

Reply to Status Report from The Assets and Funding Task Group of Toronto  
Conference

By Barbara White, July 11, 2008

I commend the group for its work to date on this very contentious issue.

My responses are as follows:

1. Re: points of agreement, point 1. I'm not sure I support this "basic principle" unless there are some definitions in place. What does it mean that decisions on funding support and asset management must be brought closer to the congregations? We have plenty of examples of where congregations and/or presbyteries have held on to the proceeds of sale of property for use close to them that HAS NO CONSIDERATION FOR NEEDS BEYOND THAT GEOGRAPHIC AREA. It is an accident of history where churches are located and does not give those living there a divine right to determine where the proceeds will go. To suggest otherwise is to keep firmly in place a CHARITY MODEL of funding, rather than a justice model that I think The United Church is trying to embrace more fully. To say this in another way, it's like Bill Gates setting up a foundation and then having the power to decide how the money will be spent, rather than submitting to the wisdom of a court concerned for a wider area. Have congregations always done the work of discernment that includes concerns for issues beyond their own geography and interests? Only if they can demonstrate that they have would I support this "basic principle". I think many have either thought they had the right to use the resources to continue a decline into oblivion or to support their pet projects without concern for broader issues.

2. Re: points of agreement, point 7 – funding priorities. The Mission Support Committee of the Conference has tried for probably 20 years to establish such priorities. It is very difficult due to the "apples and oranges" nature of the applications. How do you rank congregational development versus community ministry (amongst other things.) Perhaps it could be

expresses as a percentage (e.g. x% for congregational development, y% for community ministries, etc.) but other than that it is very difficult.

3. Re: Points of agreement, point 9 – TUCC. The recent introduction of a substantial administrative cost for moneys invested in the Investing in Ministry Fund has not helped the historical tension between TUCC and presbyteries and conference. But structurally, having those with the resources totally separated from those who need them is not a healthy model likely to develop trusting relationships. In the long run, I think we need to bring the two sides more closely aligned in the structure of the church if relations are to improve.

4. Re: General conclusions – I am very pleased and relieved that you are not considering the status quo even in the face of strong pressure in some quarters.

5. Re: General conclusions, point 2 – back to the issue of equity. Are the areas of greater historical presence in outreach the only or the greatest areas of need? I think rather it is a factor of the history, of selling buildings and setting up outreach ministries in response. I think a basic principle needs to be that we are a church, committed to building up the body of Christ for service in a hurting world. We are not primarily our buildings, we are not primarily community ministries that have no faith component.

6. Re: General conclusions, point 2 – second paragraph on amalgamations and consolidation. I see inherent in this paragraph the assumption that a congregation is a group of 150 – 300 people or more with a large, functional building and a good-sized parking lot. This is the “old model” of church. I think many congregations in the future will be small groups gather in homes or rental space and dedicated to learning about who they are as Christ’s people in the world and making a difference in the world. Thus the discussion of amalgamation and consolidation needs to include this model instead of merely trying to re-create what hasn’t worked in the past.

7. Re: General Conclusions, point 2 – 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph. AMEN! They must be held together
8. Re: General Conclusions, point 4 – regular review. This is a very good point, that is largely missing in the present model.
9. Re: Models – I favour the 4 presbyteries Model, though I remain uncomfortable with TUCC resources being separate from this.
10. Re: 4 presbyteries model, point 6. I think that the “extensive existing commitments” of Toronto West Presbytery need to be frozen at July 2008 or when the final model is approved so that more ministries are not established there in order to retain more of the resources.
11. Re: TUCC Model – I like the fundraising component of this model.

Thanks for the opportunity to respond.

Barbara White,

Ordered Representative from Toronto Conference to General Council Executive –  
member of Toronto Conference Executive.



## THE TORONTO UNITED CHURCH COUNCIL

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September 8, 2008

Michael Scott  
Chair, Assets & Funding Task Group  
Toronto Conference Office  
65 Mayall Ave.  
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Dear Michael,

I am writing on behalf of the Executive of Toronto United Church Council to thank you and the members of the Toronto Conference Assets & Funding Task Group for responding to the questions that arose as we examined the Task Group's Status Report dated June 2008.

As you know, the central pillar to Council's Proposal is –  
*to establish a suite of growing Endowments whose annual income, when combined with other funding, will provide an ongoing and increasing source of income to finance the initiatives that are undertaken.*

An important reason for asking the questions we did was to clarify the accuracy of the financial assumptions used in putting together Council's Proposal which was initially submitted at the request of Conference in January of this year.

What we have learned from your helpful information is that significant assets we included in our calculations are not available. This being the case, it is not possible to create the appropriately financed suite of endowment funds to further the work of Conference and Council. It is now clear that the prerequisites for the successful implementation of the strategy set out in the Proposal are not attainable at this time. Our Executive, therefore, is reluctantly withdrawing the Proposal as an option within the possible funding plans before your Task Group.

As noted, the Proposal was formulated as a response to a request from the Conference Restructuring Steering Group "to assist them in examining strategies for the management of assets and the role Council could play". This action to withdraw the Proposal does not diminish in any way our ongoing commitment to be in partnership with Toronto Conference and the new Presbyteries in achieving their investment requirements and financing their ministry goals. Council looks forward to being a supportive participant in the continuing disengagement process to which your Task Group is giving leadership.

Yours truly,



Vincent Alfano  
Executive Director

c.c. Members, Toronto Conference Assets & Funding Task Group  
Members, Executive, Toronto United Church Council  
David Allen, Executive Secretary, Toronto Conference

**From:** JOAN HART [mailto:jehart@rogers.com]  
**Sent:** August 12, 2008 3:58 PM  
**To:** Carol Paniccia  
**Subject:** The Assets and Funding Task Group

Hi Carol

### Comments

i) Points of Agreement - very good

Last point re TUCC - I'm just wondering about the "reluctance" stemming "in part from historical experience". How recently are we talking?

Or are we looking at 20 or more years ago?

ii) General Conclusions

Great! Love the questions re equity, etc. Strongly agree with the "bad stewardship".

#### United Church of Canada Foundation

Just an observation that the Foundation seems to be in a state of flux at the moment. The President has resigned and there will not be a new one appointed for another year. This indicates to me that there are issues that the Board is grappling with. One would like to know that the Foundation that will emerge can honour whatever arrangements that are made with it.

The Foundation has a corporate Investment Fund Manager. Although the charge is reasonable it means that money is going out of the United Church community and is not circulating like it would in TUCC's Investment in Ministry program.

Since the Presbyteries would have their own accounts that would mean that the access is closer to the congregations.

#### Toronto United Church Council

I understand that TUCC has bylaws which makes them need "irrevocable acts" when funds are transferred and that "investment decisions must be made by TUCC's Board of Directors". But I would hope that TUCC would consider setting up Donor-Advised Funds, similar to what UCCF is offering. Or that the Presbyteries would place their investments in the Investing in Ministry Funds similar to congregations where they could also withdraw funds when needed. This would be more funds available to congregations overall.

Thank you and the committee for all the hard work that has gone and is going into this project. Keep up the good work.

Joan Hart