



CONSCIENCE CANADA
2024 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)
Held on Saturday, April 20, 2024, 15:30 EDT
via Zoom videoconferencing

AGENDA:

Welcome (Jan) and Land Acknowledgement (Linda)

1. Verification of quorum
2. Verification of Notice of Meeting
3. Approval of the Minutes of the 2023 AGM (copies available, also on website)
4. Approval of this Agenda for the 2024 AGM
5. Presentation and adoption of the 2023 financial report (copies available)
6. Confirmation of board members standing for re-election: Jan Slakov, Doug Hewitt-White, Linda Thyer, Renée Nunan-Rappard, Charles Small, Terri Sleeva
7. Election of new board member(s): Madelyn MacKay
8. Review of CC activities in January 2023 to March 2024 (Board Report – copies available)
9. Discussion of future plans and actions – Discussion in breakout rooms of 4 or 5 people. Return to plenary for wrap-up roundtable discussion.
10. Other business and announcements
11. Adjournment

MINUTES

1. **Verification of Quorum:** (members present via Zoom 16 ; by proxy 10)
A total of 26 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 15, 2024 the Notice of Meeting of the 2024 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 2024 Newsletter with the Notice of Meeting was also posted to the CC website by February 15, 2024. Additionally an emailed invitation to the AGM was sent to all members on March 31.

3. **Approval of the Minutes of the 2023 AGM:**

Moved by Doug ; Seconded by Terri – Carried Unanimously

4. **Motion to approve the Agenda for this 2024 Conscience Canada AGM:**

Moved by Dave ; Seconded by Bruna – Carried Unanimously

5. **Presentation & Approval of 2023 financial statement** (presentation shared on screen):
Presented by Scott Albrecht. The financial presentation is appended to these minutes.
In discussion Dave Bechtel recommended that CC continue to have liability insurance.

ACTION: CC board to consider insurance at their next meeting.

Motion to receive the 2022 Financial Statement:

Moved by Scott; Seconded by Bruna – Carried Unanimously

Appointment of an Auditor for CC finances for 2023: -

Motion to appoint Edward M. Simon CA, Professional Corporation, Kitchener, Ontario as Auditor for CC 2023 finances and an audit of the final closing of the Peace Tax Trust Fund.

Moved by Jan; Seconded by Bruna – Carried Unanimously

6 & 7 **Confirmation of board members standing for re-election and Election of new board member:**

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.

Stepping down from the current CC board are Bruna, Scott & Dwyer.

Standing for re-election were:

Doug Hewitt-White, Renee Nunan-Rappard, Jan Slakov, Terri Sleeva, Charles Small, and Linda Thyer

Standing for election as a new board member was Madelyn Mackay

Motion to elect continuing and new Directors:

Moved by Mary; Seconded by Dwyer – Carried Unanimously

8. **Review of CC activities in 2023** (Board Report – copies available) and a look ahead.

Board Report for period January 2023 to March 2024:

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.

9. **A discussion of future plans and actions** with participation & questions from all attendees.

Breakout rooms with 4 or 5 people in each were organized for discussion.

Under consideration for discussion:

- For 10 years, there have been Campaign Nonviolence Action Days between Sept. 21 and Oct. 2 (which is at the beginning of our White Poppy campaign from Sept. 21 - Dec. 10). In 2023, 5057 actions were planned around the world. Over 60,000 people took part in these actions & events. Are there activities CC could effectively organize as part of the Campaign Nonviolence Action Days?
- What kinds of actions might you like to organize or participate in?
- In this period of intense conflict and distrust, of ecological & social breakdown in our society - how can we use nonviolence as a tool to build trust & cooperation?
- How can we move beyond misinformed opinions & competitiveness towards understanding and empathy?
- In peace advocacy, is there a danger of making things worse; how can we work for peace most effectively?
- CC has a particular focus on how we can withdraw our complicity in war and militarism; how can we empower more people to act as conscientious objectors?

The breakout rooms were composed as follows:

Room 1: Dave Bechtel, Jan Slakov, Maryse Azzaria, Scot Albrecht

Room 2: Bruna Nota, Madelyn MacKay, Marilyn McKim, Dwyer Sullivan

Room 3: Clair Adamson, Murray Lumley, Terri Sleeva, Mary Groh

Room 4: Doug Hewitt-White, Ernie Wiens, Joy Warner, Linda Thyer,

After the breakout discussions everyone returned to plenary and participated in a final idea and suggestions roundtable.

Plenary discussion:

There was a half hour of discussion. Several areas of action and focus included: Communication (expanding, strengthening); Connecting and Collaborating (with possible allies in environmental and climate groups, etc); Activities to Continue and grow; Campaigns new and different. Below are the ideas generated in each of these areas.

Communication

Newsletter piece that sets out clarity on what we want: to pay taxes in full but in such a way that none of our taxes go towards war & militarism. So not tax avoidance or tax evasion but conscientious objection to military taxation. Emphasize the desire to RE-DIRECT rather than simply WITHHOLD taxes.

Post the route of the Peace Caravan on our website, showing stops along the way

CC as a conduit of information via email, social media and web to help spread the word about events and campaigns so people can join in and also bring in other groups that they may be a part of – creating a multiplier effect. Some sort of communication effort like this would be appreciated.

Connecting and Collaborating

Join eco groups & communicate about implications of war & militarism (an example is the SCAN (Seniors Climate Action Now) group)

Show how everything is connected: human rights, eco-justice, peace

Reach out using email & social media (An example is connecting with young people who will be meeting with MP Heather MacPherson in Edmonton, or reaching out to the Climate Emergency Unit, which is working towards a Youth Climate Corps, collaborating with Quakers or other Peace Churches, for example. participating in Gaza Ceasefire Pilgrimage; there's a group making social justice films in Montreal that might be interested. Claire Adamson mentioned this, might know how to connect with them)

Examples of connecting with other groups through participation: in Toronto there will be a two day 41 km walk along old railway line (this is length of Gaza) May 11 & 12 to support ceasefire in Gaza. There was a Peace in Gaza pilgrimage in Winnipeg at Easter time, there is the On to Ottawa Peace Caravan and No to CANSEC demonstrations coming up at the end of May

CC may not be able to initiate a lot of activities but we can publicize and support (we need to make connection between those activities by other groups and conscientious objection) We could work to get environmental orgs to include in their mission/mandate countering the damage by war and militarism (W&M) – recognizing the enormous carbon footprint of W&M.

Continuing

Continue with White Poppy campaign and distribution of cards. Bruna and Dwyer mentioned that they are interested in working again on the white poppy campaign.

Campaigns and New Activities

Working together with Quakers on non-violent action days (Oct 2)

If we were to mount a campaign for “Soldiers Without Bullets” (better name would be needed):

- Find out from DND how much the military spends on non-military, humanitarian work
- Info graphic type information could include not just military taxes but info on weapons trade (from Project Ploughshares) and on CPP investments in militarism
- The campaign would encourage the govt to increase the portion of military \$ being spent on humanitarian work. Focus on how much military spends on relief efforts and try to increase that, more training, more resources.
- Some people don't see the dots connected militarism and the destruction of the climate. Military GHG emissions are not required to be reported. People don't know the extent of military impact. They don't see how environmental destruction, human rights, militarism are so inter related.

Promoting idea of there being a climate emergency youth working group - this as a way of attracting the attention and gaining support from young people. How do we overcome reluctance of climate activists to support anti-war efforts (even though it is obvious of tremendous impact of war and preparation on the climate)

Reaching out to Seth Klein and his involvement with creating Youth Climate Corps and asking about non-violence and anti-war in the thinking of such a group. Could non-violence training be an important part of that.

There was also some discussion about CC's general approach and attitude. Doug & Bruna exchanged views. Doug was in favour of a results-oriented approach. Once a year PTR is not enough. CC needs determined action. That would be of interest to younger people. We need to be a horde of angry bees. Bruna responded that we do not want to be fighting fire with fire. It is the culmination of little actions that make a big difference. And Bruna referenced the book *Healing Resistance* by Kazu Haga. Jan noted a common theme in our discussions is how to attract and involve younger people in our efforts. Terri agreed with Doug saying we need to change the status quo.

From the Chat notes: It is more than things that need changing. People and our culture needs to change.

10. **Other business and announcements**

None

11. **Adjournment at 17:25 EDT**

ADDENDUMS

FINANCIAL

Balance Sheet Conscience Canada

| ACCOUNTS | As of 2023-12-31 | As of 2022-12-31 |
|----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Assets | | |
| Total Cash and Bank | \$66,406.68 | \$72,375.57 |
| Total Other Current Assets | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Total Long-term Assets | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Total Assets | \$66,406.68 | \$72,375.57 |
| Liabilities | | |
| Accounts Payable | \$181.18 | \$181.18 |
| Peace Tax Trust Fund | \$48,154.24 | \$54,791.45 |
| Total Liabilities | \$48,335.42 | \$54,972.63 |
| Equity | | |
| Total Other Equity | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Total Retained Earnings | \$18,071.26 | \$17,402.94 |
| Total Equity | \$18,071.26 | \$17,402.94 |

Peace Tax Trust Fund Closure:

Between October 2023 and February 1, 2024, we heard from a total for 42 Peace Tax Trust depositors.

| | | | |
|---------------|----|-----------|---------------|
| Refunds: | \$ | 11,294.82 | 10 depositors |
| Donate to CC: | \$ | 12,526.99 | 34 depositors |

Donations will be recognized in 2024 financial statements.

**Profit and Loss
Conscience Canada**

| ACCOUNTS | 2023 | 2022 |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Income | | |
| Donations | \$1,795.00 | \$1,400.70 |
| Interest Income | \$1,443.45 | \$447.77 |
| Investments – Interest | \$0.00 | \$242.50 |
| Total Income | \$3,238.45 | \$2,090.97 |
| | | |
| Total Cost of Goods Sold | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| | | |
| Gross Profit | \$3,238.45 | \$2,090.97 |
| Operating Expenses | | |
| Administration | \$0.00 | \$505.24 |
| Advertising | \$40.18 | \$0.00 |
| Insurance – Liability | \$1,510.92 | \$1,592.10 |
| Newsletter | \$170.96 | \$442.49 |
| Outreach | \$707.15 | \$100.00 |
| Professional Fees | \$0.00 | -\$83.00 |
| Website | \$140.92 | \$134.69 |
| Total Operating Expenses | \$2,570.13 | \$2,691.52 |
| | | |
| Net Profit | \$668.32 | -\$600.55 |

Note - negative expense in "Professional Fees" - the estimated bill for 2021 audit was counted as a 2021 expense. The actual bill, paid in 2022, was \$83.00 lower than estimated.



Le français suit

Board of Directors Annual Report for the period January 2023 to March 2024

Considering that we came close to shuttering Conscience Canada (CC) in recent years, it's heartening to know that numbers of people using our online Peace Tax Return have gone up noticeably this year. (The total numbers for the 2021 and 2022 tax years were 33 and 21 whereas for this 2023 tax year, by the end of March 199 people had submitted online Peace Tax Returns. The increase in people withholding military taxes was particularly striking, rising from a total of 9 for the 21 and 22 tax seasons, to 55 this year, by March 31.)

We recently organized a presentation on fiscal conscientious objection and people have stepped up to follow up on a number of ideas and connections that arose from Doug's presentation and the discussion that followed.

A major focus this year has been winding up the Peace Tax Trust Fund. We thank our treasurer Scott Albrecht and also Dave Bechtel, for their efforts. We had hoped to have the final audit done in time for this AGM but the preparatory work is still not quite done.

Several CC members attended World Beyond War's #NoWar2023 online conference; this has proved to be a great way to meet and connect with others working to free the world from war. It's also a great way to learn about nonviolent resistance and peace-building happening around the world that the mainstream media rarely, if ever, cover.

Through the year we regularly "sign on" to initiatives from other peace groups. For instance, we joined an international "Ceasefire Now" appeal last fall, and we continue to support the Global Days of Action on Military Spending, which extend this year from April 12 to May 15. We are a member organization of the International Peace Bureau, which is highlighting the role of conscientious objection in nominating 3 remarkable groups of conscientious objectors in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus for the 2024 Nobel Peace Prize. Last spring we endorsed Science for Peace's education series on non-violence. We've also endorsed this spring's Peace Caravan which starts on Mother's Day, in Vancouver and will arrive in Ottawa in time to amplify efforts to oppose the CANSEC weapons bazaar, at the end of May.

CC board member Dr. Linda Thyer spoke at Vancouver's Hiroshima Day commemoration and Bruna Nota and Murray Lumley hosted the CC table at Toronto's Hiroshima Day event.

Several CC board members have written articles to share information about the urgency and moral imperative of shifting our energies away from violence and destruction and towards life-enhancing efforts. It's not always easy to find outlets willing to publish such pieces, but Linda Thyer co-authored one on war as an act of climate denial which was published in Canadian Dimension magazine, Doug Hewitt-White's "Remembering Our Humanity" op-ed was published in the Millstone News and Jan Slakov's Viewpoint article for the International Day of Peace was published by the Powell River Peak in BC.

The official launch day for the white poppy campaign was Sept. 21, the International Day of Peace. The campaign featured a wide variety of outreach actions, including:

- distribution of over 500 white poppies, mostly homemade
- distribution of 2500 wallet cards
- white poppy displays in stores
- outreach to various media outlets and elected officials, including cards and poppies mailed to 50 MPs
- Board member Dwyer Sullivan, whose teaching career carries on well past retirement, found a great way to highlight the white poppy campaign at Hallowe'en: He invited trick-or-treaters, for another candy, to answer these questions: 1) what symbol am I wearing? 2) what does it stand for? 3) what will you tell your class Nov 11th?

At the end of this list of actions, it feels important to include non-action, reflection, simply being. A theme that has arisen in our exchanges is the question: When we say no to war, what do we say yes to? Among the many wonderful things to say yes to, is simply quieting ourselves and listening, cultivating humility, kindness and the love that underlies the force of nonviolence.

Jan Slakov
for the Conscience Canada Board of Directors