



## Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice

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

P.O. Box 40011, Ottawa, ON, K1V 0W8

President, Rev. Frances Deverell

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To all MP's

Dear Members of Parliament;

I write as the president of the Canadian Unitarians For Social Justice to oppose the passage of bill S-7 which would renew the capacity of the police and the government to arrest people without charges and to hold them indefinitely without trial. These special wartime provisions were allowed to die in 2006 and should not be renewed. Unitarians hold democracy as a principle to be promoted in all aspects of our lives. We do not want to see this type of exceptional powers and potential violation of human rights become the norm in Canada.

I urge you to vote against Bill S-7 for the following reasons:

- We do not need to live in fear of terrorism every day. Our police have been doing a good job combatting terrorism without the need to violate the Charter rights of Canadians. These controversial provisions are neither necessary nor effective to confront terrorism. **Every major criminal terrorism-related incident in Canada since 2001 has been disrupted and prevented *without* the need for preventive detention or investigative hearings.** Provisions relying on arbitrary powers and a low threshold of evidence cannot be allowed to replace good police work. They add no value to our law or to law investigation and enforcement. Indeed, they may actually impede effective counter-terrorism measures by tipping off potential perpetrators that they are under investigation.
- The provisions of Bill S-7 have the potential to become instruments to deny due process and stain reputations. Under these provisions, individuals could be forced to testify in a court of law, arrested, detained or made subject to bail conditions – all **without charges** being laid. Individuals have no right to know, and no opportunity to challenge, the bases on which they are being subjected to preventive arrest or required to attend investigate hearings. As a result, a person could be **branded as a terrorist without having been found guilty by trial**, with all the consequences and stigmatization which ensue.
- I am very concerned that the definition of a terrorist, or terrorist activity is unclear and that this legislation could cast a very broad net with many innocent people affected by it. I am particularly concerned that it may be used against people who are involved in legitimate and legal dissent. It is very important that we maintain the rights of people to

disagree with the government without finding themselves thrown into jail for their courage. That is the essence of what a democracy is.

- Investigative hearings not only introduce the notion of inquisitorial justice, they also transform the role of the judge who then becomes an actor at the service of police investigations. This runs counter to the essential principle of the separation of powers in a democracy and undermines the independence of the judiciary.
- Bill S-7 would be a terrible erosion of one of the pillars of our democracy, the rule of law and the right to a fair trial. It threatens the very civil liberties hard one by our forebears. Commitment to the rule of law means that counter-terrorism measures must adhere to the values embodied in the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and cannot infringe on basic rights.

I urge you to reject these unnecessary encroachments on fundamental liberties and to vote against Bill S-7.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frances Deverell', written in a cursive style.

Rev. Frances Deverell  
President, Canadian Unitarians For Social Justice  
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cc Media  
Canadian Unitarian Council  
Unitarian Universalist Ministers of Canada