



## Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice

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

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To Premier Kathleen Wynne, Bob Chiarelli, Ontario Minister of Energy, and the Ontario Energy Board

Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice (CUSJ) (<http://www.cusj.org>) is a national, liberal religious organization founded to actively promote Unitarian values through social action. CUSJ is a membership organization and when it speaks, it speaks only for its members and not for either the Canadian Unitarian Council or for any particular Unitarian Congregation.

Unitarians affirm the fundamental unity and interdependence of all existence. We see this reality in the interconnections between people of all continents in our globalized world. We see the peoples of the world as one community in which the security of each nation is entwined with the security of all others. We believe the greatest threat to human security is global warming and climate change. We believe the overwhelming preponderance of scientists who tell us humans are responsible for the speed with which it is occurring.

The CUSJ Board believes we must all make it a priority to transform our ways of living toward sustainable economies that drastically reduce our energy consumption and the pollution of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. As a people, we must take responsibility for ourselves. The well-being of our children and their children and their ability to enjoy life on this earth is at stake.

The principles of justice and the inherent worth and dignity and equality of all people requires that everyone should have equal access to the basic necessities of life. If all areas of the world continue to focus on growth as the route to well-being, humanity will be on a collision course with the natural world. We in the developed world have long used more than our share of energy and resources. If we are to enjoy the fruits of growth, it must be through innovation and transformation to a new economy. We must take immediate and dramatic steps to change our ways of living, to reduce greenhouse gases put into the environment, and to reduce our consumption. Ontario can aggressively work towards this goal in a number of ways:

- **Focus on conservation.** We are pleased to see Ontario put emphasis on conservation. It is important and we must do even more in this area. Review all policies with an eye to reducing consumption. Building codes must require high efficiency standards. New appliances must be state of the art low energy users. Businesses and manufacturers must be strongly encouraged through a combination of carbon taxes and conservation incentives. Home retrofit programs should be

renewed and expanded. City design needs to encourage low-energy public transportation and communities where people work where they live. We need to move away from consumerism and militarism toward a different economic base.

- **A strong public education program** should back up these types of initiatives. If this kind of aggressive program has to be sold, show leadership. Sell it. Help Ontarians to understand why we have to go this route.
- **Produce solid information.** Ontario should ensure that the best information on all sources of power is gathered and published in useable formats so that people at all levels – individuals, businesses, and governments can make the best decisions. This information must not be biased toward one industry or another. The gathering of this data should be publicly funded.
- **Congratulations to Ontario for eliminating coal** as a source of power generation. Finish the job. This is a great success story to celebrate.
- **Ontario should halt its plans for nuclear power development.** There are many reasons for this. (see CUSJ brief to the Darlington commission: [Nuclear Power Brief 2011 03 31 CUSJ](#).) Nuclear power uses far more greenhouse gases to produce than is claimed if you consider cradle to grave processes. It is expensive to produce and costs are escalating. It is uninsurable against disaster. The Fukushima plant in Japan continues to pose great risks to human health around the world despite great efforts to contain the radiation. We do not want to put our Great Lakes area at risk. There is still no solution in sight for nuclear waste. Burying it in the Great Lakes Basin is completely unacceptable. Ontario should set as a goal to reduce the percentage of Nuclear Power in the mix down to zero as the plants we have age and must be decommissioned.
- **Replace the baseload power generated by nuclear power with hydropower** purchased from the James Bay area of Quebec as much as possible.
- **Bring up the investment in both wind, solar,** and small local water projects as well as biogas, heat pumps, and other sources of renewable energy as quickly as possible. Learn as much as we can from countries in the lead. Encourage innovation and new technology for power generation, storage, and for a smart grid to distribute the power. Encourage new organization structures such as local energy cooperatives to help generate this power. Make Canadians competitive in a new world.
- **Encourage localized power generation** wherever possible according to the particular situation and conditions in each place and each home and business. Massive wind farms may be suitable in some locations but more of our power should be developed house-by-house and business-by-business. The long-term strategy should be for a decentralized system—a flexible system that can increase or decrease power as demand changes.

- While, in the short term, an emphasis on natural-gas generated power may be necessary as the “cleanest” of the carbon-based fuels, it would be better if we can develop the new, emerging hydrogen potentialities. In the long term, we must **eliminate all carbon-based fuels**. They should be reserved for those uses for which there are absolutely no other alternatives. A long-range plan should include phasing out carbon-based fuels.

The climate crisis can be seen as a terrible threat or a great opportunity. We believe it is the responsibility of liberal religious organizations such as our own to remind our leaders that a better world is possible – a world where we stop damaging the capacity of the earth to sustain life and where we recognize our interconnection and our interdependence with all life as we know it. It is not too late to take action. We have a choice.

Our current economic and political priorities are generating massive disparities of wealth and poverty, in Canada and around the world. We allow a few people with concentrated wealth and power to control the public agenda in their own interests, without any accountability. We destroy our own nest. We foster human greed and ignore the consequences. We will not be able to ignore these consequences forever. Increasing numbers of extreme weather events are telling us that we are reaching a tipping point. Hurricane Sandy in 2012 in New York, and terrible floods in India, and in Calgary in 2013 are but two examples. Who knows who will be hit next or how much it will cost? The time for serious action in the public interest is now.

Will you, the leaders we have elected to represent us in a democratic country, take the necessary action to ensure that Ontario has a healthy future for many years? Our long-term energy policy is a critical element in ensuring such a future for our children and grandchildren. We are asking you commit yourself to doing everything you can to promote a renewable energy economy for Ontario and to the phasing out of both Nuclear power and carbon fuels. We join with ClimateFast (<http://www.climatefast.ca>) and many other grass roots organizations in asking for your pledge to a healthy energy future.

In faith,



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