



CONSCIENCE CANADA
2022 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)
Held on Saturday, April 30, 2022, 15:30 EDT
via Zoom videoconferencing

AGENDA:

1. Verification of quorum
2. Verification of Notice of Meeting
3. Approval of the Minutes of the 2021 AGM (copies available)
4. Approval of this Agenda for the 2022 AGM
5. Presentation and adoption of the 2021 financial statements (copies available)
6. Appointment of Auditors for 2022
7. Confirmation of board members standing for re-election:
Scott Albrecht, Dave Bechtel, Doug Hewitt-White, Jan Slakov, Dwyer Sullivan
8. Election of new board member(s):
9. Review of CC activities in 2021 (Board Report – copies available) and a look ahead. This circle discussion will be about CC ambitions, hopes; real world constraints; and plans for going forward. Participation & questions about past & future actions is invited
10. Other business and announcements
11. Adjournment

MINUTES

1. **Verification of Quorum:** (members present via Zoom 21 ; by proxy 9)
A total of 30 members were in attendance in person via Zoom or by proxy. The Quorum (15 members) having been confirmed the business of Conscience Canada (CC) proceeded. The following are the motions and resolutions presented and approved by the membership. All supporting material was available at the meeting, is appended to the original of these minutes, and is available to all members on the CC website at <http://www.consciencecanada.ca/>

2. **Verification of proper Notice of Meeting:**

On February 22, 2022 the Notice of Meeting of the 2022 AGM was included in CC Spring Newsletter and sent by email or post to all the members' addresses CC has on record as required by Conscience Canada's by-laws. The CC Spring 2022 Newsletter with the Notice of Meeting was also posted to the CC website by February 23, 2022. Additionally an emailed Notice of Meeting with an updated agenda was sent to all members on April 10.

3. **Approval of the Minutes of the 2021 AGM:**

Moved by Mary Groh ; Seconded by Jan Slakov – Carried unanimously

4. **Motion to approve the Agenda for this 2022 Conscience Canada AGM:**

Moved by Jan Slakov ; Seconded by Dwyer Sullivan – Carried unanimously

5. **Presentation & Approval of 2021 financial statements and audit report (copies available):**

Presented by Dave Bechtel and Scott Albrecht

Motion to receive the 2021 Financial Statements;

Moved by Dave Bechtel ; Seconded by Dwyer Sullivan – Carried unanimously

6. **Appointment of an Auditor for CC for 2022: -**

Motion to appoint Edward M. Simon CA, Professional Corporation, Kitchener, Ontario as Auditor for CC for 2022.

Moved by Scott Albrecht ; Seconded by Doug Hewitt-White – Carried unanimously

7. **Confirmation of board members standing for re-election:**

The four officer positions required by our by-laws, and to be chosen from within the Board within two weeks of the AGM, are President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Secretary; in addition there can be board members at large.

Standing for re-election are:

Scott Albrecht, Dave Bechtel, Doug Hewitt-White, Jan Slakov, Dwyer Sullivan

Motion to appoint/ confirm Directors:

Moved by Doug Hewitt-White ; Seconded by Don Woodside – Carried unanimously

8. **Election of new board members:**

Motion to Elect Bruna Nota as a new board member:

Moved by Doug Hewitt-White ; Seconded by Daphne Davey – Carried unanimously

Motion to Elect Linda Thyer as a new board member:

Moved by Doug Hewitt-White ; Seconded by Bruna Nota – Carried unanimously

9. **Review of CC activities in 2021** (Board Report – copies available) and a look ahead.

Board Report for 2021:

Jan Slakov presented the report on behalf of the CC Board. The report is appended to these minutes and is available upon request. Together with these minutes it will be posted on the CC web site.

Motion to receive the 2021 Board report:

Moved by Daphne Davey ; Seconded by Dwyer Sullivan – Carried unanimously

A **Circle Discussion** followed with participation & questions from all attendees on the future of CC.

Daphne Davey led off our discussions and recalled her experience years back appearing in Tax Court in PEI to defend her resistance to paying military taxes. Being very busy she has not been able to be much involved in recent years other than submitting proxies to others attending past AGMs. This year given the importance of these discussions she made sure to be with us in person.

Murray Lumley: Is tax resistance working to end Canadian participation in wars? No. Is it working to end all wars? Maybe, if we could see ahead 200 years – some seeds may have been planted. We are not being paid attention to with respect to withholding taxes. Nations are just able to print money and go to war. We can stay active and support the many anti-war efforts that are working for change (No Fighter Jets, etc.).

Scott Albrecht: When you think about our mission, COMT, we need to focus on it and not be distracted by the many other broader efforts that are going on to bring peace. COMT is the core of what CC is about.

Marilyn McKim: Agrees with Scott. This has been a tool for her to use in opposing military taxation.

Ivan Unger: He has withheld taxes for many years. The government has recovered most of it. He still has some money in the Peace Trust. Legislation to enable COMT has not happened. He is discouraged. He wonders if he should give up and withdraw his money from the Peace Trust. He is open to the advice of CCers: how to use the money he has in the peace trust, how to go forward? CC needs a lot more members, and money, or parliamentarians who are gung-ho on this issue. Ivan sees himself as fortunate in being able to donate enough money to charitable causes to avoid paying taxes.

Bruna Nota: Has been able to get income tax down to zero by donating money to charitable causes. One of benefits of focusing on COMT is it allows us to have conversations about it with other citizens and it reminds us of how bankrupt of values our governmental systems are. It is important for CC to remain faithful to the core of COMT even if the hope for legislation is never realized. She will not give up. There is a value to symbolism and a value in conversation.

Doug Hewitt-White: COMT is our core mission. That is what it has been and what it should continue to be. Wanting to bring in more and younger people we need to put some spin on the COMT message. We have begun to use the slogan “Defend the earth. Defund the military.” It is through defunding the military that we are actually defending the earth. We can broaden out our message to reach environmentally aware people through this slogan. However the crux of our challenge is not the message and how to reach people but who is going to do the work. It is a lot of work even if we hire a young person to carry out a project.

Dwyer Sullivan: Agrees with what has been said. The idea of defending the earth by defunding the military should appeal to many people active in tackling climate change. A huge percentage of Canadians should want this. His hope is that we can find the people to get the message out. We have great work in the past and we need to be energized and transformed to carry on into the future.

Don Woodside: Wonderful to see everyone again; not so wonderful to not see new people. Agrees with COMT as core mission but feels time has passed for CC. Although there are many good and active anti-war groups, CO is not part of their thinking. His experience over the years of presenting to younger people was that there was little uptake, the idea of CO did not grab them. Anti-war activism was important to many people but not through CO. CC has a dilemma. COMT is not of interest to many. In the context of the war in Ukraine how does anyone advocate to Ukrainians that they should stop fighting and negotiate. Once war starts how is the momentum of war halted. There are viable bigger organizations doing bigger work, especially climate work. Don is ready to see CC fold.

Jan Slakov: COMT is our core mission or more broadly just CO in whatever form it takes is the mission. How much are we achieving? That depends on what measure you use. The real thing that funds war is the sense of legitimacy. Belonging to CC has meant an amazing education in non-violence. This is so valuable. Despite not having been able to convince many people through CC work, nevertheless the discussions are vitally important. It is important to keep alive all the historical connections around CO. The board has been wondering – what is the point in expending so much energy on just keeping CC on life support. But we have had many people reach out to us and ask us to please keep going in whatever way you can. That makes CC and COMT worth continuing.

Ernie Wiens: He related a quote from Dorothy Day “*It is rather arrogant to assume that when you plant a seed that you are going to see the harvest.*” Let us not think that all our efforts are for nought just because we are not getting the results we would like to see. Why have we not been able to get a thousand Mennonites to declare their COMT? Ernie does not know. He cannot pin down an answer. Are we too comfortable in our lives, our government and how things work? Option A on the PTR would seem an easy way to declare COMT. Has there been any uptick in people using the PTR (option A or B)? Are we just about COMT? Ernie thinks it is more than that? When doing your PTR many of us probably add more to the form letter. It is more than personal conscience. There are bigger issues. It is what is being done in our name with our tax dollars. There are so many people keen on climate change and its impact on our world. Why is the connection not being made to militarism? Somehow we need to keep pushing that connection, telling people of the damage to our environment due to militarism. Over the time we have been doing Option B of the PTR some of the best conversations we have had is with staff at the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). More than once we have asked to talk about why we do what we do and we were given time to do that. And when we were done the comments we got were: “*we have never thought of that – we agree with you – but we*”

have a job to do – if you just pay up we can close the file". Do these conversations make a difference? But let's come back to "Plant the seed" and hope for a harvest some day.

Linda Thyer: Being new to CC with family connections to CO and a family doctor, she reached out to CC last September asking about the idea of withholding taxes as a strategy for conscientious objection to paying for the destruction of our natural environment. The issues around militarism and the environment tie together. Withholding taxes is what sets CC apart from the many other peace groups. It is at the core of CC. She has spoken to people involved in the climate activism she does, and she has found there is a certain fear of repercussions from withholding taxes. As civil disobedience would it be considered criminal? Would it have an impact on licensing as a physician? Some may be willing to protest but not in that way. It could also be a problem for people living very close to the line in terms of their finances. Threats from government by means of penalties etcetera for people whose lives do not feel very stable would just add to their sense of insecurity. Personally as a salaried employee she only has the option of using donations as a way to reduce the taxes she pays. The medical community is working towards a wellbeing society rather than a wealth based society. Working towards peace needs to be an element of that.

Joy Warner: she has been listening to international discussions about what can people do about the war in Ukraine and not support military action. We need to speak up about withholding taxes as a practical option. Also when speaking about human rights, the next generation of universal human rights must include the right to peace. Then we could use that human right as the basis for objecting to paying taxes for the military. This is a long term goal. We need to bring the human right to peace into our conversations more. Also let's not forget Gene Sharpe and his ideas on Civilian Based Defense. Worthwhile and practical to offer people. When people withhold taxes they want a practical outcome. The money in the CC Peace Trust Fund does not support initiatives. Younger people may be more likely to get involved in Peace Trust money was going to setting up a peace constituency.

Jeevan Bhagwat: what Linda spoke about is very relevant. We really need to address the issue of repercussions and that youth cannot withhold money they do not have. Symbolic resistance, symbolic refusal to pay tax for the military, would be more attractive for younger people. We know the WHAT and the WHY, the real question is the WHO. Who will do these things. If we can answer that then other things will fall into place. We can use art, contests, online workshops, to raise awareness about CO and the damages of war. Other groups are doing this to attract new younger membership. We have to look at the WHO part. If we can answer that then CC can survive and still be relevant. We all hope CC can continue its mission. Here is a quote: "*Hope is the thread that stitches together our unborn dream.*"

Anna Nieminen: Agrees with Jeevan and Linda that there are real fears of repercussions especially among those still working. If these fears are unwarranted then that message needs to be out there. Maybe tell the stories of people that withheld taxes and what actually happened. And highlight that there is a symbolic option. Could be an option going forward and could attract some attention. One way to get youth involved would be to engage students at colleges and universities to conduct projects related to COMT and CC.

Ivan Unger: Disappointed with the lack of any recent support by the Mennonite church. Maybe some Mennonite CCers need to get to work on this. Mennonites are supposed to be conscientious objectors to war. Mennonites are thrifty hard workers and generally affluent because of this. We need to use this to our advantage. So long as we file tax returns we are not criminals. As a PRO we need CC to keep on reminding us and helping us with COMT. CON – can we find enough energy. As we get older that is hard.

Jan Slakov: I see war as a kind of mind pollution. Even symbolic COMT helps us clean up the way we think. It is so tempting to think that aggression must be met with aggression. But in day to day living it is not like that.

Harriet Woodside: We all share the core mission of CC and agree with it. But for a considerable time there has not been significant uptake in the use of the PTR, CC's primary vehicle to drive our mission forward. As Quakers Harriet and Don have struggled to get their own group to use the PTR even symbolically. If we cannot convince the groups that we know agree with CO to get on board then something is wrong. I would argue that CC should be looking to another way. My suggestion

would be to transition CC to work with another likeminded organization in the hopes that that way we can attract more youth, more members, get artistic ideas, capitalize on the growing interest in environmental change. That way we can continue to speak to our mission but find a way to do it that would allow us to plant more seeds.

Scott Albrecht: The PRO of continuing CC is that we have a unique mission that no one else is directly hitting. The CON is just that it has a cost in financial and energy terms. It may be that the energy we put into CC could be better used for other initiatives. We have planted seeds for many years and even though not much growth has been seen, even if CC ceases, it is not impossible that these seeds will still grow – that something else will sprout and grow in another way. We must keep in mind that for CC to continue on is not cost free. It may be better to wind down in an orderly fashion rather than struggle on and find ourselves with a tiny board unable to find the will and energy to function, to even find the energy to file the paperwork to close down properly. I am willing to continue my work with CC but I don't feel we have the assets to build a really good ship.

Rosemary Meier: Recently when getting ready to file my taxes my accountant on hearing of COMT wanted to know more about CC. Professional connections like this could have some promise. Many people needing an accountant's assistance may not know about CC and COMT. Perhaps a strategy could be developed to take advantage of such professional connections. In terms of collaboration with another group, which group would that be? CC should work with like-minded groups who see the connection between militarism and the climate crisis. Also working with another group may improve any future court challenge. Withholding taxes can have problems. Jerelyn Prior has had many challenges due to her tax resistance (some of that may be due to having to file both Canadian and American taxes).

Harriet Woodside: We have had a long and good discussion but I am not sure if we have an answer to whether CC should continue or close down. If we can get a decision then that will give us time to figure out next steps to be taken.

A straw vote was taken. The result was 11 to 10 – a very slim margin, no consensus – in favour of CC continuing. Now it is up to the CC Board to determine next steps.

Following are additional comments that were submitted via the chat:

From **Murray Lumley** : Thanks Ivan and Bruna for your commitments to reducing your taxed by charitable donations. Linda and I try to do that as well, not getting to zero taxes yet.

I have read about Civilian-led non-violent resistance that does not advocate use of weapons to resist an aggressor like Russia right now. I read that Lithuania has trained its citizens in this, before they joined NATO. Denmark used it to resist the Nazi's in WW2. I believe that fewer lives would be lost with non-violent resistance. What seems to drive wars is the huge availability of weapons and the more we send to Ukraine, the more people, civilians and military conscripts who don't have a choice about being there will be killed. I read once that when Ghandi was told about Hitler and his threats, Ghandi said something like - is Hitler not a man? Will he not die? Humanity just doesn't seem to have the patience to outwit aggressors. I know this does not answer the question of the Holocaust perpetrated by the Nazis in central Europe. But what human decisions led up to this? The Treaty of Versailles? Or today the failure of the West/U.S. to make a contribution to the Russian people after fall of the Iron Curtain

From **Linda Thyer** : You can add my name to option A!

From **Bruna Nota** : thank you Linda. So heart warming to hear your thinking as you ponder all of this. I did correspond with your parents in the late '90s early 2000s. Thanks for sharing!

From **Charlie Diamond** : In military CO, there is the option of alternative service. What is CC's alternative service for our military taxes?

From **Scott Albrecht** : Donations to charities could be considered the alternative service, since we haven't been able to get a legal peace tax in place.

From **Bruna Nota** : About CRA. In conversation with a CRA official she was moved to consider becoming a CO after we talked, but she still pursued my case until I paid up with interests. All my bank accounts would be frozen and my salary garnished.

From **Linda Thyer** : Yes, I suspect you are right Doug, but the perception is that there could be repercussions.

From **Murray Lumley** : Paul Rogers - Bradford U. in England

From **Linda Thyer** : That's a good slogan Anna!

From **Eric Unger** : Ivan, I agree with you totally and have many of the same concerns with respect to our denomination.

Email from **Shelagh Young** (posted in Chat by Doug)

Hello People of Conscience:

Possibly not making the meeting, I'm sorry, but I have a seasonal small business and The Season is now. I'm also totally exhausted by the world.

Having looked over (with great appreciation) the matters at hand, and wandering around in the idea of Conscience Canada, its core integrity and potential for activation, a few thoughts seem worthy of mention. Hope so.

Combining a few of the needs expressed for the discussion today, one possibility is to engage others in our soul-searching. Go public with the quandary.

It could begin simply/cheaply with a social media campaign exploring/investigating the meaning of, necessity for, and expression of, "conscience".

What's a pro-peace group doing in a world like this? could launch a hundred memes. Maybe a thousand. with 2 choice buttons, or some other click-engagement which goes to an informative and well-designed Conscience Canada website asking deeper questions, perhaps also in multiple-choice quiz form, about the relevance of what we're doing and why, and if they'd like to contribute or engage or stay informed... or something.

It's research for this organization, while also exploring, one could say, the general state of pacifism in a war-on-everything culture. with news links, also perhaps, on our trillion dollar debt, and why are we buying warships? But I digress.... Content decisions are much later, of course. I'm just throwing this thought in as an option.

If the organization can't survive, spend the money on a beautiful last gesture to understand why the closure must happen. If it does. OR, be completely revitalized by positive and uplifting results.

Setting this up would take some work to do well. Funds could be directed toward a staff person with coordinator/manager w/social media "push" skills. Could be very part-time for the right person.

Grants might be available for the hire. Find a PHD student needing a research project. team with students in graphic arts, web development, etc... at George Brown? and their instructors. also university sociology students might enjoy coming up with simple multiple-choice questionnaires for social media quiz posts. Questions about the meaning and limits of personal conscience and choice could be made fun, and imaginative George Brown students could really run with design and presentation.

So that's the thought. Could be a great publicity op for local news also.

Do we collectively still believe in the possibility of peace? If so, what are we doing about that?

Pose that as a question for Cross Country Checkup with Conscience Canada as guest!

Hope to join you later.

all the best to you all, and thank you.
Shelagh

From **Anna Nieminen** : "Defend the Earth. Defund the Military. End War." is a slogan Doug came up with and it's in the meeting notes he's sharing

Email from **Maryse Azzaria**: (posted in Chat by Doug)

I was looking forward to this Zoom meeting, but unfortunately some family situation prevents me from being with you. I had reflected on the questions you will be debating. Here is how I see things at the moment. And thank you Jan for translating in French. It is really appreciated.

> Question #1

> What is the core mission of CC? Is it Conscientious Objection to Military Taxation? Is it bigger than that – is it working to end Canadian participation in any war; is it working to end all wars? Is it something else?

For me, the mission of CC is more than an individual action. It is a means to an end: reduce or eliminate Canada's participating in war, making arms, selling arms. It is so so sad to see, in the present war in Ukraine, how the public opinion immediately pushed for sending arms.

> Question #2

> Having answered #1 above, what are the pros and cons of CC continuing or CC closing down?

Pros: CC will always have a profound meaning for those who are conscious of the horror, stupidity danger of any war. As long as a few individual are willing to give some time to the movement, without necessarily creating new activities, CC has a place of choice in Canada. The name itself is worth keeping. Being conscious is the key to our life in society

Cons: Since, as you write, legislation will probably never get passed, the goal of CC seemed impossible to achieve. In that case, it is probably to close down.

> Question #2 (a)

> If in answering #2 we arrive at a positive commitment to continue, what should be our immediate unique-to-CC objectives: pursuing legislation (that will probably never get passed), pursuing a legal challenge, continuing with the PTR, using resources to hire an outreach/comms person, focusing on education, are there others?

Difficult to answer. Education to conscience of the present reality of our planet would be an objective. How to achieve it? It seems social media is the way to reach people.

>

> Question #2 (b)

> If in answering #2 we decide it would be best to close, what should we do with our current operational money?

When it comes to spending money, there are always many ideas. You should maybe look into helping people who suffer from war, refugees for instance.

> Question 3

> If CC goes on, how can we get people (particularly youth) who are passionate about tackling climate change to see the inextricable connection between militarism, war and climate disaster. (Defend the Earth, Defund the Military, End War).

Definitely link arms and climate change.

Thank you so much everyone for your work for peace.

Maryse

From **Anna Nieminen** : A legacy project would be a way to preserve the history and successes of CC such as in a book and possibly video that could be hosted somewhere

Here's an example of a legacy website for The Leap <https://theleap.org/>

From **Marilyn McKim** (she/her) : I am impressed by the research the Board did to source a good selection of other organizations with which we could collaborate. Much appreciation for that work! If CC closes, our funds would most appropriately go to one of them, for instance the Canada-Wide Peace and Justice Network.

From **Murray Lumley** : I feel that a yes vote requires a commitment of time toward CC

From **Charlie Diamond** : I wish all peace groups had a more satisfying response once war has broken out

From **Daphne Davey**, PEI : It was well worth attending this AGM! Thanks to all.

Post meeting email from Don Woodside:

CC

Inherent contradiction

To protect COs, or to oppose military spending

Originally set up to support COs by providing legislation; with hopes it would also be inspirational to reduce spending especially if it spread to many others. The people we want to reach now, aren't exactly 'conscientious objectors', but more antiwar activists, and less willing to take on whatever consequences may arise. And they want to see some hope of an impact from any tax resistance.

A couple of decades ago when this debate was on the table with government officials (and among the board), we acknowledged that while as COs we had a right to redirect, we would express our opposition to military spending as ordinary citizens. To me that still makes sense.

If the main focus is now opposition to military spending eg. Defend the environment, defund the military, then CC can't offer a privileged way for citizens to do that by redirecting taxes. We are into the realm of tax resistance more generally. Then it doesn't make sense to have a peace tax fund where people place the resisted taxes if there is no legal precedent to depend on, and no hope of legislation to legalize it. It also makes the target less clear; just which govt spending is taking a toll on the environment? There are lots of candidates for that.

Post meeting email from Eric Unger:

Dearest friends,

Just a big *thank you* to each of you for your contributions to peace efforts on this planet. In my mind, COMT is the single most important focus of CC, but always in the back of my mind is the hope for a Peace Department in our federal government. After all, if we have a War Department – calling itself the Department of Defense – why wouldn't we have a Department of Peace? And citizens should (I believe) have the right to choose which department to support through their taxes. But we know what the priorities of our government, and virtually all other governments, are and so there *is* no Department of Peace.

But as a result of some of the discussion by board members, I had an idea. Sorry.

I'll pass it on and you can . . . well, whatever . . .

"Defend the Earth; Defund the Military" is an excellent CC motto. For all I know, it's already copyrighted and ineligible for tinkering with. BUT, what if it isn't? Or what if there are *other* candidates for a motto? Would younger/techier people be interested in participating in a "CC billboard motto contest" – for a modest honorarium? (World Beyond War has some very powerful billboards that say a lot using very simple images.) If so, this could be a way of drawing in, or at least exposing, more young people to CC and its mandate. Who knows?

Well, there it is. I'm done. Back to shovelling water out of our basement.

Peace,

Eric

10. Other business and announcements

Next Board meeting will be sometime in early June.

11. Adjournment at 17:30 EDT



Conscience Canada

Work for peace. Stop paying for war!
Travaillons pour la paix. Cessons de payer pour la guerre !

CC Board Annual Report for 2021

At our 2021 AGM last May attendees worked together to generate ideas and suggestions for how to revitalize CC and move forward. Since then the Board has worked on some of these suggestions. A brief summary follows:

Could CC become a chapter of World Beyond War? –

CC is currently an affiliate of WBW. A chapter does not have its own mission whereas CC does. Chapters are regional in Canada, not national. So it would not be suitable for CC to become a chapter. As an affiliate CC can collaborate with WBW on specific actions, but CC still needs to do its own work on COMT.

Could CC join up with the Canadian Friends Service Committee? –

Although several Quakers support alternate service for military taxes, the CFSC did not think it would be workable for them to take on CC's work.

What about the Mennonite Central Committee Canada? –

MCC was approached about taking over the Peace Tax Fund. They won't take it on, as they need to stay in good standing with Global Affairs Canada for funding, and also maintain their charitable status. CC's mission is to change political policy. Essentially we are about civil disobedience so no charity could pick up the Peace Tax Trust Fund without putting their charitable status in jeopardy.

Could CC grow through links with Climate, Environment, Peace, and Social Justice groups?

1. CC did receive some requests from people interested in using tax resistance as a tactic for Defunding the Police. While this resulted in interesting conversations about tax resistance, it would be a tricky tool to use to reduce taxes that support municipal and provincial funded policing. Further collaboration may come later down the road.
2. The Canada-Wide Peace and Justice Network is a loose network of peace organizations from across Canada. CC is a member of CWPJN. As with WBW, CC collaborates with CWPJN on specific actions, but CC still needs to do its own work on COMT.

Could CC start a class action lawsuit against paying for war?

CC worked with Lily Haury who was interested in getting a class action going in Quebec. She was in contact with a lawyer who specialized in this area. He did not think this approach would be successful. Bottom line is that this would require a lot of work and money (probably considerably more than we have) with doubtful results.

Would including War on Nature in CC's mission attract younger people?

The board reach a consensus that we can include reference to the war on nature in our vision, but not in our mission. In other words, our vision includes respect for life in general, for creation. But trying to lobby for a law that would enable taxpayers to redirect the portion of their taxes being used on the metaphoric “war on nature” seems unworkable. We can speak up in support of movements such as Extinction Rebellion that are working hard for biodiversity, nature conservation, and environmental protection. We would need to keep in mind that broadening out to embrace other causes could come at the cost of losing focus while replicating the work of others.

What about promoting the idea of COMT supporting investing in government sponsored Green Bonds (investing in the environment not war)?

The option of green bonds was explored, but these seem geared for institutions and corporations, not individuals.

Board members also continued with CC work, keeping the Peace Tax Trust Fund up to date and properly audited, producing the newsletter and updating the PTR, recruiting new board members, and supporting initiatives started by other groups, such as a sign-on letter objecting to increasing military spending.

The above sums up what the CC board has done since our last AGM. It should be noted that amidst these explorations and deliberations Doug Hewitt-White regrettably resigned for personal reasons as our Board Chair and President. Jan Slakov took over as President; Doug remains as a board member.

At this point the Board generally agrees that CC should continue for one more year [2022]. Hence the decision was made to produce in the Spring of 2022 another PTR for the 2021 tax year. As usual it is available on the CC website and as a downloadable PDF.

At our 2022 AGM on April 30 we do need to get input from attendees on key questions that require answers so CC can decide its future. For example:

1. What is the core mission of CC? Is it Conscientious Objection to Military Taxation? Is it bigger than that – is it working to end Canadian participation in any war; is it working to end all wars? Are there others?
2. Having answered #1 above, what are the pros and cons of CC continuing or CC closing down?
 - 2 (a) If in answering #2 we arrive at a positive commitment to continue, what should be our immediate unique-to-CC objectives: pursuing legislation (that will probably never get passed), pursuing a legal challenge, continuing with the PTR, using resources to hire an outreach/comms person, focusing on education, are there others?
 - 2 (b) If in answering #2 we decide it would be best to close, what should we do with our current operational money?
3. If CC goes on, how can we get people (particularly youth) who are passionate about tackling climate change to see the inextricable connection between militarism, war and climate disaster. (Defend the Earth, Defund the Military, End War).

We look forward to a lively discussion on April 30th.

Jan Slakov and Doug Hewitt-White
for the Conscience Canada Board of Directors