybody in Saskatchewan could be raised above the poverty line at a cost of \$ 626 million or 1.4% of the provincial GDP; and

WHEREAS a study by the Ontario Association of Food Banks states that the costs of poverty in that province are the equivalent of 5.5% to 6.6% of Ontario's GDP; and

WHEREAS the Health Disparity in Saskatoon Report by Dr. Mark Lemstra and Dr. Cory Neudorf found that low-income is associated with greater risk of diabetes, heart disease, youth depression and drug and alcohol abuse; and

WHEREAS the Health Disparity in Saskatoon Report also found that residents in low-income neighbourhoods in Saskatoon are 14.6 times more likely to attempt suicide, 33.6 times more likely to have Hepatitis C, 15.5 times more likely to have a teenager give birth to a child and 4.5 times more likely to have an infant die in the first year than residents of higher income neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS poverty and inequality have led to huge financial and human costs in our health, justice, education and social support systems;

THEREFORE BE IT PROPOSED that Saskatchewan Conference of the United Church of Canada call upon the Government of Saskatchewan to act as quickly as possible to develop an effective and sustainable poverty elimination strategy for all Saskatchewan citizens that includes:

- 1.) Adequate income security benefits.
- 2.) A living wage and quality labour standards.
- 3.) Expansion of quality and affordable housing and childcare.
- 4.) Greater equity for First Nations and Métis peoples, women and persons with disabilities.
- 5.) A system of fair taxation that makes poverty elimination possible.

BE IT FURTHER PROPOSED that Saskatchewan Conference encourage all its pastoral charges to consider these issues with a view to raising them with government as appropriate.

PROPOSAL NO. 2

Title: NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY

Origin: TWIN VALLEYS PRESBYTERY

Financial Implications:

Staffing Implications:

Sources of Funding:

Conference Action: CARRIED

PREAMBLE: The intent of this proposal is to ask Saskatchewan Conference to petition the Government of Saskatchewan to declare National Aboriginal Day (June 21) or other suitable day a statutory holiday in Saskatchewan to celebrate the culture of our First Nations Peoples, and their contributions to our Province and the well-being of all its peoples.

WHEREAS: We, as The United Church of Canada, are called to be an “Intercultural Church” and

WHEREAS: God reminds us that we are many parts of one body (1 Co 12); and that we should celebrate the giftedness found in creation, and in people; and

WHEREAS: The traditional territories of our First Nations People in Saskatchewan have yielded fruit plentifully for the benefit of all persons in the province; and

WHEREAS: We are all treaty people; and

WHEREAS: Canada’s National Aboriginal Day gives many people the chance to learn more about Aboriginal people and their contributions towards the country’s development and progress. First Nations, Métis and Inuit people have the opportunity to showcase their cultures and achievements throughout Canada on this day; and

WHEREAS: Other historical events and gifts are celebrated in Saskatchewan with a statutory holiday such as Victoria Day, Remembrance Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas, etc; mostly from a white, European cultural tradition; and

WHEREAS: The Indigenous Peoples of this land have a rich culture which is a gift to non-first nations and future generations; and

WHEREAS: National Aboriginal Day is a paid holiday for employees in the Northwest Territories, (except those in the Northwest Territories Teachers’ Association).

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Saskatchewan Conference of The United Church of Canada petition the Government of Saskatchewan to recognize National Aboriginal Day, June 21, as a statutory holiday in Saskatchewan; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Saskatchewan Conference direct the Executive Secretary to forward to General Council Executive of The United Church of Canada a proposal to endorse National Aboriginal Day as a national statutory holiday and call upon the Federal Government to recognize Aboriginal Day, June 21, as a national statutory holiday.

PROPOSAL NO. 3

Title: HIGH LEVEL NUCLEAR WASTE

Origin: DIVISION OF MISSION

Financial Implications:

Staffing Implications:

Sources of Funding:

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,(1) 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,(2) 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 the mine in McLean Lake, Saskatchewan, filled with uranium mine wastes, (3) 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.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Saskatchewan Conference of The United Church of Canada request the Government of Saskatchewan to follow the lead of the Manitoba Legislature by passing a law prohibiting the transport through or within Saskatchewan, or the storage in this province, of high level nuclear waste.

END NOTES

1. CBC News, "Storing nuclear waste a \$24 billion problem," August 18, 2009.
"Some of the Radioactive Poisons In Used Nuclear Fuel," Adapted from Appendix F, of Atomic Energy of Canada's Environmental Impact Statement. (see attached statement)
2. P. Fritz and S.K Frappe, Saline Waters and Crystalline Rocks, Published by The Geological Association of Canada, 1987.
3. The Globe and Mail, "The Search for a Nuclear Graveyard—40,000 metric tonnes of radioactive waste stored in sites across Canada," by Anna Mehler Paperny, Aug. 25, 2009, p. A 7
4. CBC News: Friday, Dec. 18, 2009, "Nuclear waste proposal; slammed,"
<http://.cbc.ca/canada/saskatchewan/story/2009/12/18/sk-nuclearwaste-912.html>
The Manitoba Legislature, "The High Level Waste Act." Current as of October 15, 2009; Assented to
July 17, 1987 Available at: <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/r010e.php>

PROPOSAL NO. 4

Title: ADEQUATE BENEFITS PROGRAM FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Origin: DIVISION OF MISSION

Financial Implications:

Staffing Implications:

Sources of Funding:

Conference Action: CARRIED

WHEREAS The United Church of Canada has committed itself and repeatedly to the principles of justice, compassion and inclusion for all and

WHEREAS our faith in God requires that we promote the common good and dignity for all persons; and

WHEREAS Jesus brought good news to the poor; and

WHEREAS as of February 2010, 80% of the Saskatchewan Assistance Program (SAP) cases on assistance for more than 24 continuous months are disabled(1), and

WHEREAS welfare was never meant to be a long term financial solution for anyone; and

WHEREAS welfare has become the default program for people with disabilities; and

WHEREAS the Government of Saskatchewan, in cooperation with the disability and anti-poverty communities, have developed and implemented an independent financial benefit program for people with disabilities called the Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID), and

WHEREAS the Government of Saskatchewan has moved those in government funded group homes to this program; and

WHEREAS there are still many people with disabilities who remain on welfare; and

WHEREAS the SAID programs benefit levels are currently as inadequate as welfare,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Saskatchewan Conference of The United Church of Canada call upon the Government of Saskatchewan to implement phase two of the Saskatchewan Assured Income Disability (SAID) program, and move those still left on welfare with disabilities on to SAID; and

BE IT FURTHER PROPOSED that the Saskatchewan Conference of The United Church of Canada call upon the Government of Saskatchewan to implement a time line that will see the benefits for this program brought up to a socially acceptable level of income that is indexed to the consumer price index, so disabled people in our communities will never fall back into poverty.

1. Source: Lyn Tulloch, Executive Director, Income Assistance Service Delivery.

PROPOSAL NO. 7

Title: PRISONER – PHONE BILLS

Origin: PRAIRIE PINE PRESBYTERY – Dave Whalley

Financial Implications: UNKNOWN

Staffing Implications:

Sources of Funding:

Conference Action: CARRIED

WHEREAS Saskatchewan Conference works ecumenically with the Mennonite Church for prison visitation and Circles of Support and Accountability in our prison system,

WHEREAS the building of healthy relationships is essential to enabling offenders to become productive people in our society,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Saskatchewan Conference of The United Church of Canada oppose charging inmates' phone calls from our provincial jails, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Saskatchewan Conference urge the Saskatchewan Government to rescind its decision to charge inmates for phone calls to family and friends.

APPENDIX 2:

FURTHER INFORMATION

HIGH LEVEL NUCLEAR WASTE

Manitoba High-Level Radioactive Waste Act

<http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/r010e.php>

<http://www.er.gov.sk.ca/adx/asp/adxGetMedia.aspx?DocID=10785,3385,5460,2936,Documents&MediaID=29016&Filename=Future+of+Uranium+Public+Consultation+Process+-+Final+Report.pdf>

http://www.icucec.org/files/sup_court_appeal.pdf

ADEQUATE BENEFITS PROGRAM FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

SAP Rate Card

<http://www.socialservices.gov.sk.ca/SAP-rate-card.pdf>

Low Incomes Cut off Line

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75f0002m/75f0002m2009002-eng.pdf>

Fiona Douglas and Paul Gingrich, Child and Family Poverty Saskatchewan Report 2009.

University of Regina Social Policy Research Unit: Regina, SK, November, 2009. Accessible at

<http://www.campaign2000.ca/reportCards/provincial/Saskatchewan/2009PovertyReportCard.pdf>

Paul Gingrich. Boom and Bust: The Growing Income Gap in Saskatchewan. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Regina, Saskatchewan. September 2009, page 211. Accessible at:

<http://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/boom-and-bust>

www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/repcard1e.pdf