



Nova Scotia
Environmental Network
Connecting for a Sustainable Future

2022 NSEN Annual General Meeting

Thursday, June 14, 2022 @ 6:30 pm, online via Zoom

ATTENDANCE

NSEN Board Members (5 out of 7):

- Chris White (Chair)
- Emily Dodge (Secretary)
- Sophia Lindfield
- Victoria Byrne
- Naomi Boon (outgoing)

NSEN Volunteers & Staff (3)

- Dylan Yates (staff)
- Kass Harris (staff)
- Sheila Cole (outgoing Senior Policy Advisor)

NSEN Caucuses (3 of 3)

- Karen McKendry (Environmental and Sustainability Education Caucus)
- Paul Strome (Climate Change Caucus)
- Kelly Schnare (Water Caucus)

Organization Members (7 out of 40):

- Tina Northrup (East Coast Environmental Law)
- Karen McKendry (Young Naturalists Club)
- Angela Riley (Scotian Shores)
- Emily Dodge (Sierra Club Atlantic)
- Doug Rigby (KAIROS Halifax)
- Laura Bright (Arlington Forest Protection Society)
- Kelly Schnare (Reimagining Atlantic Harbours)

Individual Members (3):

- Doug Rigby
- Mary Rigby
- Charlene Morton (Campaign to Protect Offshore NS)

Other Guests (1):

- Stephen Schneider (candidate for NDP in Kings Hants and Kings South)

FORMAL PROCEEDINGS

Call to Order and Land Acknowledgement:

Chair Chris White calls the meeting to order and welcomes all attendees. Chris acknowledges the unceded status of Mi'kmaw territory and the importance of the Peace and Friendship Treaties. Chris points out the connections between settler colonialism and environmental crises and encourages environmental groups to highlight and support Indigenous stories, initiatives, and causes. Attendees introduce themselves briefly.

Acceptance of Agenda:

Chris White goes over the agenda for the AGM. Call out for participants to add to the agenda. No one has anything to add. Agenda is accepted as is.

Approval of 2021 AGM Minutes:

Motion to approve the 2021 AGM minutes. Doug Rigby moves to approve. Laura Bright seconds. Minutes are approved.

Directors' Report:

Chris White delivers the 2022 Directors' Report presentation (see [document](#) for full details).

- Several staff grants gave NSEN highest capacity in many years
 - 3700 staff hours compared to 500 in previous year
- Rapid growth in membership
 - Recruited 14 organizations as new members over an 8-month period
- New Volunteer Hub initiative to build volunteer capacity for NSEN members
- 12 free webinars to educate public on various environmental topics
- Two new caucuses focused on climate change and water
- Successful meeting with Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Tim Halman
 - Attended by 14 NSEN member organizations
- Produced a 1-hour documentary film on NSEN's 30+ years of history
 - To be released later in 2022
- Future focus on fundraising to maintain staff capacity and continue growth

Open for comments / questions:

Laura Bright asks if NSEN has considered pursuing funding at the federal level. Chris White explains that the Canadian Environmental Network has been trying to restore federal funding for many years without success. NSEN is unlikely to have more success, but this avenue will be explored in the future.

Motion to approve Directors' Report: Doug Rigby moves to approve. Karen McKendry seconds. Report is approved.

Financial Report:

Chris White delivers the 2022 Financial Report presentation (see [document](#) for full details).

- 2021/2022 cash flows and balance sheet
 - \$101,050 total revenues - \$99,472 total expenditures = \$1,578 net surplus
 - \$6,881 total equity at end of fiscal year (March 31, 2022)
 - Books are balanced
- Core revenues (\$4,900) exceed core expenditures (\$3,700)
 - All savings have been invested into securing 80%-covered staff grants
- Future focus on increasing memberships and donations and securing more staff grants
 - Long-term, NSEN needs sustainable funding for an executive director

Open for comments / questions:

Paul Strome asks about NSEN's funding prospects for 2022/2023. Chris White explains that NSEN was fortunate to get 100%-funded staff grants in 2021 and is hoping to get more this summer. NSEN is presently unable to afford any 80%-funded staff grants as this costs at least \$4,000 every 6 months. Core revenues will have to increase before NSEN can afford the typical 80%-funded staff grant. It is difficult to predict what the situation will be in 2023, but the team is optimistic.

Motion to approve Financial Report: Doug Rigby moves to approve. Laura Bright seconds. Report is approved.

Appointment of 2022/2023 Board Members:

Chris White recognizes outgoing board members and introduces current board nominees. Chris discusses his intent to step back from his role as Chair and encourages members to join the Board to ensure NSEN's continued success.

- Recognition of outgoing board members:
 - Naomi Boon, Jayne Hawkins
- Recognition of outgoing Senior Policy Advisor, Sheila Cole
- Appointment of organizational board members
 - Emily Dodge is appointed to represent Sierra Club Canada
 - Victoria Byrne is appointed to represent Diocesan Environmental Network
 - Laura Bright is potentially interested in joining the Board but would like to discuss the opportunities and responsibilities at a later date before considering the appointment.
 - No further organizational appointments
- Nomination of individual Board members
 - Chris White
 - Sophia Lindfield
 - Ivan Drouin
 - No further individual nominations

Motion to approve individual Board members: Laura Bright moves to approve. Doug Rigby seconds. Individual Board members are approved. The 2022/2023 Board is officially formed.

Discussion of 2022 Strategic Decisions

Chris White reviews proposed changes to by-laws and memorandum of association

- Proposed changes to membership structure into Class A, B, C
 - Classes for non-profit organizations (A), individuals (B), and for-profit organizations (C)
- Proposed changes to NSEN's official objectives
 - New objectives align with charitable purposes so NSEN can pursue charity status

Open for comments / questions:

Charlene Morton asks if for-profit members would be permitted to join the NSEN Board. Chris White clarifies that for-profit member groups would not be able to join the Board under the proposed membership structure, though this is ultimately up to the members to decide based on tonight's discussions.

Karen McKendry expresses that individual members should have the right to vote at the AGM as this is typically a basic right of being a paid member. Chris White points out that if a large number of individual members could outvote a smaller number of organization members then this would defeat the primary purpose of NSEN, which is to serve environmental organizations. Karen McKendry suggests this can be safeguarded against by the rules governing who can join the Board.

Sheila Cole recommends that if NSEN does accept for-profit members then they should be entitled to representation on the Board since businesses have their own resources and the purpose of NSEN is to promote and support grassroots environmental work. Chris White echoes that the organizations who steer NSEN's future should be the types of organizations NSEN was originally founded to serve.

Laura Bright describes a for-profit startup focused on environmental education for local youth and asks whether they would be entitled to posting volunteer positions as an NSEN member. Chris White says that membership benefits may have to be assessed on a case-by-case basis since this example seems more appropriate than other possible examples.

Angela Riley points out that the reason she operates Scotian Shores with a for-profit business model is because it is easier and more financially stable compared to a non-profit society. Angela says that she would be disappointed if Scotian Shores was unable to access key NSEN membership benefits such as promoting volunteer opportunities and initiatives. Chris White suggests an alternative model where NSEN does not distinguish between non-profit and for-profit members but does ensure any for-profit members meet certain criteria before being accepted.

Tina Northrup points out that NSEN has already been accepting for-profit members based on the existing by-laws which state that NSEN membership is open to any "organization or individual" and that NSEN is effectively interpreting "organization" to mean "non-profit or for-profit organization", which could be disputed. Chris White confirms that "organization" has been interpreted this way until the members can collectively decide what the membership structure should be.

Tina Northrup advises that it is very difficult to have vagueness or uncertainty in the establishment and implementation of by-laws, such as granting membership and benefits on a case-by-case basis. Tina also points out that the term "benefits" is not defined in the by-laws. Chris White describes the membership approval process of the New Brunswick Environmental Network, which defers official approval to the AGM where current members vote on each new applicant. Chris recommends that NSEN take a similar approach, but clarifies that this in itself would require changes to NSEN's by-laws.

Tina Northrup suggests that these significant changes to NSEN's membership structure are deserving of more time, consideration, and engagement from member groups. Tina proposes that NSEN treat tonight's discussion as an initial conversation and defer the decision-making to a future special general meeting after more members have had an opportunity to learn about and engage with the process. Chris White agrees with Tina's suggestion and hopes that more members will come to the table to contribute to these important decisions. Chris suggests distributing surveys to members to collect feedback before attempting to make a decision. Laura Bright agrees. Karen McKendry also agrees and adds that the proposed changes to the memorandum of association should be treated the same way and perhaps addressed first so as to better define the purpose of the organization before the membership structure is defined. Chris White agrees.

Sheila Cole advises that surveying may not be the best first step since many people may not yet have a good understanding of what these decisions really mean for NSEN. Sheila suggests a webinar format where several models are presented and discussed. Sheila suggests that for-profit organizations could be included in the network through an "associate membership" that excludes rights to voting, Board representation, meeting with the Minister of Environment, etc. Sheila emphasizes the importance of protecting the authority of grassroots environmental groups within the network.

Tina Northrup adds that she is unsure of what issues might arise for a registered charity with a membership that includes for-profit businesses, and advises that NSEN give this consideration if charity status is to be pursued.

Chris White concludes that the discussions around proposed changes to NSEN's by-laws and memorandum of association will be deferred and incorporate live online sessions and surveys before tabling a special resolution at a special general meeting. Chris adds that in the mean time, the by-laws will be interpreted as granting equal member rights to non-profit and for-profit organizations.

Next Steps for NSEN & Caucuses

Chris White reviews top priorities for NSEN in the coming year and beyond

- Seeking funding for staff and in-person gatherings
- Seeking funding for a new "Eco Hub" to serve as online environmental networking tool
- Continuing to recruit new members and grow the network
- Sharing the NSEN documentary to raise public awareness and enhance fundraising
- Establishing and supporting caucuses and multi-stakeholder collaboratives

Environmental & Sustainability Education Caucus overview by Karen McKendry (Caucus Interim Chair)

- Online monthly meetings from Sep to Jun plus an annual summer solstice gathering
- Connect with more people through Facebook and listserv
- Typically do more projects such as attending Atlantic Science Teachers Conference
- Lower leadership capacity this year so mostly focusing on networking at monthly meetings

Climate Change Caucus overview by Paul Strome (Caucus Co-Chair)

- Collaborative decision-making model rather than hierarchical
- Training on the En-ROADS simulation program to show people the importance of climate action
- Getting involved with organizational capacity training at the Tamarack Institute
- Still seeking more members to grow the caucus

Water Caucus overview Kelly Schnare (Caucus Secretary)

- Currently about 40 members meeting monthly
- Each member represents an organization
- Looking to create a short video to introduce people to the caucus
- Striving to get funding for staff to provide administrative support to the caucus

Open for comments / questions:

Karen McKendry asks about how NSEN connects with the Canadian Environmental Network (RCEN).
Chris White explains that NSEN can appoint representatives to RCEN caucuses and steering committee.
Sheila Cole explains that any NSEN member is automatically an RCEN member as well, and encourages Karen to participate in the national-level Biodiversity Caucus.

Closing Remarks and Adjournment:

Chris White thanks attendees for coming to the AGM and encourages anyone interested to remain on the call for a preview of NSEN's documentary and casual discussion.

Motion to adjourn meeting: Laura Bright motions to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.