

# **An open letter to Brad Wall, Premier of Saskatchewan**

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*By Bert Pitzel, Community Co-ordinator of Saskatchewan, KAIROS Prairies North*

You stated that the people of Saskatchewan will be able to participate in the nuclear power question, but you've also said that the question of whether or not there will be nuclear power in the province is not on the table. It looks like the level of participation is only token, with citizen decision-making being reduced to when, how, and where not if "adding value to uranium" will come.

On Ash Wednesday, Feb. 25, 2009, three bishops, representing the Anglican, Catholic and Lutheran Evangelical Traditions, who also spoke on behalf of four other Saskatchewan bishops, released a joint statement calling on your government to listen to the voices of the citizens of Saskatchewan so that they might participate meaningfully in the nuclear question before you act on recommendations that your nuclear panel will give you at the end of March. They also asked you to provide adequate forums so that nuclear power generation and other renewable energy approaches could be studied in an unbiased and transparent way.

Additionally, the bishops called upon their own diocesan church members to begin a process of critical examination of the issues surrounding "added value" to our uranium resource so that when called upon, their participation would be intelligent, responsible and moral. I remind you that together the religious leaders who signed the statement represent about 250,000 people, fully a quarter of Saskatchewan's population.

They said it would be sinful to make a choice without careful consideration of the consequences that the decision would have on community and environment.

Quite significantly, the Bishops' statement calling for genuine participation has been endorsed by groups which are not episcopal policies — the River Bend Presbytery of The United Church of Canada, the Saskatchewan Conference of the United Church of Canada and the Mennonite Central Committee.

CBC-TV news carried a portion of the bishops' news conference, but the news piece ended with an interview of yourself so that you would have the opportunity to have the final say on the matter.

Mr. Premier, I was surprised at your response. As if by divine right, you dismissed them, failing to acknowledge that they offered a means for enriching the democratic process and an opportunity for you to show that wisdom and humility required you take their words to heart. You too might have something to learn. You deflected their comments by using your reading of the polls to try to trump their words. You said that the polls indicate that a majority of citizens of Saskatchewan favour nuclear power.

Is that the truth? What preparatory work has been done to help citizens think through this complex matter? Who framed the polling questions? Front page newspaper articles have only echoed pro-nuclear points of view. Crafting the decision making process in this way denies the people of Saskatchewan the opportunity to make an important moral choice for them. Is it ethical and wise to bypass their discussions and discernment when it will be citizens and their grandchildren who will have to live with the consequences of expensive power generation, radioactivity and waste disposal for many, many life times to come?

Mr. Premier, the bishops call you to use the power vested in you to act responsibly. Show that you respect the dignity of the people of the province by engaging them with the lesser questions of when, where and how without omitting the more telling question of IF we should have nuclear power in our province. In the spirit of the Cluff Lake Inquiry and as you did with the Uranium Development Panel that they might promote nuclear power, fund environmental and clean green groups so they can begin a process of informing the public about the up- and downside of every kind of power generation.