

Interim progress report on Eli Mina's governance review

The Board of Trustees has made a number of specific and intentional adjustments in response to the review it commissioned Mr. Eli Mina to do around the issue of Board Governance. The report produced by Mr. Mina was distributed to all member societies and is available on the CUC website. In more than one spot Mr. Mina makes the point that change is not easy to do. As we all know, it is commonplace for reports of this nature to be received and then gather dust. The Board wants you to know that we are committed to make real and substantive change for the sake and benefit of the Canadian Unitarian Council and to that end we provide you with this interim progress report.

On behalf of the Board I welcome your comments. While it is always nice to receive positive and supportive comments we particularly solicit your concerns. This is an important time of transition for the CUC and we believe that we have an obligation to hear what it is that you want your national organization to be. Our resources are limited. Our numbers are small. But we believe that our liberal religious message is large; one that is more important for our society today than has ever been the case. So... getting this right is far more important to us than avoiding constructive critique. Please feel free to contact me personally or your Board representative. I can be reached at gary@cuc.ca. Your Board representative can be reached by using their first name@cuc.ca.

Since receiving Mr. Eli Mina's report (with some points predating the report) we have done the following:

1. Made changes to way the Board meetings are run.
 - a. We have a consensus "card" system in place.
 - b. Motions to be discussed are presented in writing to all Board members in advance. Motions "on the fly" are no longer done.
 - c. A motion was passed to allow grammatical corrections to be made outside of the meeting, without altering the intent of the motion.
 - d. Member participation is tracked informally. On significant issues we generally do a "go around" to make sure everyone has an opportunity to speak to the issue at hand.
 - e. The pace of the meeting has improved significantly.
 - f. A motion was passed to allow seconders of motions not be recorded as allowed for by Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised.
 - g. We hired a person to take minutes at our meetings.
 - h. We have clarified that the youth observer to the Board (YOB) and the UUMOC observer to the Board have equal right to speak to every issue. While they, and the ex-president, do not have a vote we ask them after votes what their vote would have been had they been able to vote so that we know their opinion and perspective. We explicitly encourage them to speak when they feel that their unique perspective is valuable.

- i. We feel like we have made real and substantive progress on the issues of managing conflict constructively and diversity of opinions.
 - j. There is an ongoing effort to emphasize that decision-making is co-owned.
 - k. The majority of the meetings are dedicated to visioning and leadership.
 2. Made changes to the way the Executive Director is supervised.
 - a. A policy change was introduced to allow the executive director contract committee (EDCC) to supervise the executive director between face-to-face meetings.
 - b. A policy change was introduced to give the EDCC explicit guidelines to deal with complaints.
 3. Made changes to staff-Board access/interaction.
 4. Increased communication and consultation with the membership especially in difficult times.
 - a. We quickly communicated to you the resignation of Jennifer Dickson
 - b. We have asked for your assistance in reviewing the job description of the executive director prior to searching for a new ED.
 - c. We will be communicating with you about the future work plan and budgetary situation once we have the detail of the 2011 year end in hand.
 5. Increase communication and consultation with UUMOC (Unitarian Universalist Ministers of Canada).
 - a. We have moved to strengthen our relationship with UUMOC by asking their advice during the current time of transition.
 - b. We have a yearly connection between UUMOC and the Board following the annual general meeting.
 - c. Collaborated with UUMOC in the development of this years spiritual leadership symposium.
 - d. Arranged for a monthly phone between the Board president and the UUMOC chair.
 6. Carver and the Board
 - a. We have chosen to work on finalizing the preparations to fully implement the Carver governance system “on the sidelines” in order to allow Board meetings to be focused on visioning.
 - b. We are being more pragmatic in its implementation given that:
 - i. Board policies are mostly in place but have not been tested for the most part.
 - ii. An ownership linkage plan is in place and being implemented but is yet to be tested to see if it acceptable.
 - iii. Monitoring of the executive director was starting to be implemented and is currently suspended until a new ED has been hired.
 - c. The Board prioritized the goals of the organization such that 80% of time and budget were to be spent on four areas of high priority during the September face-to-face meeting.

- d. We are in the process of reviewing a book entitled “Governance in Ministry” by Don Hotchkiss in order to assess if there are deficiencies in the Carver model that needs to be addressed.
7. Succession planning
 - a. The nominating committee and the Board have a conversation yearly about the needs of the Board.
 - b. A list of desired traits of Board candidates has been established.
 - c. A process to explain the roles and required commitments to candidates before they agree to be nominated is in place.
8. Board evaluation
 - a. A yearly evaluation of the Board as a whole is scheduled for each September face-to-face meeting
 - b. An evaluation of each meeting is done at the end of each meeting.
9. Hired Mr. Mina to mentor the current President in his role for a one-year period.

In addition plans are in place to do the following:

1. Implement a “bottoms up” consultation on one or two issues of importance to the membership.
 - a. This process forms a part of the ownership linkage plan of the Board.
 - b. The exact issues to be addressed will be iterative in nature but the issues that are currently emerging include:
 - i. The need for a “spokesperson” or visionary leader.
 - ii. The desires of the council given the quickly approaching reality that a balanced budget will require by the end of 2014 and concerns that have been expressed about a proposed increase in the annual program contribution.
2. Improve the Board orientation process.
 - a. Have a yearly orientation around the May meeting.
3. Communicate frequently with the membership.
4. Improve the Board-membership connection including but not exclusive to:
 - a. Establishing the value of the CUC to member societies.
 - b. Asking advice on major decisions
5. Have a joint Board-Staff day during the March face-to-face meeting to go through a visionary “scenario planning” session.

Sincerely,

Gary Groot
President
CUC Board of Trustees