

Report on the Conscience Canada Annual General Meeting, held at Danforth Mennonite Church, 2174 Danforth Avenue, Toronto, ON, Saturday, April 9, 2016

Eleven members and five guests attended this year's Conscience Canada (CC) AGM with 14 additional proxies received. Mary Groh, 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, Mary Groh of Toronto ON, Anna Kirkpatrick of Nelson BC, Murray Lumley of Toronto ON, Jan Slakov of Salt Spring Island BC, Dwyer Sullivan of Kitchener ON, Eric Unger of Winnipeg MB. Two new board members were elected at the meeting - Kelly Krauter of Montreal, PQ and Peter Tiessen of Winnipeg, MB. Treasurer Dave Bechtel distributed the 2015 financial statements and the auditors were appointed for 2016. Don Woodside of Hamilton, ON has resigned from the board. A note of thanks written by Jan Slakov was read aloud and Mary led us in a song she wrote which celebrated Don's many contributions to Conscience Canada.

'Non-business' part of the meeting: -

At about 3:30 pm our guest speaker Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish (known as the Gaza Doctor) spoke to an audience estimated at 150 people, which packed the auditorium and foyer. He spoke on the topic, "The Cost of Peace vs. The Cost of War". He spoke for more than an hour and the first 28 minutes were captured on video which is presented on this web page.

Conscience Canada Board Report for 2015

The board of Conscience Canada faced 2015 with serious ambivalence about whether or not the organization should continue on, given the declining interest in COMT. During the year only 19 persons re-directed their military taxes (7.8% of federal taxes) into the Peace Tax Trust fund. The decline in support was thoroughly discussed at a conference call on March 28, and at the AGM immediately following. The task of inserting a miniscule number of Canadian consciences into the rest of the population's and the government's (misguided) preoccupation with security seems to be such a hopeless task. Yet those whose consciences are activated when they perceive the connection between their taxes and war remain firmly committed to seeing CC continue and spread.

The amount of genuine and positive support members expressed for continuing, and the willingness of board members to continue their faithful volunteer work for another year or two, resulted in the idea of folding to be put on hold. The maintaining of our Peace Tax Trust fund is not very onerous, as our treasurer attests. Closing it down and starting it up again at a future time could be.

As for promoting CC, we have been encouraged by the enthusiasm and fruitful efforts of two young activists, Kelly Krauter from Montreal and Emily Minger from Waterloo, hired as interns for six months. Since the fall they have been using their social media and technical skills to carry our message into spheres we oldsters find hard to reach. We are grateful to them and to our webmaster Todd Lumley for their eagerness and competence to do what they do for minimal remuneration. We were happy also to add Peter Tiessen of Winnipeg to our board deliberations, which continue to be mainly by e-mail. Conference calls are organized on rare occasions.

One of our best promotional tools, the DVD "Work for peace, stop paying for war", was mysteriously removed from our website in 2015. Some agent claims the music on it breaks copyright law. We are

trying to trace exactly what is the offence, how to remedy the situation, or how to revise the DVD, the content of which does, after all, date back ten years.

Our mandate to persuade government to legalize our tax re-direction means we need again to discover a sympathetic MP to take our CO bill to parliament. Although our new government seems to be more peace-minded than the last one, we have as yet to find a member willing to represent our weak voice behind a private member's bill. Suggestions for such a member would be welcome.

Is our focus too narrow? There are many groups across the country working admirably for peace, and from time to time someone asks for Conscience Canada's endorsement. Increasingly the lines between environmental and peace organizations are becoming quite blurred. This past year the board drew up some guidelines to help us when a member is asked to sign, on short notice, our organization's name to a new campaign. CC members are involved in many worthwhile causes aimed at promoting peace and justice and elimination of poverty and environmental degradation, and we are proud of that. But in the midst of this diffuse grassroots movement to improve the world for humanity, Conscience Canada must continue to challenge people to scrutinize their own personal fiscal responsibility for government's military response to conflicts across our planet.

Mary Groh, President,

for Conscience Canada Board of Directors,

Dave Bechtel, Anna Kirkpatrick, Murray Lumley, Jan Slakov, Dwyer Sullivan, Eric Unger, (Don Woodside - leaving the board), Kelly Krauter, Peter Tiessen