

Telecommunities Canada

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2022

Zoom conference
Dec. 1, 2022
3-4 pm EST

Attendees: Garth Graham, Marita Moll, Kathryn Carruthers, Chris Cope, Adrian Schmidt, Ivan White, James Van Leeuwen, Tracey Axelsson, Mildred Weiss

1 Approval of minutes of the 2020-2021 AGM

Motion: That the minutes of the 2020-2021 AGM be approved as circulated
moved: Tracey Axelsson
seconded: James Van Leeuwen
Motion carried

2 Financial Report

Chris Cope reported that we started the year with \$5,136.68. We had no funds coming in. We are paying \$3.75 monthly bank fees and \$4.50 for a paper statement. We were charged an extra \$20 for an "inactive account fee". Paper statement cost has just been increased by 50 cents. It is projected that at the end of the year we will have about \$5,000.

Motion: That the financial report be accepted
moved: Kathryn Carruthers
seconded: Garth Graham
Motion carried

Discussion: Should we try to avoid the \$120 per year of bank fees? If we have at least one activity on the account per year we might avoid the \$20 inactivity fee. Kathryn suggested that Alterna has no fees for business accounts.

Action Item: Chris to look into Alterna to see if it is worth changing from Royal.

3 Appointment of auditor

Chris Cope suggested that limited activity on the account means that there is really nothing to audit. He recommended that we forego an audit

Motion: That the need for an audit be waived
moved: Garth Graham
seconded: Tracey Axelsson
Motion carried

4 President's report

The full report was circulated to members. Here a brief summary:

We didn't do a newsletter but we did add a youtube channel. We have picked up a few new members. We currently have between 30-40 members.

Telecommunities Canada is a very important part of the At Large enduser constituency at ICANN. TC has been at the table from the beginning and is recognized as an active and valuable participant in the decisionmaking process in At Large. For the last 4 years, I have been one of 15 members of the At Large Advisory Committee (ALAC) - the main decisionmaking body in At Large. My term on that committee has now ended. I am still the lead discussant in At Large on issues around the evolution of the multistakeholder model.

Another area I have been monitoring are the Schools of Internet Governance. These are short courses on how the internet is governed and usually take place in the few days prior to an ICANN meeting. They are volunteer driven and there are opportunities for fellowships to attend if the meeting is in your region. A few of our members have attended these schools through such fellowships.

At the national level, the Canadian Internet Governance Forum has mostly been on-line for the last couple of years with occasional hour-long meetings on relevant topics mostly around national legislative agendas currently underway.

Some of TC members attended on-line lectures that were available and posted on our list -- especially the "Taming Big Tech" lectures sponsored by Center for Free Expression at Toronto Metropolitan University.

I did unsuccessfully run for the CIRA Board again but that election was once again influenced by the use of the member's list as a campaign tool by one candidate. This practice is discouraged as it creates an unequal playing field for the member slate. I once again sent a letter of complaint to the CIRA board about this practice. I also unsuccessfully applied for a seat on the Public Interest Registry (PIR) Advisory Council. PIR is a non-profit organization that runs the .org registry.

Question: Did the sale of PIR happen. How was this controversy resolved?

Response: No, the sale of PIR to a private equity firm did not happen because the Government of California declared it illegal. PIR is a California non-profit corporation. The possibility of this happening did cause a major uproar in the internet community. I wrote an article about this dispute for a New Brunswick community paper and shared it through to the TC list.

Question: Is it true that there is a movement within the UN to suspend the Internet Governance Forum in favour of giving more power to the ITU with respect to Internet governance

Response: There has been a high level panel created at the UN to discuss Internet issues -- very top down. This is the direct opposite of the IGF bottom up model. There are various activities going on at the UN right now with respect to internet governance which are still evolving. The direction is unclear. There was recently an election for president of the ITU between a candidate from Russia and one from the U.S. There was some concern about how that would resolve. The candidate from the U.S. was ultimately successful.

Motion: That the President's report be received

moved: Tracey Axelsson
seconded: Chris Cope
Motion carried

5 Election of directors

Motion: That the following slate of directors be approved for the year 2023

Clarice Leader (Man)
Chris Cope (Ont)
Garth Graham (BC)
Fred Campbell (Atlantic)
James Van Leeuwen (AB)
Marita Moll (Ont)
Tracey Axelsson (BC)
Kathryn Carruthers (Que)

moved: Tracey Axelsson
seconded: Ivan White
Motion carried

6 Members reports

Chris Cope: The National Capital Freenet (NCF) has just celebrated its 31 birthday. It is older than any of the commercial ISPs in Ottawa. One of the activities around this event was the creation of a digital time capsule-- 30 internet leaders were invited to predict the internet future 5/10/20+ years out. File to be opened in 5 years.

On another topic, Ottawa keeps struggling to get adequate broadband to rural areas.

Action item: send a letter of congratulations to NCF through their current Board Chair.

James Van Leeuwen: At a recent CIRA meeting, the conversation centered around the model we need for competition in telecom in Canada. There was a discussion about structural separation -- treating the internet as basic infrastructure like highways and sewers. It is a discussion that has been too long in coming and the delay has come at the expense of competitiveness -- economic and demographic -- and innovation. We have competing networks rather than competing services on a shared network. The language describing the internet as a utility is gaining ground and we all need to be using that language consistently in order to keep from falling further behind. This is especially relevant in rural Canada. Municipalities are starting to realize that this is the only model that will work for them in the future. Open access fiber networks will only exist in rural areas if municipalities take the initiative and take control of the infrastructure. This is an area which fits strongly with TC's mandate. Our support of this concept will create value for us -- bringing to bear the expertise in the community, helping to foster leadership, and help build capacity for digital literacy. TC is well positioned to play this role.

Discussion: Members of TC have been talking about structural separation since 1994. It was simply treated as absurd. If this kind of discussion is going on in fora like CIRA, perhaps we should develop a discussion paper on this. James would be interested in doing this but only with some feedback from people on the call as to what the key message needs to be. The need is to develop community capacity from the bottom up to drive pressure to government circles which drive policy and regulatory reform. The telcos will do everything they can to protect the status quo. TC would have the most legitimacy in helping to engage community level leadership or helping to stimulate/foster that leadership to become

as effective as it can be in advancing the agenda from the bottom up.

Question: Where is the pressure for the change coming from now?

Response: Pressure is beginning to emerge from the vendor side and the investor side -- they are ready to offer open access digital fiber networks mainly for rural communities. TC could have an impact in communicating with the municipalities.

Action Item: organize a TC meeting solely on this topic in the near future.

Tracy Axelsson: The building in Vancouver downtown east side, from which the Vancouver Community Network (VCN) has been operating and offering walk-in services, access points, help desk, volunteers, telephone and fax services has been closed since March 2020 and VCN is currently looking for a new home. They are still busy with the help desk and continue to offer the Digital Skills for Youth Program. During co-vid, the budget for this project went from \$1-2M per year to \$6-7M per year which was a huge challenge. The budget is now back to \$1M and a lot easier to manage. About 400 interns are currently working across Western Canada -- still part of the budget boost. In total, to the end of 2023, \$14M will have been distributed during the lifetime of the project.

VCN had its 30 anniversary in May -- without much celebration. Maybe a party for 31 to celebrate that VCN is still active, vital and doing this kind of work to support the community.

Question: Which Freenets are still operating as all were created at about the same time.

Response: In addition to NCF and VCN, there is some activity at Chebucto in Halifax. Toronto Freenet still has a live website. Seattle is also still operating.

Action item: send a message of congratulation to the VCN Board of Directors and put a note on the website publicly acknowledging the fact that these community networks are still active and playing an important role in their communities

Kathryne Carruthers: The Quebec gov't and fed. gov't rolled out a lot of money to build fiber networks to rural environments but in almost all cases, the projects have been delayed. Gov't maps don't match reality -- if Shawville and area is any indication. Bell no longer offers cable or satellite TV and are recommending cellphone be used for internet. Kathryn has Starlink and is happy with the service. But Starlink is expensive -- hardware \$700 service and \$160 per month for 150MG, 20 times faster than anything else available. She is going to contact gov't to report faulty data on maps.

Discussion: Starlink is becoming a victim of its own success. The service cannot keep up with demand. In the end, satellite users get more motivated to move to fibre. It is possible that Starlink is coming to the realization that the business case is getting weaker and the environmental/social liabilities are adding up. Maybe Elon Musk could offer a sharing package for communities.

Ivan White: Spent the summer working on a project taking film crews out to do artist interviews to document their work trajectory, showing a wide range of ages and experiences. Ivan also did a live community radio weekend with TC member Fred Campbell -- interviews, live music, etc. Fred also livestreamed the 4 day pow-wow that was going on at the time and that is a podcast on Fred's Rykuga website. A great community media moment.

Adrian Schmidt/ Mildred Weiss: Adrian and Mildred are new members who came on board after the North American Regional At Large (NARALO) Summit in Hollywood earlier in the year. In September, Adrian did a presentation on internet governance at an IT technical standards meeting in

their Faith Community. Interestingly, although it was an IT audience, they had no idea about the wider world of internet governance. There was a lot of interest and potential for growth. Adrian's job has them temporarily posted in the US.

Discussion: An Argentinian ISP is providing services at \$8 per month over optical fibre. Despite the sometimes political instability, the internet is widely available at low prices in Argentina -- in comparison to prices in Canada. Sharing info a different access practices is an excellent example of how TC can help bring important information forward to the people who most need it.

Action Item: Adrian will provide a link to more information on internet access in Argentina

7 Any other business

Garth Graham: Garth has been distributing info to the list on the issue of digital equity in Canada. At the grass roots level there are any number of initiatives that point to the issue as a matter of social disadvantage. Digital equity is a serious issue in Canada at the level of access. It tends to collect in stovepipes in various localities and there is probably a role for TC in breaking those stovepipes by promoting more awareness of digital equity.

Another issue that is starting to emerge is in the context of privacy legislation currently being considered at the federal level where privacy is being addressed as a consumer issue whereas it is a human rights issue. This points to the degree to which industry drives government policy. This is also why the structural separation issue will be so difficult to implement. Digital equity and privacy are both human rights issues -- but this is not how the government addresses it. It will be hard to make any progress in these areas.

Discussion: The telecom companies want to own their customers. That is the language that they use in the industry itself. In the human rights context in Canada, it is actually indigenous communities that are picking up this agenda and driving it forward. They will be the vanguard for the bottom up movement as it unfolds in Canada. First Nations communities are running a fibre optic cable all around Vancouver Island (\$40M). This is First Nations led and owned. On the whole, we need to learn how to do leadership development to bring the financial and technical people together to talk about social innovation and community capacity building.

8 Adjournment

Motion that the meeting be adjourned

Moved: James Van Leeuwen

Seconded: Tracey Axelsson

Motion carried

Action Items from this meeting:

- Check out Alterna as another possibility for TC banking (CC)
- Info. to the list on internet access practices in Argentina (AS)
- Letters of congrats to community networks + website recognition (MM)
- Set up meeting with James to talk about structural separation (MM)
- Set up a meeting with Peter Frampton re: the Learning Enrichment Foundation (MM)