

APRIL, 2007



# → CUC IN ACTION →

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

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## **HARPER AND THE CBC**

Thursday, March 8, 2007

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper  
Prime Minister of Canada  
House of Commons  
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

### **RE: CBC – OUR NATIONAL HERITAGE**

Dear Prime Minister:

Your election policy of 2006 stated, “Arts and culture make essential contributions to our national identity. A Conservative government will ensure that the CBC and Radio-Canada continue to perform their vital role as national public service broadcasters.” The Canadian Unitarian Council supports increased funding for the CBC and stricter controls over media concentration.

This is a clear statement from your party of support for our public broadcasters and reflects unequivocal polling results showing that Canadians value the CBC and want it preserved and strengthened in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The public sees the CBC as a unique centerpiece of the Canadian arts and cultural scene. The CBC promotes and defends a distinct culture on the northern half of this continent that is not treasured in the same way by commercial media. The CBC literally links us from coast to coast to coast. All Canadians need to have access to CBC programs in the communities where they live. Your government’s statements and actions since the election put in doubt the government’s resolve in supporting the CBC and in recognizing how the public feels about their public broadcaster.

While commercial providers may fill a valuable role in responding to niche market needs, private media ownership is consolidated in fewer and fewer hands which compromises their ability to present critical and diverse perspectives.

Unitarians, like all Canadians, surely, affirm and promote a free and responsible search for truth and meaning and believe that access to factual, unbiased information is essential in a democracy. Furthermore, we passed a resolution in 2005 encouraging our congregations to “promote the principles of diversity and balance in radio and TV programming.”

The CBC is in a unique position to provide these diverse and unbiased perspectives, but it can only do so effectively with sufficient funds. It cannot protect our cultural and historical heritage with only \$22 per capita in public subsidies. The BBC, in contrast, receives \$120 per capita. The recent attempts to reverse the reduction of local programming initiated under Mr. Rabinovitch show that cutting local programming to save money was a mistake.

It is unfortunate that your popular pre-election statement has been ignored once your party was elected. Another election is looming. I look forward to hearing from you as to how you will fulfill your election promise of ensuring that the CBC and Radio-Canada continue to perform their *vital role* as our national service broadcasters.

Yours sincerely,

Ms Vyda Ng  
President  
Canadian Unitarian Council

Cc: CBC – Communications  
Cc: CBC – Audience Relations  
Cc: CBC – Corporate Communications  
Cc: Société Radio – Canada – Réseau de l’information  
Cc: Société Radio – Canada – [Relations avec l’auditoire](#)  
Cc: CRTC (Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission)



## OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE 12/08/06 CUC SR LETTER: *TERMINATOR SEED*

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Feb 27 2007

Vyda Ng  
President  
Canadian Unitarian Council  
018 – 1179A King St W  
Toronto, Ontario M6K 3C5

Dear Vyda Ng:

I am writing in response to your letter to the Right Honourable Stephen Harper regarding genetic use restriction technologies (GURTs). As you know, the Prime Minister's Office forwarded a copy of your correspondence to the Honourable Chuck Strahl for consideration. The Minister appreciates receiving your comments and has asked me to convey the following to you.

Canada's success in agriculture has long depended on the sector's ability to adapt to a changing marketplace by using new technologies to help lower production costs and to enhance the range of products available to meet new consumer demands. Innovation has helped Canada to be successful in an increasingly competitive global marketplace and has led to unique products for which Canada has been able to develop promising new markets.

The Government of Canada supports a science-based approach to the introduction of new technologies such as GURTs. This process requires that plants with novel traits, including plants with GURT traits, be subjected to strict environmental safety, livestock feed safety, and food safety assessments. This is consistent with the position taken at the Eighth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Brazil in March 2006.

It is important to note that, at this time, the Government of Canada has not received any applications for new plant varieties incorporating GURTs. Plants with GURT traits have neither been planted in field trials nor been commercialized in Canada.

It should also be noted that producers in Canada already have a wide range of farm inputs and technologies to choose from. In the case of seeds, this includes varieties that farmers are free to save and replant, as well as varieties for which seed saving is not often practiced. As an example of the latter, most commercial corn in Canada is produced using hybrid seed, which does not reproduce true to type and therefore is not often saved for replanting. The Government of Canada supports producers having choice in deciding which agricultural practices or technologies to adopt, based on which approach offers them the most benefits from both an economic and environmental perspective.

On December 7, 2006, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food held a hearing on GURTs, at which a range of experts from academia, government and industry appeared before the Committee and provided comments. For more information on this briefing, please visit the following House of Commons website:

[http://cmte.parl.gc.ca/cmte/CommitteeList.aspx?Lang=1&PARLSES=391&JNT=0&SELID=e21\\_&COM=10464](http://cmte.parl.gc.ca/cmte/CommitteeList.aspx?Lang=1&PARLSES=391&JNT=0&SELID=e21_&COM=10464)

To learn more about the regulation of plants with novel traits, and about GURTs, you may also wish to access the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's website at:

[www.inspection.gc.ca/english/plaveg/bio/pbobbve.shtml](http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/plaveg/bio/pbobbve.shtml)

I trust that this information is of assistance to you. Thank you for writing with your concerns on this matter.

Sincerely,

Donald Boucher  
Acting Policy Advisor