



Annual Report

2018-2019

Helping People with

Good Reason



Centre for Inquiry Canada

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Thank you to:

- members
- donors
- councillors
- directors
- volunteers
- partners

Our volunteers:

- write
- edit
- plan
- communicate
- fundraise
- manage
- organize
- speak
- listen
- lead
- follow

Thank you to all who give their time to CFIC. We couldn't do it without you.

Photos on pages 1, 4, 7 and 9 by Andrea Piacquadio from Pexels

Message to Our Members

Message from Our President

In 2017, Centre for Inquiry Canada created a three-year plan which would guide the organization until the end of 2020. This year, our board and volunteers worked tirelessly to implement the goals in that plan. We are proud of our achievements and grateful to our membership and donors for making it possible for CFIC to be “the voice of reason in an often-absurd world.”

CFIC is run almost entirely by volunteers. Both local and national activities are reliant on these passionate people giving freely of their time and talent. Our volunteer board of directors is a working board, meaning that all directors take on one or more regular tasks to move the agency

forward. This year, our board members truly stepped up to the task. Their commitment was obvious in that we enjoyed 80% attendance, had quorum at every meeting, and in that each of our board members makes a monthly donation to CFIC. The amount of work that they do is immeasurable.

Our volunteers accomplish extraordinary things. Our volunteer branch managers are the event organizers, promoters, team leaders and treasurers of our branches. Our writing and editing team is responsible for all CFIC communications including our monthly Critical Links newsletter, our social media presence, our website, and all other CFIC correspondence, reports and promotions. Our technical team researches available technology, advises the organization and implements IT solutions. Thank you to all of you.

In the coming year, CFIC will be completing our three-year plan and beginning to develop our next plan, which will look five years into the future. As members, you will be invited to have input into the plan. We hope that you will choose to participate. We thank you for your membership in 2018-19 and look forward to continuing to be your voice of reason for the foreseeable future.

Gus Lyn-Piluso

President – Centre for Inquiry Canada



2019 Overview

Growing Stronger, Helping More People and Having More Impact

In 2019, CFIC grew stronger because of the significant increase in support and enthusiasm among individual Canadians across the country. We're on the move, helping more people and having more of an impact on those who hold the decision-making power and control public money in our society.

With your support, we help people to:

- sort out what is true and not true in a “post-factual” time when false information is instantly shared and lies are told out of greed and self-interest;
- build a more inclusive and compassionate society using evidence-based decision making;
- protect themselves from dangerous products, fraudulent services, exploitation, and all other instances when people prey on others using lies and baseless claims;
- connect to communities of interest focused on secular, scientific, and compassionate values in a time when people who possess these values may feel isolated and powerless;
- build a more peaceful, inclusive and respectful society. As a multicultural society, it is essential that we treat all beliefs – including non-belief – equally and fairly;
- better understand science in a time when it is at the heart of our most pressing public issues, such as climate change, energy and healthcare;
- insist that decision-making, policy debates and government accountability are focused on solid, verifiable information; and
- make a difference by supporting and participating in CFIC's important work.

1. Critical Thinking

2. Building Community

3. Secularism

4. Science and Education

5. Supporting CFIC

1. Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is at the heart of everything that CFIC does. We try to assist our readers in untangling rhetoric from reality. Often, our news about secularism and about scientific inquiry is based in critical thinking. This year we were pleased to provide monthly “Think Check” contributions to our Critical Links newsletter.

Early in 2019 we launched our inaugural “Scammies” award. In this we highlighted some of the most ridiculous claims we heard in 2018. We hope that our annual Scammies awards are fun and entertaining for our readers. More importantly, the Scammies highlight how unscrupulous swindlers prey upon vulnerable and desperate people in society. We hope that by reading these examples, people will research an item that sounds too good to be true before wasting their hard-earned money.

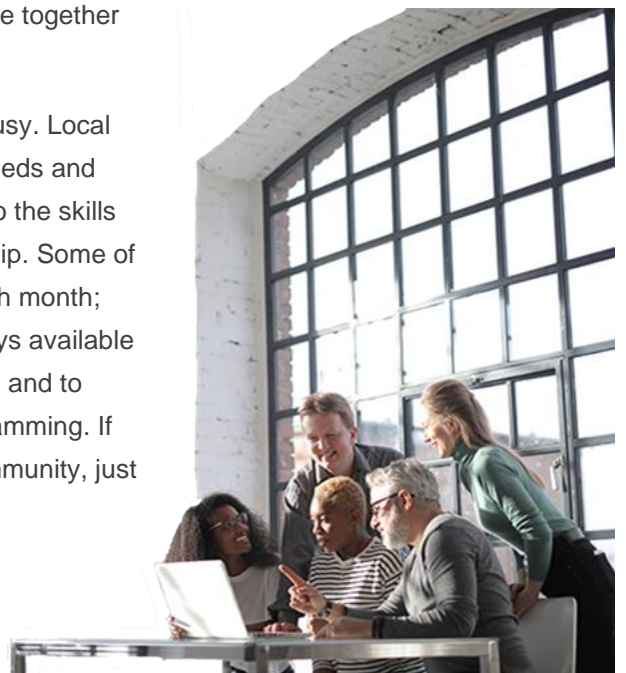
Diane Bruce – Critical Thinking Chair

2. Building Community and Supporting Stronger Branches

At CFIC we know that a sense of belonging is important to people. We know that as we leave an era of superstition, many individuals whose sense of community depended on faith-based activities may feel disconnected from others in society. For this reason, CFIC offers an opportunity for like-minded people to come together for activities not based on faith.

This year our local branches were very busy. Local branches offer programs that meet the needs and interests of their membership according to the skills and availability of their volunteer leadership. Some of our branches have one regular event each month; some offer many programs. CFIC is always available to assist volunteers to start new branches and to assist existing branches to expand programming. If you would like to get involved in your community, just let us know.

We also understand that many of our members live in rural or remote communities where launching a branch



is impractical, or whose hours of work or other life circumstances prevent them from attending local events. For this reason, in 2018-19, CFIC launched our virtual branch.

We already have plans for more activities in 2019-20 and hope that you will join us.

Seanna Watson – Branch Liaison, Vice President

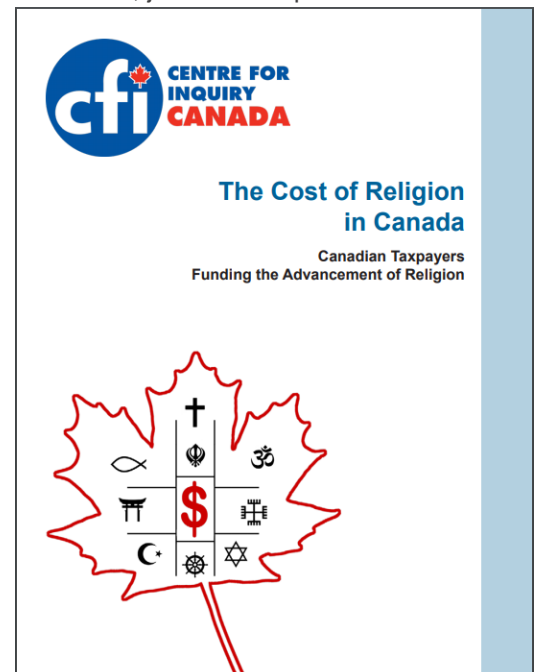
3. Secularism

This was an interesting and often challenging year for secularists. While we celebrated the 2018 Supreme Court ruling that discrimination is not a protected religious right in the Trinity Western University case, we were disheartened by the continued increase in the number of allegations of sexual assault by members of the clergy; by Alberta removing support and protections for Gay Straight Alliances in its schools; by the passing of Quebec’s distinctly anti-secular law banning civil servants from wearing religious symbols; and by the loss of life in religiously based hate attacks in New Zealand and Sri Lanka, just weeks apart.

It was not all bad news, however. In December 2018, Canada's blasphemy law was repealed; and, for the first time, a candidate for the leadership of the Ontario Liberal party publicly called for the merger of the public and separate school systems in the province, bringing much-needed scrutiny to the issue.

Last year, CFIC began work on the series “The Cost of Religion in Canada.” The first report in this series was published in November 2019. In the year to come, we will complete the series and will continue to work with our partners on issues such as public funding of religious schools in the hopes of building a more just, secular community. Thanks to a large donation directed to our Secular Rescue campaign, CFIC will be able to support a Pakistani refugee living in Nepal while his application for refugee status in Canada is processed. Your continued financial support for this and other CFIC programs is deeply appreciated by the entire board.

Leslie Rosenblood – Secular Chair



Secularism

CFIC offers Living Without Religion to support individuals who are questioning their faith or have left their religion.

“We sincerely wish that we could assist with every request we receive for secular rescue.”

Omer can't imagine living without fear. We look forward to sharing that new experience with him.

Living Without Religion

For many individuals who have grown up in religious families, the beginning of religious doubt leads to the questioning of the foundation of their belief system for all things and is often associated with the loss of their social network. CFIC offers Living Without Religion to support individuals who are questioning their faith or have left their religion. This year, we offered LWR in Ottawa and Toronto and began planning for the Virtual LWR program that was launched early in our 2019-20 fiscal year.

Edan Tasca – Mental Health Chair

Promoting Human Rights

At CFIC we sincerely wish that we could assist with every request we receive for secular rescue. It is always difficult to



read the stories of individuals facing persecution

and even death for simply stating their doubt in a deity. When we received a request from “Omer”, the fact that other groups were supporting Omer and that initially there was no need for financial support made it easy for CFIC to get involved.

By now you will be aware that CFIC has also agreed to provide some financial support. Two very generous donors have made this possible. One, a large, monthly pledge to CFIC, has provided the stability of funding that allows us to expand in this direction. Another large donation directed to our Secular Rescue campaign gave us the assurance that others would assist.

Jason Lawrence – Human Rights Chair (resigned October 2019)

Secular Rescue

In 2018-19 CFIC began working with "Omer" (not his real name). Growing up as Muslim, Omer started expressing doubt at a young age. As a result, he has been tortured, disowned by his family and eventually had to go into hiding.

Omer's refugee status has been confirmed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. He hopes to come to Canada and has secured a Canadian sponsor under Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees program. CFIC has been working with other groups to ensure that Omer is safe. Currently we are supporting him as he awaits final processing of his application for entrance to Canada

Is it Real Science?

This is likely Real Science

- Reported in a reputable journal (see “Research before you Research”, Critical Links, March 2018)
- Data is gathered through a scientific method
- Data and interpretation are peer-reviewed
- Authors do not have financial or other conflicts of interest in the outcome
- Authors invite critiques
- Results are reevaluated and changed as new information becomes available
- Authors/researchers prove the theory

This might be Pseudoscience

- Self-published; social media; popular press
- Data is based on popular opinion or testimony
- Claim is made independently
- Authors have a vested interest in the claim
- Criticism is identified as a conspiracy
- The result is absolute and new evidence is viewed with suspicion

4. Science and Education

Is It Real Science?

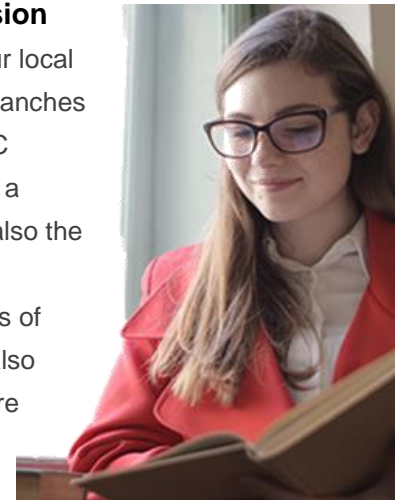
This is the question that is at the heart of the work CFIC engages in with our monthly science current news stories. We were very pleased to publish a frequently-referenced infographic called “Is It Real Science?” this year. We also published an article exposing thermography as a scam, preying on women’s fear of breast cancer.

In the coming year, we look forward to creating an archive of our science articles to make it easier for our readers to find evidence-based information about important science topics.

Zack Dumont – Science Chair

Education – the Heart of Our Mission

Most of our education is delivered by our local branches or distributed by email. Our branches offer a wide array of programming. CFIC Ottawa continues to offer Skepticamp – a conference in which the attendees are also the speakers. As part of the most recent Skepticamp, CFIC Ottawa offered a Kids of Inquiry program. CFIC Saskatoon has also offered Kids for Inquiry, helping to ensure that the future generation is better prepared to engage in critical thinking.



Seanna Watson – Education Chair

Communications

Sharing information is critical to the mandate of CFIC. Our communications team includes experts in media relations, website development, writing, proofreading and editing, social media, and graphic design. Our communications team produces diverse information that responds to the preferences of our membership. Our monthly Critical

Links newsletter is 100% volunteer produced. We enjoy a remarkable array of professional and technical writers. Our team works hard to bring you accurate and informative information in an entertaining format.

In 2018-19 we produced 12 issues of Critical Links, brought you the first annual Scammies award, produced an infographic (“Is it Real Science?”) and formalized our social media presence. In response to requests from membership, we have begun the process of saving individual Critical Links articles in a sharable format on our website.

This year, CFIC has begun planning to be more visible in traditional media. If you have expertise in this area, please consider volunteering with us

Rohit Mohindra – Communications Chair

5. Supporting CFIC

With each new member, our voice of reason gets stronger and more influential. As we grow in numbers, so does our influence with government decision makers and the public opinion that guides them. Without us, the major influencers will continue to be the large, self-interested groups and institutions that benefit from making baseless claims and spreading pseudoscientific nonsense.

We help people make decisions based on evidence, rational thinking and compassion. We know what a positive difference those kinds of decisions make for people, communities and organizations. We are Canada’s only national non-profit with the mission of promoting critical thinking, science and secularism.

If you or someone you know wants to be a part of this important work, there are many ways you can participate. Visit <https://centreforinquiry.ca/> for more information.

Stronger Together

The CFIC Board of Directors recognizes the importance of working with our partners to achieve more. Throughout 2018-19 we engaged in dialogues with many partners about how we can work better together to maximize our impact with our modest financial resources. Those dialogues are ongoing.

Gus Lyn-Piluso – Partnership Chair

Changes to Rules on Political Activity

For years, our membership and our partners have asked CFIC to become more politically active. This has now been made possible, as rules which limit the amount of political activity a charity can be

involved with have been removed. While this opens up a new opportunity for CFIC, we are concerned that the impact on secularism will be negative, as the change in rules also applies to religious charities who possess a far larger budget.

CFIC would benefit from a small team of volunteers with a strong background in political activity who can help us use our limited financial resources to the best effect

Alex Kenjeev – Policy Chair

Building Financial Health

In 2017, CFIC lost a significant donor, causing the organization to run a significant deficit in 2018. As a result of focusing on finances, CFIC's deficit was halved in 2019 and we are forecasting running approximately at break-even for 2020. I wish to thank all our donors, especially those of you making monthly contributions. These regular donations, and one large monthly donation in particular, provides CFIC with stable funding, makes it easier to forecast our year end position, allows us to fund ongoing programs, and makes one-time contributions a welcome bonus for the organization instead of something we must rely on.

Leslie Rosenblood – Treasurer



Statement of Financial Position As at September 30, 2019

	2019		2018
Assets			
Cash	19,823	\$	23,833
Accounts receivable	83		4,918
Government remittances recoverable	3,909		24,308
Prepaid expenses	1,558		1,645
Long term capital assets	1,647		2,073
	<u>27,020</u>		<u>56,777</u>
Liabilities and Net Assets			
Accounts payable & accrued liabilities	4,655	\$	10,885
Deferred income	3,890		3,662
Unrestricted net assets	18,475		42,230
	<u>27,020</u>	\$	<u>56,777</u>

Statement of Operations and Changes in Net Assets			
for the Year Ending September 30, 2019			
		<u>2019</u>	<u>2018</u>
Revenue:			
	Donations	\$ 39,903	\$ 36,685
	Membership dues	8,655	7,640
	Events	4,503	2,753
		<u>53,061</u>	<u>47,078</u>
Expenses			
	Depreciation	426	551
	Fundraising related expenses	922	319
	Insurance	2,236	2,322
	Office and general	2,276	3,389
	Professional fees	4,709	4,576
	Program-related expenses	6,983	4,942
	Rent	15,840	11,880
	Subcontractors	39,724	56,898
		<u>73,116</u>	<u>84,877</u>
Excess of expenditure over revenue for the year		(20,055)	(37,799)
Net Assets, beginning of year		38,530	85,729
Error adjusted to prior years		-	(9,400)
Adjusted Net Assets, beginning of year		-	76,329
Net Assets, end of year		18,475	38,530

2018-19 Directors

Gus Lyn-Piluso	President
Seanna Watson	Vice President; Education Chair; Branch Liaison
Leslie Rosenblood	Treasurer; Secular Chair
Zack Dumont	Science Chair
Jason Lawrence	Human Rights Chair
Alex Kenjeev	Policy Chair
Edan Tasca	Mental Health Chair; Critical Links Editor
Diane Bruce	Critical Thinking Chair
Rohit Mohindra	Communications Chair
David Simmons	Recording Secretary (ex-officio)

2018-19 Branch Managers

Sophie Shulman	Manager, Centre for Inquiry Canada Victoria Branch
David Richards	Manager, Centre for Inquiry Canada Regina Branch
Kendra Getty	Manager, Centre for Inquiry Canada Saskatoon Branch
Jocelyne Lemoine	Manager, Centre for Inquiry Canada Winnipeg Branch
Rohit Mohindra	Manager, Centre for Inquiry Canada Toronto Branch
Diane Bruce	Manager, Centre for Inquiry Canada Ottawa Branch
Lidia Kasprzak	Manager, Centre for Inquiry Canada Montreal Branch
Matthew Brewer	Manager, Centre for Inquiry Canada Halifax Branch
Onur Romano	Manager, Centre for Inquiry Canada Virtual Branch

2018-19 Staff

Sandra Dunham	Executive Director of Development
Mark Maharaj	Office Manager