

Bringing faithful justice to the grill

Talking to your MP this summer BBQ season

The summer is a great time to connect with and build a relationship with [your MP](#).

We have created some short BBQ pitches on topics that we know are of interest to you as advocates. Make the most of the opportunity of your MP being home from Parliament until mid-September. Use and adapt these words as you see fit. Please send us relevant updates, suggestions, or questions to justice@united-church.ca and to help us keep the conversation going at [United Action for Justice](#) on Facebook, [X](#) (formerly known as [Twitter](#)), and [Instagram](#).

This is an opportunity

- for you and your MP to get to know each other on a personal level, acknowledging their humanity and learning what is important to them
- to bring important issues and asks to your MP's attention
- to get commitments from your MP
- to gather information about what questions your MP has about an issue

Most MPs have a community BBQ open to everyone sometime in the summer—you can Google it, call their constituency office, or look on their social media page. You can also organize a meet-and-greet to invite your MP to attend.

As people of faith, we are called into bold discipleship that leads to daring justice! Much public witness draws on the biblical prophetic tradition of speaking truth about the state of society/world, and calling for change and transformation to promote life, justice, and peace. Isaiah, Micah, Ezekiel, Amos, and Jesus are examples for us. Speak up about justice in small doses and plant seeds for future change! For more tools for faithful justice action, check the [Faith and Politics](#) webpage on united-church.ca.

NOTE: We aren't covering every topic or all the important questions. We will keep adding to this resource over the coming weeks and months. Some advocacy groups have their own summer BBQ guide, so check out other organizations you support.

August 2024 update

Jump to the issue(s) you're most concerned about

2SLGBTQIA+ Justice..... 3
Cuban Economic Crisis 5
Migrant Justice..... 6
Just Peace in Palestine and Israel 8
Guaranteed Livable Income 10
Indigenous Justice: Grassy Narrows 12
Climate Justice 14
Just Peace in the Philippines..... 16
Additional Justice Issues to Follow 18

2SLGBTQIA+ Justice

Question/Ask

Around the world, discriminatory laws put at risk the human rights of people who are 2SLGBTQIA+. As my MP, will you support our three asks to help ensure safety, dignity, and respect for the human rights of all?

- **Appoint a Special Envoy** for LGBTQIA+ human rights to coordinate international efforts with other countries standing up for LGBTQIA+ rights worldwide, and **use all diplomatic channels available to secure the repeal of draconian anti-LGBTQIA+ laws** worldwide, including in Canadian provinces.
- **Improve pathways** to Canada for LGBTQIA+ activists and community members who may need to flee their countries for safety.
- **Increase Canadian international assistance** to organizations committed to inclusion and supporting LGBTQIA+ human rights, and make it a long-term funding commitment.

If yes, when will you let me know what you've done and what answer you've received?

If not, why not?

Issue

As people of faith, we are called to challenge injustice and oppression so everyone can live life abundantly. The United Church of Canada opposes discrimination against anyone, for any reason, including actions that result in someone's worth being devalued. The work of justice is about how we treat people in the world, so we work to end all forms of discrimination. The United Church of Canada affirms that all persons are made in the image of God. The United Church denounces the amendments to policies and legislation across provinces in Canada that roll back safety and legal protections for 2SLGBTQIA+ people, particularly transgender and non-binary youth. We also raise the alarm about anti-LGBTQIA+ bills that have passed around the world, notably in Uganda and Ghana, putting peoples' lives in danger. Ask your MP: How is Canada supporting LGBTQIA+ human rights in places such as Uganda?

We invite tangible actions from the people of the United Church and all people of goodwill to be in solidarity with 2SLGBTQIA+ peoples in response to these proposed policy changes and draconian laws.

Polarization and attempts to roll back rights and protections of 2SLGBTQIA+ peoples should be met with concerted resistance by all.

More information

- The United Church of Canada: [Call to Act: Join in Solidarity with the 2SLGBTQIA+ Community](#)

August 2024 update

- Dignity Network Canada: [2023 Briefing Report: A Canadian Special Envoy on International LGBTIQ+ Human Rights](#) and [March 23: Call to Support Uganda's LGBTIQ Communities](#).
 - The United Church is a member of the board of Dignity Network Canada.
- [Affirm United](#)

Cuban Economic Crisis

Question/Ask

Cuba is facing an extreme economic crisis. As my MP, will you help bring attention and aid to the Cuban people's plight?

Will you ask the Minister of International Development and the Minister of Foreign Affairs to:

1. increase Canadian humanitarian aid to Cuba?
2. speak with the US about how its policies* towards Cuba harm the Cuban people and affect Canadians' ability to deliver aid?

**Sanctions; erroneous listing on the US List of State Sponsors of Terrorism.*

If yes, when will you let me know what you've done and what answer you've received?
If not, why not?

Issue

The United Church of Canada has fostered close relationships with Cuban partners for over four decades. The Cuban people are facing the worst economic crisis in the country's history: increased hunger, severe child food insecurity, increased child mortality, prolonged power outages, and lack of cash and medicines.

Jesus cared for the children around him, and our faith calls us to do the same. Today, 9% of Cuban children experience **severe** food poverty, and 33% experience moderate food poverty. This is in sharp contrast to Cuba's previous position as the only country in Latin America to *eliminate* child malnutrition (UNICEF, 2009). The extreme economic crisis in Cuba is caused by three factors:

1. the effects of US policy (sanctions and listing)
2. the impact of COVID (drop in remittances and tourism dollars)
3. the impact of droughts, tornadoes, and other effects of climate change

The solution requires both humanitarian aid and an end to US policies that create these harms. Canada has a long history of connection with the Cuban people. We have heard from MPs that they are not hearing about the current extreme economic crisis in Cuba, and that many MPs aren't aware of how US policies are affecting Canadians' ability to respond to the situation.

More information

- [Letter](#) from 35 Canadian churches and civil society calls government ministers to action.
- The article "[Crisis in Cuba: a role for Canada?](#)" outlines how Canada should play a greater role in responding to the crisis in Cuba.

Migrant Justice

Time sensitive: The Government of Canada appears to be back-tracking on its commitment. The Migrant Justice Network invites us September 14th and 15th to join events to “Say No To Racism! Yes to Immigrant Justice!” See <https://migrantrights.ca/events/sept/> to find an event near you or to register an event your community will organize in solidarity.

Question/Ask

The Government of Canada promised permanent resident status for undocumented workers in Canada but have yet to deliver. As my MP, will you tell the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada that you support the promised comprehensive program to “regularize” undocumented people and ask for its immediate implementation?

*Please also **thank** your MP for the recent improvement to the [status of care workers!](#)

Issue

The United Church of Canada’s congregations include both newcomers to Canada and thousands of people who welcome newcomers through formal refugee sponsorship, as well as formal and informal supports to migrants. We believe that we are called to show radical hospitality to our neighbours near and far.

We believe in the dignity of every person, and a vision of an equitable and just country and world. We support regularizing undocumented migrants, people who contribute greatly to the flourishing of our country. For years, The United Church of Canada, with the Migrant Rights Network, has been advocating for status for all.

Undocumented migrants are integral to our communities, yet they face exploitation and exclusion. Regularization will empower undocumented people to assert their rights at work; to protect themselves from abuse, and to access healthcare and essential services while growing the economy, which in turn funds public services. Regularization will change lives for generations to come.

In December 2021, PM Trudeau made a [mandate letter](#) commitment asking the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to create a “regularization program” for undocumented migrants. That promise has been repeated many times, and the Minister [promised to bring a proposal to Cabinet](#) in the spring of 2024. Recently, the Minister has [indicated that there is no consensus](#).

A comprehensive and inclusive [regularization program](#) that allows all undocumented people to apply for permanent resident status immediately should be implemented. It should include no caps, no restrictions by industry of work or geography, and no two-step immigration, which

August 2024 update

only gives temporary work permits. We welcome the recent announcement of such a program for care workers.

More information

- The United Church of Canada, [“Ecumenical Partners Call for Justice for Migrant Workers”](#)
- Migrant Rights Network [Take Action](#) and [briefing](#) on regularization

Just Peace in Palestine and Israel

Question/Ask

Canada needs a binding two-way arms embargo to ensure it is not in any way complicit in international crimes in Gaza. As my MP, will you join people of conscience throughout your riding and sign onto the [Arms Embargo Now statement](#)?

If yes, will you help get other members of your caucus to sign, too?

If not, why not?

Issue

People in Gaza are experiencing utter destruction, loss of lives, and inhumane conditions without access to necessities for life. Famine is imminent. Children are particularly impacted. Our faith and our humanity call us to act now to ensure an end to the injustice.

Unfortunately, despite passing a non-binding parliamentary motion on March 18, 2024, **Canada has NOT YET imposed an arms embargo on Israel!**

1. **A loophole means that arms exports can continue. Previously authorized permits**—i.e., any [permits issued before 2024](#)—**remain valid**. This is no small number: [Permits worth \\$30 million](#) were granted in 2023, much of that in the October–December period.
2. Canada’s parliamentary motion **does not apply to arms and component parts that first go to another country**. So Canadian exports to the United States, which is Israel’s largest arms supplier and one of Canada’s largest trading partners, aren’t touched by the motion.
3. An arms embargo is a **two-way ban**: on **both exports and imports** from the named country (according to [Global Affairs Canada](#)). Canada’s parliamentary motion does not prevent Canada from continuing to purchase military equipment from Israel.
4. Canada’s **motion is non-binding**. The Canadian government could start issuing permits again anytime, without needing to seek permission from Parliament or even needing to let the public know.

A binding, two-way arms embargo could be put into place immediately—it doesn’t require Canada to pass a new law or for anything to go before the House of Commons; it is fully within the government’s reach during the summer break!

More information and additional asks

- As people of faith, we bring the grief, compassion, and concerns of a hurting world to God. It will take all of our efforts to get the Government of Canada to do everything in its power to help bring an end to the conflict and to not be complicit in genocide and famine. An arms embargo is just one of the measures needed to secure lasting peace in

August 2024 update

the region. Join us at The United Church of Canada's [Support Justice and Peace in Palestine and Israel](#) Take Action page to [send a letter to your MP](#).

- An essential part of our witness is to amplify the voices of global partners and vulnerable and marginalized people, as you'll see from this [letter](#) written by Kairos Palestine.
- Read more:
 - The United Church of Canada is part of the [ArmsEmbargoNow Campaign](#). The campaign site has helpful resources and additional ways to take action.
 - See our latest letter to the Prime Minister calling for the [suspension of diplomatic relations](#) and imposition of economic and political sanctions until Israel complies with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.
 - UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese's findings of genocide and state obligation to impose an arms embargo ([testimony to UNHRC](#); written [report](#)).
 - Project Ploughshares' [Jan. 2024 report, *Fanning the Flames*](#), noting "substantial risk" that Canadian military goods could contribute to abuses in Gaza. And the Project Ploughshares analysis of the [arms ban motion](#).
 - Canadian [lawyers sue Government of Canada](#) for illegal arms exports to Israel.

Guaranteed Livable Income

Time sensitive: Parliament will vote on a Guaranteed Livable Income bill as early as September 19th. The vote is to determine whether the bill can at least be studied in the committee or if its journey ends now. Sources tell us that if it went to a vote right now, the bill might not make it to committee!! Please get in touch with your MP **AND** send a personalized letter to [all members of cabinet](#) expressing your support for the bill. **Doesn't preventing and responding to poverty at least deserve a few hours of parliament's time to hear from experts and consider?**

Question/Ask

Poverty can happen very quickly to anyone. A guaranteed livable income would help address the persistent inequities in our country. As my MP, will you vote in support of [Bill C-223](#) when it goes to second reading?

If yes, will you help get other members of your caucus to vote in support, too?

If not, why not?

Issue

A guaranteed livable income (GLI) is a payment to individuals or families by government that covers the cost of basic necessities (food, shelter, clothing, transportation, and community participation); it is not conditional on meeting employment criteria or being able to fulfill bureaucratically driven applications to prove they are “really poor” in order to qualify for the benefit. It ensures everyone an income adequate for meeting basic needs, allowing everyone to live with dignity regardless of work status. All Canadian citizens would be ensured an automatic top-up when their income collapses for whatever reason. Such a program would be part of the national fabric of services that preserve and protect Canadians, or, as Jesus put it, “to love our neighbours as ourselves.”

Since 1972, The United Church of Canada has advocated a policy of guaranteed annual income that is more equitable, and less expensive and complicated, to administer than the numerous government support programs currently available. Since then, national and international studies and programs have shown that a universal basic income is affordable and has beneficial effects in the areas of health, justice, education, and social welfare. It is encouraging that bills to create a guaranteed livable basic income are advancing through BOTH the Senate and the House of Commons. If passed, such a law would require the Minister of Finance, within one year, to create a **Canada-wide framework for the implementation of a Guaranteed Livable Basic Income.**

Simply put, this means that the federal government would need to develop the standards and plan from which it, along with the other levels of government, could create guaranteed livable basic incomes in its jurisdictions.

August 2024 update

More information

- See The United Church of Canada [Guaranteed Livable Income page](#).

Indigenous Justice: Grassy Narrows

Time sensitive: The Grassy Narrows River Run 2024 will take place on September 18th 2024. Find more information and registration details at the United Church River Run page [here](#).

Question/Ask

Grassy Narrows First Nation suffered one of Canada's worst environmental poisonings. Decades later, they continue the fight for justice and to prevent this from happening again. As my MP, will you support Grassy Narrows' three demands?

1. **Compensate** everyone in Grassy Narrows fairly for the mercury crisis,
2. **Respect** the Grassy Narrows Indigenous Protected Area (end mining and logging plans in Grassy Narrows territory and keep nuclear waste out of the watershed), and
3. **Support** Grassy Narrows in restoring their community and way of life from the damage that mercury has done.

If yes, when will get back to me to let me know what you've done?

If not, why not?

Issue

Grassy Narrows First Nation suffered one of Canada's worst environmental poisonings when, between 1962 and 1970, a paper company dumped an estimated 9,000 kg of untreated mercury into the English-Wabigoon river system. The poisoning of the water harmed Grassy Narrows in multiple ways: people suffered serious health issues linked to mercury poisoning, people could not exercise their right to fish the community lost their traditional economy, and unemployment sky-rocketed, among other significant impacts. For fifty years, Grassy Narrows has been fighting for government support to address and remediate the mercury crisis. Grassy Narrows is also concerned about future corporate harms, including by mining companies taking advantage of the concession staking system that fails to ensure free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Throughout, Grassy Narrows people have shown themselves to be powerful leaders in the movement for Indigenous sovereignty and environmental justice, making some important gains. This year, Grassy Narrows announced a landmark lawsuit against the governments of Ontario and Canada:

"Grassy Narrows is going to court to protect its people and Territory from further environmental contamination. They seek meaningful remediation, compensation for the extreme harm they have suffered, a stop to the mill's pollution and an end to industrial threats to their land, water and people. Their goal remains the restoration of the health of their people and land, their wellbeing and their way of life."

August 2024 update

More information

- The United Church of Canada is endorsing the 2024 Grassy Narrows River Run and encourages you to join us on September 18th 2024
[River Run 2024: Walk with Grassy Narrows for Mercury Justice | The United Church of Canada \(united-church.ca\)](https://freegrassy.net/grassy-narrows-river-run-2024)
<https://freegrassy.net/grassy-narrows-river-run-2024>
- To learn more:
 - <https://freegrassy.net/learn-more/grassy-narrows/history/>
 - River Run Tool Kit:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1LI0DAoMhcNVjS4xBnrcohnHsl27i42WdE0KwoUtaz5M/edit>

Climate Justice

Question/Ask

We are living in a climate emergency. For the love of creation and future generations, will you, as my MP, urge the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to

1. Increase Canada's greenhouse gas emission targets to 60% ;
2. Fund targeted climate adaptation and mitigation measures to help ease the heavy burden on those most impacted and least responsible for climate change and
3. Uphold the rights, knowledge, sovereignty and leadership of Indigenous Peoples and prioritize Indigenous approaches to climate action.

If yes, when will get back to me to let me know what you've done?

If not, why not?

*Please also **thank** your MP for the recent passing of the much-needed environmental racism bill <https://ccecj.ca/press/senate-passes-long-awaited-legislation-to-tackle-environmental-racism-in-canada/>

Issue

Climate justice has long been a focus of The United Church of Canada. Our [New Creed](#) calls us "to seek justice, and resist evil; to live with respect in Creation". The latest reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change at the United Nations have made the urgency starker and make it clear that the time for bold action is now. In the biblical tradition, the prophets often called us to repent of our wrongdoings with urgency—and we must lift up that prophetic voice and do all we can to preserve life on this planet. This requires us to raise our spirited voices and engage with members of Parliament who have the power to shape Canada's role and impact in the global climate crisis.

Canada is ranked as the 11th **largest** greenhouse gas (GHG) emitting country in the world. This is inconsistent with our government's commitment to act on climate change. To do our fair share, Canada must do more to meet its current target of 40-45% GHG emission reduction and it must increase its 2030 target to a 60% reduction from 2005 emissions.

In addition, those who are least responsible for climate change around the world are, conversely, the most negatively impacted by it. This places an unfair burden on these communities, primarily located in the Far North and the Global South. Given Canada's oversized contribution to global GHG emissions, Canada must take responsibility for this ecological debt. Canada should increase support for **grant**-based climate finance and should commit equal support for climate change adaptation and mitigation measures in the Far North and Global

August 2024 update

South. This could be funded, at least in part, by ending fossil fuel subsidies and reallocating those funds to climate finance initiatives.

Finally, Canada must prioritize Indigenous approaches to climate action and uphold the rights, knowledge, sovereignty, and leadership of Indigenous Peoples consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. Indigenous voices in the church remind us all that we are called upon to look after Creator's gifts and to pass along these gifts to our children. We can be part of a just transition to a renewable energy economy by pressuring governments and industries, ending unsustainable overconsumption through lifestyle choices, and working with United Church ministries and partners engaged in climate justice. Indigenous Ministries and Justice Community Capacity Development Coordinator Martha Pedoniquotte teaches us all that [by integrating First Nations perspectives](#), we can foster a more comprehensive and effective response to climate change, one that respects both the natural world and the cultural heritage of Indigenous peoples. Consider sharing her June 2024 blog with members of Parliament you are in touch with!

More information

- See The United Church of Canada's [Climate Justice page](#)
- The United Church of Canada is an endorsing organization of For the Love of Creation, read more about our [collective advocacy](#).

Just Peace in the Philippines

Question/Ask

In the Philippines, human rights workers, labour activists, and community organizers are being targeted and killed for defending human rights and dignity. As my MP, will you support an immediate audit and public report on Canada's provision of financial, programmatic, and technical support to the Government of the Philippines and use all diplomatic measures at its disposal to urge the Government of the Philippines to respect international humanitarian law and pursue a path towards a just peace.

If yes, when will you get back to me to let me know what you've done?
If not, why not?

Issue

The United Church of Canada stands in solidarity with our partner the International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines (ICHRP). ICHRP reminds us that the Canadian government may be inadvertently enabling continued attacks on human rights and human rights defenders by providing financial, programmatic, and technical support to the Government of the Philippines. We stand with those who struggle to live in peace, in justice, with respect for human life as well as Creation.

In the Philippines, human rights workers, labour activists, and community organizers are being targeted and killed for defending human rights and dignity. Many have been imprisoned under the guise of the anti-terror law. Religious leaders, journalists, and Indigenous peoples have also been falsely labelled as communists, in the Philippines called "red-tagging." Partners inform us that the Philippines government uses these tactics to criminalize dissent, attack critics of the government as enemies of the state, and make them targets of political persecution.

The ICHRP calls on peace loving Canadians to recognize the role of our own government in this troubling situation. For example, Canadian support is contributing to the increased militarization in the region and the recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding on defense cooperation and potential Visiting Forces Agreement with the Marcos government, risk linking Canada to abuses committed in repressive counter-insurgency campaigns. Canada should support peace negotiations, call on the Philippines government to respect international humanitarian law, support human rights defenders in the region and audit its foreign policies to ensure it is not complicit.

More information:

- See The United Church of Canada's page to [learn more and find other ways to take action](#).

August 2024 update

- See also the International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines page for more information about the international day of prayer on September 1st and the [interfaith petition](#) that has been signed by The United Church of Canada.

August 2024 update

Additional Justice Issues to Follow

This fall, we will add the following priority issues, timed to coincide with other activities

- Racial equity in housing advocacy
- Food security
- Indigenous justice