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PROPOSED ACTION: **Right to Clean Air, Water, and Soil**
PROPOSERS: CUC Environment Monitoring Group
CONTACT: environment@cuc.ca
DATE: APPROVED May 15, 2015 at the Annual General Meeting

Background:

1. A healthy environment is inextricably linked to well-being.
2. In order to protect themselves, individuals and communities need to know what pollutants are being released into the local environment and need to have the right to participate in decisions affecting their environment.
3. Environmental conditions respect no borders.
4. Individuals, acting alone, can do little to protect themselves.
5. Past efforts to establish environmental rights at the national level failed, there is now a new movement to establish “clean air, water and soil” and the right to know what pollutants are being released as rights progressively, starting at the Municipal level; then when there is sufficient momentum within a Province move to the Provincial level; finally when established in seven or more Provinces with 50% of the population, move to the Federal level; and
6. As of 02 March 2015 this movement has seen these rights established in, 25 municipal entities (see sample resolution at Appendix B attached) and counting including these: Victoria BC; Vancouver BC; The Pas MB; Montreal QC; Yellowknife NWT; Hamilton Ont. etc.
7. The CUC 2009 Environmental Resolution “**call(s) upon the CUC and its members to provide leadership through collective and individual actions, and to be a strong voice and presence, in confronting environmental issues.**”

Therefore, in order to further fulfill the previously approved resolution of 2009, we propose the following actions:

1. The CUC urge member congregations and fellowships and their members to engage, join with and support others in their community in collective/cooperative political activity(s) to persuade first municipal and subsequently provincial and then the federal government to recognize a clean environment as a basic right and to enact, within their jurisdictions, resolutions, by-laws and/or legislation as appropriate to protect the rights for all to clean air, water and soil along with the right to know what pollutants are being released.

2. The CUC Environmental Monitoring Group will survey CUC members in 2016 and again in 2017 to ascertain progress at the community level, and along with other relevant information, communicate progress to members.

APPROVED.

ACTION PLAN FOR PROPOSERS – CLEAN AIR, WATER AND SOIL

An Action Plan accompanies each proposed motion, outlining action steps that might be necessary to implement the motion. This is to provide delegates with a clear idea of the resources that might be involved, and how much staff and volunteer time needs to be allocated.

The Proposers suggest the following actions to support the implementation of their motion, if approved by delegates at the Annual General Meeting:

PROPOSED ACTION	DETAILS	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	COMPLETION DATE
Promote, Survey and Report	Promote and respond to questions: provide appropriate supporting information, material, and sources; and conduct surveys	Environmental Monitoring Group	Dec 2017
Communicate	Communicate, “urge to participate” to member congregations; and post this action plan on the CUC web site and appropriate supporting information.	CUC Staff/Board	June 2015
Engage locally and respond to survey	Engage with others to enroll municipalities, provinces and territories to enact rights; and respond to two surveys	CUC Members who choose to engage	Dec 2017

APPENDIX B
RIGHT TO CLEAN AIR, WATER, AND SOIL – City of Victoria, BC

The City of Victoria in British Columbia approved unanimously on 18 December, 2014 the following motion:

Declaration of the Right to a Healthy Environment

WHEREAS the David Suzuki Foundation Blue Dot Tour has inspired many Canadians **to request that the right to a healthy environment be** and requests support for the right to a healthy environment to be enshrined in the Charter of Rights and Freedom through support of the following motion;

AND WHEREAS the City of Victoria understands that people are part of the environment, and that a healthy environment is inextricably linked to the well-being of our community;

AND WHEREAS the City of Victoria's Official Community Plan (2012) provides a strong policy foundation to pursue actions and initiatives that contribute toward a healthy environment;

AND WHEREAS the City of Victoria has the opportunity to be the first jurisdiction on Vancouver Island to endorse the Declaration of the Right to a Healthy Environment, joining other Canadian cities in re-affirming our commitment to social, environmental and economic sustainability;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the City of Victoria endorses the following declaration:
"All people have the right to live in a healthy environment, including:

The right to breathe clean air;

The right to drink clean water;

The right to consume safe food;

The right to access nature;

The right to know about pollutants and contaminants released into the local environment;

The right to participate in decision-making that will affect the environment.

The City of Victoria has the responsibility, within its jurisdiction, to respect, protect, fulfill and promote these rights.

The City of Victoria shall apply the precautionary principle: where threats of serious or irreversible damage to human health or the environment exist, the City of Victoria shall take cost-effective measures to prevent the degradation of the environment and protect the health of its citizens. Lack of full scientific certainty shall not be viewed as sufficient reason for the City of Victoria to postpone such measures.

The City of Victoria shall apply full-cost accounting: when evaluating reasonably foreseeable costs of proposed actions and alternatives, the City of Victoria will consider costs to human health and the environment.

By December 31st, 2015, the City of Victoria will consider objectives, targets, timelines and actions within its jurisdiction to fulfill residents' right to a healthy environment, including options to:

- Ensure equitable distribution of environmental benefits and burdens within the municipality, preventing the development of pollution “hot spots”;
- Ensure infrastructure and development projects protect the environment, including air quality;
- Address climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and implementing adaptation measures;
- Responsibly increase density;
- Prioritize walking, cycling and public transit as preferred modes of transportation;
- Ensure adequate infrastructure for the provision of safe and accessible drinking water;
- Promote the availability of safe foods;
- Reduce solid waste and promote recycling and composting;
- Establish and maintain accessible green spaces in all residential neighbourhoods.

The City of Victoria shall review these objectives, targets, timelines and actions every five (5) years, and evaluate progress towards fulfilling this declaration.

The City of Victoria shall consult with residents as part of this process.”

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT Council forward this resolution to the annual meeting of the Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities, the Union of British Columbia Municipalities, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and member local governments, requesting favourable consideration by local councils and by delegates at the 2015 annual meetings of these associations.

Council thanked Rupert Yakelashek for inspiring Council to take action and for taking the lead on this Declaration.