

June, 2008

→CUC IN ACTION→



Current Social Responsibility Letters, Events, Topics & Discussion



Members of Peterborough—photo by E. Nancy Strider

WELCOMING CONGREGATIONS

The following congregations received their Welcoming Congregation Certificates, Sunday May 18th at this year's ACM in Ottawa. Art Brewer as Chair of the Gender & Sexual Diversity Monitoring Group made the presentations.

First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto, renewed January 27, 2008 (first certified in 1998)

Unitarian Congregation of Niagara, certified February 17, 2008

Neighbourhood Unitarian Universalist Congregation, certified April 20, 2008

Unitarian Fellowship of Peterborough, certified April 20, 2008. (pictured above)

After the certificates were received a new tradition of singing "One More Step" was led by Ottawa's Folk Festival director, Chris White.

Mary Bennett, Executive Director

URANIUM PROSPECTING: CUC LETTER.

The letter on page 2 was sent to The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada, The Honourable Chuck Strahl, PC, MP Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, with copies to Ed Bianchi, KAIROS, Aboriginal Rights Program Coordinator; Bob Stevenson, Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice, President; The Honourable Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario; The Honourable Ed Stelmach, Premier of Alberta; The Honourable Gordon Campbell, Premier of British Columbia; The Honourable Gary Doer, Premier of Manitoba; The Honourable Shawn Graham, Premier of New Brunswick; The Honourable Danny Williams, Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador; The Honourable Floyd Roland, Premier of the Northwest Territories; The Honourable Rodney Macdonald, Premier of Nova Scotia; and The Honourable Paul Okalik, Premier of Nunavut, on Friday May 23rd.

It addresses the issue of mining, and particularly uranium prospecting, on land claimed by First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

Dear Prime Minister,

The Canadian Unitarian Council joins the Shabot Obaadjiwan and Ardoch First Nations as well as numerous municipalities in urging your government to declare an immediate moratorium on uranium mineral prospecting, exploration and mining. We ask as well that you take action to settle outstanding land claims by Canada's Aboriginal peoples, as we did on June 29, 2007, we "urge Canada to work diligently to resolve these long-standing issues in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, and in a just and compassionate way."

Until the land claims are settled, we ask you to ensure proper consultation on the use of land that has never been ceded and remains disputed, as is required by law. Further, if Aboriginal peoples request mediation with the provincial and federal governments to resolve such issues, we request that you act quickly to ensure this process is carried out in good faith.

Our concerns have been heightened by the events near Sharbot Lake and the concerns of the Algonquin people, who have been attempting to prevent the mining exploration company Frontenac Ventures Corp. from doing test drilling for uranium on land claimed by the Algonquin people. Canadian law stipulates that these lands cannot be developed without the consent of the Algonquin. Neither Canada nor Ontario has consulted with the Algonquin about uranium exploration, despite the fact that the staked land is part of a Comprehensive Land Claim that is under ongoing negotiation with Ontario and Canada.

It has become clear that a review and complete overhaul of the Ontario Mining Act and other legislation is necessary in order for companies to be prevented from prospecting, claim staking, and exploration without the meaningful consultation or the consent of Aboriginal communities, municipalities and private property owners.

Actions such as those in Eastern Ontario and the Ottawa River watershed, and the arrest of Robert Lovelace for his role in a peaceful demonstration are the most urgent among a growing number of environmental and social concerns raised by uranium prospecting and mining. Problems in Uranium City and La Ronge, SK, where the Council of Indian Chiefs oppose uranium mining, are ongoing, and in March the City council of Moncton, N.B., voted unanimously to call on the province to ban all uranium exploration and mining in New Brunswick. On March 18, 2008, the Ontario Superior Court sentenced Chief Donny Morris and six other council members to six months in jail for "contempt of court" for defying a court order to stay away from land belonging to the Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation slated for mining by the Platinex Corporation. In fact, Judge Patrick Smith cited charges against Robert Lovelace as a precedent. We fear that uranium mining will continue to cause serious problems for relations between Canada's Aboriginal peoples and both federal and provincial governments.

The Canadian Unitarian Council affirms "Justice, equity and compassion in human relations." In 2007, we resolved "that the CUC calls on all its congregations to promote our shared principles by being active witnesses for racial, religious, and First Nations equity in our communities." We consider the possibility of uranium mining near Sharbot Lake, along with the government's failure to create processes for meaningful consultation, and its treatment of people who oppose uranium exploration on environmental, safety, and legal grounds, to contravene this principle.

We hope that the Canadian and provincial governments will

- release Robert Lovelace from jail immediately,
- consult with First Nations people as they are required to do, and overhaul outdated legislation, including mining acts.

We encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity to demonstrate good faith through genuine consultation, and to be forward-thinking on issues of potentially grave consequence to our Aboriginal and other communities.

Sincerely yours,

Jean Pfleiderer

Jean Pfleiderer, Ph.D.

President, Canadian Unitarian Council / conseil unitarien du Canada

TELESEMINAR: UPDATING THE 1999 ENVIRONMENTAL RESOLUTION

Approved at the May 2008 annual meeting in Ottawa, your Environmental Monitoring Group is initiating this update via a conference call.

Agenda questions to be explored include:

What is the challenge?

How does this relate to the UUA statement of conscience on Climate Change?

What constitutes success for you?

For background, the current resolution can be found at

http://www.cuc.ca/social_responsibility/sr_resolutions.htm.

This will be a "Community Conversations On Climate Change and the Environment" a dialogue to engage, inform and solicit input. Join us please, **Monday, June 23, 2008 – 5:30 pm pacific standard time, 8:30 eastern.**

Dial-in Number: 1 (605) 475-6000 Participant Access Code: 708263#

Forrest Smith

Environmental Monitoring Group

For a list of who's who in the Social Responsibility Monitoring groups go to:

http://cuc.ca//whos_who/index.htm#Monitoring.

RESOLUTIONS PASSED AT THE ANNUAL MEETING MAY 17 19, 2008.

Proposal to Study: Updating the 1999 Environment Resolution

Text of motion:

Whereas almost a decade has passed since the adoption of the 1999 Statement of Environmental Policy and it would be prudent to review the content;

BE IT RESOLVED then that the Environment Monitoring Group act as a Study Group, to review the Statement of Environmental Policy adopted by the CUC Annual General Meeting in 1999 and to propose amendments as appropriate AND TO BRING FORWARD ACTION recommendations for approval at the 2009 Annual General Meeting.

Proposed Special Resolution without Notice on Sanctuary for 2008 CUC Annual Meeting

From: Sanctuary Committee and Board, First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa.

Whereas the CUC through its Board in 2005

Endorsed the right of CUC member congregations to offer Sanctuary to individuals and families in recognizable danger of persecution, adopted guidelines for granting sanctuary for the benefit of congregations as part of this policy and called on government authorities in Canada to respect such sanctuary and to work with the congregations involved in order to resolve such situations promptly, safely and justly,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Canadian Unitarian Council 2008 Annual Meeting

Affirms and endorses the policy on sanctuary adopted by the CUC Board of Trustees in 2005;

Notes with concern the prolonged stay in sanctuary of Shree Kumar Rai, a Nepalese refugee who has now spent almost 12 years in Canada seeking to flee persecution in his native Nepal and who has been in sanctuary at the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa since February 2007;

Supports and endorses Mr. Rai's application to be granted permanent status in Canada on humanitarian and compassionate grounds or under the federal skilled worker program as a sushi chef or through a temporary resident permit that will lead to permanent status;

Calls on the federal government and its agencies to give favourable consideration to all cases of refugees in sanctuary, particularly those cases where refugees have been unable to overcome unfavourable decisions by government agencies because of the lack of a workable process for appeals.