

April 26, 2022

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

**Minutes of a meeting of the
Social and Ecological Justice Commission
Tuesday, April 26, 2022**

The Social and Ecological Justice Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council met on April 26, 2022 by video conference. The meeting began at 1:00 p.m.

Members Present

Susan Eagle (Chairperson), Lois Brown, Esther Collier, Tina Conlon, Don Ford, Irene Green, Won Hur, Cameron Watts

Staff: Jeffrey Dale, Rachael Howes

Guests: Brian McIntosh, Greg DeGroot-Maggetti, Cheryl Van Daalen-Smith, Lori Neale

Absent: Moon-Ja Park,

Welcome, check in and prayer

The chairperson opened the meeting at 1:04 p.m. and welcomed everyone. There was a time of introductions and check-in.

Susan Eagle gave an opening prayer. She 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.

Agenda

Two additions to the agenda:

Greg DeGroot-Maggetti from ISARC to join the meeting at 1:30 and a draft proposal to the regional meeting.

MOTION by Cameron Watts / Tina Conlon that the agenda be approved as amended.

MOTION

CARRIED

Minutes

MOTION by Cameron Watts / Tina Conlon that the Minutes of the meeting of the Shining Waters Social and Ecological Justice Commission held March 15, 2022 be adopted as circulated.

MOTION

CARRIED

Annual Meeting

Susan Eagle has been participating in the program planning group for the regional annual meeting on May 27 and 28, 2022.

United Church Women (UCW)

Guest, Cheryl van Daalen-Smith joined the meeting. She is on the Executive of the regional UCW. She spoke about wanting a formal link between the UCW Executive and this Commission, to have reciprocal information sharing.

MOTION by Don Ford / Irene Green that the Social and Ecological Justice Commission approach the regional council to have a position on the Commission designated for a representative of the United Church Women.

MOTION

CARRIED

Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition (ISARC)

Greg DeGroot-Maggetti joined the meeting to speak about what ISARC has planned for the upcoming Provincial election. They are concentrating on four main areas: income security, affordable housing and homelessness, long-term care sector, and workers rights. Greg gave some information on these areas and indicated that ISARC is producing background information about these topics as well as questions that people will be encouraged to ask their individual candidates. The resources and questions will be available on the ISARC website along with responses they get from the parties.

The commission members had an opportunity to ask questions and have a discussion on the information Greg shared.

Greg DeGroot-Maggetti left the meeting.

Esther Collier left the meeting.

Cheryl Van Daalen-Smith left the meeting.

Proposals

Susan Eagle provided a draft proposal *Raising and Indexing Social Assistance Rates in Ontario*. The proposal asks the region to call on the government to;

- raise social assistance rates starting with an increase that would bring them to the Deep Poverty Threshold (that is 75% of the Market Basket Measure (MBM)),
- collapse the basic amount and shelter allowance into a standard Flat Rate benefit,
- index OW and ODSP rates to inflation and
- initiate a multi-year plan to raise social assistance incomes above the Market Basket Measure of Poverty

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MOTION by Don Ford / Irene Green that the Social and Ecological Justice Commission approve the draft proposal *Raising and Indexing Social Assistance Rates in Ontario* and forward it on to the regional council meeting in May 2022.

MOTION

CARRIED

Cameron Watts left the meeting.

Updates

SJNOR (Social Justice Network of Ontario Regions) – Tina Conlon, Jeffrey Dale

There is an upcoming event, *Ontario Social Justice Roundtable*, being held on May 1st which is a roundtable in preparation for the Provincial election. Everyone is encouraged to register.

Community Ministries Working Group – Jeffrey Dale

This group has had one meeting to date. Their next meeting will focus on next steps; how we look at the ministries individually and collectively.

Environmental Issues

Lori Neale, staff with the Church in Mission unit of the General Council office, joined the meeting to share where the national church is on environmental issues. She shared some slides and information including *For the Love of Creation* campaign, launched in 2020; *Give it up for the Earth* campaign, and theological reflection around climate. She also spoke about the Korean Peace campaign which is a global campaign to end the war in Korea. And she spoke about *Vigil for the Silenced* calling for a “just recovery” from Covid-19, a “just transition” to a Green Economy, a “just resolution” to the political violence, and a “just livable income” for all struggling with income insecurities.

The members had an opportunity to ask questions and have a discussion on the information Lori provided.

Brian McIntosh left the meeting.

Staff reports – Jeffrey Dale

Jeffrey reported

- GC44 proposal GS08 on climate change – the Commission is being asked to examine the proposal more closely;
- at GC44 listening session on April 6th – conversation regarding Israel Palestine became heated and a lot of tension was created. Because of the relationship with PalNet, this is something that the Commission needs to discuss and explore.
- affirming and pride events are being planned.
- have received 18 jobs through Canada Summer Jobs program for Shining Waters and Canadian Shield regional councils. They will work on social justice issues. This Commission will be invited to meet with them in the summer to hear about the projects they are interested in, as well as a final meeting at the end of the summer to find out what they worked on.

- The harm reduction proposal is going to GC44 on May 18th.

Ongoing Commission Work

Poverty/Income Inequality (*Susan Eagle, Moon-Ja Park, Tina Conlon*)

Guaranteed Liveable Income – because of the Provincial election coming, we want to try to promote the lawn signs that are available at the regional council office; we will send something out to the region to advise of their availability.

Commission Member updates

UNJPPI (United Network for Justice and Peace in Palestine and Israel)

Tina Conlon reported that UNJPPI is encouraging regional councils to offer financial support for the gathering happening May 6, 7, 8 at London, ON.

Lori Neale left the meeting.

Topics for Future Discussion

- How the Commission funds.
- How the Commission is communicating.

Deferred Items

- Social Justice (Mid Winter) Event – next event?
- Justice for workers (item deferred from December meeting) – *Tina Conlon*
- Decent hours and scheduling in long-term care workers, equal pay/benefits regardless of status (temp/contract workers, migrants)

Closing The meeting ended at 3:30 p.m.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, May 17, 2022

