



Nova Scotia
Environmental Network
Connecting for a Sustainable Future

2023 NSEN Annual General Meeting

7:00 PM September 26, 2023 (online via Zoom)

ATTENDANCE

NSEN Board Members (6 out of 7):

- Chris White (Chair)
- Emily Dodge (Secretary)
- Victoria Byrne
- Haley Evans
- Makayla Cole
- Christina Goudy

NSEN Staff (1 out of 2)

- Larissa Dean

Organization Members (7 out of 45):

- Diocesan Environment Network (Victoria Byrne)
- Ecology Action Centre (Karen McKendry)
- KAIROS Halifax (Doug Rigby and Mary Rigby)
- Nature Nova Scotia (Becky Parker)
- Nova Scotia Invasive Species Council (Ken Donnelly)
- Sierra Club Atlantic (Emily Dodge)
- Young Naturalists Club (Becky Parker)

Individual Members (1):

- Selina Plehn (Animal and Plant Lab)

Other Guests (1):

- Joshua Cadegan-Syms (new candidate for NSEN Board)

FORMAL PROCEEDINGS

Call to Order and Land Acknowledgement:

Chair Chris White calls the meeting to order and welcomes all attendees. Attendees introduce themselves briefly. Chris acknowledges the unceded status of Mi'kmaw territory and the importance of the Peace and Friendship Treaties.

Acceptance of Agenda:

Chris White reviews the agenda for the AGM and asks attendees if there are any proposed additions to the agenda. No additions are proposed. Agenda is accepted as is.

Approval of 2022 AGM Minutes:

Chris White asks attendees if there are any comments or questions regarding the 2022 AGM minutes. No comments or questions are raised.

Motion to approve the 2022 AGM minutes. Karen McKendry moves to approve. Doug Rigby seconds. Minutes are approved.

Directors' Report:

Chris White delivers the 2023 Directors' Report presentation (see [document](#) for full details).

- Membership continues to grow (now at 45 organizations)
 - 9 new organizations have joined since May 2022 (25% growth)
- Biodiversity Caucus launched in 2023
 - NSEN now has four active caucuses
- Maintaining staff capacity through staff grants with the help of Eco Internships
 - About \$24,000 in staff funding in 2022 (\$2,000 contribution from NSEN)
 - About \$31,000 in staff funding in 2023 (\$3,000 contribution from NSEN)
 - NSEN has now acquired 16 staff grants and 10 different youth interns since 2020
- Staff have taken on many projects and activities for NSEN over the past year
 - Hosting free educational webinars on environmental topics every 1-2 months
 - Managing NSEN's monthly e-newsletter with content submitted from NSEN members
 - Introduced "virtual speed-networking" as a new networking activity for NSEN
 - Initiating and facilitating caucuses
 - Managing NSEN's Volunteer Hub to build volunteer capacity for NSEN members
 - Initiating next meeting with Minister of Environment and Climate Change (early 2024)
- NSEN documentary completed and premiered at in-person screening event in May 2023
 - Now freely available to the public on NSEN website and [YouTube](#)
- Objectives for near future are focused on increasing revenue through various means
 - Revenue is increasing slowly year over year, but not enough to expand NSEN activities
 - Need funds to maintain staff capacity and organize in-person events for NSEN members
 - Considering fundraising events, charity status, donation campaigns, membership drives
- Overall, NSEN is in great shape and has a strong team working towards a bright future

Open for comments / questions:

Ken Donnelly suggests looking into thrivingnonprofits.ca for funding opportunities. Selina Plehn expresses appreciation for speed networking events.

Motion to approve Directors' Report: Kenn Donnelly moves to approve. Victoria Byrne seconds. Report is approved.

Financial Report:

Chris White delivers the 2023 Financial Report presentation (see [document](#) for full details).

- 2022/2023 cash flows
 - \$34,273 total revenues - \$38,741 total expenditures = -\$4,468 net surplus
 - This includes about \$4,464 spent from grants awarded in previous fiscal year
 - Actual net surplus is close to zero (all surplus was invested into hiring staff)
- 2022/2023 balance sheet
 - \$25,644 total assets
 - \$20,842 total liabilities (mostly a \$20,000 payroll loan)
 - \$4,802 total equity
 - Assets = Liabilities + Equity (books are balanced)
- 2022/2023 core funds
 - Core revenues (\$5,500) exceed core expenditures (\$3,700) to give \$1,800 surplus
 - All savings were invested into securing staff grants which cover 75-90% of total costs
- Can reliably expect \$1,000 - \$2,000 surplus each year based on current revenues and expenses
 - Need to increase revenue to grow NSEN staff capacity and core activities

Open for comments / questions:

Victoria Byrne says everything was clearly presented. No further comments.

Motion to approve Financial Report: Doug Rigby moves to approve. Victoria Byrne seconds. Report is approved.

Appointment of 2022/2023 Board Members:

Chris White recognizes outgoing Board members and introduces current board nominees.

- Recognition of recent Board members:
 - Sophia Lindfield, Ivan Drouin, Steph Boan, Laura Eldridge, Larissa Dean, Kass Harris
- Appointment of organizational Board members
 - Emily Dodge is appointed to represent Sierra Club Atlantic
 - Victoria Byrne will confirm at a later date whether she will continue as the appointed representative for Diocesan Environmental Network
 - No further organizational appointments
- Nomination of individual Board members
 - Chris White
 - Haley Evans
 - Makayla Cole
 - Chritina Goudy
 - Joshua Cadegan-Syms
 - No further individual nominations

Motion to approve individual Board members: Doug Rigby moves to approve. Ken Donnelly seconds. Individual Board members are approved. The 2023/2024 Board is officially formed.

Presentations from NSEN Caucuses:

Environmental & Sustainability Education Caucus overview by Karen McKendry and Becky Parker (caucus members)

- Caucus is great for networking and fostering collaboration
- 10-12 core members who participate throughout the year
 - 4-5 members who are consistently active
 - Aim to share leadership responsibilities among 2-3 people
- Hold monthly meetings and an annual summer solstice in-person gathering
- Putting on an environmental education conference as part of the Atlantic Science Teachers Conference this October

Water Caucus overview by Larissa Dean (caucus facilitator)

- Former chair, Raelene Fewer, stepped down last year
- Or Denmark and Kelly Schnare have been sharing interim leadership responsibilities
- Held a caucus meeting on September 20 with 9 attendees
 - Steering committee taking shape
 - Discussed the possibility of composing a “state of the water sector” report to submit to the provincial government
- Looking for more caucus members and steering committee members

Climate Change Caucus overview by Larissa Dean (caucus facilitator)

- Caucus is co-chaired by Phil Gee and Paul Strome
- Held a caucus meeting on September 20 with 10 attendees
 - Discussed potential projects for future
 - Primary near-term goal is to build caucus membership

Biodiversity Caucus overview by Chris White (standing in for caucus facilitator, Kass Harris)

- Currently has 14 members (both individuals and organizational representatives)
 - 4 members serving on steering committee
- In process of finalizing caucus mission statement and priorities
- Happy to accept new members if interested
- Next meeting on October 24 at 1 PM

Open for comments / questions:

Larissa Dean is compiling a caucus facilitation framework to help guide the establishment and management of NSEN caucuses in the future. Selina Plehn will follow up with Larissa about joining the Water Caucus.

Discussion of NSEN Membership Structure

Chris White reviews potential changes to NSEN by-laws to better define different membership classes.

- Current by-laws allow any organization or individual to join if they uphold the objects of NSEN
 - All members are allowed to attend NSEN meetings
 - All members are eligible for one seat on the NSEN Board of Directors
 - Organizations can cast one vote at NSEN meetings, but individuals cannot

- Current by-laws do not define specific membership benefits that members are entitled to
- Current by-laws do not distinguish between non-profit and for-profit organizations
- In recent years, a number of for-profit organizations have joined NSEN as members
 - The NSEN Board thought it would be prudent to consult with NSEN members on whether or not for-profits should have all the same membership rights as non-profits
 - NSEN can potentially revise the by-laws to reflect the collective will of NSEN members
- Canadian Environmental Network now uses a Class A / Class B membership structure
 - Class A is for non-profit organizations (full rights and benefits)
 - Class B is for individuals and for-profit organizations (non-voting, limited benefits)
- NSEN recently sent out a survey to NSEN members to get feedback on membership structure
 - Only 7 responses so far, so it is too soon to draw conclusions
 - Early responses have provided thoughtful comments and varied opinions
 - NSEN will work on getting more survey responses and organize one or more online information sessions to allow for group discussion on the topic
- Once a consensus is reached, NSEN will organize a special general meeting to ratify new by-laws

Open for comments / questions:

Ken Donnelly asks whether there is concern about the possibility of NSEN being taken over by for-profit organizations. Chris White references the Canadian Environmental Network (RCEN) and their 'business membership policy', which allows RCEN to refuse membership to any for-profit organization if it is not a good fit. RCEN evaluates for-profit applicants on a case-by-case basis. Chris will check with RCEN to learn how their new system has been working out. Chris says that if a particular for-profit could potentially have a negative influence on NSEN, then they should not be permitted to join. Chris says that Ken's point is valid and is worth discussing. Ken says he is on the Board of the Canadian Invasive Species Council, and they have a certain number of Board positions for different sectors (non-profit, Indigenous groups, industry, government, etc.). A maximum of 5 private sector representatives are permitted on the Board, which gives them voting rights but prevents them from forming a majority. Ken suggests that this model could work for NSEN. Chris adds that there could be many different mechanisms to reduce the risk of negative influence from for-profits, such as using an upper limit on budget size for certain membership rights.

Doug Rigby asks if NSEN's pursuit of charitable status will effect how NSEN structures privileges for non-profit vs for-profit organizations. Chris White recalls a past meeting with a charity lawyer, where this point was discussed briefly and not identified as a significant issue. Chris says that NSEN will need to confirm this, as it is an important consideration for NSEN's future plans. He adds that NSEN will be meeting with another charity lawyer later this fall, so this will be included on the agenda.

Karen McKendry echoes Ken's suggestion to use proportional representation for the NSEN Board of Directors. Karen also describes how Ecology Action Centre uses a screening tool for donors, including categories for "definitely aligned", "definitely not aligned", and "grey zone", where the Board reviews any grey zones. Karen suggests that NSEN could employ a similar system for screening for-profit organizations. Karen also points out that for-profits have more freedom to alter their operations compared to non-profits, which should also be taken into consideration.

Victoria Byrne asks how we might consider any negative effects on NSEN's brand if we openly accept for-profit members, such as potentially dissuading non-profit members from joining NSEN. Victoria also asks how we can hold for-profits accountable to what they claim to do and stand for, such as including a clause in the by-laws that allows NSEN to revoke membership if claims turn out to be false. Chris White reference the New Brunswick Environmental Network (NBEN), which requires all members to agree to a statement confirming that they uphold the values of NBEN. This is included on the membership sign-up form as well as the annual renewal form. Chris notes that NBEN does not allow for-profit members.

Ken Donnelly asks for clarification regarding the right for NSEN member organizations to appoint representatives to the NSEN Board of Directors without an election. Chris White explains that the NSEN Board was meant to be a sort of steering committee with representatives from the non-profit members, but acknowledges that there is currently no mechanism in the by-laws to handle a scenario where an excessive number of non-profit members wish to appoint Board representatives. Chris adds that NSEN will need to ensure that the new by-laws prevent anyone with ill-intent from joining the Board, whether that means requiring election for for-profit Board members, prohibiting for-profit Board members, or some other approach. Makayla Cole expresses support for a system where non-profit members can appoint Board representatives without election, but for-profit members require election to appoint Board members.

Karen McKendry commends NSEN for asking these tough but important questions.

Closing Remarks and Adjournment:

Chris White thanks attendees for joining the AGM and contributing to meaningful discussions.

Ken Donnelly expresses enthusiasm for joining NSEN and its caucuses. Chris White thanks Ken for joining NSEN and for being an active member.

Motion to adjourn meeting: Victoria Byrne motions to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 9:01 PM.