

April 20, 2021

**THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA
SHINING WATERS REGIONAL COUNCIL**

**Minutes of a meeting of the
Social and Ecological Justice Commission
Tuesday, April 20, 2021**

The Social and Ecological Justice Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council met on April 20, 2021 by video conference. The meeting began at 1:00 p.m.

Members Present

Susan Eagle (Chairperson), Lois Brown, Tina Conlon, Elizabeth Cunningham, Moon-Ja Park, Eleanor Scarlett, Cameron Watts

Staff: Bri-anne Swan, Jeffrey Dale

Absent: Donna Lang

Welcome, check in and prayer

The chairperson welcomed everyone, opened with prayer, gave an acknowledgement of the land, and acknowledged our commitment to being a safe place for all people to gather and participate in our Region.

The chairperson constituted the meeting in the name of Jesus Christ.

There was a time of check-in.

Agenda

MOTION by Tina Conlon / Eleanor Scarlett that the agenda be approved as circulated, with the addition of Business Arising regarding letters related to Paid Sick Days in Ontario.

MOTION

CARRIED

Minutes

MOTION by Lois Brown / Elizabeth Cunningham that the Minutes of the meeting of the Shining Waters Social and Ecological Justice Commission held March 16, 2021 be adopted as circulated.

MOTION

CARRIED

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Business Arising

Community Ministries

Since the last Commission meeting:

1. A letter was sent to the Regional Council Executive, as well as Executive Minister Peter Hartmans, expressing the concerns of the Commission. The letter was received by the Executive, but has not yet been dealt with.
2. Jody Maltby called Susan Eagle to propose a conversation with the Communities of Faith Commission (CFC) about how to relate to one another and talk about overlapping areas of responsibility and interest. There were 11 people on the call: several members of the CFC, staff and the Regional Council President. Susan was the only person present to represent the Social and Ecological Justice Commission (SEJC) and expressed that had she known there would be so many representatives from the Communities of Faith Commission she would have invited other SEJC members to join her. Within the meeting, there appeared to be two contrasting narratives: a) The outreach ministries saw the current funding phase was ending and have decided to close; that the board members have become burnt out. b) The board has been distressed that there is nobody looking for funding for the ministries but has been looking for ways to keep going. Seeing no way forward, and little support from the Regional Council they opted to close. The outcome of this meeting was that the two commission chairs would have a meeting with the Community Ministries board to understand their perspective in this conversation.
3. There was a meeting with the Board of Jane-Finch Community Ministry and Davenport-Perth Community Ministry, SEJC and the Communities of Faith Commission. The Board was very specific in saying that the *only* issue was funding and hoped that the Regional Council would see the ministries as a priority for funding. The Board expressed that they wanted to give their ministers ample notice if the ministries needed to close but were hopeful that they are not in palliative care. The Board said they have no understanding of where the rumour that they are tired came from and are distressed that this story is in circulation. The Board is waiting to see what the Regional Council is going to do next.

Susan Eagle has inquired as to whether there are additional pockets of funding available to keep the community ministries going. Funding sources identified include: Mission and Service, PTCC, TUCC. Questions were asked about who sets the priorities for the funding within the Regional Council. It was decided that this is the question for the Executive.

It was brought up that as Church we are called to walk with the vulnerable. We are a church moving towards being an anti-racist denomination. We need to be present in the communities where these ministries function. There are no churches present at Jane and Finch — they are all closed.

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A discussion took place around whether the Social and Ecological Justice Commission needs to take further action at this point. Susan Eagle and Cameron Watts will be present at the next Executive meeting (April 27th) and will address the letter and ask about how funding priorities get set within the Regional Council. There was concern expressed that all communities of faith, as members of the Regional Council, need to have the opportunity to participate in the setting of funding priorities.

The Commission could propose there be a working group that would look at what could be done in regards to funding the community ministries. SEJC would want to be at the table for those discussions.

Discussion about the priorities would include requesting:

- up-to-date financial statements.
- a timeline for priority setting.
- requesting a working group (that includes SEJC) with the purpose of setting priorities

After receiving a statement of funding, the working group could create a plan which would be ready for the Regional Council Annual Meeting.

Update from Jeffrey Dale re: Harm Reduction

Conversations titled *Seeking to Reduce Harm* have been set for May. Seven Regional Councils are participating.

The House of Commons has a bill before Parliament to change the Criminal Code re: illicit substances. This bill does not go as far as Jeffery would like in decriminalizing illicit substances for personal use.

Peter Hartmans has agreed to increase this Commission's 2021 budget from \$10,000 to \$12,000, so that \$2000 can be allocated to Harm Reduction education and programming within the Region.

MOTION by Elizabeth Cunningham / Tina Conlon that the Social & Ecological Justice Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council ask that their budget be increased by \$2000, with that additional money allocated to harm reduction education and programming.

MOTION

CARRIED

Bradford Bypass Action (deferred)

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Paid Sick Days

Toronto Imams contacted Faith in the City in an attempt to gather faith leaders around a statement in support of increasing vaccine access in high risk areas and pushing the province to adopt (at least temporarily) sick pay for people who were ill, in isolation or needing time off work to get vaccinated. Seventy-two people/groups have so far endorsed the letter.

Bri-anne Swan has launched a Paid Sick Days action page on the Regional Council website. Individuals are able to send their own (customized if they wish) letter to the Ontario Government directly from the website. A tally is kept of how many people submit their own letter. Bri-anne has also drafted a letter for David's signature that can be sent on behalf of the Regional Council.

MOTION by Eleanor Scarlett / Tina Conlon that the Social and Ecological Justice Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council ask that a letter in support of Paid Sick Days for all working Ontarians be presented to President David Leyton-Brown for signature, and that the letter from Faith in the City be endorsed by Shining Waters Regional Council and distributed to communities of faith.

MOTION

CARRIED

Deferred Item

Regional Council and General Council Proposals

There is a new timeline for proposals intended to go to General Council. While normally proposals would be received in the spring, these proposals are now being requested for the fall. Bri-anne Swan will circulate the proposal template in anticipation of the next Commission meeting. There was agreement expressed that effort needs to be focused in supporting communities of faith through the process of creating proposals. Proposals intended only for the Regional Council use the same format at the General Council proposals.

Questions were asked about how the theme and agenda of the Annual Meeting get set. Last year, they were set by the President and the Executive.

SJNOR Report – Tina Conlon and Bri-anne Swan

The last SJNOR meeting was primarily a large sharing session about the justice work being done in each particular Regional Council.

There has been a formal financial ask of Shining Waters Regional Council in 2021 to contribute \$1000 to the ongoing work of SJNOR. Peter Hartmans has approved this funding. The Commission thanks Peter for this approval.

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Reports/updates from sub-committees (as required):

Homelessness (Elizabeth, Eleanor, Cameron, Susan)

There was very positive feedback from communities of faith about the Good Friday resources re: homelessness. These liturgical resources remain relevant beyond Lent, and Bri-anne will make sure they are archived and renamed on the Regional Council website along with other worship resources available to congregations.

Poverty/Income Inequality (Susan, Moon-Ja, Tina, Elizabeth)

Update of Guaranteed Livable Income Vigils, April 8:

All of the Ontario vigils needed to (very last minute!) move online because of a stay-at-home order issued by the Premier. Online vigils were held. Some MPs attended. Bri-anne Swan assisted with highlighting the social media posts of those who were lighting candles in support of Guaranteed Livable Income.

Bri-anne will be working with the videos and photographs submitted from the vigils held within the Region to increase awareness about Guaranteed Livable Income.

Anti-Racism (Eleanor, Elizabeth, Moon-Ja, Lois)

There are two different events for Asian Women being held nationally titled *Support, Strength, and Solidarity*. Kim Uyede-Kai is facilitating.

Sunday, May 2 (6:00-8:00 pm, Eastern Time)

Wednesday, May 5 (6:00-8:00 pm, Eastern Time)

There is a United-in-Learning webinar on May 18 titled *Lifting Up Asian Voices*. Tina Conlon will be one of the speakers.

<https://www.united-in-learning.com/index.php/webinars/395-lifting-up-asian-voices>

Tina also recently appeared as a speaker with the Committee on Asian/North American Asian Theologies (CANAAT — a theological resource and support to Emmanuel College).

<https://emmanuel.utoronto.ca/the-centre-for-religion-and-its-contexts/canaat/>

Right Relations (Lois, Cameron, Tina)

Lois Brown is the new Chair of Living Into Right Relations. There has been a meeting with the Executive and this Commission about the role of LIRR as a committee and access to funding.

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Israel/Palestine (Tina, Lois)

Palnet is offering a virtual tour of Palestine/Israel. They are also looking to connect with communities of faith who are engaged with or interested in justice work related to Palestine and Israel.

There has been a request that the minutes from this Commission be forwarded to Palnet. The Commission minutes are available on the Shining Waters Regional Council website but Bri-anne will also forward minutes to Tina and Lois.

Report from Bri-anne Swan

Bri-anne reported on:

- Supporting the Good Friday worship resources project (video re: Housing Charter)
- Paid Sick Days campaign
- Ongoing releases of the *do justice* podcast
- Increased social media conversations, support for Guaranteed Livable Income vigils
- Working with Nominations re: recruiting potential GC44 commissioners

Correspondence

Letters from Tony Rennett re: prayers for the Unborn, and Trinity St. Paul's UC re: Right Relations were received for information.

Susan Eagle will go back to Trinity St. Paul's and ask for further clarification about their letter.

A response from the Province of Ontario re: Christian Colleges was received.

Closing

A closing prayer was offered and the meeting adjourned at 3:05 pm.

Next Meeting: May 18, 2021, 1 p.m.