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Strengthening our Democratic Voices

Report of the Active Democracy Study Group

May 2012

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1 Executive Summary and Recommendations

A decade of conversations about democracy within and outside the CUC eventually led to the 2010 Study Resolution on Active Democracy and the Active Democracy Study Group (ADSG). A set of workshops to get initial input were held at the 2011 Fall Regional Gatherings and then broader consultation was launched. Broader consultation included congregational and stakeholder conversations and an online survey. This report is the synthesis of those survey and conversation results, the feedback from the Regional workshops, and the Study Group's research and experience.

Throughout the process of our consultation with member congregations, individuals, and interest/stakeholder groups, we heard that there is a hunger for greater involvement in high level decisions, particularly about determining priorities and the directions we are headed. We have made the following recommendations to try to reflect those desires, while still allowing the CUC Board and Staff to be effective in their jobs.

The following recommendations generally fall under a few themes. First, a need for improved and more accessible communication between congregations, individuals, stakeholder groups, and the CUC's Council, Board, and Staff. Secondly, a need for a process to allow more voices to be brought into the conversation more effectively; more often and at more appropriate times than only at the Annual Meeting. Third, a need for improved knowledge of the CUC and particular issues, within congregations - but note that for this to be effective, congregations and their members need to step up and take on a larger role. And lastly, a few other recommendations that came up organically during the course of this Study Process.

Recommendations from this Study Process:

Decision-Making Within the CUC:

1. That an ongoing consultation process be developed, to consider CUC strategic priorities so that the budget is not the only mechanism for commenting on priorities.
2. That strategic priorities, the Annual Program Contribution (APC) and the overall thrust and bottom line of the budget for the following year, be voted on at the annual meeting.
3. Approval of the Annual Program Contribution and budget should be mandated by the bylaws.
4. That the Board proceed with consultation regarding representation of our faith in the larger social and religious environments, and consider all alternatives for which position could best fulfil that role.

Relationships between Individuals & the Council, Board, and Staff:

5. That the development of a flexible, electronic communications platform be made a high priority.
6. That the CUC Board and staff develop and communicate an "issue process" that clearly and transparently articulates to whom an individual should go with a given

issue, and the next steps should the issue not be dealt with to that individual's satisfaction.

Delegates & Delegate Selection:

7. That CUC staff develop Best Practices for Delegates/Denominational Affairs Representatives (and their selection) for use by congregations.
8. That CUC delegates be asked to serve for one or two year terms, that there would be the expectation of ongoing communication between the delegates and the CUC board and staff during those two years, and that there be suggested roles for the delegates to play in their congregations during those two years.

Promoting Discussion Within and Among Member Congregation, on Matters Going to the Annual General Meeting:

9. That CUC Board and Staff use the e-news for straw polls and other responsive mechanisms
10. That CUC Board and Staff regularly advertise communications channels such as the cuc-leaders list serve, especially during times of conflict when people are most likely to be wanting their voice heard
11. That ongoing education and publicity about the Resolutions process be a priority for CUC Board and Staff, and specifically, that online communities and other groups be made aware that they can use this process to move ideas and issues onto the floor of the Annual Meeting

Stakeholders and Associate Members:

12. That the CUC Board work in conjunction with the AD SG when proposing changes to bylaws etc., related to Associate Members.
13. That we create a category of "Stakeholder group" outside the bylaws to replace the current "Associate Member" category. Stakeholder groups would need to meet specific criteria and their status would need to be approved by a vote at the Annual Meeting.
14. That recognized Stakeholder groups have:
 - a. A voice at the annual meeting, but not a vote. An elected spokesperson for a stakeholder group does not need to wait until all delegates have spoken -- they can be in the lineup with the delegates.
 - b. The ability to put an item on the agenda, having demonstrated that they have met the criteria of the resolutions process.
15. That CUC Board and Staff prioritize education about Stakeholder group requirements and the use of the Resolutions process as a way to move ideas and motions forward to the annual meeting.

Electronic Participation & Access to the Annual Meeting:

16. That the CUC invest in hardware/software for ongoing communication between cluster groups spread geographically across the country to allow full participation in Council Meetings.

Transparency Around Board Officer Selection, and the Nomination Process

17. That the Council vote yes or no for each of the Board's recommended officer positions for the upcoming year.
18. That the communication surrounding the process and opportunities to be nominated to the nominating committee and/or the Board be expanded and widely distributed.

Recommendations to the CUC Board for future Study Groups:

19. That future Study Groups consider organizing the questionnaire into two parts, the first part being forced choice and the second part having open ended questions.
20. That future Study Groups create separate feedback systems for individuals, congregations and groups.
21. That surveys, responses and analysis from Study Groups, Task Forces and other Board and Staff enterprises be stored in an online collection, where they can be accessed by future groups.
22. That all surveys include region as a required question.

2 Background to the Appointment of the Active Democracy Study Group

Background to the Democracy Conversation

Over the past decade, questions about our democratic processes have been raised at our Annual Meetings, in reports and in resolutions. How should we organize ourselves so that we can best live out our principle of democratic process? What is the role of the CUC Board relative to the Annual Meeting, the Membership, and the various groups comprising the Unitarian movement in Canada? “Democracy” covers a wide range of ideas, practices and principles. How are we called to be together right now?

In 2003, the Social Responsibility Committee of the First Unitarian Church of Victoria asked the Annual Meeting for a mandate to lead a two-year study of Canadian democracy. The results of the study were brought to the 2005 Annual Meeting in the form of the “Imagine Canadian Democracy” resolutions, which passed unanimously with a few amendments.

These resolutions called on Canadian Unitarians to foster a culture of democracy in many areas, including everyday life, government, the media, and our congregations. Note was made of the role of the CUC Board in providing leadership in democratic and transparent processes (2.1), the role of congregations in supporting ACM delegates financially (2.4), the role of congregations in encouraging delegates to be aware of congregational views (2.4), and the responsibility of congregations to involve youth (2.6).

Meanwhile, at the CUC Board level, after five years of working within the “Regions and RNGs” strategic plan, there was an awareness that the Board needed to figure out what would come next. After working (and struggling) with the Go4It plan, the CUC Board presented a shortened, practical plan to the 2008 Annual meeting.

The 2008 short-term plan included an item on Active Democracy:

Active Democracy. Recognize our responsibility to enhance our democratic and governance processes:

1. Propose a new process for resolutions to the Annual Meeting, with the goals of simplifying the process, increasing transparency, and engaging congregations in the process more thoroughly.
2. Upgrade our board policies to more clearly state “what we do, for whom, at what cost.”

Item 1 from the 2008 plan became the responsibility of the Resolutions Study Group which was voted into being at the same 2010 meeting that birthed the Active Democracy Study Group.

The Resolutions Study Group report, released in advance of the 2011 Annual Meeting, found that:

25.4% of respondents said that their congregation’s delegates did not have enough information to make sound voting decisions;

34.1% said they did not know if this was the case.

38.2% thought their congregations were not knowledgeable about upcoming resolutions at an AGM, and 27.6% did not know if their congregations were knowledgeable.

53.1% did not know who to submit a resolution to.

21% said their congregations had a clear process for selecting delegates.¹

The Resolutions study group designed a process to encourage conversation and engagement by giving congregations a time to consider and amend proposed resolutions before they come to the floor of the Annual Meeting.² However, the Resolutions Study Group recognized that the democratic nature of the resolutions process is affected by factors such as congregational engagement, delegate selection, and delegate funding. They felt that these factors were outside their mandate, and recommended that the Active Democracy Study Group address them.³

The second item in the 2008 Short-term plan, “Upgrade our board policies to more clearly state ‘what we do, for whom, at what cost’” has been described as short-hand for a need to develop and better understand the Carver model used by the Board.⁴

The CUC Board hired a Carver consultant, but the concerns continued. A rash of Board member resignations prompted the Board to hire governance consultant Eli Mina. Mr. Mina’s final report was released in October 2011 and shared with congregational leaders. This report spoke to the need to bolster the culture of democracy within the CUC (using the language of the 2005 resolutions). While acknowledging the good efforts of the Board to make changes, Mr. Mina recommended paying attention to some lingering concerns: the habits of conflict avoidance, acquiescence and silence, the remnants of a culture of secrecy, and a disconnect between the CUC Board and member congregations.⁵

Mr. Mina’s report also pointed to the need to articulate the relationship of the Board with the CUC Members (6.4), selection of Board Members and Officers (6.7.1), relationship of the Council and stakeholder organizations, and especially the roles of the Minister and Youth Observers (6.10).

Moving back to the time before the creation of the Active Democracy study group: Sometime around 2008 the Board began to talk about selection and preparation of delegates, as well as the question of whether ministers should have voting privileges at the Annual Meeting.⁶ These concerns, combined with the Board’s awareness of the need for more transparency and clarity, led to the creation of the Active Democracy Study Group at the 2010 Annual Meeting (see resolution, Appendix 1).

Those attending the Annual Meeting (and the CUC Board) were particularly interested in the relationship of the Board to the Council as a whole, wanting our processes to be as

1 *Canadian Unitarian Council Resolutions Study Group, Report to the CUC Board of Trustees and the Annual Meeting, Toronto, ON, Approved May 2011, page 5*

2 <http://cuc.ca/governance/resolutions-process>

3 *Canadian Unitarian Council Resolutions Study Group, Report to the CUC Board of Trustees and the Annual Meeting, Toronto, ON, Approved May 2011, page 9*

4 *John Hopewell quoting Jean Pfliederer in an email of March 21, 2011.*

5 *Eli Mina, Final Report Governance Review Project, section 5*

6 *John Michell in an email to John Hopewell, April 6, 2012.*

transparent and fair as possible, and to provide as many opportunities as possible for members to be involved in the governance of our national association.

3 Study Group Process

After some difficulties in finding a chair in the fall of 2010, the CUC Board decided to proceed with an initial group of members whose first responsibility was to find a chair and fill out the positions on the Study Group based on the criteria mentioned in the resolution.

The initial group had its first meeting on March 17th, 2011. The Study Group members reviewed applications by other interested individuals wanting to join the ADSG and began recruiting additional members based on the criteria outlined in the resolution.

Given the delay in starting the Study Group, the group proposed a revised time line:

May 2011 – Brief status report to annual meeting

May 2012 - present an interim report with preliminary recommendations

May 2013 - formal resolutions to the Annual Meeting

In Spring and Summer 2011, the Study Group reviewed existing practices and processes within the CUC and began researching best practices and existing models used in other organizations. Members of the Study Group also recruited a youth member, and another member from the Eastern Region. Throughout the Study Group process, some members have had to step down for various reasons and the ADSG did their best to find replacements to ensure that the necessary representation was maintained.

In the Summer and early Fall of 2011, the Study Group put together a workshop whose main aim was to begin securing input from individuals within member congregations around the ideas of democracy. The workshop was offered, in some form, at each of the 4 Fall Regional Gatherings and focused on 4 main topics: How Decisions are Made, Electronic Voting and Participation Possibilities, Delegates, and Stakeholders. The feedback from these workshops was brought back to the Study Group and discussed.

The next step was to acquire more of this type of discussion and to increase engagement in the conversation on the part of congregations, stakeholder groups and individuals within member congregations.

A workshop package was put together in the Winter of 2011, and congregations and fellowships, as well as stakeholder groups, were asked to hold this workshop (or conversation) in the Spring of 2012. The feedback from the conversations was inputted into an online survey. Individuals could also participate on their own by filling out the survey themselves. The survey and workshop materials also included some background information, (and in some cases, specific scenarios), to make it easier for anyone to participate, regardless of their knowledge of the structures and issues.

The Study Group members then met in two clusters, in Saskatoon and Toronto, at the end of March 2012, and the clusters were linked by video conference for part of this meeting time. During this time, the responses from the survey were analyzed, summarized and discussed, and recommendations and general observations were brought forward. Those analyses, summaries, observations and recommendations make up the majority of this report.

4 Survey Participation - Methodology and Demographics

Methodology

The method used to deliver the survey was Survey Monkey, a web based, data collection platform that formats and collates responses. The questions used were mostly open ended as a way to generate the widest range of possible responses.

Member congregations were notified of the survey through a number of ways including posting on the CUC website, and the Presidents', Ministers' and CUC Leaders list serves. Board members were notified, as were Denominational Affairs Representatives of those congregations with such representation. In addition, members of the Active Democracy Study Group contacted each congregation individually. The CUC advertised the survey on the front page of their website, a MailChimp mass email was sent to everyone in the database, bringing in a significant number of responses, and the survey deadline was mentioned in the March edition of the e-newsletter.

Respondents

110 Questionnaires were returned. Over 80%, or 89 questionnaires, were returned by individuals, 5 were filled out by interest groups and 16 were identified as coming from congregations (for the list of congregations, see Appendix 3, Acknowledgements)..

Of the 16 congregations, 7 were from the Central region, 5 from BC, 2 from Eastern and 2 from Western.

Only four of the congregations indicated the number of participants engaged in the process (22, 21, 7 and 3 congregants respectively).

Of the 73 individuals who identified their region, 22 (30%) were from the Eastern Region, 29 (40%) from Central, 12 (16%) from Western and 10 (14%) from British Columbia.

More than one answer was solicited for the preferred method of communication category: 91 respondents or 97% preferred email; 50 respondents or 53% preferred being communicated to in person and 34 respondents or 37% preferred Canada Post. Teleconferencing, Skype, Facebook and Google docs were lower on the list of preferences at 31%, 23%, 26% and 17 % respectively.

In the age range question, a total of 77 individuals answered; they were heavily weighted in favour of senior members with 66% or 51 respondents in the 50 – 74 age category and 7 or 9% in the 75 plus category. Ten respondents or 13 % were in the young adult category and 7 or 9% were in the 75 plus category.

Individuals who participated in 16 congregational meetings as participants were heavily weighted in favour of the over 50 year age category at 16 with 11 in the 35 – 50 category and 7 were young adults (18-35). Youth and under 14 years old had 6 participants each.

Limitations

We had 34% of our congregations respond to the survey. Two congregations in the Eastern Region answered, one was east of Ottawa. Two from the Western Region answered. 10 out of 16 (62.5%) of responding congregations were from Ontario, which includes congregations in Eastern, Central and Western regions within its borders. Three congregations held meetings but encouraged their members to answer individually (for the list of congregations, see Appendix 3, acknowledgements).

We had many more individuals respond to the survey than congregations or groups, and it is important to distinguish between individual responses and group responses (and congregational responses from stakeholder group responses).

We did not connect with youth as well as we had wanted to. No youth groups discussed the survey or filled out a questionnaire, to the best of our knowledge. The study group is aiming to include more youth participation in the review of the report during fall 2012.

The combination of Survey Monkey and the format of open ended questions was more friendly to individual respondents than for groups. Some respondents answered in two ways as individuals and as a member of a congregation (which was encouraged).

Some of the congregations that did not participate let us know that they had other priorities or there was too short a time frame for this consultation. Several congregational leaders mentioned a concern that their congregation didn't have enough knowledge of the CUC to make it worthwhile to run a workshop. For more information on these and other challenges, see Section 5, Feedback on the Process.

Recommendations

1. That future Study Groups consider organizing the questionnaire into two parts, the first part being forced choice and the second part having open ended questions.

Both formats provide useful information, and some people have a preference for one or the other method.

2. That future Study Groups create separate feedback systems for individuals, congregations and groups.

3. That surveys, responses and analysis from Study Groups, Task Forces and other Board and Staff enterprises be stored in an online collection, where they can be accessed by future groups.

The open ended format of the majority of the questions yielded data that generates a host of ideas and opinions that can form the basis of further discussion on issues central to the inclusive and effective participation in decision making in the CUC.

4. That all surveys include region as a required question.

5 Feedback on the process

As we began to compile this report it dawned on us that our experiences in doing this work are, in themselves, important to reflect upon as the experiences are a reflection on the system in which we currently function. This section of the report draws on those reflections. In doing so the concerns that are highlighted are intended to shine a spotlight on our *organizational structure* with a view to improving that structure for the purposes of augmenting our collective democratic process. Throughout the remainder of the report you will find recommendations that, collectively, might address the systemic problems identified here.

The most obvious challenge we encountered was in finding volunteers willing to participate in the study group. Despite several calls for participants, it was a struggle to find individuals willing to participate and even more challenging to find someone willing to chair the study group. This resulted in a yearlong delay in getting started. The appropriate requirement of the resolution to find individuals representative of the various regions and stakeholders made this even more challenging. As we reflected back on this challenge the root causes of this problem seem to be:

1. Some “disconnect” between the delegates who voted in favour of this resolution at the annual meeting and the member societies that were subsequently called upon to do the work that the resolution called for.

The challenges that we experienced with recruiting volunteers to serve on this working group, (and subsequently in getting member societies to participate in completing the workshop/survey), suggests to us that there is a lack of connection between the delegates who attended the annual meeting and voted in favor of the resolution and the congregations they represented. If in fact the delegates who voted in favour of this resolution were democratically representing their congregations when they voted one would have anticipated both excitement for the process and an abundance of volunteers willing to be a part of the study group, reflecting the overwhelmingly positive support for the resolution at the meeting. The unfortunate reality was quite the opposite and in many cases member societies did not seem to understand that the resolution was in fact a creation of the council. Despite personal contact made with every member congregation by the study group, only 34% participated in the process and the most common reason cited for non participation was that the congregation was too busy with their own local priorities. While this is understandable one might have expected those congregations to have requested their delegates to have respectfully voted against the resolution on the grounds that they were not in a position to support the work at this point in time (even if they weren't against the issue being discussed).

2. The reality that most, if not all, member societies are appropriately busy with their local congregational life.

While this is related to the first issue it is subtly different. Even amongst the group of Canadian Unitarian Universalists who have an interest in the national organization, many are already in positions of leadership in their own congregations and as such do not have the time to commit to a study group such as the ADSG.

3. The reality that many volunteers are already over extended with other commitments.

We found that even those who did agree to participate in the study group were heavily involved with a wide range of commitments, both within the Unitarian Universalist movement and outside of it that made full engagement challenging for them. This volunteer “crisis” permeates every level of our organization.

4. The communication system that currently exists between the Canadian Unitarian Council’s Board, Staff and Member Societies, has been a cause of frustration.

The system that we primarily used for communication with congregations, (and that is prevalent in the current organizational system), was the formal leadership structure (president, minister and/or denominational affairs person). When that failed to produce the desired results, shoulder tapping of individuals known to be leaders in their congregations by the people on the study group ensued. There is no current mechanism in place to connect directly with individual congregants who might have both passion and expertise that has yet to be identified by those in formal leadership positions, thus limiting potential resources for and interest in the national organization and its work. While we found our current communication strategies to be efficient when they worked, communication failed more often than it functioned and is likely at least partially responsible for the lack of understanding and knowledge that individual congregants have about their national organization.

5. The regional annual fall gatherings were a useful venue for member participation in some regions and not so much in others. The utility of the meeting from our perspective was directly related to the importance that was placed on the event by the planning committee. In regions where the active democracy event was one stream competing with others there was limited participation whereas in those regions where the event was highlighted and occurred without competition there was excellent participation.

The most striking observation about our experience in engaging Canadian Unitarian Universalists in this conversation was the range of knowledge and understanding of how the Canadian Unitarian Council actually functions. A large majority of Canadian Unitarians and Universalists are understandably more engaged in their own local congregations and have little involvement at the national level. Having acknowledged that, the responses to the survey would suggest that there is significant room for improvement in communication to and education of the individual congregant so that they better understand their national organization and how to become democratically engaged in such a way that they receive value for the investment they have made.

6 Decision-making authority of the Board relative to the Council

Survey Overview

The study group decided that scenarios would be helpful to participants in examining the decision making process. Questions 1 to 5 in this section related to what, where and how decisions are made. Under our bylaws almost all decisions beyond the election of Trustees and the Nominating Committee can be made by the Board rather than the Council, where decisions are made by delegates, typically at the Annual Meeting.

The study group asked a question about the Annual Program Contribution (APC) because it regularly comes up for discussion at both Board and Council. The APC is the amount societies pay to maintain their standing with the CUC. Questions relating to Lifespan Learning or Religious Exploration were included in part because of past concerns about changes to the way in which the CUC delivers Religious Exploration support and development. However in each case the topic was presented as an example, and data gathered is presumed to be transferable to other decisions.

While there was no unanimity from respondents, several major themes emerged from responses to questions 1 to 5

1. On whether the Council or the Board should set the APC:

- A majority indicated the decision should be made by the Council, often suggesting this should be based on a recommendation from the Board. Some cited the direct impact of the decision on their congregations as a reason for a Council decision.
- Many respondents stated the Board needs to demonstrate “value for money” as part of the approval process.
- A minority suggest it should be a Board decision, involving consultation with congregations, because they believe trustees have a fuller understanding of the issues.
- Although it wasn’t asked in this question, it is significant that 12 respondents also indicated the budget should be voted on by the council.

2. On how the Board can recognize which decisions need to be made by the Council, there was broad support for:

- Vision, mission and identity issues including priority setting.
- By law and Policy issues.
- Major financial decisions including those such as APC and budget.
- Many respondents asked for increased and more timely communication and consultation. Some suggested the use of straw votes between meetings. There was support for informal plenary sessions on specific issues ahead of a vote at the annual meeting, such as have been held on resolutions in recent years.

3. On consultation for Religious Exploration:

- Most respondents supported very broad consultation rather than a sampling.

- There was concern that specialists and interest groups, in this case Directors of Religious Exploration, should be consulted.
- There were requests for new and creative means of consultation with no consensus about the most effective means (e.g. teleconferences, online discussions, surveys, email, regional or more local cluster meetings, face-to-face meetings with staff).
- There was a desire that when consultation occurs, there should be a report back about what was heard and what was done with the information.
- There were also a few comments about there being too much consultation.

4. Question 6: Balancing the needs of large and small congregations.

- Many respondents argued that all needs should be met as effectively as possible and it shouldn't matter what size the congregation is.
- Another common theme was ensuring that congregations of all sizes are included in any consultation or needs assessment.
- Several mentioned that needs of differently sized congregations are different, not necessarily more or less. It was suggested that many resources that are created could be made with the idea of being adjustable for various sizes.
- There was also encouragement for more sharing of resources and ideas between congregations, not just support from the CUC.
- There were some conflicting comments; some saying small congregations need proportionately more attention whereas others suggested more resources should go to larger congregations in proportion to local membership.

5. Questions 7 to 11: This section dealt with who should speak for the CUC and whether we need a person designated as national spokesperson.

- More than 80% of respondents indicated there should be a national spokesperson who could speak on behalf of the CUC. Most supported using guidelines for positions taken but with some latitude. Only 10% were opposed to a national spokesperson.
- Comments included that not having a spokesperson is to be silent on national issues, not speaking out when we probably should and that we need more timely responses. Having a spokesperson does not mean every Canadian UU will agree with them, but that person would be a voice for our core values.
- Many supported strengthening the existing monitoring group process in support of a national spokesperson.
- There were varying opinions on who the national spokesperson should be. The most support was for the President but with others preferring a moderator or the executive director.
- A number of respondents indicated the spokesperson should be an elected individual.

Analysis and Recommendations

Decision Making and Consultation

There was general support for the Council ultimately making decisions on APC, Budget and decisions on the overall direction of the CUC. These are implicitly linked in that the budget is supported by the level of the APC and reflects the current direction of the organization.

The CUC fiscal year runs from January to December which coincides with the fiscal year of many congregations. In the past 20 years changes have twice been made to the fiscal year for various reasons. The current timing of the annual meeting means it is too late to approve a budget for the current year and too early to approve a firm budget for the following year. Since 2010 the annual meeting has approved “in principle” the budget for the following year. “In principle” is not defined but is assumed to mean the bottom line and the overall thrust of the budget.

In 2010 a two-year work plan was presented for discussion at the annual meeting and this included some discussion on mission and vision. However in general the budget has been the main vehicle for implicitly approving priorities. The 2010 work plan was based on the Executive Director’s survey. Subsequently in 2011, the Executive Director conducted a survey to evaluate progress on the work plan, although this was not well received by many congregations. In addition, local boards and Ministers are regularly consulted by CUC board members on a variety of issues. Based on feedback received in the 2011 survey, that fall the Board identified four priorities which provided more focus to the work plan.

While congregations clearly want to continue to have a direct say in approving the budget and the APC, many consider it equally important that they have an explicit voice in developing and approving priorities. Questions to be answered include: do CUC board and staff have the right priorities? Are they doing the right things? These underlie the “value for money” question. Developing priorities cannot reasonably occur only at the annual meeting. There needs to be an interactive process in which congregations can identify their expectations and priorities can be set cooperatively. Ongoing consultations on priorities could occur at fall gatherings and at teleconferences through the year.

Recommendation:

- 1. That an ongoing consultation process be developed, to consider CUC strategic priorities so that the budget is not the only mechanism for commenting on priorities.**
- 2. That strategic priorities, the Annual Program Contribution (APC) and the overall thrust and bottom line of the budget for the following year, be voted on at the annual meeting.**
- 3. Approval of Annual Program Contribution and budget should be mandated by the bylaws.**

Consultation could occur by periodic teleconferences and especially at regional gatherings, with Presidents and/or year-round delegates (see section 8 of this report) attending the regional gatherings. Attendance could be in person or electronically (see

section 11 of this report). Subsequently at the annual meeting the budget will be presented with motions to affirm the priorities, and approve the APC and budget.

Note: For some issues, alternative techniques may be needed. For example, a consultation on Religious Exploration may need to include RE professionals as well as local board representatives and ministers. In some cases, such as this Active Democracy study, focus groups may have a role. Surveys also have a useful role. Techniques such as electronic straw polls could be used for less complex questions where a broad response from individuals is desired (e.g. the date of the annual meeting)

National Spokesperson

As outlined above, there was overwhelming support for having a national spokesperson but no agreement on who this should be. In his February 9, 2011 communication to the membership, President Gary Groot indicated that during the tenure of the Interim Executive Director, the Board will be conducting an extensive consultation with its membership to clarify the extent to which they wish the Executive Director to represent our faith in the larger social and religious environments.

Recommendation: that the Board proceed with consultation regarding representation of our faith in the larger social and religious environments, and consider all alternatives for which position could best fulfil that role.

7 Relationships between individuals within the member congregations and the CUC Council, Board and staff

The CUC is an association of congregations, with a provision for Individual Members who are not affiliated with a congregation. The legal relationship between members of congregations and the CUC is through the congregations, which are represented by delegates at the Annual Meeting. However, the CUC directly depends on individuals to serve as volunteers and to provide some funding through “Friends of the CUC” or through endowment campaigns. In addition, it is the individuals in a congregation who approve local budgets which support the APC funding to the CUC. This informal relationship between the CUC and members of congregations is therefore critical.

Most congregations have a small group of members who are very knowledgeable about the CUC. These are people who attend Annual Meetings and Fall Gatherings or who serve as volunteers in various capacities. The number of individuals engaged in these activities is likely around 10% of the total membership in any given year, and these are likely people pre-disposed and able to travel. All members of congregations receive the “Canadian Unitarian” publication and more than half also receive the new web-based eNews. Both of these publications have received very positive feedback and provide a strengthening connection between individuals and the CUC.

Part of the Study Group process was to contact all congregations to encourage them to participate in the study. Many gave various reasons for not participating including a lack of knowledge about the CUC within the congregation and the low priority of CUC issues. At the same time, Section 6 above reports a strong desire for local participation in CUC decisions which impact congregations. This would require an enhanced understanding of the CUC by individuals within congregations so that knowledge-based decisions can be made.

Most individuals are naturally focused on their own congregations, and are unlikely to develop in-depth knowledge of the CUC. However, the Study Group has concluded that it is important to develop processes to strengthen and encourage increased awareness of national issues and for conversations between interested parties. These conversations need to take place on an on-going basis rather than once a year at the Annual Meeting. Development of a flexible, electronic communications platform would facilitate greater participation in meetings and congregational development activities. Use of feedback mechanisms recommended elsewhere in this report, including issue-focused teleconferences, focus groups and straw polls, would allow interested individuals to both learn about current issues and provide their input.

The CUC Board occasionally receives direct correspondence from individuals; however, more contact and communication occurs between individuals who occupy leadership roles in congregations and CUC staff, than occurs between individuals and the CUC Board. If an individual does approach the Board, it is usually done on behalf of a stakeholder group in response to a particular issue; for example, RE support or UU-UNO re-structuring; and via initiatives such as CUC Friends or Chalice Lighters where individuals can support the CUC outside of the framework. It is often unclear who should be contacted for specific issues.

Recommendations:

The ASDG recommends the following be put in place to encourage these initiatives and improve communication between all parties:

- 1. That the development of a flexible, electronic communications platform be a high priority.** (Financial consideration acknowledged: The Board and Council must decide how these funds will be procured: changing spending priorities, a one-time infusion from reserves, fund-raising, grants specific to this project, for example).
- 2. That the CUC Board and staff develop and communicate an “issue process”, that clearly and transparently articulates to whom an individual should go with a given issue, and the next steps should the issue not be dealt with to that individual’s satisfaction.**

8 Selection of delegates to the Annual Meeting by member congregations

This was an open-ended question, so there is no tabulation of numerical results. There were, however, a number of recurring themes which are listed below. It is worth noting that most of the themes discussed do not contradict each other. For example, having a well publicized, open process for applying to be a delegate would reinforce having a well defined process. Having people recruited to apply would not reinforce a well publicized open process, but it would not necessarily contradict it either.

The Common themes were:

- the need for a well publicized, open process within congregations
- there should be an application process
- people should be recruited to apply
- there should be a well defined expectation of reporting back to the congregation
- There was a suggestion that using electronic voting, every member of every congregation be allowed to vote, at least on some issues
- Delegates might be appointed for a full year with electronic communication (and possibly voting on issues throughout the year)

In Other sections of the study there was a clear wish that delegates have a greater say in establishing the priorities of the Canadian Unitarian Council. The consensus of the committee was that more will need to be required of delegates in order to make this successful, and that, happily, electronic communication is now at a stage where this is feasible. Hence our recommendation of an extended term limit with the expectation of ongoing consulting during the term, and ongoing reporting between the delegates and their congregations. This would also mean some merger of responsibilities between delegates and denominational affairs committees (in those congregations that have denominational affairs committees).

Recommendations:

- 1) That CUC staff develop Best Practices for Delegates/Denominational Affairs Rep (and their selection) for use by congregations.**
- 2) That CUC delegates be asked to serve for one or two year terms, that there would be the expectation of ongoing communication between the delegates and the CUC board and staff during those two years, and that there be suggested roles for the delegates to play in their congregations during those two years.**

9 Means for promoting discussion, within and among member congregations, of matters coming before the Annual Meeting

Voice

The promotion of free and open conversation that includes all those who are affected by a given decision is an important part of active democracy. One of the strongest themes that emerged from the survey results was the importance of giving individuals and groups a voice in the decisions that affect them. This sentiment should not be a surprise; after all, one of the children's versions of our fifth principle says almost the same thing: we believe that all persons should have a say about the things that concern them.

Much of the conversation about having a voice has focused on the Annual Meeting. While the Annual Meeting is indeed important, it has serious time limitations. Even if it did not, having a voice at the Annual Meeting is not sufficient because the conversation has already been framed by the time it reaches the Meeting. We must ensure that there are ways of bringing voices into the conversation before the meeting opens.

The process brought forward by the Resolutions Study Group is an important step forward. We applaud the decision to dedicate Staff time to the resolutions process, ensuring that resolutions are received and sent out in a timely way. It is also important that congregations pick up the ball. Proposed resolutions need to be distributed to those who are affected (for example, this past winter the Lay Chaplaincy resolutions needed to get to Lay Chaplaincy committees) and decisions affecting the majority of members need to be discussed at the congregational Board table at the very least (if not taken to the congregation as a whole).

Communication through Existing Roles and Structures

We must learn to make better use of existing communications structures. The cuc-presidents, cuc-ministers and cuc-leaders email lists are useful. Would it be possible for announcements to go out to other lists? Or should there be an "announcement only" list that anyone can sign up for if they want to receive CUC announcements? How do congregational leaders and potential national leaders find out about the cuc-leaders list?

In its own publicity the Active Democracy Study Group discovered that an article in the e-newsletter received a good response, and a MailChimp email mail out from the CUC received an excellent response. Of the 495 unique visitors to the Active Democracy web page (not counting bots and phishing visits) 258 came by clicking on a link that they were sent.⁷

Opening up Communications

While it is important for congregational leaders in specific roles (such as the congregational President) receive specific mailings, we want to ensure that communication is not just with one or two individuals in particular roles, otherwise there

⁷ information provided by Ben Wolfe in an email to John Hopewell and Karen Fraser Gitlitz on March 19, 2012.

is a danger of a bottleneck if a particular person isn't interested, or has other, more pressing, priorities.

Part of cultivating future leaders is getting the word out to those who are not yet involved. E-newsletters and e-mailings are a good way to do this, as long as the overall number of mailings is controlled. Simple surveys and advertisements could be used to get a straw poll on a particular issue, and to draw attention to opportunities to participate.

Creating a culture of engagement

There is a feeling that the current structure doesn't encourage people to come forward—you have to know where to look to find out what is happening. Using the e-newsletter to advertise communications like the cuc-leaders list will help open up the opportunities so that anyone can get involved.

An educated voice

It is not enough to have a voice: there must also be opportunities for conversation, where questions can be clarified and ideas refined. Delegates and attendees at the Annual Meeting are able to participate in the mini-plenaries on social action items, pioneered by the Rev. Brian Kiely when he was CUC President. Creating opportunities before the meeting even begins would also be useful, such as the 2010 teleconferences on the budget organized by the Board and the Executive Director. Online communities can be very helpful in this regard. It is in the nature of online communities that they spring up when there is a need and disappear when the need has passed. We encourage the creation of online communities on an ad hoc basis. We also encourage the "delegates chat" initiated in 2011 to give delegates a venue for discussing issues coming before the meeting be given a higher profile.

Wanting to deepen our conversations all year round, and not just at annual meetings, we encourage use of time limited focus groups, where a small group of people who are interested in a particular topic are brought together for one or more conversations. The current nature of volunteering means that there is more availability for short-term tasks than longer-term study groups and Board commitments. While the latter continue to be needed, we could do a better job of tapping into the willingness of short-term volunteers. Imagine a big notice in the e-newsletter: *we're looking into "X" and if you want to be part of this six week conversation, contact _____* .

How are issues and ideas brought forward?

For conversations to be meaningful, the results must have some impact. How do we ensure that issues raised in online communities make it to the floor of the Annual Meeting, or at the very least, how do we ensure that the discussion informs the agenda items for the Annual Meeting?

If an online community wants to place an agenda item on the floor, they do have access to the Resolutions process, by gaining the support of twenty-five individuals who are members of at least three different member congregations located in at least three of the four CUC Regions. (For more information on who may submit a resolution, see Appendix 5, Who May Propose a Resolution?). The Resolutions process is central to how we make decisions, but many people are still not aware of how it works and why it is important. We encourage CUC Board and Staff to make education about the resolutions process an ongoing priority.

If an online community wants to bring their ideas forward to the conversation about an existing motion, they would need to work through a congregational delegate or another person who has a voice at the meeting (see Section 8 on Delegates and Section 10 on Stakeholders).

Do we need specific channels of communication for stakeholder groups such as religious educators, to bring their particular concerns forward to the Board or to the Council, without going through an individual congregation? This brings us to our next discussion, on stakeholders and their voice.

Recommendations

- 1. That the CUC Board and Staff use the e-news for straw polls and other responsive mechanisms**
- 2. That the CUC Board and Staff regularly advertise communications channels such as the cuc-leaders list serve, especially during times of conflict when people are most likely to be wanting their voice heard**
- 3. That ongoing education and publicity about the Resolutions process be a priority for CUC Board and Staff, and specifically, that online communities and other groups be made aware that they can use this process to move ideas and issues onto the floor of the Annual Meeting.**

10 Stakeholders and their voice

The survey results from congregational responses were clear: stakeholders should have a voice at the meeting, but not a vote. Individual responses were more diverse.

We understand that the new legislation for federally incorporated non-profits will require that Associate Members have a vote (congregations are not affected by this legislation). We understand that the CUC Board is looking into the implications this year and there will be recommendations coming to next year's annual meeting.

Recommendation: 12. That the CUC Board work in conjunction with the AD SG when proposing changes to bylaws etc., related to Associate Members.

Given that we have an interest in making sure that important groups have a voice but not a vote, it seemed wise to steer clear of the Associate Member category, and instead create a new category outside the bylaws called "stakeholder groups" for those groups which have a moral stake in the direction of the Canadian Unitarian Council, but for whom the congregation (or congregational delegate) is not the appropriate vehicle for having that voice heard.

Some of the criteria for stakeholder groups are the same as for Associate members, and some are different:

- the group must have a formal structure with bylaws, ensuring that there is due process for elections
- the group must be organized enough to be able to identify who is and isn't in group
- the group must be organized enough to elect a "spokesperson" who can be their representative at the Annual Meeting
- the group must demonstrate a commitment to our movement, with an important perspective to offer the Annual Meeting
- the group must be able to explain why the congregational model of representation doesn't meet their needs.

Finally, in order to become an official stakeholder, the group must present their case to the Annual Meeting for the Meeting's approval.

Examples of potential stakeholder groups might be Directors of Religious Education, National Young Adults organization, National Youth organization, Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice.

Recommendations:

That we create a category of "Stakeholder group." Stakeholder groups would meet specific criteria and their status would be approved by a vote of the Annual Meeting.

That recognized Stakeholder groups have:

- 1. a voice at the annual meeting, but not a vote.** An elected spokesperson for a stakeholder group does not need to wait until all delegates have spoken -- they can be in the lineup with the delegates.
- 2. the ability to put an item on the agenda, having demonstrated that they have met the criteria of the resolutions process**

That CUC Board and Staff prioritize education about Stakeholder group requirements and the use of the Resolutions process as a way to move ideas and motions forward to the annual meeting.

Note: These stakeholder recommendations are qualified by the caveat that any proposal or bylaw change must be in keeping with the new federal legislation.

Ministers status

No changes recommended at this time. The survey responses to the question of giving all Unitarian Ministers a vote at the annual meeting were very polarized, almost 50/50. Respondents felt very strongly one way or another, so we don't feel comfortable recommending a change at this time.

Ministers should also have a voice but not a vote (unless, of course, they are delegates). Individual Ministers already have the individual ability to speak at the meeting, so they are distinguished them from other stakeholder groups who need to elect a stakeholder in order to have a voice.

Observer Status at the CUC Board

No changes recommended at this time. Minister and Youth observers at the Board have a unique role, representing the CUC Board to their constituency and their constituency to the CUC Board. They should not have a vote at the Board table as this would compromise their role as observer. Voting Board members are meant to consider the needs of the organization as a whole when they vote.

11 Feasibility of electronic participation at the Annual Meeting

Comments from individuals about using electronic communications for Annual Meetings were all over the map. They ranged from “My idea of Unitarian heaven” to “I’d hate it.” However, the overwhelming response to the question: “would you be willing to participate electronically in an Annual Meeting “was “Yes”. 87.2% to 12.8%.

Recurring comments indicated a concern for preserving the richness of human face to face interactions and desirability of having people gather in groups; preventing the frustrations of individuals who might find themselves disconnected from a meeting due to technical issues; and preventing people who do not have the required hardware/software from being shut out.

A Practical Proposal:

Recommendation: That the CUC invest in hardware/software for ongoing communication between cluster groups spread geographically across the country to allow full participation in Council Meetings.

Example 1: 10 Cluster Locations (by population/geography):

Halifax
Montreal
Ottawa
Toronto
Unicamp
Thunder Bay
Saskatoon
Winnipeg
Red Deer
Vancouver

Example 2: 4 Cluster Locations (one site in each region):

Vancouver
Winnipeg
Toronto
Montreal

Example 3: Mobile setup for each region

A technological kit that could be setup for each region and which moves to the appropriate city each year.

Locations for meetings could be either in congregational buildings or in colleges/universities that house existing technology. A possibility of individuals (with computers) being able to view proceedings without necessarily giving input is also an option. .

Note: The Annual Conference and Annual Meeting are not the same thing and do not necessarily have to happen at the same time and place. Our Annual General Meeting has to happen every year (by law), but the conference doesn't necessarily need to happen every year in the same way it does now.

There are **two main ways** for this electronic voting & participation proposal to work:
1-When there is a central meeting (and/or conference), other "clusters" can join in from across the country
2-Can also have a meeting where there is no "central meeting" going on: a completely dispersed meeting between the clusters only

12 Other recommendations

Other concerns were raised, some of which may not be the mandate of the Active Democracy Study Group. These will be referred back to the Board.

Selection process of Board Officers (President, Treasurer, Secretary etc.) Should these positions be decided by the Board after its appointment or by the council during the Board approval process?

The current selection process, described simply, is as follows: The nominating committee, a committee chosen by the council, looks for candidates who fit the upcoming needs of the Board and presents a slate to council at the Annual Conference & Meeting. The council approves the slate and then officer positions are allocated by the Board itself. Commonly, most people have spent some time on the Board prior to making a commitment to serve in the capacity of President/treasurer etc.

A few people in the survey raised the question of whether the Council should approve the Board proposal for officers.

Recommendation: That the Council vote yes or no for each of the Board's recommended officer positions for the upcoming year.

Election process of Board and Nominating Committee

A concern was raised, that, as a general rule, we usually have only one candidate presented for nomination to the Board from each region and whether this situation results in the best candidate for the position.

The AD SG found that the current nomination process does not prohibit more than one person being nominated from each region, and certainly the nominating committee could be encouraged to look for more than one candidate. In review of Mr. Eli Mina's report his assessment of this issue was that "although some of the individuals I interviewed expressed a preference for a competitive process and possibly contested elections, I am not convinced that such a move would, by itself, address the systemic issues that I raised. Over the years of my practice, I have seen contested elections deliver less than optimal results, e.g.: nominees with low commitment levels or poor people skills being elected because of a passionate AGM speech".

An additional observation was of a need for more transparency around how people are nominated to the nominating committee itself and how the selection process unfolds towards presenting a slate to Council. This was seen as an education piece.

Recommendation: That the communication surrounding the process and opportunities to be nominated to the nominating committee and/or the Board needs to be expanded and widely distributed.

How to address social action work

The question was raised regarding how the Canadian Unitarian Council as a collective can increase effectiveness and engagement in social action work, whether by spokesperson, monitoring groups, education etc. Many of these suggestions are covered in other areas of this discussion, and the AD SG agreed that Social Action work

specifically was not part of the group's mandate and will refer this issue to the Board and staff to consider how best to approach social action issues.

Timing of annual meeting

It was suggested that the timing of the Annual Conference & Meeting may affect delegate accessibility. i.e. The May long-weekend may inhibit many members from attending as it is the first long weekend of the summer. There was insufficient feedback to make a recommendation and this issue will be has been passed along to the Board and staff for consideration.

Encouragement of underrepresented voices/marginalized persons to become involved in CUC decision making.

This issue has been largely addressed in the selection of delegates section and also throughout the discussion of electronic participation and voting. It should be noted that any investments in technology should take into account the diverse needs surrounding accessibility.

Governance model in use by the CUC. (corporate vs. Carver model currently in use.)

There was a concern that Council has given up too much authority to Board and that the current governance model as outlined by our bylaws seems inadequate. According to the majority of the ADSG members, our recommendations within this report have given some authority back to the Council, (voting on vision/priorities, etc., creating second opportunity for delegates to be involved at regional gatherings, enhancing communication opportunities etc.) and the ADSG feels that re-visiting Governance structures is beyond the scope of this report and that our recommendations fall effectively within the existing model's framework.

CUC interaction with individual congregants

A highlighted concern was that the workshop and questionnaire did not address this aspect of the ADSG mandate. The ADSG does see this has having been addressed under both the communications and relationships sections.

Board presence on study group

It was suggested that a Board presence on study groups can compromise the process. The ADSG acknowledges that the current representation may not be ideal: (A CUC Board Past President, and a former Board Member as co-chairs, as well as the current President as a study group member). It should be noted that the past CUC Board member is on the study group as an elected representative of UUMOC.

The makeup of the group came out of necessity. There were a few applicants who were not accepted for reasons of geographic representation but in reality we found very few people volunteering to join the study group. We did recognize that, ideally, the Board would have one voice only in study groups. Having said this, the group was a study group of the Council, and Council gave the CUC Board authority to appoint people to the group, including specified stakeholder representatives.

Appendix 1: Active Democracy Study Group Resolution

Study Resolution on Active Democracy (2010)

Approved by the CUC Annual General Meeting, May 2010

Whereas, by virtue of its By-laws, the affairs of the Canadian Unitarian Council (“the CUC”) are managed by a Board of Trustees (“the Board”) who may exercise all such powers of the Council as are not expressly directed or required by the By-laws of the Council or by the Canada Corporations Act to be exercised by the Council at its general meetings;

And whereas the Board has committed to undertake its responsibilities in an open and transparent manner through the adoption of formal written policies with corresponding accountabilities and monitoring mechanisms;

And whereas the Board is committed to ensure that the Mission, Vision, Ends and other policies reflect the CUC’s broadest values and perspectives;

Such that, in this instance, the Board seeks assistance from the Council’s members in examining the relationship in policy between the Council and its Board;

Be it resolved that:

1. The CUC Board is directed to form a Study Group to undertake a two-year national conversation regarding the democratic processes employed in the governance of the CUC, to include, but not necessarily limited to:
 - a. the decision-making authority of the Board relative to the Council;
 - b. the relationships between individuals within the member congregations and the CUC Council, Board and staff;
 - c. the selection of delegates to the Annual Meeting by member congregations;
 - d. means for promoting discussion, within and among member congregations, of matters coming before the Annual Meeting;
 - e. the feasibility of electronic voting at the Annual Meeting; and
 - f. multi-generational representation including Youth, young adults, professional religious educators and Ministers within the Council.
2. The Study Group shall be composed of representatives of member congregations, UUMOC (Unitarian Universalist Ministers of Canada), Canadian UU Youth, young adults, professional religious educators, the CUC Board and Staff, as well as a Chair and such other persons as the Board shall appoint from time-to time;
3. The Study Group shall present an interim report with preliminary recommendations to the 2011 Annual Meeting;
4. The Study Group shall bring formal resolutions to the 2012 Annual Meeting.

Appendix 2 Task Force Members

Current Members

Rev. Karen Fraser Gitlitz - Co-Chair, Ministry Representative; BC & Western Regions
March 2011-May 2012 - current

John Hopewell - Co-Chair; BC Region
March 2011-May 2012 - current

Christine Mishra - Secretary, Young Adult Member; Central Region
April 2011-May 2012 - current

Gary Groot - CUC Board Representative; Western Region
March 2011-May 2012 - current

John Marsh - Ministry Member; Eastern Region
March 2011-May 2012 - current

Carol Cumming Speirs; Eastern Region
August 2011 – May 2012 - current

Mary-Anne Parker – Religious Educators Representative; Western Region
Feb 2012-May 2012 - current

Past Members

Forbes Leslie; BC Region
March 2011-April 2012 - past

Brigit McFadden – Youth Member; Central Region
August 2011-March 2012 - past

Jennifer Dickson – CUC Staff Member; Central Region
March 2012-November 2011 - past

Kat Hutter – Religious Educators Member, Young Adult; Western Region
April 2011-July 2011 - past

Appendix 3 Acknowledgements

We have been ably served by many along the way to completing and writing up the results of this survey.

First by all the CUC staff throughout the process. Karen Claney assisted us with our March 2012 Face to Face (and Skype) Collation Meetings and especially those who gathered in Toronto at the CUC Offices. Karen offered us excellent communication and help with the set up. Jorge Moreira provided technical support. Karen was at the end of a phone when we ran into difficulties with the wifi service and offered a good solution.

We also thank Rev. Shawn Newton for the loan of his office for an entire Saturday from early morning to mid evening... causing him to relocate to write his sermon for the following day.

We are grateful to Bryan Carroll, member of the Unitarian Congregation of Saskatoon, for preparing a background document on democracy for us.

Above all we thank all of the individuals, congregations, and groups who answered the survey or participated in the workshops, both this spring, and last fall. Your input was essential to the task and greatly appreciated.

Congregations who returned questionnaires

Unitarian Congregation of Niagara, ON
First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto, ON
Lakehead Unitarian Fellowship, Thunder Bay, ON
Unitarian Congregation of Saskatoon, SK
First Unitarian Church of Hamilton, ON
First Unitarian Fellowship of Nanaimo, BC
South Fraser Unitarian Congregation, Surrey, BC
Don Heights Unitarian Congregation, Don Mills, ON
Unitarian Congregation in Mississauga, ON
First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa, ON
Kingston Unitarian Fellowship, ON
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Kamloops, BC
Unitarian Universalist Church of Olinda, ON
North Shore Unitarian Church, West Vancouver, BC
Comox Valley Unitarian Fellowship, BC
Unitarian Fellowship of Peterborough, ON

Congregations who held workshops, inviting participants to fill out individual questionnaires

Unitarian Church of Calgary, AB
Unitarian Church of Vancouver, BC
Unitarian Fellowship of Northwest Toronto, ON

Interest and professional groups

Professional Religious Educators
Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice

Young adults

First Unitarian Church of Victoria Sub-Committee on Democracy

Unidentified congregational group (counted as an interest group because this gathering was not the result of an openly advertised congregational meeting)

Appendix 4 Excerpt from the 2005 “Imagine Canadian Democracy Resolutions”

DEMOCRACY RESOLUTION No. 3:

DEMOCRACY WITHIN OUR UU CONGREGATIONS

The Resolution, as amended, passed unanimously.

1. The Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC), assembled at its Annual General Meeting in Hamilton, Ontario, on May 20-23, 2005, and pursuant to its resolution in May 2003 authorizing a two-year study on democracy,

1.1 Recalling that our Unitarian and Universalist (UU) principles uphold the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and the right of conscience and use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large,

1.2 Recognizing that participatory democracy requires, on the one hand, strong leadership to get the job done and, on the other hand, widespread congregational involvement in church life and decision-making,

1.3 Understanding that U Uss seek to fulfill their spiritual needs through a continuing process of self-discovery and interaction with fellow UUs,

1.4 Noting that although our principles affirm acceptance of one another and a diversity of viewpoints, we are not always tolerant of novel views or values that are outside established church practice,

1.5 Realizing that democracy is a way of life and our RE program offers an excellent opportunity for learning democratic practices,

1.6 Acknowledging that each UU congregation has a responsibility to foster its own democratic processes,

1.7 Believing that the welfare of all UUs can be better met in a democratic environment where all are welcome, and

1.8 Trusting that promoting democratic practices in church life will bring about the openness, equality, transparency and empowerment that make for a stronger and more supportive church community;

2. Resolves to search for ways and means to increase the use of the democratic process by:

	EXPLANATIONS AND EXAMPLES
	When voting on this Resolution, you are NOT voting on any of the material on the right side of the split pages. It is for information only.
2.1 ENCOURAGING the CUC Board to be leaders in and advocates for adopting democratic and transparent procedures in CUC internal affairs; recognizing the need for the Board to speak with one voice, once decisions have been taken.	CUC Board Members especially have a responsibility to present all views, including dissenting ones.
2.2 URGING Ministers, and Committee and Board Chairs to embrace processes and procedural rules that promote	Such as respectful exchange of views, rules to prevent domination by one person, respectful dissent, democratic resolution of

democracy in our congregations,	conflict. See “So Now You’re a Committee Chair” by John Slattery, March 2004.
2.3 ENCOURAGING all UU congregations to enhance inclusive governance and planning, and to exchange useful democratic practices with other congregations,	If a congregation has found some procedure to be more democratic and effective than common practice, that congregation is encouraged to inform others. Such practices might be: informing others through a “best practices forum” on the CUC website, using circle rather than theatre-style set-up for gatherings, making decisions by consensus, simplifying procedures, and using “everyday” language in our bylaws.
2.4 ENCOURAGING UU congregations to budget for up to full financial support for congregational delegates to attend the CUC Annual Meeting and urging all delegates to know and understand their congregation’s views on the topics to be discussed,	In many congregations, delegates do not know their congregations’ views, and therefore cannot represent their congregations faithfully when voting at the CUC Assembly. They could learn their congregations’ views by, for example, attending congregational workshops on resolutions, and by attending meetings of committees interested in a specific resolution.
2.5 DEVELOPING a “lifespan” Religious Education program that models and teaches everyday democratic practices,	For example, offer critical thinking and conflict resolution courses, encourage debates on current issues, analyze news events.
2.6 ENCOURAGING congregations to welcome youth (17 and under) into the fold with a formal ceremony, granting them duties and responsibilities appropriate to their age,	
2.7 EXPLORING the use of post-service forums to continue a dialogue or provide information on the theme of that Sunday’s service, or on any issues that have arisen in the congregation,	Each congregation could develop these forums according to its own culture. Some congregations (e.g., FUCWaterloo, Capital UU Congreg., Victoria) have already done so.
2.8 FOSTERING the use of democratic procedures in exchanges with other faiths, and	See examples under 2.2 above.
2.9 ENCOURAGING UU congregations to hold workshops promoting discussion on how to make democratic practices a	Encourage congregations to develop a “Covenant of Right Relationships”.

natural addition to enhancing church life,	
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Amendment Motion #1: Moved by Vyda Ng-Cornish, duly seconded and carried:
That in 2.1 “recognizing the need for the Board to speak with one voice, once decisions have been taken”, be added to the end of the sentence.

Amendment Motion #2: Moved by Philip Symons, duly seconded and carried unanimously.

That in 2.4 “URGING delegates to CUC assemblies to know and understand their congregations’ views on the topics to be discussed,” be replaced with “ Encouraging UU congregations to budget for up to full financial support for congregational delegates to attend the CUC Annual Meeting and urging all delegates to know and understand their congregation’s views on the topics to be discussed”,

Appendix 5 Who May Propose a Resolution?

From “The CUC Resolutions Process” (pdf document) on the CUC Website,
<http://cuc.ca/governance/resolutions-process/>

WHO MAY PROPOSE A RESOLUTION?

A resolution may be proposed by any one of the following (“the Proposers”):

- a) The CUC Board;
- b) A Study Group established by resolution approved at a CUC General Meeting for the express purpose of recommending such a resolution covering the topic in question;
- c) An existing Social Responsibility Monitoring Group that is responsible for the topic in question, with at least 3 active members;
- d) A member congregation; or
- e) Twenty-five individuals who are members at least three different member congregations located in at least three of the four CUC Regions.

In the cases of a) through d), the Proposers must submit to the Executive Director a statement signed by the presiding officer of the group(s) involved, certifying that the resolution has been approved by a majority of the members of the Proposers’ group in a duly called meeting (held in person or by electronic means).

In the case of e), the Proposers must submit to the Executive Director a statement of support from each of the individual members, and a statement from the relevant member congregations, stating that the individual supporters are members of that member congregation. This information can be gathered electronically.