

[SAMPLE LETTER]

Date, 2010

Office of the Premier
Room 307, Legislature Building
10800 - 97th Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 2B6

Dear Premier Stelmach,

We are extremely concerned about the government's current review of the *Water Act* and its potential impact on ecosystems, human health and the future development and sustainability of our communities and the economy in Alberta.

As people of faith, we believe that God as Creator of heaven and earth has provided natural resources, including water, to sustain all of life.

We believe the creation belongs to God who has called on us to be stewards of creation (Genesis 2:15).

Jesus commanded us to love our neighbour (Matthew 22:39). We understand our neighbour to include all who depend on water for life, as well as future generations.

Therefore, any system of water allocation should give priority to ecosystem health, basic human needs, and future generations, as well as recognize the treaty obligations the government has to First Nations peoples.

As such, we are troubled that the Government of Alberta is moving towards a largely deregulated market for water allocation. A market system which distributes water based on the ability to pay is not appropriate for a resource as critical as water. Moving to a market system is a fundamental abdication of an important provincial responsibility, and will leave decisions about future development in the province up to a small number of players with senior licenses who will be able to act as water brokers, profiting by selling access to an essential resource that they received from the government for free.

Neither government nor license holders are the true owners of water. Water is part of God's gift of creation. The government has the responsibility to be a good steward of this gift for the sake of all living things. Decisions about who has access to water belong to government and not to private or corporate interests. Only government can provide proper oversight to ensure that the public good and environmental protections are safeguarded for the future.

We have already seen other jurisdictions experience major failures with water markets, resulting in rivers running dry and leaving towns waterless because other entities with more money were able to buy up licenses. This is all the more important because there are concerns that once a market-based water allocation system is established it will be irreversible because of obligations under international trade agreements.

Finally, decisions about how water will be allocated in Alberta are far too important to be made without consulting the residents of Alberta. Since your 2008 announcement that the *Water Act* would be reviewed and updated, the Alberta Government has only consulted with its own appointed experts. Government efforts to engage the public about the water allocation review should be expanded and given sufficient time to ensure that the concerns of all people in Alberta are taken into account before sweeping changes are made. Residents in Alberta are deeply concerned about water in the province, and should be consulted on the issues of water and water allocation. It is the obligation of the government to ensure opportunities for meaningful public participation.

As members of [insert name of church], and members of the Synod of Alberta and the Territories of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, we call upon the Government of Alberta to

- 1) Develop a provincial water allocation system that focuses on the public interest by giving first priority to ecosystem health and basic human needs, rather than a market-based system that allocates access to water based on the ability to pay.
- 2) Incorporate water conservation as a top priority of government and to dedicate adequate funding and staff to this purpose.
- 3) Conduct broad and meaningful consultations with the public, impacted groups and First Nations on the full range of options before making changes to the *Water Act*.

May God the Father, Son +, and Holy Spirit give you the wisdom to fear and love God and the courage to do God's will for the sake of the long-term health and well-being of this province and its peoples.

In Christ's service,

The members of [name of church]

Also send a letter to the Honourable Rob Renner, Minister of Environment:

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