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SCO DEMANDS PROVINCE HALTS CROWN LAND AUCTIONS

First Option For Land Redistribution Must Be Given To First Nations: Grand Chief Daniels

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ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB — The Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO) is calling on the provincial government to put an immediate end to the practice of auctioning off Crown lands without first consulting with First Nations.

“When I met with Premier Stefanson shortly after her election, she assured me that things would be done differently when it comes to the relationship between the province and First Nations,” said SCO Grand Chief Jerry Daniels. “The issue of Crown land auctions is the perfect opportunity to show she truly means to fulfill that promise to me and other First Nations leadership.”

In January, the province stated it would hold online auctions this week to sell off agricultural Crown land leases and permits. SCO firmly believes that First Nations should be given first option to acquire land that is up for sale.

First Nations were promised land more than a century ago when treaties were signed with the British Crown between 1871 and 1910. The province signed the Manitoba Framework Agreement on Treaty Land Entitlement in 1997 that called for more than a million acres of land to be transferred. A quarter of a century later, only half of that quota has been met. First Nations want to convert the land to use for cultural practices and economic opportunity.

“No matter who is at the helm, the current provincial administration is beholden to *The Path to Reconciliation Act*,” stated Grand Chief Daniels. “I cannot think of a better time to adhere to the language of that legislation than now. The act clearly states that reconciling the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Manitoba should be a priority. I call on Premier Stefanson to honour the act and the Treaties.”

SCO is also concerned that the land auctions are to take place without a formal Treaty Land Entitlement (TLE) agreement for all First Nations in Manitoba. When a First Nation has a formalized TLE in place, it then has the first option to purchase neighbouring Crown land which can be used for critical economic development for its' community.

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“If this government is truly serious and committed to establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between us, then these online Crown land auctions must be stopped,” concluded Grand Chief Daniels. “We must be adequately consulted in this process, and the focus should now be on honouring existing agreements and finalizing additional TLE agreements before any more land changes hands.”

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The Southern Chiefs' Organization represents 34 First Nations and more than 81,000 citizens in what is now called southern Manitoba. SCO is an independent political organization that protects, preserves, promotes, and enhances First Nations peoples' inherent rights, languages, customs, and traditions through the application and implementation of the spirit and intent of the Treaty-making process.

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