



→ **CUC IN ACTION** →



**CURRENT SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY LETTERS, EVENTS,  
TOPICS & DISCUSSION  
JUNE 2009**

**ACM 2009: UPDATING THE CUC 1999 ENVIRONMENT RESOLUTION**

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The CUC Environmental Principles were first adopted at the Canadian Unitarian Council Annual Meeting on May 23, 1999. It's been 10 years since adoption of these Environmental Principles and since then the CUC has endorsed the Earth Charter, submitted letters to our Federal Government leaders requesting action on meeting our Kyoto Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emission targets and issued a statement regarding genetic engineering of food. Many congregations across Canada have incorporated environmental education into their religious education curricula and formed environmental justice committees; several congregations have received or are working toward Green Sanctuary Accreditation through the UUA Ministry for Earth. This is still just a start.

At the CUC Annual Meeting in May 2008 a resolution was passed that the CUC Environmental Principles should be revisited and revised to address the continuing pressures on our environment. These pressures continue to have devastating effects not only on our natural world but also on those cultures and communities most unable to protect themselves from the effects to our environment brought on by consumerism and subsequent high energy demands.

Since May 2008, the Environmental Monitoring Committee has reviewed the original Environmental Principles. We feel they still reflect the concern UU's have for the environment. We also feel they still lend guidance for our daily lives. What mattered to us was that our statement reflects the concerns and language of today to ensure that the diversity of beliefs and attitudes that enrich our Unitarian Universalism was expressed. With this in mind we made minor changes and have submitted the following revised version for feedback and comments.

An updated version as detailed below was proposed for adoption and accepted May 2009.

## MOTION ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

### WHEREAS:

Canadian Unitarian Universalists recognize that the ecological support systems upon which all life depends are threatened. A growing world population and the failure of our institutions to manage economic growth have created an environmental crisis. Climate change is an acknowledged result of these failures—negative impacts to ecological and social systems worldwide are already being felt. This is a profoundly moral issue; as a religious community, it is incumbent upon us to foster the ethics and values that will ensure the continued existence of a world as beautiful and productive as that which we know as our home.

### THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

We affirm the ethics implicit in the document *Environmental Principles and Values of Canadian Unitarian Universalists*.

We call upon the CUC and its members to provide leadership through collective and individual actions, and to be a strong voice and presence, in confronting environmental issues.

## ENVIRONMENTAL PRINCIPLES AND VALUES OF CANADIAN UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS

1. **Interdependence:** As Unitarian Universalists, we covenant to affirm and promote respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

The values of individual responsibility, personal growth, democracy, and social justice that we also affirm are essential elements in the development of a sustainable relationship with nature.

2. **Inherent worth:** We acknowledge that we are but one species of many on earth; each has its own value that cannot be measured by its service to humankind.

We affirm the right and requirement of all species to cohabitate.

3. **Sustainability:** Ensuring sustainability of the earth and all life upon it is our first responsibility to future generations and to all the species with which we share the planet.

In a sustainable world, healthy human societies will live in harmony with the natural environment.

4. **Religious Commitment:** We seek guidance from Unitarian Universalist and other world spiritual teachings and from the sciences to design our liturgies and inform our religious stories. Our goal is to draw inspiration from these sources in order to re-establish the proper balance of humanity with the global ecosystem.

5. **Ethical Action:** We must adopt practices not only appropriate to our time and place but also that address needs of the future. We must embrace a view that sees ourselves not as master of the land, but rather as an integral part of the earth's ecosystem where all life forms are interdependent.

6. **Biodiversity:** Species are disappearing from the earth at a cataclysmic rate, weakening some ecosystems and causing the collapse of others. By fragmenting Earth's landscapes, we are creating conditions for even greater losses.

We affirm to promote the health and quality of life on earth that depends upon the preservation and restoration of biodiversity.

7. **Precautionary principle:** We can never be certain of the impact of our actions on nature; where knowledge is incomplete and irreversible harm is possible, we must err on the side of caution.

Every decision is a choice about the future; application of the precautionary principle will reduce the possibility of undesirable consequences.

8. **Natural Capital:** The ecological support systems of planet earth are finite, imposing limits on the growth of populations and economies.

Since the economy is highly dependent upon the environment, it cannot be allowed to undermine the integrity of ecological processes. A sustainable economy must limit consumption to the "interest" produced by the natural capital upon which it depends.

**SPECIAL RECOGNITION GIVEN TO MONITORING GROUP LEADERS**

Special recognition was given at the ACM to: **Leslie Kemp**, Alternatives to Drug Prohibition; **Art Brewer**, Gender and Sexual Diversity; **Forrest Smith**, Environment; and **Philip Symons**, Democracy ~ for their long, tireless devotion to social justice in their work leading a CUC Monitoring Group.

## **PRESS RELEASE: UNITARIANS STRONGLY SUPPORT CLIMATE CHANGE BILL**

Delegates at the Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Unitarian Council, held at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, May 17, 2009, called upon all Canada's federal political parties to support and endorse the passage of Bill C-311, an Act to ensure Canada assumes its responsibilities in preventing dangerous climate change.

The legislation is intended to ensure that Canada reduces greenhouse gas emissions in order to prevent dangerous climate change, in accordance with the scientific evidence on the impacts of increased levels of global average surface temperature and the corresponding levels of atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases.

Kalvin Drake, President of the Canadian Unitarian Council, pointed to the urgency of this legislation, stating that "the overwhelming scientific evidence points to certain global disaster should immediate action not be taken. By passing Bill C-311, the Canadian Government can demonstrate global leadership on this important issue." The Bill, introduced to Parliament by Bruce Hyer, MP for Thunder Bay Superior North, ensures that Canada assumes its responsibilities in preventing dangerous climate change.

The Canadian Unitarian Council is the national voice of Canada's Unitarian and Universalist congregations. Drake added that as Unitarians we are called upon "*to affirm and promote respect for the interdependent web of life, of which we are all a part*"



## **CUC RESPONSE TO PMO LETTER REGARDING ATTACK ADS MAILED MAY 28, 2009**

To: Prime Minister Harper

From: Calvin Drake, President CUC

On behalf of the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC), I would like to thank you for your response dated May 14, 2009 to the letter sent to you on April 7, 2009 by our immediate Past President, Jean Pfliegerer regarding the use of attack ads against other parties - particularly their leaders.

We conclude from your letter that you value "the need for civility in political debate". We heartily agree with that sentiment. However, our primary concern remains and has been reinforced by your party's continued use of attack ads.

Again we urge you, as leader of your party, to abandon the use of attack ads.

[For complete letter see [http://www.cuc.ca/social\\_responsibility/RespectLetterResponseFinalOnline.pdf](http://www.cuc.ca/social_responsibility/RespectLetterResponseFinalOnline.pdf)]

## **LETTER REGARDING ATTACK ADS RE-ISSUED MAY 28, 2009**

To: Hon. Michael Ignatieff, Leader of the Liberal Party  
Hon. Jack Layton, Leader of the New Democratic Party  
Hon. Gilles Duceppe, Leader, Bloc Québécois

From: Calvin Drake, President CUC

On behalf of the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC), I would like to remind you of our letter sent by our Past President, Jean Pfeleiderer, on April 7, 2009 regarding the use of attack ads against other parties – particularly their leaders. As Unitarians, we draw inspiration from the world's religious traditions, reason, and our own direct experience. For example, "As you wish that men would do to you, do so to them." [The Bible, Revised Standard Version, Luke 6:31] – known as the “Golden Rule” that appears in most of the religions and cultures of the world.

As we mentioned in that previous letter, attack ads such as those used in the last election fall dangerously close to defamation of character and are contrary:

- not only to the Golden Rule in all its forms;
- not only to our Unitarian First Principle which affirms *the inherent worth and dignity of every person*;
- BUT also to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights introductory statement and Article 1:  
*All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.*

We urge each of you, again, as the leader of your party, to abandon the use of attack ads. In this period of economic and social hardship, we need you to act as a model of the co-operative spirit that will move Canadians to be our brothers' and our sisters' keepers.

[For complete letter see [http://www.cuc.ca/social\\_responsibility/RespectLetterNonPartisanRevisitedFinalOnline.pdf](http://www.cuc.ca/social_responsibility/RespectLetterNonPartisanRevisitedFinalOnline.pdf)]

## **LETTER TO PARTY PRESIDENTS REGARDING ATTACK ADS SENT MAY 28, 2009**

To: Party President - Conservative Party of Canada  
National President, Alfred Apps - Liberal Party of Canada  
Anne McGrath - New Democratic Party of Canada  
Party President - Bloc Québécois Montréal,

From: Calvin Drake, President CUC

On behalf of the Canadian Unitarian Council, I enclose for your action the letter sent by our Past President, Jean Pfeleiderer, to party leaders on April 7, 2009, regarding the use of attack ads against other parties, and ask that you take seriously our concern regarding these tactics.

With the current serious economic situation, it is particularly devastating for such personal attacks to be carried on at a time when many families and individuals are looking for compassion from their representatives in parliament.

[For complete letter and attachment to the above see [http://www.cuc.ca/social\\_responsibility/RespectLetterNonPartisanPresidentsFinalOnline.pdf](http://www.cuc.ca/social_responsibility/RespectLetterNonPartisanPresidentsFinalOnline.pdf)]