

# C U S J

## Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice

*A national faith-based organization founded in support of Unitarian values*

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1Prime Minister Harper,  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6

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Dear PM Harper: re your decision to shut down Parliament for three months

Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice support a number of principles one of which is “affirming and promoting of the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large”. Your actions during the past year show that you are not following **Canadian** democratic traditions. The most blatant example occurred in December 2008 when you secured the prorogation of Parliament to avoid a confidence vote. This past month you prorogued Parliament again, and stopped the debate of our national affairs for the next three months.

While it is technically legal to prorogue Parliament, it is clear that you are not doing so for any legitimate reason. There are still 35 pieces of legislation at various stages of approval that need to go to final reading in both houses, but all these are all now dead. The economic situation has not changed sufficiently to warrant a complete change in economic strategy and normal annual adjustments to a plan should be sufficient.

To ordinary Canadians it appears as though you are using the economic situation as an excuse to avoid the legitimate and important concerns on the table at the moment: an investigation into our practices in treating prisoners of war, a bill requiring government to take responsible action on climate change, a bill to hold corporations accountable to their employees pensions, and many others.

Your Government is humiliating Canada internationally and amongst our allies by failing to pursue aggressively the allegations of our possible complicity in the torture of Afghan detainees. Not only will you not call a public inquiry into the issue but you have now shut down Parliament - the only other place where Canadians might get at least partial answers.

A minority government has to work to seek compromises with legitimate voices in the opposition that represent the views of many Canadians. It is not acceptable for you to shut down the house and govern the country with executive powers, running roughshod over our parliamentary procedures and institutions.

When you ran in the last election you promised a new era of government accountability. The new era is no accountability at all. We urge you to reconvene the parliament immediately and get on with the work of moving the many bills before the house forward to completion.

Yours truly,

Katharine Im-Jenkins  
President,  
Canadian Unitarians For Social Justice