

The United Church of Canada
Shining Waters Regional Council

**Minutes of a meeting of the
Social and Ecological Justice Commission
Tuesday, January 17, 2023**

The Social and Ecological Justice Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council met on January 17, 2023 via Zoom. The meeting began at 1:00 p.m.

Members Present

Susan Eagle (Chairperson), Lois Brown, Esther Collier, Don Ford, Jennifer (Jay) Gordon, Irene Green, Won Hur, Brian McIntosh,

Staff: Jeffrey Dale, Rachael Howes, Celio deAndrade Santos

Regrets: Tina Conlon

Absent: Bruce Sweet

Welcome, check in and prayer

The chairperson opened the meeting, and welcomed everyone. Brian McIntosh gave a land acknowledgement and offered an opening prayer. 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.

There was a time of check-in and Celio introduced himself to the Commission members.

Agenda

MOTION by Jennifer (Jay) Gordon / Don Ford that the agenda be approved as circulated.

MOTION

CARRIED

Minutes

MOTION by Don Ford / Lois Brown that the Minutes of the meeting of the Shining Waters Social and Ecological Justice Commission held November 15, 2022 be adopted as circulated.

MOTION

CARRIED

Business Arising

Follow up on response to Bill 23 (Appendix A)

The Commission's response to the Provincial government's Bill 23, on November 17, 2022, was circulated to the Commission prior to the meeting. The Regional Council has not received a response to the submission. Don Ford reported that the Bill was approved before the consultation process was completed.

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Funding proposal for children's environment curriculum

This was discussed at the last Commission meeting. Jeffrey has worked on a proposal and he, Susan and Esther have had some more conversation about it. The Vision Fund supplied \$5,000 to work with Bees for Peace for the summer curriculum, and there will be pieces out of it that will help with a Fall program as well. Jeffrey will meet with the Bees for Peace people and with some ministers to engage them in the writing of the curriculum. So, this matter will come back the Commission in the late Spring with something more complete for the Fall.

Response from region regarding budget priorities

There is no further update on this. This commission has a budget for its work; for projects that the Commission undertakes or specifically wants to work on.

Susan will undertake to get some clarification about commission budget money for networks.

MOTION by Brian McIntosh / Lois Brown that the Social and Ecological Justice Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council request some clarity from the Regional Council with regard to how the Commission can spend its budget on related networks' programs and actions.

MOTION

CARRIED

Reports from sub-committees

Ecological (*Esther, Don, Won, Jennifer, Bruce, Susan*)

Esther reported;

The sub-committee looked at the effect of the workshop hosted in November. There has been a positive response, and queries about what's happening. The sub-committee feels there is a desire to build on the foundation that was started. They have chosen to hold simple, clear information meetings for the regional council community on topics that are important, and have picked three dates;

March 20 – retro-fitting church buildings;

June 21 – green design (concepts such as renewable energy, transportation initiatives, food waste, gardening, etc.)

November 4 – community engagement (can include advocacy, inspiring and connecting people outside the church building)

It is hoped this will become a pattern and they are trying to make them driven by the community that attends. They will make sure there is expertise there on the topic. There will be a short presentation and a lot of time for interaction with the participants.

They also want to accompany people on their journey so are hoping to have two ways to do this. One would be an un-curated site online where people could pose questions of the group, and where there could be mutual support happening. Also, to try to have our own

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small expert group that can deal with questions that aren't being answered and can provide expertise over the course of time between, when people are working on projects.

They are going to make sure this work isn't being duplicated in the United Church. If so, they will find out how to link to it.

The upcoming regional council meeting in May will have a focus on several issues, equity, community ministries, and environment. This commission is being asked to structure and guide the environment component. The sub-committee discussed what that would look like.

The sub-committee is also looking at data collection as they feel it is a strong motivator for people to see where their church community is in relation to other church communities. They are considering having churches add their own data to a shared spreadsheet and thinking of making that visible for people to see where their church would fit on the spectrum in order to guide their own direction.

The notes from the sub-committee meetings will be shared with the commission members.

Homelessness (*Susan, Brian*)

This group has set some potential dates to meet with the poverty advocates from communities of faith. They have identified that there is information, advocacy and policy around housing and homelessness. As for education, there is some, and there are some areas of advocacy where they might involve the poverty advocates because a number of churches have identified housing and homelessness as real and local issues that they are concerned about. They expect to have this information to commission members soon and anyone on the commission is invited to join in the conversation.

Poverty/Income Inequality (*Susan, Tina, Irene*)

No report at this time.

Guaranteed Liveable Income National Group

Tina Conlon feels she needs to step back from her connection with this network for this Commission. They meet monthly and this commission has committed to stay connected with the group. Susan asked if anyone would be willing to take over from Tina. Irene Green and Esther Collier agreed to share the task.

Inter-faith Social Assistance Reform Coalition (ISARC)

ISARC is working on a pre-budget brief to the Provincial government. As soon as that is ready, Susan will share it with the Commission.

Staff Reports - Jeffrey Dale and Kim Uyede-Kai

Jeffrey reported;

Community Ministries – this group met on Monday and will meet monthly until the regional council meeting. They are working on a proposal for the regional council meeting

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in May and they will bring it to the March Commission meeting for review and approved at the April meeting.

Moderator Visit - June 14 & 15 the Moderator is visiting Shining Waters. She will be with clergy on the 14th and on the 15th she will be with young adults. There are guest speakers being arranged for the day with the young adults for the Moderator to hear what is going on in the young adults' lives in the church.

Harm Reduction – He is still working on the harm reduction pieces and is starting to get other regional councils asking questions. Jeffrey is working on a proposal on how the commission can be involved in that work as it moves forward, and he will bring it to the next meeting.

Kim reported;

Toronto Metropolitan University has speaker events which have been recorded. One is around environmental racism in Canada. This is the link:

https://www.torontomu.ca/alumni/podcasts/the-forefront/season-3/the-forefront-s03e02/?utm_source=campaigner&utm_campaign=20230116-FFS3-Launch&utm_content=alumnirelations&cmp=1&utm_medium=email

Lebret (Qu'Appelle) Indian Industrial Residential School – two thousand anomalies discovered on the grounds of the Qu'Appelle residential school in Saskatchewan. It is one of the first residential schools and the last to close.

Living Into Right Relations – is a circle connected with the right relations work of the region. The next circle will be January 26th at 10:30 a.m. by Zoom. Two people from Wasauksing United Church and Food Bank will be guest speakers.

The question was raised of whether there is a place for this commission to make some noise about the fact that graves keep being discovered and yet it keeps drifting away and investigations aren't called for; to just not let it slide into obscurity.

Recognizing the unmarked burials has been one of the Calls to Action and the government and general Canadian communities have been slow in taking it seriously. There is great trauma in every Indigenous community when graves are discovered. These are horrible things to happen but are not new to Indigenous communities. Our responsibility is to acknowledge that this is not new; they've all known this for years and we weren't listening. We can urge the government to put forward the funds that they need in order to get the ground-penetrating radar done well and quickly, and to do that in every site.

Kim also recommended that people get to know local Indigenous communities because when you know the people, the discoveries mean something because you know the people, you know the communities, and you know the effect it has on the communities and you can sit with them in their trauma. It takes it from the intellectual to the personal. It's all in the relationship; how do we be in relationship in ways that are not colonial, if we can

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unpack that colonialism that's in our relationships and just be with people and communities; take the time to listen and just be with them. It does take a long time to be in a listening space, it can take 3 to 5 years until you get to a place of trust.

Should we talk about what we need to do in order to be creating a space where people can be in relationship with us.

At the next meeting, the Commission will take a look at the Calls to Action, so we're ready to have a conversation, and look at what the government has done to respond.

Budget

Update

The Commission has a new budget starting at the beginning of the year. Our budget is \$25,000.

Social Justice Network of Ontario Regions (SJNOR)

This network meets once a year. Tina Conlon wants to step back from her position as our rep with this Network. Susan asked that members give some thought as to whether they would like to represent our region on this network. It involves sharing information on what our commission is doing and bringing back to us what other regions are doing.

The commission usually commits \$1,000 or \$1,500 a year in support of the SJNOR to assist in convening meetings, sharing in the travel costs. They are anticipating an in-person meeting this year.

Brian McIntosh agreed to be the Shining Waters rep to SJNOR for one year.

Regional Meeting

Report back from planning meeting (*Susan and Esther*)

Esther and Susan are part of the program planning group for the regional council meeting in May 26, 27 and 28, 2023. Topics identified for the focus of the meeting are community ministries, equity, and environment with a potential for a fourth. There seems to be a real need for there to be a lot of chance for voices to come from the community.

It is an in-person meeting and people will be looking forward to being together. It is felt there is a need to build in some capacity for recognition of the yearning for community and who we are as a church, and just how powerful that is.

New Business

Correspondence

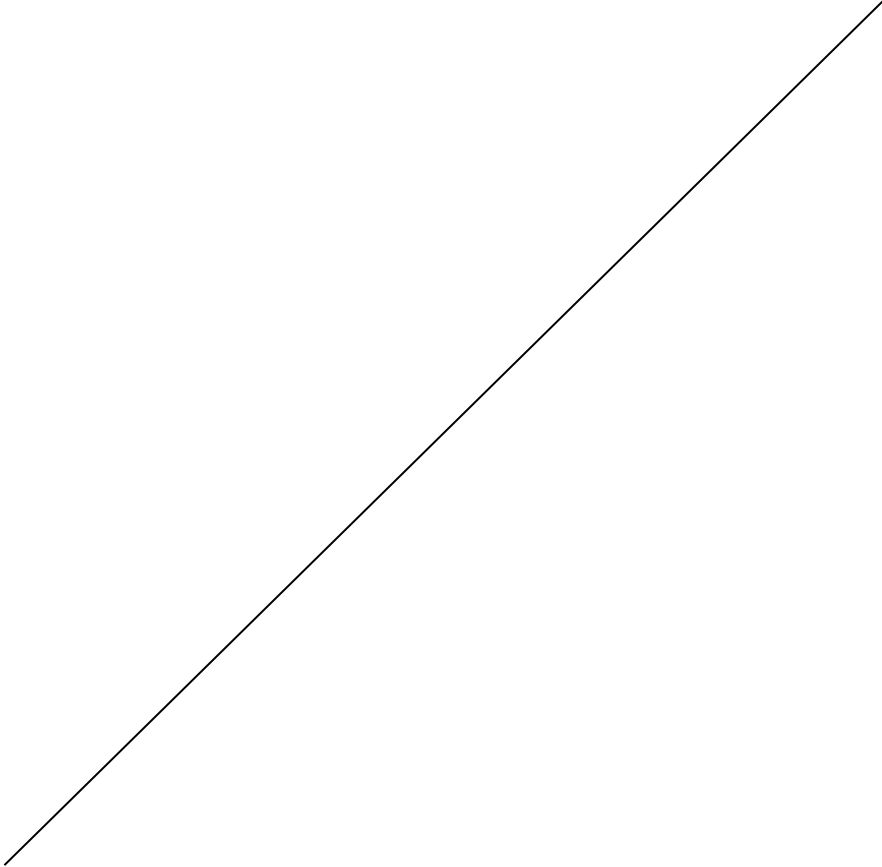
- Wellington Water Watchers Forum, February 11, 2023
- Holy Land service and discussion, January 29, 10:30 a.m. (in-person at Trinity-St. Paul's) <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86335286671>

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Closing

Won Hur gave a closing prayer and the meeting closed at 3:00 p.m.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, February 21, 2023 at 1:00 p.m.



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Appendix A

November 17, 2022
via on-line submission

Re: Bill 23 - More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022

TO:
Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy
Whitney Block
Room 1405
99 Wellesley Street W
Toronto, ON M7A 1A2

Attention: Laurie Scott, MPP, Chair;
Isaiah Thorning, Committee Clerk

FROM:
David Leyton-Brown, President
Shining Waters Regional Council
The United Church of Canada
59 Line 4 North
Oro-Medonte, ON L0L 2L0

We are writing to you in response to *Bill 23*, the *More Homes Built Faster Act*, which was announced on Tuesday, October 25th, 2022. Shining Waters Regional Council is one of 16 regional councils in The United Church of Canada, extending from Peel, Toronto, and part of Durham Region northward to Parry Sound. We represent approximately 167 communities of faith (congregations) with over 25,000 members. This letter is based on research conducted by our Social and Ecological Justice Commission that has reviewed the content of *Bill 23*, along with publicly available responses from a variety of individuals and organizations.

We support the government's commitment to reducing unnecessary barriers to development and streamlining processes, and we recognize that there are some provisions in *Bill 23* that are potentially beneficial for housing affordability, including:

- Addressing the “missing middle” or infill housing types in established neighbourhoods;
- Allowing gentle density growth as of right and free from NIMBYism;
- Ensuring a minimum density around transit hubs; and

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- Removing development charges for non-profit housing developments.

We agree that there is a housing supply and affordability issue in Ontario that needs to be pragmatically addressed. We agree that the stated outcomes are important, but we are concerned that the proposed legislative changes may have unintentional, negative consequences. It is important that new housing in Ontario respects the local environment and focuses on affordability as much as on supply. This Bill requires amendments to existing legislation that, if passed, will exacerbate homelessness and affordability, while at the same time increase risks to life and property for Ontario residents.

Our faith compels us to protect and preserve the Earth, and to speak up for the common good in our public witness. The Shining Waters Regional Council of The United Church of Canada is therefore expressing our concerns regarding *Bill 23*, as detailed below. We believe that there are several aspects of this proposed legislation which the government should reconsider. We are asking the Province to resume meaningful consultation with all key stakeholders, including municipalities, conservation authorities, developers, and affordable housing advocates to consider better alternatives to balancing housing supply with protection of communities from flooding and erosion and preserving key natural habitats and functions. Specifically, we ask that the Province, through such consultations, address the following issues and concerns.

1. Homelessness and lack of affordable housing are not only the result of a supply issue.

Focusing on supply without considering affordability will only exacerbate our current situation. What good is more housing if no one can afford to rent it or carry a mortgage? This Bill has no clear mechanism to guarantee that newly constructed housing will be affordable (30% or less of monthly after-tax income). As financialized landlords raise rents, persons supported by Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program sink further and further into homelessness.

2. Existing affordable housing must be protected.

Rental replacement rules must remain in place. Losing these safeguards could lead to further depletion of existing affordable rental housing and will increase the number of homeless and underhoused. The weakening of rent controls and vacancy controls encourages financialized landlords to intimidate long term tenants into moving, but not all have a place to go to.

3. Inclusionary zoning proposed in this Bill reduces future affordable housing units.

Many municipalities already have Inclusionary Zoning rules in place that require that a minimum of 15% of units to be affordable for 99 years. Reducing the total number of affordable units to 5% and the affordability period to 25 years severely limits the ability of municipalities to include affordable housing in any new developments.

4. **Development charges are necessary to fund the infrastructure necessary to support housing.**

There are limited revenue streams available to municipalities and conservation authorities. The removal of these development charges means that taxpayers will have to pay for the cost of servicing these new developments. Growth needs to pay for growth.

5. **Democracy in planning processes.**

The *Planning Act* requires developers to inform community members about development plans and allows residents the right to appeal planning decisions. Bill 23 proposes to reduce or eliminate such consultation. The housing crisis is not the result of citizens exercising their democratic rights.

6. **Existing parkland dedication requirements allow for all Ontarians to have access to greenspace.**

Bill 23 proposes to reduce parkland dedication requirements. All Ontarians, and especially those living in affordable housing, with reduced ability to travel, need access to greenspace. Recent studies have demonstrated that urban residents (and particularly those with disabilities) need accessible urban green space for physical exercise, relaxation and observing nature, and that such access reduces stress levels and leads to better overall health outcomes.

7. ***Bill 23* does not ensure that new homes, built with incentives from public funds, will be affordable or remain affordable even to the next generation.**

There are no requirements in the legislation that developers must pass along their savings to home buyers or renters. There is nothing to indicate that any new housing will meet the definition of affordable (30% of monthly income).

8. **Areas across Ontario have experienced significant flooding in recent years. *Bill 23* proposes to reduce or eliminate the ability of conservation authorities to manage flood hazards**

The province's own Special Advisor on Flooding, Doug McNeil, recommended that the province support municipalities and conservation authorities during land use planning due to their vital role in protecting Ontarians and reducing risks and disasters that are occurring in other parts of Canada where conservation authorities do not exist. In recent years, both Alberta (\$5 billion) and British Columbia (\$9 billion) have suffered catastrophic losses associated with flooding, costs which are only expected to continue to rise in the future as climate change events become more prominent. We believe that the efforts of Conservation Authorities are the reason Ontario has not seen impacts to this extent. Conservation Authorities are the first line of defense in preventing and reducing the impacts of flooding, which is the leading cause of public emergency in Ontario. The most practical approach to avoiding the impacts of flooding is prevention, including informed land use and infrastructure planning that recognizes the interrelationship between natural hazards and broader environmental issues.

9. Environmental Protection, including pollution, conservation of land, and wetlands

Bill 23 would prevent Conservation Authorities from considering pollution or the conservation of land in their permitting process. It would also end the use of municipal green building standards. Ontario does not need to sacrifice environmental protection to address the housing crisis. The climate crisis is already impacting Ontarians and the elimination of green building standards will only exacerbate the challenges. Wetlands play a critical role in mitigating floods and further wetland loss may result in serious flooding, putting the safety of communities at risk. Wetlands are a cost-effective strategy for protecting downstream properties. The government must proceed cautiously when considering changes to the Ontario Wetland Evaluation System, which could negatively affect the ability of wetlands to reduce flooding and confuse roles in wetland management and protection between municipalities and conservation authorities.

10. Use of conservation lands for housing

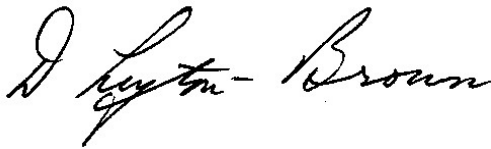
Conservation authorities have acquired environmentally sensitive lands that are used for passive recreation by hundreds of thousands of Ontarians every year. These lands were acquired specifically for these purposes and should not be made available for development. Instead, the Province should consider mechanisms to encourage and expand brownfield developments in existing urban areas, where servicing and other infrastructure are already in place.

In summary, we provide the following recommendations for your consideration:

1. Require that a minimum of 15% of new residential units will be affordable for a period of 99 years.
2. Protect Ontario's existing rental replacement rules.
3. Maintain current development charges, parkland dedication rules, and green building standards.
4. Maintain the existing protections for agricultural operations in the *Provincial Policy Statement*.
5. Maintain the existing requirements in the *Planning Act* regarding notifying residents of development plans and allowing the public to appeal planning decisions.
6. Engage with the existing multi-stakeholder Conservation Authorities Working Group (CAWG) to ensure there is a streamlined, consistent and scoped process for conservation authorities and municipalities to help the Province achieve its housing goals while ensuring costs are low, the process is fast, and Ontario taxpayers are protected.
7. Allow municipalities the freedom to enter into Memoranda of Understanding with conservation authorities, with clearly defined terms, timelines, and performance measures, as allowed under Section 21.1.1 (1) of the *Conservation Authority Act*.
8. Keep all hazard land assessment, management, and mitigation with the conservation authorities; part of their core mandate since Hurricane Hazel in 1954. Now is not the time to offload these responsibilities to over 400 separate municipalities, many of which lack the resources or the experience to manage these complex challenges.

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9. Maintain the existing *Ontario Wetland Evaluation System*, along with the existing protections for woodlands and other natural areas in the *Provincial Policy Statement*.
10. Do not selectively remove lands from the protections of the Greenbelt Plan or Conservation Authorities, only to “replace” them with lands that are already protected. The Greenbelt boundary was developed based on scientific research with a goal of regional ecological protection. Sacrificing the proposed 7,400 acres for 50,000 homes will only attain 3% of your stated goal of 1,500,000 homes yet exact a high ecological price. It will also generate significant pressure from other landowners for fair and equal treatment, resulting in further requests for lands to be removed from Greenbelt protections. Conserve our conservation lands for current and future generations.
11. Invest financial and regulatory resources to accelerate the development of Brownfield sites across Ontario. These properties already have municipal servicing and are usually close to urban centres with existing transit networks.
12. Provide financial incentives to spread the population growth more equitably across Ontario. This will reduce the demands on specific municipalities that may not have the ability to sustainability accommodate the population growth stipulated in this proposed legislation.



David Leyton-Brown, President
Shining Waters Regional Council
The United Church of Canada

cc Hon. Doug Ford, Premier and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs
Hon. Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Hon. David Piccini, Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
Hon. Graydon Smith, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry
Mike Schreiner, MPP, Guelph, Leader, Ontario Green Party
John Fraser, MPP, Interim Leader of the Ontario Liberal Party