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# **Social Justice Co-op's 2021-2022 Strategy Compass**

This document will serve as a guide for planning, decision making and action for the Social Justice Cooperative for the year ahead (June 2021 - June 2022). It is called a "Strategy Compass" to emphasize that this provides us direction, but doesn't give us a perfectly clear map or strict plan to follow. This will allow our staff and volunteers to evolve, adapt and improve as the events and activities of the year ahead unfold.

This document is an expression of our collective commitments for the year ahead. We will work together to make these aspirations a reality.

## **A view from 2022**

*Imagine we are one year in the future at our June 2022 AGM. What follows is a speculation on what we might have achieved one year from now. It imagines what our 2022 AGM will be like, if we reach our goals over the year ahead.*

"June 10, 2022 - The 2022 Annual General Meeting for the Social Justice Co-operative (SJC) of Newfoundland and Labrador took place in a lively community hall in Corner Brook yesterday. Almost 120 people from across Newfoundland and Labrador attended in person, and another 62 attended via zoom. The purpose of the event was to bring together volunteers, staff, donors and allies of the SJC to celebrate the past year's activities and set plans for the year ahead.

After an introduction by the chairs of the board, the SJC's two staff people gave a presentation on key activities from the past year. Lea Mary Movelle gave a slide show presentation, overflowing with photos, of numerous volunteer trainings and leadership development sessions that the SJC has conducted over the past year. They then handed the mike to Aaay Beee, a staff member based in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Bee presented on the extensive participatory research on a Green New Deal for NL that the SJC has conducted in many communities around the province.

Following the staff presentations came presentations from the volunteer organizers of the SJC's many action teams. These included teams focused on: Challenging Car Culture, Poverty Elimination, Food Sovereignty, Zero Waste, Coalition for a Green New Deal, West Coast chapter, and Opportunity not Austerity. These action teams have been busy over the past year, with protests, policy advocacy, involvement in municipal elections, lots of media engagement and supporting allied organizations in a variety of ways.

The afternoon began with allied organizations who shared presentations on how to practice inclusion and anti-oppression in our activism and then attendees were invited to breakout groups to reflect on and discuss how members can incorporate these practices into our work. Breakout groups were constructed to reflect the intersectionality of the room; some breakout spaces were reserved for folks with lived experience of oppression to create a safe space for attendees, while other participants were encouraged to move between breakout groups to share and learn from each other's experience.

Following these presentations and discussions, the meeting formally voted on by-law changes, board appointments and confirmation of the 'Strategic Compass for 2022-2023'”

## Priorities for 2021-2022

- Continue to support our currently active action teams: Challenging Car Culture, Poverty Elimination, Food Sovereignty, Coalition for a Green New Deal, Zero Waste, West Coast Chapter
- Fundraise - through both grants and public donations - towards being able to pay for two full time staff
- Put lots of time, energy and focus into volunteer engagement, empowerment and enjoyment. This will mean running more events, creating more resources and fostering more relationships necessary to help more volunteers get involved, develop leadership capacity, and have fun while participating in our movement
- Clearly communicate the SJC's story, purpose, strategy and future intentions through our website, our fundraising materials, and our materials and sessions aimed to onboard and train new members
- Along with key allies, lead the development of a Green New Deal via participatory action research
- Create a new action team focused on opposing austerity and promoting alternatives to austerity.
- In all of the above, engage a wider diversity of people and groups in the Social Justice Coops activities, teams, board and decision making by supporting our partners and making a greater effort to organize outside the overpass, including establishing a Labrador chapter.

## Distribution of Responsibilities for the Year Ahead

To reach our goals for the year ahead, we need to ensure that our people know what is expected of them, that no one is overwhelmed, and that a sufficient number of people take responsibility for all key initiatives and priorities.

Our staff will therefore focus on providing the necessary support to action teams while also leading efforts to increase volunteer engagement and empowerment.

The action teams themselves will be led by volunteers, although we will have to go through a transition period of handing over staff responsibilities.

Our board will take the lead on fundraising, communication about the SJC, as well as initiatives aimed at diversifying our membership

Once we have sufficient capacity, volunteer organizers will create a new action team to focus on austerity.

Our Green New Deal work is currently being guided by the board of directors, but we will need to grow capacity (staff and volunteer) in order to reach our goals in this area.

## Guidelines and Get Rights

The board should create new initiatives or processes to ensure we get the following right over the year ahead:

- **Transparency and internal communication.** The SJC Board needs to do a better job communicating our work to our members.
- **Inclusive decision making.** It is critical that the decisions that guide our work, at all levels and in all teams and committees, are made by our grassroots membership in a democratic and consensus based manner. To this end, we should also train and empower our people in effective consensus based decision making practice.
- **Promote and invite healthy feedback.** None of us are perfect, and we are all learning from each other. We can continue to improve the processes and practices we follow to ensure that feedback and suggestions are shared throughout our organization, and followed through on.
- **Support the well-being of our people.** There is so much to do and not enough of us to do it all. We need to make sure that our people pace themselves, care for themselves and each other and organize for the long haul. Action to help staff and volunteers avoid burnout should receive regular attention throughout the year.
- **Solidarity and showing up.** We must commit to showing up for our allies and partners. We have a responsibility to support others with our resources, time and energy. We should be present at their events, lend our voice to help amplify theirs and rally our community in support of others.

## Prospective Initiatives

Here are some of the key initiatives we know we will need to follow to successfully reach our objectives.

- **Establish a Fundraising Team,** led by the board, and guided by its own thorough strategy.

- **Establish a Radical Inclusivity and Anti-Oppression Committee**, led by the board, and guided by its own thorough strategy. This committee will lead initiatives and make recommendations aimed at increasing inclusivity and anti-oppression practices into our internal operations and external organizing.
- **Procuring people power, and thoroughly planning, for the project to develop a Green New Deal.** We intend on developing a Green New Deal through consultation and collaboration with many communities and groups, as well as a thorough process of participatory action research. We will need to establish clear plans and ensure volunteer and/or staff capacity is in place before this can be fully pursued.
- **Session on SJC response to austerity.** This will be organized sometime in summer 2021. This will be an open session where SJC members can share their thoughts and feelings about the prospect of increased austerity in NL and how the SJC should respond.
- **Public Communications Review.** With the May 10 launch of our website, we need to step back and assess the strengths and weaknesses, gaps and opportunities in our public facing communications about the SJC's purpose, focus, approaches and activities.
- **Events, creation of resources, and establishment of practices aimed at volunteer empowerment and leadership development.**
- **Consult with members to compile a Rights and Responsibilities Code of Conduct**

## Timeline Considerations

- Fundraising needs to be a near term priority. Much of our other work will not be possible without increasing staff capacity. The board should prioritize the creation of a fundraising committee immediately after the AGM.
  - If this is successful, it will lead to increased capacity for both increasing activity outside of St. John's and advancing work towards the Green New Deal.
- The need for action on austerity will present itself before we can have a fully fledged, volunteer led action team on it. Until then, we could look to volunteers of the Poverty Elimination Action Team to take some initiative. We can also use our voice to support actions being taken by allied organizations.
- The board should support Lea in building the volunteer leadership capacity of action teams in the first half of the year, so that Lea can hand off responsibilities and have additional time and energy for new initiatives in the latter half of the year.

## Appendix A - Background info on our current structure and capacity

The Social Justice Cooperative currently has a monthly general meeting that is attended by 11 participants on average.

Our work is done on action teams (what some might call “committees”). These teams also meet monthly. Below is a list of teams/committees and the average attendance at their monthly meetings:

- Coalition for Green New Deal NL - 10
- Challenge Car Culture - 8
- Food Sovereignty NL - 5
- Poverty Elimination - 5
- Zero Waste Action Team - 8
- 2SLGBTQ+ Neighbouring Pod - 4

There is also a West Coast chapter that is just emerging whose monthly meetings are attended by about 4 people on average.

The SJC board of directors has 9 members who meet monthly and who take on various responsibilities related to governance, fundraising, communications and supporting members.

The SJC staff is paid for 20 hours of work a week.