

The United Church of Canada
Shining Waters Regional Council

**Minutes of a meeting of the
Social and Ecological Justice Commission
Tuesday, November 15, 2022**

The Social and Ecological Justice Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council met on November 15, 2022 via Zoom. The meeting began at 1:00 p.m.

Members Present

Susan Eagle (Chairperson), Lois Brown, Esther Collier, Don Ford, Irene Green, Won Hur, Brian McIntosh, Bruce Sweet

Staff: Jeffrey Dale, Rachael Howes

Regrets: Tina Conlon, Jennifer Gordon, Kim Uyede-Kai

Welcome, check in and prayer

The chairperson opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

Lois Brown offered an opening prayer. She gave an acknowledgement of the land and Susan Eagle 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

MOTION by Brian McIntosh / Irene Green that the agenda be approved as circulated.

MOTION

CARRIED

Minutes

MOTION by Esther Collier / Lois Brown that the Minutes of the meeting of the Shining Waters Social and Ecological Justice Commission held October 18, 2022 be adopted as circulated.

MOTION

CARRIED

Business Arising

Update from Ecological Subcommittee – *Esther Collier*

Esther updated the Commission on the climate forum being held on November 21st

Reports from sub-committees

Homelessness (*Susan Eagle, Brian McIntosh*)

Susan and Brian have had an opening conversation around homelessness and plan to do more.

November 22 is national housing day.

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Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022

This bill was introduced right after the municipal elections and has already been pushed through two readings of the Provincial parliament. ISARC is hoping to send a written submission to be on the record opposing the Bill. The content, timing, misleading information and inferences of the bill are all a concern. There was discussion about sending a letter stating our opposition. Don Ford agreed to help craft the language for such a submission.

MOTION by Brian McIntosh / Esther Collier that the Social and Ecological Justice Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council send a message of opposition to Bill 23 identifying the negative impacts, questioning the timing and the process.

MOTION

CARRIED

Poverty/Income Inequality (Susan, Tina, Irene)

Tina Conlon attended a meeting of the Guaranteed Liveable Income (GLI) group last week. Susan attended only part of the meeting but shared that the GLI group nationally is now working on a strategy of trying to get municipalities to support guaranteed liveable income and to gather motions through municipalities. There has been some success in this in Newfoundland on this with several municipalities and some other places in Atlantic Canada. Tina will be asked to say more on this at another meeting. This might be a way in this region, through this commission, that we can support an initiative to have local municipalities endorse this.

Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition (ISARC)

This coalition mostly looks at housing and poverty policy. They are having a week of fasting and prayer leading up to the religious leader forum. Susan encouraged the members of this commission to get on the ISARC email list.

Staff Reports - Jeffrey Dale

- Next week the community ministries working group meets; he is hopeful they will have a clear picture of the process to lead them to the regional council meeting and what will be needed even going forward from that. By the beginning of the new year, this commission will have an idea of where this Commission will be actively involved in that conversation.
- Continuing the work with Anglican United Refugee Alliance (AURA); there has been a little bit of difficulty trying to connect them because of their relationship with our national refugee support, so that conversation continues.
- starting to try to figure out exactly where people's time and priorities are in communities of faith around their justice pieces; a group of five or six younger folks that are connected with the church have started a conversation with Jeffrey around where their priorities are, and Jeffrey will bring that to this Commission, so we can see where and how they are actively engaged and recognize that their space can sometimes be different and the way in which they engage can be different.

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- Still working on Naloxone training and more voices are being added to the table, so it's taking longer than expected but it is valuable.

Budget

Update

At the last meeting we looked at some numbers; have not received any updates on financials; perhaps we would like to have monthly financial information for meetings.

The Affirm expenses that were in this Commission's budget are now being removed as the Affirm comes under the Executive.

Social Justice Network of Ontario Regions (SJNOR) - follow-up on last month's motion to make sure cheque is sent.

Proposal: Creating children's environment curriculum

Esther, Jeffrey and Susan had a conversation about this.

There is a wonderful resource that included Indigenous information on how to communicate to children about environment. Research has shown that children under the grade four level should not be exposed to the calamitous crises in the world but more to how they are connected to the environment and how the environment recycles and reuses things so that they get a positive awareness of the earth and their role in it. From grade four up, the work should be on helping them in recognizing that the crisis exists, and helping them see that adults are working on it and including them in the processes with actions that they can do. It's a lot about helping children be present, often in leadership roles, where youth are not the ones telling people what to do, they're not the ones doing all the actions, but they are the ones hosting and being there to watch the adults talk and discuss it. That begins to let them see the skills the adults are using to solve problems, to recognize that they are part of a group that is working on issues, that they're not alone, and they are developing the leadership and confidence skills for when they become adults. It also takes away a lot of their anxiety, as there is a lot of anxiety connected with environmental crises globally, and it is necessary for children to be a part of what's happening.

The idea is that we need to have something that can be used in Sunday Schools and in Church education, opportunities that are by grade and respectful of different environments such as urban and rural, Indigenous, etc. and including all the equity issues as well. Their conversation talked about creating such a curriculum and allocating some funding towards the process of writing it.

They started with this because there were a lot of churches in this region that were trying to do Sunday school outside during the pandemic and really enjoyed that, but there are no curriculum resources in the United Church to help them with this piece.

A more formal proposal on this will be developed and brought to the next meeting.

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Allocation and Priorities

At the last commission meeting there was a conversation about whether or not we were to fund outside the commission's work. Subsequent to that, correspondence was received from PalNet about this commission providing funding to them. That request was referred to the Grants and Mission Support Committee which is the correct process, but that Committee is not able to provide funding at this time.

The question was raised, what are our priorities and allocation criteria for whether something fits within our budget or not. For clarity, there was a request made for something in writing from the region to help understand what the criteria is for the allocation of funds for various proposals that might come forward.

It was decided to make a formal request to the President and Executive Minister to give the commission direction and guidance towards this question.

MOTION Brian McIntosh / Don Ford that the Social and Ecological Justice Commission seek clarification from the Executive of Shining Waters Regional Council around criteria for allocation and priorities for the Commission budget.

MOTION

CARRIED

Regional Meeting

A request has been received inviting someone from this commission to be part of the agenda planning team for the regional council annual meeting in May. The planning team will primarily focus on programming for the meeting and will meet five or six times online.

Esther Collier and Susan Eagle will be this commission's reps on the regional meeting planning team.

Reports from sub-committees

- Anti-Racism (*Lois*) - no report
- Right Relations (*Lois, Tina, Brian*) - There is a Living Into Right Relations Circle meeting online on Thursday, November 24 at 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
- Israel/Palestine (*Tina, Lois, Brian*) - A trip was being planned to Bethlehem but it has been postponed and replaced by a book study during Advent on the book, *Bethlehem Besieged*.

Correspondence

The correspondence from PalNet is postponed because it sought funding for some participants for the trip to Bethlehem which is postponed.

Deferred items

- Prison ministry and criminal justice
Jeffrey reported that this has been coming up a lot in young adult conversations, so this might be something we could look at of how we influence a conversation at the regional

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council meeting with a proposal of how the regional council can take a stand. Jeffrey is engaging a conversation about this for the spring and that conversation is progressing along. There are many people in our regional council that do prison ministry and work in that area.

- HIV/AIDS
Jeffrey is working on a podcast and worship resources in time for World Aids Day.
- TUCC connection - defer

Closing

Susan Eagle gave a closing prayer and the meeting ended at 2:45 p.m.

Next Meeting

January 17th, 2023 at 1 p.m. If something needing attention comes up, it will be dealt with through an email vote.