

## Preliminary Report of the Unicamp Charter Review Committee

### Unicamp AGM Resolution

At the September 18, 2021 Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Unicamp, the following motion was adopted by the delegates:

*To strike a committee of delegates to facilitate a community engagement process to review the mandate and charter of Unicamp that would be gathered and reported on at the next AGM with recommendations.*

### Unicamp Charter Review Committee

In October 2021, the delegates who volunteered to serve on the committee, the Unicamp Executive Director and the President of the Board, began meeting regularly to work on this task. The Executive Director of the Canadian Unitarian Council participated for a number of months. A consultant with the Unicamp Evaluation Advisory Group also assisted the committee with the community engagement phase. A list of committee members appears at the end of the report.

### What is a Charter?

A charter, more commonly referred to as articles of incorporation, is a key governing document that gives an organization its legal status. It identifies the characteristics of a corporation such as its name, charitable purposes and other financial and legal powers and authorities.

### Committee Review of Current Unicamp Charitable Purposes

Unicamp was incorporated as a charitable organization in 1969. The charter or articles of incorporation have not been significantly updated or amended since that time. We decided to focus our review on the **charitable purpose statements of the charter** which describe the objectives or aims the organization was created to achieve and to recommend that the remaining statements in the charter regarding financial and legal authorities be reviewed and updated by the Unicamp Board of Directors.

The AGM resolution included a review of the mandate of Unicamp. The committee decided that any review and update of the mandate statement, revised in recent years, should occur after the process of updating the charitable purposes and thus was not addressed by this committee.

The original and current statement of purposes (objects) of Unicamp found within the existing charter are:

*UNICAMP OF ONTARIO INCORPORATED*

*For the following objects, that is to say:*

- a) To organize, operate and maintain camps with related services for Unitarian religious training of children and to provide, operate and maintain facilities for church and leadership conferences and seminars.*

We reviewed the legal requirements for charitable purposes, which are regulated by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and the Ontario Not-For-Profit Corporations Act (ONCA). We reflected upon Unicamp's core identity and the breadth of its programs and activities as they relate to the existing charitable purposes. We

concluded that some aspects of the purposes are still relevant (such as operating camps for children), but the language is outdated. The purpose relating to offering church and leadership conferences and seminars does not adequately describe or reflect Unicamp's diverse programs and activities. Unicamp has significantly changed and evolved since its formation. Charitable purpose statements should serve as a clear guide for an organization's activities but the existing purposes cannot adequately do so. We concluded that the 50+ year old charitable purpose statement needed to be updated. The Canadian Unitarian Council (and others) recommend that charitable purposes be reviewed and updated, if needed, every ten years. (Note that an excellent recounting of the history and evolution of Unicamp is available.)

### **Development of New Charitable Purpose Statements**

We spent considerable time reviewing the policy guidance documents of the CRA in order to understand the legal requirements for charitable purposes and to draft updated purposes that would comply. The ONCA regulations were also reviewed. Charitable purposes are the aims the organization was created to achieve – its reasons for being. References to some policy guidance documents appear at the end of this report.

We reflected on who we are presently as a religious charity, how we have evolved over time and what we aspire to be. We considered the ways in which Unicamp's many programs and activities fulfill, or aspire to fulfill, the charitable purpose of advancing religion. Then we engaged in a process of creating updated charitable purpose statements that would reflect our current aims as a religious charity and would comply with the legal requirements.

The process of working on this together as a committee was challenging, meaningful and enjoyable and we are excited to share this updated charitable purpose statement with the Unicamp community for their consideration. We believe these proposed purposes can play an important role in guiding leadership for Unicamp, for deepening the spirituality of Unicamp programs and activities and strengthening our UU faith and community, as well as maintaining our charitable organization status.

### **The Proposed New Charitable Purposes for Unicamp**

Below are the three charitable purposes we are proposing, in addition to an introductory statement that provides additional information required in charitable purpose statements.

**The statement of purpose of Unicamp of Ontario is to operate a Canadian Unitarian Universalist (UU) campground and Spiritual Retreat Centre for UU's, member congregations, and the general public of all ages to:**

- **Provide camps, programs, services and gatherings, that advance Canadian Unitarian Universalist principles, engage in religious exploration, and build a welcoming, inclusive, multigenerational, community;**
- **Nurture leadership and life skills by offering programs and opportunities to children, youth, and adults through grounding learning in the Canadian Unitarian Universalist Principles;**
- **Engage people in practicing environmental stewardship and living out the Canadian Unitarian Universalist principle of respecting the interdependent web of all existence.**

**This will be realized through: education, conservation, and the enhancement of Unicap's natural habitat.**

### **Charitable Purposes: Advancing Religion, Means and Beneficiaries**

The CRA requires that charitable purpose statements meet legal requirements and provide particular information.

“To be eligible for charitable registration, a purpose should identify three elements:

- the **charitable purpose category** (relief of poverty, advancement of education, **advancement of religion**, or certain other purposes beneficial to the community in a way the law regards as charitable)
- **the means** of providing the charitable benefit—to define the scope of the activities that can be conducted to directly further the purpose and ensure the provision of a charitable benefit...
- the **eligible beneficiary group**—to ensure the charitable benefit is provided to the public or a sufficient section of the public...” (CRA. How to draft purposes for charitable registration. B. 9.)

The graph below may be helpful to illustrate how the proposed purposes meet these requirements.

	<b>How the purpose advances religion</b>	<b>Means of providing charitable benefit</b>	<b>Beneficiaries</b>
<b>a)</b>	-advance Canadian Unitarian Universalist principles, - engage in religious exploration, - and build a welcoming, inclusive, multigenerational, community;	- provide camps, programs, services and gatherings	UU's and the general public of all ages  Exclusion – seasonal camping requires UU congregational membership in good standing
<b>b)</b>	Nurture leadership and life skills through grounding learning in the Canadian Unitarian Universalist Principles;	-by offering programs and opportunities	UU's and the general public of all ages  Children, youth and adults

c)	Engage people in practicing environmental stewardship and living out the Canadian Unitarian Universalist principle of respecting the interdependent web of all existence	-education, conservation, and enhancement of Unicamp's natural habitat	UU's and the general public of all ages
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### **Note Re Charitable Purpose Category**

The committee was operating under the assumption that Unicamp was designated as a religious charity type by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). We recently discovered that Unicamp is currently designated as “other purposes beneficial to the community.” CRA was unable to provide any clarification as to why or when this designation was made and said we could apply for the religious charity designation in the future. The committee recommends seeking designation as a religious charity in the future.

### **Engaging the Unicamp Community**

The resolution at the 2021 AGM called for the committee to “facilitate a community engagement process” for the review of the charter. We believe it is vital to hear from the many different groups of people who are involved in Unicamp activities. Do the updated charitable purposes reflect who we are and what we seek to achieve as a religious campground and spiritual retreat center?

We worked with a member of the Unicamp Evaluation Advisory Group with expertise in evaluation and community engagement processes. To obtain feedback on the updated charitable purposes, we will be holding focus groups with the Board of Directors, seasonal campers, youth and adult staff, and a focus group open to congregational members. We will also be broadly distributing an online survey in the coming months for Unicamp participants and members of congregations who are interested in providing input. A summary of the community feedback will be included in the final report, along with recommendations, to be presented at the 2022 Unicamp AGM.

### **Unicamp Charter Review Committee Members**

Dianne Heise, Committee Chair, Grand River Unitarian Congregation Delegate  
Ed Bennett, Grand River Unitarian Congregation Delegate  
Aukje Byker, Unitarian Fellowship of Peterborough Delegate  
Terri Marks, Unicamp Board President  
Lauren Renzetti, Neighbourhood UU Congregation Delegate  
Yvette Salinas, Unicamp Executive Director  
Lorna Weigand, Don Heights Unitarian Congregation Delegate  
With contributions from Vyda Ng (Canadian Unitarian Council Executive Director) and

Kitty Corbett, Unicamp Evaluation Advisory Group

### **For More Information**

If you would like to learn more about the requirements for charitable organizations and charitable purposes, please refer to the summary prepared by the Canadian Unitarian Council or the Canada Revenue Agency website. Some links are provided below.

Canadian Unitarian Council – Reviewing and Updating Charitable Purposes

<https://cuc.ca/congregations-leaders/legal-issues-reporting/reviewing-updating-charitable-purposes/>

CRA – What is Charitable

<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/charities-giving/charities/registering-charitable-qualified-donee-status/apply-become-registered-charity/establishing/what-charitable.html>

CRA - How to draft purposes for charitable registration

<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/charities-giving/charities/policies-guidance/guidance-019-draft-purposes-charitable-registration.html>