

Report on the Conscience Canada Annual General Meeting, held at Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, ON, Saturday, April 7, 2018

Thirteen members plus two guests attended this year's Conscience Canada (CC) AGM with 18 additional proxies received. Doug Hewitt-White, President of the board, presided over the meeting. Persons willing to remain as board members and who were accepted by the meeting were: Dave Bechtel of Kitchener ON, Charlie Diamond of Toronto ON, Mary Groh of Kitchener ON, Doug Hewitt-White of Almonte ON, Murray Lumley of Toronto ON, Jan Slakov of Salt Spring Island BC, Dwyer Sullivan of Kitchener ON, Eric Unger of Winnipeg MB. They were thanked for their service to Conscience Canada. Scott Albrecht of Kitchener ON was elected as a new member of the board. Doug Hewitt-White continued to act as President of Conscience Canada with Mary Groh acting as Past-President. Treasurer Dave Bechtel distributed the 2017 financial statements and the auditors were appointed for 2018.

'Non-business' part of the meeting: -

At 3:30 pm Tamara Lorincz, a PhD student in Global Governance at the Balsillie School for International Affairs (Wilfrid Laurier University), made a powerful slide and talk presentation, on "The Climate Costs of Canada's New Defence Policy". Tamara's talk was wide ranging and indicated how much more governments are spending on armaments for future wars and how little on the environment and on how much the military spending hurts our environment. One slide showed the increase in Canadian National Defence spending increasing from \$10 billion in 1997 to \$28 billion by 2016 while the Department of the Environment and Climate Change spending over the same period has remained flat at \$1.5 billion. The biggest military spender is the United States with its 800 bases worldwide, consuming massive amounts of fossil fuels with the resultant release of greenhouse gases. These military carbon emissions were not even taken into account in the original Kyoto Protocol on decreasing carbon dioxide emissions. Tamara indicated that she has presented her data to Canadian members of Parliament and been told that Canadians are not interested in this line of reasoning. This represents just a small portion of what Tamara had to say about how military spending and emissions are such a threat to our environment.

Conscience Canada Board Report for 2017

For the first few months leading up to our AGM in April the focus of the board was to find new members. Our retiring president, Mary Groh, sent everyone on our mailing list a letter soliciting new board members and particularly someone interested in taking on the presidency of CC. This recruitment effort was successful. Charlie Diamond responded to a personal contact at Friends House in Toronto, and Doug Hewitt-White was the sole responder to the mail solicitation and agreed to take on the role of President. At our AGM these new board members were confirmed (hooray!).

In May the board decided CC should join and provide a financial contribution to the No2percent military spending public awareness campaign. Organized by Public Response the campaign was supported by a number of Canadian peace groups. The campaign, petition and video were social media driven through Facebook. The video and petition earned national media attention. The campaign ran in May and June and reached over 300,000 Canadians on Facebook. The video was watched over 51,000 times. Over 2300 messages were sent to PM Trudeau by supporters opposed to military spending increases.

This was followed by CC joining and financially supporting a timely campaign just before Hiroshima Day (Aug. 6) in support of Canada signing the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty. There was a Facebook petition and video as well as a Day of Action on September 20 with events across Canada where citizens signed the Treaty. The social media awareness campaign on the Ban Treaty reached more than a half-million Canadians through Facebook. In the days leading to Hiroshima commemorations, three video ads appeared on Facebook.

In October the Board decided that with many different versions of the CC logo in use (over 10 and counting), all with different fonts, colours, styles and slogans, it was time to refurbish our logo and launch a more consistent visual presentation and brand. This took a few months and volunteer help. The result of this facelift is seen here:



In November the board decided that CC should apply to join the International Peace Bureau (IPB). As stated on their website, IPB *“is dedicated to the vision of a World Without War. Our current main programme centres on Disarmament for Sustainable Development and within this, our focus is mainly on the reallocation of military expenditure.”* IBP has over 300 member organisations in some 70 countries. This global network brings together knowledge and campaigning experience in our common cause.

November also saw the launch of a strategic planning process for CC. We have been for a number of years deeply challenged in pursuing our goals in the face of declining numbers of peace trusters. It was decided we needed a three year strategic plan that would plot our future. We need to look at where we are, our strengths, weaknesses and opportunities and create plan, a document, a clear idea on how to revitalize CC. We will create a timeline for necessary tasks and actions. It will be a flexible tool for guiding CC forward — always open to reworking and adjusting. Much work has been done on the plan but there is still a lot to do including setting out Actions and Tasks on Communications, Initiatives, Operations and Finances. It is anticipated the plan will be complete by Spring 2018.

Doug Hewitt-White
for Conscience Canada Board of Directors