

# **EASTERN CANADA REGIONAL FORUM FINAL REPORT AUGUST 23-25, 2024**

## **Ottawa, Ontario**

**LAST NAMES OF CLASS A (NONALCOHOLIC) TRUSTEES**

**AND NONALCOHOLIC EMPLOYEES ONLY APPEAR IN THIS REPORT**

Dear A.A. Friends,

Please mark your calendar for the next Eastern Canada Regional Forum that will be held August 21-23, 2026, in Québec at the Hôtel Mortagne.

A.A. World Services, Inc.  
c/o General Service Office  
P.O. Box 459  
Grand Central Station  
New York, NY 10163  
(212) 870-3120  
Fax: (212) 870-3003  
E-mail: [regionalforums@aa.org](mailto:regionalforums@aa.org)  
GSO's A.A. Website: [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org)

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## INTRODUCTION

The 2024 Eastern Canada Regional Forum was held in Ottawa, Ontario. Registration for the forum was **418**. This included **272** members attending their very first Forum.

## UNANSWERED ASK-IT-BASKET QUESTIONS

**Q.** Why do Canadians have to pay for postage when sending Anniversary envelopes but American do not?

**A.** Currently our Business Reply Mail permit, which allows the recipient to pay the postage instead of the sender, is issued by the United States Postal Service and is valid only in the United States. This question was forwarded for discussion.

**Q.** Is there a plan to add QR codes to our A.A. pamphlets in the near future?

**A.** Yes, the Publishing and Communications departments are working on a strategic plan to implement permanent QR codes on pamphlets. We are working on prioritization, potential timelines, and administrative details to ensure a smooth and sustainable process. We will be updating the AAWS Board and the Fellowship as we move forward. *Stay tuned....*

**Q.** Can you expand on why there are 22 Trustees on the board? Why does having a Class B increase the number from 21 to 22?

**A.** Historically, there have been 14 Class B Trustees – 8 Regional, 4 General Service (2 AAWS and 2 AAGV), and 2 Trustees-at-Large (1 U.S. and 1 Canada) and 7 Class A Trustees, one of whom has served as Chair of the Board.

With the election of a Class B Trustee as Chair, the decision was made that the Board still needed the services of 7 Class A Trustees for the business skills they bring and the spiritual value they add.

So, with a 15th Class B Trustee and the usual 7 Class A, we are now 22 Trustees.

**Q.** In the U.S., is approaching the professional community similar for youths in youth centers?

**A.** From the Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC) Assignment:

CPC informs professionals based on our guidelines and following our Traditions. These topics are covered in the CPC Workbook and other service material. What a committee decides to do will be dictated by local needs and experience. The suggestions here are just that — suggestions.

Each CPC committee is autonomous and can customize their presentation to the professional community according to their Area's group conscience. In our service material, we emphasize the importance of knowing the professional audience we are presenting to, and being well-versed in the resources GSO offers to inform that community as some of our pamphlets are designed to target specific audiences.

When addressing youth organizations, we might direct them to resources that speak to the young community, such as the Young People's videos, the pamphlet "Young People in A.A.," and our YouTube channel. We might also emphasize AA Grapevine issues that have stories from young people, and highlight the AA Grapevine app, podcast, and Instagram page as perhaps more effective in connecting younger people with the Fellowship and A.A. resources.

So, while the approach is the same, the materials we offer those professionals who deal with young people specifically might be slightly different than professionals who deal with the wider population. Again, this is a matter for an informed group conscience of the committee, the district, or the area. Contact the CPC Desk, [cpc@aa.org](mailto:cpc@aa.org), for more information or lists of suggested materials that might be suitable for sharing with professionals who serve specific populations.

From the Corrections Assignment:

**Carrying the Message into Youth Detention Centers and Short-term Facilities (Corrections Workbook)**

Although the basics of carrying A.A.'s message into youth detention centers and short-term facilities are no different than carrying the message into any other correctional facility, many Area Corrections Committees felt there was an expressed need to include some information in this workbook regarding what they viewed as added challenges to service work in these two areas and, based on their experiences, some suggestions on leading meetings in these institutions. Experience shows that there is often a rapid turnover of individuals in both youth detention centers and short-term facilities. Frequently, attendance at A.A. meetings in 18 of these institutions may not be voluntary. It is prudent to be aware that, like many A.A. members in the beginning, some people may not believe they have a problem with alcohol and resent attending an A.A. meeting. It is important to remember that A.A. is there to offer a message of hope. You may not be able to see immediate results, but a seed may be planted. (Additional information can be found in the Corrections Workbook.)

# DELEGATE PRESENTATIONS

## Virtual Areas

James O., Area 83, Eastern Ontario

*The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Services* pg. 25 states the following: "2. How are areas defined? Each delegate area of the U.S./Canada General Service Conference is defined geographically: it may be part of a state or province, or all of it, or may include parts of more than one state or province, depending on the size and needs of the A.A. population."

What is the purpose of an area? Not all areas operate in the same way, but generally speaking, an area's purpose is threefold:

1. To elect a delegate who will represent the area's conscience at the annual General Service Conference, where decisions are made that affect A.A. throughout the U.S. and Canada.
2. To form a local decision-making structure so groups can collectively decide on matters that affect their area.
3. To carry out Twelfth Step work that may not be practical for groups, districts or intergroups to take on by themselves. Examples include, but are not limited to: • Accessibility • Area bulletin or newsletter • Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC) • Corrections COMPOSITION • Informational website • Language translation services • Literature, including Grapevine and La Viña • Public Information (PI) • Treatment Facilities

When is a new area deemed necessary, and how can we create one?

If the A.A. population seems to have grown to the point where the current delegate and other trusted servants can no longer provide adequate service and communication, there may be local interest in forming a new area. In such a case, the area committee or Committees involved may write to G.S.O. and request an application for an additional delegate area. This four-page application form requests detailed information about the current area structure: • How often assemblies are held • Whether there is an alternate delegate • How often district meetings are held • Number of active DCMs and whether they assist the delegate and alternate delegate • Number of active GSRs in the area • Geographical and A.A. population information about the area and its pattern of growth over the past five years, broken down to yearly figures.

The application form is designed to determine problems regarding geography and A.A. population, as well as whether or not the current area service structure is as well developed as it might be to provide support for the delegate.

What did Bill W. have to say about creating a new area?

When such a request came up at the 1961 Conference, a memo from co-founder Bill W. provided background on the subject. Bill wrote (in part): "It should be reemphasized that the

Conference is not a political body, demanding a completely rigid formula of representation. What we shall need will always be enough delegates at the Conference to afford a reliable cross-section of A.A. plus enough more to make sure of good local communication.”

As of August 21, 2024:

- *There are 2,599 active virtual groups in Areas 1-93.*
- *There are 754 active virtual groups in Area 95.*
- *797 groups have a GSR.*

*Virtual Districts:*

- Area 14 – North Florida, District 2*
- Area 45 – Southern New Jersey, District 42*
- Area 48 – NENY, District 20*
- Area 58 – Oregon, District 33*
- Area 72 – Western Washington, District 25*

What is the Online Intergroup A.A. (OIAA)?

Total Members = 930 | Officers and Committee Chairs = 24 | Groups = 698 | Nonvoting = 208 (as of April 29, 2024)

The Online Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous, or OIAA, is an international service organization established in accordance with the Ninth Tradition of Alcoholics Anonymous, A.A., specifically for the purpose of assisting online A.A. groups in their common purpose of carrying the A.A. message to the alcoholic who still suffers. OIAA fulfills this purpose by

- 1) Promoting unity among online A.A. groups through its Workshops, Forums, and Assemblies

- 2) Using the internet to carry the message of A.A., creating opportunities for volunteers to be of service, and enabling all its members and the organization itself to connect and communicate

- 3) Responding to the needs of online A.A. through our service committees such as online 12th Steppers, responding directly via email to people seeking help for a drinking problem support; the CPC committee, reaching out to all professionals who may have the opportunity to provide services to those who may have a drinking problem; and the Tech Steppers, who assist online A.A. groups improve their online safety and security posture.

- 4) Providing a central source of information about online A.A. through the website, a central hub where members can gather and get information related to online recovery, unity, and service, and our online meeting directory that allows direct access to online A.A. meetings anytime, anywhere in the world.

What is the rest of the world doing?

Much as we have heard in the U.S./Canada, there were comments regarding the development of guidelines as a useful and important tool.

Of the countries that are actively examining how best to incorporate groups into the service structure, many are in the same place as we are (committees examining the best way for



their structures to approach the challenge), and at least one — Australia — has started the process to set up a virtual Area. South Africa is looking at creating a virtual Area. Other countries are in the process of developing what we would consider to be virtual Districts, although in their structural language, it is referred to as an Area. Portugal is an example of that. In Ireland, newly formed groups are asked to identify with one of the geographic areas in their structure. More Shared Experience Needed Regarding Online Groups. While Conference-Approved literature needs to go through the Conference process to be updated, service material has fulfilled the important role of providing shared experience to groups and members when there is a need for timely sharing of information. However, the magnitude of change A.A. has gone through in the last few years has sometimes outpaced our ability to collect shared experience, especially in areas related to online groups. It is clear from the survey responses, sharing at workshops, and correspondence from A.A. members and groups, that there is a desire for more information regarding online groups. Below are links to materials currently available on the aa.org website, in the Group Handbook, and service kits with information related to online groups.

- Members located outside our structure would have a say in our business.
- Would our structure be truly “self supporting” by accepting contributions from members located outside our structure?
- We could potentially have a voting member at the GSC with a more global agenda, which would not be best for membership in our conference structure.
- Could my GSR be from another country? Would they be able to represent our local group effectively?

There are still, as there were with the first progress report, more questions than answers. However, the shape of the questions continues to evolve and change. It is apparent that many conversations are happening at Area, District, and Group levels, and that there is a need and an appetite for continued shared experience. There are voices that we continue to need to seek out and hear from in this still-evolving picture and process.

### **Remote Communities**

André D., Area 87, Southwest Québec

According to the 2021 census, there are roughly 150,000 Haitians and roughly 150,000 Latin Americans, with the majority concentrated on the Island of Montreal. The vast majority of all Haitians and a large proportion of all Latin Americans in Canada live in the Greater Montreal area.

At present, Area 87's membership is made up of some 5,000 Francophones, 2,000 Anglophones, and around 250 Hispanophones in 370 groups. Haitians, an important community in the Greater Montreal area, are absent from our service structure. We do have a Russian group that meets once a week and is hosted by a Latin-American group. We also have a Polish group that is inactive, but which the area continues to post on its meeting list. Native North Americans in our area have two groups. We used to have a Farsi-language group (Iranians), which has disbanded and is, in practice, integrated into an English-

language group. Italian members attend our English-speaking groups. And especially, we have a group that has been hosting telephone meetings in French since Monday, March 23, 2020 (COVID) for alcoholics who are unable to attend or have limited mobility. And a group that holds regular meetings for deaf people in Langue des Signes du Québec (LSQ) for more than 30 years.

The composition of the Greater Montreal population — especially on the Island of Montreal, with its 2.1 million inhabitants in 2023, is a real mosaic. It represents a great diversity of cultures, races, colors, beliefs, and languages. There are no fewer than 120 cultural communities from all five continents. This reality is not necessarily reflected in our meeting rooms.

In Montreal and its suburbs, we pride ourselves on being inclusive. So how do we get our message across to alcoholics who can't be reached because of their "remoteness"? A remote community is not necessarily an isolated community from the North Pole. According to our guidelines, such a community is defined as one where it is difficult to get the message across because of language, culture, or geography. It's a very broad definition and can be viewed as a very inclusive one. Whether an individual is housebound, living in an institution, part of a special interest group, or is stigmatized because of their religious or cultural beliefs, they are welcome within our society. The issue is how do we reach out to those communities and how do we ensure equal access for the people currently underserved by our local service structure?

We have a lot of work to do in identifying community resources and leaders within our area's ethnic and cultural communities (local media, places of worship, medical care providers, social clubs, schools, etc.).

Recently, our local Public Information and Cooperation with the Professional Community committees have struggled to bring together members interested in connecting with our cultural and linguistic communities.

The forthcoming arrival of the Haitian Creole-language Big Book challenges us to reach out to this important community in the Greater Montreal area. Although over 56 percent of the population of the Montreal region is bilingual and 24 percent trilingual, the issue of discrimination on the basis of race, color, language, or ethnic origin is real, even in 2024.

When I ride on public transit in Montreal, I'm really in a diverse world, unlike sitting comfortably in my home group's Monday meeting. The contrast is striking. Why do our meetings not reflect the same diversity, and how can our small microcosm of A.A.s in the Greater Montreal area become more inviting to those underrepresented communities today and moving forward? The challenge is daunting.

In my 31 years in A.A., the A.A. message hasn't changed. I've changed. The world has changed too. The city I've lived in for nearly 40 years has also changed a lot. I'm still the same man, but my inner self has been transformed, thanks to the Twelve Steps program. My best friend is English-speaking, and my sponsor is American. I have a close friendship

and collaboration with a Latin American member, despite the fact that I speak virtually no Spanish. I have Greek, Italian, and other friends.

All our area meetings and assemblies offer simultaneous French/English translation provided by our volunteer members. All my written communications as a delegate are in three languages since, historically, our area has been English, French, and Spanish.

In 2024, we celebrate 80 years of A.A. in the Greater Montreal area. It was an Anglophone who introduced A.A. to us. In 2024, we also celebrate 50 years of AA's Spanish-speaking presence in Montreal and 75 years of history of the first French-speaking group in Montreal. Diversity has always been in our DNA. How can we make it flourish in 2024?

Right now, our membership seems to be stagnating. Please, let's stop justifying ourselves by blaming the pandemic. We could point to many reasons and certainly many of our shortcomings. Taking action is about turning to a higher power, cleaning house, and then turning to others and knowing why you're doing it. Individually, that's fine. But collectively, are we ready today to undertake this exercise? What do we want to pass on to others? Are we ready to apply it to ourselves? Collectively?

The challenges are great. I'm personally convinced that the answer lies in our shared experience, above all in sponsorship — good sponsorship, as Bill W. put it. Solidarity, camaraderie, support, and above all, a reassuring, ongoing presence. It doesn't cost much, but it takes a lot of time. In its early days, A.A. took a vow of corporate poverty. Individually, A.A. means a little money but a lot of shared time and love.

In closing, let's keep this in mind:

"But the ex-problem drinker who has found this solution, who is properly armed with the facts about himself, can generally win the entire confidence of another alcoholic in a few hours. Until such an understanding is reached, little or nothing can be accomplished." (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, page 18)

### **Overcoming the Barriers to Participation**

Debbie L., Area 90, Northwest Québec

Ensuring the Right of Participation in Our Conference Structure and overcoming the barriers In Concept III. It states: "As a traditional means of creating and maintaining a clearly defined working relation between the groups, the Conference, the A.A. General Service Board and its several service corporations, staffs, committees, and executives, and of thus insuring their effective leadership, it is here suggested that we endow each of these elements of world service with a traditional 'Right of Decision.' "

But to have that "Right of Decision" we need to follow what is written in Concept IV: "Conference structure emphasizes the importance of maintaining the traditional "Right of Participation" at all responsible levels. This principle ensures that each classification or group of our world servants is granted voting representation in reasonable proportion to the

**Commented [CE1]:** EDITOR: Consider eliminating the quotation marks at "Conference structure..."? Not sure of what is meant here, but the quoted material is not in Concept IV.

responsibility they discharge. However, several barriers can hinder this right of participation, particularly at the Group, District, or Area level due to various reasons or obstacles. Identifying these obstacles or barriers and implementing solutions is crucial for fostering an inclusive and effective atmosphere throughout the Conference structure.

Here are just a few examples that may hinder or stop us from participating in the service structure:

**Fear:** Fear of judgment, failure, or the unknown can prevent individuals from participating fully in the service structure, which can lead to underrepresentation and the loss of valuable contributions from diverse perspectives.

**Lack of Attraction:** If the Group, District, or Area is not seen as appealing or relevant, members may not feel motivated to participate. This can result in a lack of engagement and interest to serve from potential trusted servants.

**Bleeding Deacons sharing misinformation or rumors:** Misinformation or negative beliefs about the roles and responsibilities within the service structure can discourage participation. It can create misunderstandings, reduce trust in our trusted servants or the roles they occupy, and create disunity within the service structure.

**Time Constraints:** The demands of personal and professional lives can limit the time individuals have to engage in service activities. This can lead to lower attendance in group conscience and reduced involvement in decision-making processes, as Concept III states.

**Gender Bias:** Gender biases and stereotypes can create an environment where certain individuals feel excluded or undervalued. It can hinder equal participation and lead to a lack of diversity in perspectives.

**Language Barriers:** Differences in language and communication styles can make it difficult for individuals to participate fully, which often results in miscommunication and exclusion of non-native speakers.

**Distance:** Physical distance from the Group, District, or Area location can be a significant barrier to participation. This can limit the ability of individuals to attend service meetings and contribute to discussions.

**Accessibility Issues:** Lack of accessibility, whether physical or technological, can prevent individuals from participating. It can exclude individuals with disabilities or those without access to necessary technology.

**Low Self-Confidence:** Individuals with low self-confidence may feel unqualified or hesitant to participate. This can prevent valuable contributions and hinder personal growth.

Now that we have identified the obstacles that prevent us from serving in the structure, let's look at overcoming these barriers to participation and having a right of decision. Let's work on the solution. What can we do as trusted servants to change things?

**Leadership:** Cultivate strong, inclusive leadership that actively encourages participation from all members. Effective leaders can inspire confidence, model inclusive behavior, and create a welcoming environment for participation.

**Inclusivity:** Implement policies and practices that promote inclusivity and diverse representation. Creating an inclusive, safe environment ensures that all members feel valued and respected, leading to increased participation.

**Good Sponsorship:** Provide workshops on sponsorship to support members in their roles within the service structure. Good sponsorship can build confidence, provide guidance, and encourage members to take on leadership roles.

**Attraction:** Enhance the appeal of participation by highlighting the benefits, such as personal growth, meeting new friends, and the impact of service to A.A. as a whole. Increasing the attractiveness of participation can motivate members to engage more fully in the service structure.

**Accessibility:** Ensure that all service activities are accessible, including providing translation services, remote participation options, and accommodating physical disabilities. Making activities accessible removes barriers and allows for broader participation.

**Building Confidence:** Offer our help to the new trusted servant not only in words but in action to build their confidence and skills in public speaking, leadership, and other areas relevant to service participation. Building confidence can empower members to contribute more effectively and feel more comfortable participating.

So, in conclusion

Maintaining the “right of participation” and “right of decision” within our service structure is essential for ensuring that all voices are heard and valued. By addressing barriers such as fear, lack of attraction, time constraints, gender bias, language differences, distance, accessibility, and low self-confidence, we can create a more inclusive and effective environment.

Implementing solutions like strong leadership, inclusivity, good sponsorship, attractiveness, accessibility, and confidence-building will help overcome these obstacles and foster a culture of active participation. Through these efforts, we can ensure that our Conference structure remains dynamic, representative, and impactful and, most of all, continues to share a message of Strength, Hope, and Experience.

# WORKSHOP REPORTS

## The General Service Structure and How We All Work Together

**Moderator:** Marietta M., Area 81, New Brunswick/PEI, Delegate

**Reporter:** Marie-Noelle L.

Question 1: How to use technology to better communicate inside the service structure?

Tech can be useful and provide accessibility. It is important that tech helps us include and not exclude members. Some may have financial bans to access tech, or not be tech savvy. Tech can help connections grow and enhance service: districts or areas can provide support and create opportunities to reach out a hand, connect, and learn (tech workshop or training). Young people can become “tech sponsors” and be attracted to service. Tech can create confusion and frustration for the non-tech savvy. It is important to have the humility to ask for help as tech is growing fast, for example, with all. We adapt. The printed version of our material will remain necessary, for example, in the form of pocket meetings that are the Grapevine, LaVigne, and LaViña (i.e., correctional).

Question 2: How to motivate people to join in service meetings?

Attraction rather than promotion is the key: It is important to have fun and be positive when talking about service. An inventory is sometimes necessary: let's question ourselves. Some solutions put on “Service Day” workshops, offering sharing of their experiences.

## Love and Tolerance

**Moderator:** Dwayne M., Area 82, Nova Scotia/ NFLD/ LAB, Delegate

*To Follow*

## Attracting Young People in A.A.

**Moderator:** Alan W., Area 84, NE Ontario, Delegate

**Reporter:** James P., Area 84, NE Ontario, Alt. Delegate

How are our groups getting the message out to young people? Putting meetings on in hospitals, young offender facilities, treatment centers, and detox centers. By word of mouth from young members already in A.A. Try to reach out through Public Information to schools.

With love and tolerance with young people as they arrive through the doors. Is our home group doing enough to attract young people to A.A. by involving ourselves in the

community. Are we reaching out to other groups to see how they are attracting young people? Ask our young members what attracted them and use that to help attract other young people.

What are we doing to help keep young people here once they enter the rooms?  
Love and tolerance and making them feel welcome and wanted, getting young people involved in service.  
Encourage young people to help each other through fellowship, with fun activities while getting sober.

Through identification with other young people by sharing their experiences with each other.  
Long-timers have an open mind towards young people, and they lead by example. Stress spiritual principles rather than religious. Through good sponsorship, we can show them sobriety can be fun.

Let them take part in setting up our home groups and greeting people as they arrive to feel part of it. Take young members seriously when they come through the doors and make them feel welcome. Encourage them to reach out to other young struggling alcoholics they meet on their journey. Learn to adjust with the times in terms of technology and learning from each other, always leading by example and showing love and tolerance for all.

### **Grapevine, Carrying the Message in the Digital Age**

**Moderator:** Chris C., A.A. Grapevine Publisher

General discussions about the following digital outlets:

[aagrapevine.org](http://aagrapevine.org)

The main website with all things Grapevine: Store, Magazine, Archives, Daily Quote, Podcast. Discussion of GV Rep Resources available on site. Asked members to encourage their groups to have a Grapevine Rep.

AA Grapevine Apps

Demonstration of how to subscribe and features of apps. I requested that members talk about apps with their groups and at events.

AA Grapevine Podcast

Demonstrated how easy it is to listen to podcast available on all podcast platforms and on [aagrapevine.org/podcast](http://aagrapevine.org/podcast). Demonstrated how to listen on the smartphone by saying, "Hey Siri, play the AA Grapevine Podcast."

AA Grapevine YouTube Channel

Discussed recent expansion of playlists, including ASL, Young People's, Spanish

Language, and upcoming Sober Women in A.A. Showed how the podcast is also available. Discussed how to call in a 7-minute share to contribute to the channel.

#### AA Grapevine on Instagram

Showed how to follow on Instagram. Talked about the recent growth of followers. Encouraged members to let their groups know that we'll have updates of 2025 International Convention through Instagram.

#### Prison Tablets

Let members know about what we are doing in the U.S. by sharing Grapevine and La Viña content on prison tablets. One member objected to this because tablets aren't available in Canada. We said they might be in the future.

#### Audiobooks

Discussed our current list and the plans to increase the number of audiobooks as popularity increases.

#### Daily Quote

Showed how to get the Daily Quote email. It also showed how it can be accessed through the app and even as an alert on the phone or smartwatch.

#### Newsletters

Showed how to subscribe and get Grapevine Newsletters emailed.

Discussion of members' fears of technology. We encouraged members to keep print if that's most comfortable but to try some of the free digital services a bit at a time.

### **Online Meetings and Contributions to the Seventh Tradition**

**Moderator:** Céline L., Area 88, SE Quebec, Delegate

**Reporter:** Jean-Yves M., Area 88, SE Quebec, Alt. Delegate

Some sixty people attended the workshop. Most were from the Quebec areas (87-88-89-90). Three purely English-speaking participants used the services of interpreters.

Preamble by Céline: She explained that she chose this topic because the 2024 Policy/Admissions Conference Committee, of which she was a member, was reviewing the report of the General Services ad hoc committee, created after the pandemic (2021), currently exploring future possibilities for online group participation in the A.A. structure. An annual update of this ad hoc committee's report has been provided to delegates at each Conference since 2022.

This follows a 2023 survey of online groups by delegates from the Canada/U.S. Areas, asking whether online groups wished to be associated with the structure and whether they received support from their respective Areas. Overall, online groups want to



preserve their autonomy while remaining part of the structure to maintain the unity of the Fellowship. The groups surveyed are not ready to join a virtual Area.

Statistically, in 2021, there were 500 virtual groups for 300 GSRs. Today, in 2024, there are 1,236 active groups for 787 GSRs. There are also five virtual Districts in the A.A. Canada/U.S. structure in 2024.

Céline suggested 3 questions to the group:

1. Regardless of the type of online group (registered with GSO or not), why should they participate in the 7th Tradition?
2. Is participating in the 7th Tradition easy in this context, and what are the difficulties encountered?
3. As an online group, do you feel supported by your Area?

Several online group participants shared their experiences in presenting the 7th Tradition to members present at group meetings, pointing out that it was easy to contribute.

Several online groups in Area 87, including yours, which holds four meetings a day, contribute enormously to the 7th Tradition. During the pandemic, \$24,000 was sent to Area 87. All these groups were associated with the structure of the Fellowship.

GSR Zoom group: The group is registered with the GSO, and the amounts received for the 7th Tradition are sent via Interact. After our small expenses, such as the Zoom license and others, 40% of the contributions are sent to the Area, and 60% go directly to the GSO.

In 2022, there were 70 virtual groups, and by December 2023, only 34 remained, 18 in French and 16 in English. There are 110 virtual meetings per week. Virtual meetings are declining but still very much present.

GSR for a virtual group is part of a group studying the Big Book. Contributions pay for the Zoom license and travel expenses for District meetings. An account has been opened with two signatories, and transfers are sent directly to this account for maximum transparency.

District has four virtual groups, and one of them, the morning group, is the biggest contributor to the district. The GSRs participate in the district meeting. These groups are very important because some members cannot attend face-to-face meetings.

Online groups should be fine participating in the 7th Tradition. I participate regularly via Interact despite my age.

Seventeen virtual groups in his District contribute to the 7th Tradition, which entitles them to benefit from the services offered.

We talk a lot about the importance of the 7th Tradition in the online group meetings, and the money is sent directly to the Area, thus preserving the anonymity of the donors.

There is only one online group in his District, and contributing to the 7th Tradition has never been an issue. Members make contributions via Interact without any problems.

Contributing to the 7th Tradition is very important, not only to cover the minimal costs of an online group but, above all, to support the GSO's multiple expenses to help the alcoholic who still suffers.

Yes, to the 7th Tradition for online groups. Groups existed before the pandemic, and with its advent, there was an explosion of virtual groups.

An Online Intergroup Alcoholic Anonymous (OIAA) Zoom convention will be held October 23-25, and you can register online via aa.org. Seventeen countries on four continents will be represented. It's a great way to find out what's going on internationally with online groups.

Céline pointed out that the ad hoc committee is interested in what's happening at this Intergroup. She will be attending the convention.

The members here are convinced of the need to participate in the 7th Tradition. However, they point out that many participants in virtual meetings do not because they associate the structure's operating costs with the groups present. We need to educate members about indirect expenses, including those of the GSO and those that enable us to reach out to newcomers.

Many groups existed during the pandemic, but only one remains in her District.

Group representative: Online contributions may seem complicated for some people, but many do online transfers and find it relatively easy. Some groups use SQUARE, a small program like in restaurants, which can be downloaded directly onto smartphones. On the other hand, the drawback is transfers or payments in different currencies, such as the euro.

At the start of the Zoom meetings, the web people helped us with the online contributions, which were quickly implemented. A tutorial could be made available for members who don't know how. Another idea is to educate members about the structure of A.A. to develop the desire to get more involved, whether virtually or in person.

A member started a Zoom group four years ago and is now the DCM. So, the taste for service is conveyed in his online group. The 7th tradition was not seen as necessary at first, and we had to educate our members in this aspect and the structure of the Fellowship. We now have a secretary, treasurer, GSR, etc. All participate

enthusiastically in the online group's activities.

Treasurer shared that the online groups feel fully supported by Area 87 because they handle all emails concerning them, and sometimes cheques made to their group are forwarded to them.

Our Area has assigned a District to the Zoom group. All GSRs have a service email and a Zoom group so everyone can communicate with the Area.

Zoom meetings are shown in Meeting Guide areas covering 75 kilometers. We're wondering if they should extend to unlimited distances.

Zoom groups are registered with the GSO, and the Area quickly meets our needs.

Statistics for online groups and their contributions: Online groups represent 2% of active groups, and online group contributions represent 1.8% of active group contributions. 44% of virtual groups contribute to the 7th Tradition. Of course, we must consider specific difficulties in counting the data, notably because our contributions are generally made via the Areas and not directly by the groups in Quebec.

Conclusion: Online groups have their purpose, and members need to be educated about the importance of the 7th Tradition, whether online or in person. Guidelines need to be developed for online groups regarding their participation in the 7th Tradition, and tutorials must be designed to help members contribute. It is important to remember all the services GSO offers to help new members (flyers, books, etc.).

### **General Service Conference Process**

**Moderator:** Dan D., Area 86, W. Ontario, Delegate

**Reporter:** Cal B., Area 86, W. Ontario, DCM

General Service Conference Process:

Triage items of new business, review old business and make recommendations.

Re: CPC Committee – review motions at committee with values to do what is best for A.A.

Pass on Advisory Actions, Conference, and send it back to the Trustees Committee. Some motions take no action.

Questions or need for more information go back to the Trustee Committee.

Examples given: Unhoused alcoholic pamphlet, process.

Area 82

Q: Are there items determined to be an outside issue?

A: Primary Purpose, Traditions determine that A.A. business is at hand.

Area 87

Q: Motion selected move forward vs. motion on the floor: How does the conference decide what items to do first or at all due to timelines?

A: The Trustees Committee decides the order of items, budget, and financials considered as a priority.

GSO's Bob W., GM, iterated process and budget managers rationale provided, and advisory action determined. Every forecast is looked at with the budget. Each Committee has a process of prioritizing – financial resources, human resources, i.e., expenses of committee members, and the perceived priority of the Conference.

The Trustee committee does what they can do to bring to fruition items provided to them. Much venting done, respect and thoughtfulness of the items presented.

Q: 2027 Conference date?

A: To be determined, proposal pending.

Q: Are there items/motions that come back to the Conference over and over? (After being turned down)

A: No, especially without new information. Tradition 11 came to the conference many times till the language changed to update to today, for example, TV to social media.

Q: Are pamphlets specific to LGBTQ+, for example, for A.A. or an outside issue? Where does the Primary Purpose end?

A: Much to discern, need change, and are dependent on people, principles, and inclusivity. Alcoholics are first – all equal.

Q: What is an outside issue?

A: Rather than thinking of it as political, etc., look at it through the lens of new ways to attract and reach the hand-over-affected group society. Focus on the Responsibility Pledge.

**Commented [CE2]:** EDITOR: Consider rewording? Will reader know what this means?

Q: How can we do a 12th to the individuals?

A: Engage with A.A. principles vs. politics/outside issues. Thoughtful, spiritual ideas – unity, love, sponsorship conference provides guidance continually. Compassion – Unity.

## **Safety and Security in A.A. Groups**

**Moderator:** Tammy S., Area 86, W. Ontario, Alt. Delegate

**Reporter:** Gaynor S., Area 86, W. Ontario, District Secretary

Q: How to deal with aggressive/intolerant/predatory/unsolicited behavior in the meeting?

Shared Experience:

Members need to be responsible to tell the newcomer that not everyone in A.A. has good intentions.

Have two people as part of the group conscience discuss with the individual after the meeting.

Bring issues to business meetings (derogatory slurs/language).

It is the responsibility of all group members to ensure the safety of members in their group.

Nominate a member of the group to address the issue.

Add to the opening remarks a section on security. Ask those members who are group contacts to stand up if they encounter a situation, so people know who to go to.

The person affected discusses with a trusted member of A.A.

Traditions do not surpass the law. Encourage members to go to the proper authorities if necessary.

Group conscience to remove the offender from attending that group.

Before calling authorities on someone, it should be based on facts, not rumors. Keep in mind that we have a civic duty to report criminal activity and have proper authorities to handle such situations.

Need to encourage sponsees to share concerns with inappropriate behavior.

Make the accused aware of the alternate meetings he can attend (for example, men's only meetings, online meetings).

Have consideration that mental health issues can play a role in behavior (understanding) Group inventory.

Safety Cards available (yellow cards) to adopt and read in your home group.

Q2: How to deal with bullying in business meetings?

Shared Experience:

Strong GSR. Educate GSRs about their role in facilitating the meeting, and their responsibility and right to handle inappropriate behavior appropriately.

Shut it down immediately. Review Traditions and group inventory.

### **Balancing Our Primary Purpose with Inclusivity**

**Moderator:** Amy L., Area 83, E. Ontario, Delegate

**Reporter:** Natalie N., Area 83, E. Ontario, DCM

Discussion included making efforts to create a feeling of inclusivity regardless of language skills, cultural discrimination, and educational background.

Q: What can we do to help?

Experiencing surge in homelessness, How do I maintain my own boundaries?  
How do I balance carrying the message and not the person?

Attendees shared experiences of having a learning disability but yet were welcomed and cared for unconditionally. Helping newcomers with the Step work requires sponsors to meet the new member where they are. Asking them what we can do to help them with the program. We must adapt to the individual as there is no cookie-cutter approach. Some learn differently (neurodiverse) and appreciate that literacy can include technology literacy; folks come to us with different skill levels.

One member shared that their district invited religious, cultural, and gender-diverse A.A. members to share their perspectives of what it was like when they first came to A.A. and how they did not feel welcome. This was a way to bring awareness to some of the things we are doing in our meetings that are off-putting to some (such as prayer, reading old Preamble hurtful to LGBTQ+ community). Creating an environment of trust. A smile goes a long way. Kindness is key! Don't forget to allow those with disabilities to participate, giving them a commitment to the group, no matter how long it takes them to do it...Patience is a beautiful thing!

In summary: A.A. is about Love, leaving our fears of change at the door. Important that we meet everyone where they are. Keep an open mind, we have no idea where people are coming from. Rather than seeing someone as a special interest, let's try to take a special interest in that someone.

## PAST TRUSTEES' SHARING

**Jan L., Eastern Canada Regional Trustee, 2018-2022**

Hi, everybody. My name is Jan L. I'm an alcoholic, first and foremost.

My home group is the Forest Lakeside group. We meet every Monday night. It's a hybrid meeting, and I'm the techie for that. And that is really funny because I'm not a technical person. If you go to the ASR near Lambton website, you can join us at 8 o'clock Monday nights, if you wish.

I'm a past delegate, area 86, panel 54, Western Ontario. That means that I served in the Fellowship at the General Service Conference from 2004 to 2005. I was 20 years old. I just can't believe it.

And then I had the privilege of serving as Eastern Canada Regional Trustee from 2018 to 2022. I rotated out in April of 2022. But, yes, I did have the privilege of serving with Scott. And I also have the privilege of being on the trustees' nominating committee. We went through the process of hiring the new General Manager. I was one of the people responsible for bringing on Bob.

So, you're welcome. I think we made an excellent choice, even though he is a Red Sox fan. There have to be some. Anyway, I'm not.

I don't want to talk too long because my favorite part of the forum is hearing from the first-timers. And I always get tears in my eyes because I remember my first forum. It was in Kingston, and I don't even remember the year.

I remember listening to the Class A trustees, the trustees, and the staff, and all I did was cry. Because I thought, wow, I just love this. But I really want to hear from the first-time attendees. So please, if you're a first-time attendee, get up to the mic and share your experience and how you feel at this forum.

And please, go back and share with your groups and your districts and your areas the time you had at this forum and tell them about the next Eastern Canada Regional Forum in 2 years and bring some people with you. Share your enthusiasm. That's how we can spark excitement in general service.

When I first came through the doors of A.A., I sure wasn't excited to be here. But I tell you, I don't know when this happened, but when I first came through the doors this one gentleman said that it'll get better than Beyond Your Wildest Dreams. And I thought he was kind of a goof, to put it mildly. But it has. It has gotten better than beyond my oldest dreams. I was talking to Sandy earlier, and I have been so emotional this weekend just

seeing people and making friends this weekend and seeing and renewing acquaintances and listening to Marita. I listen to the trustee-at-large and listen to what the people in other countries have to go through to get to meetings.

**Commented [CE3]:** The name Marita is mentioned several times throughout report, especially referring to her presentation. I did not see any presentation from Marita. Is that all right?

We are so fortunate that we have meetings that are just so accessible to us. The guy with the battery was hooking up his batteries so he could send his report in. And then, I have people in the districts, and I hear them say, is this hour meeting going to be over? Like, no. It's a service meeting. There's no limit. But, when I first got into service work, there were two gentlemen in my home group who said, "Jan, do you think you could be secretary for our district because the secretary has to go back to school?" And that was my profession. I was a secretary. I was an executive assistant. I didn't know what a district was, and I didn't have a clue about DCMs. I said, "Sure," and I went to our district meeting.

I went to the district meeting and there we had little booklets with the A.A. groups listed in the front and the AI-Anon groups listed in the back. Our literature person had taken a magic marker and blacked out all the AI-Anon meetings. And there was a big uproar, shouting and carrying on.

And the guy finally said, well, if you don't like it, you can take this job, and he threw his books on the table, said a few choice words, and he left. And I thought, I think I'm going to like this. And that was the start of my journey. And I became secretary, and you know the rest.

Then I let my name stand for delegate and I thought, what have I gotten myself into?

I got to New York, and Murray M. from Thunder Bay was the trustee-at-large Canada at that time. And I was so green. I'm from my home group in Forest, a town of 2,000 people. I live on Lake Huron and am in a little community of 32. So here I am in New York City, and it's like, woah. I'm like a fish out of water. And Murray said, do you want to go for coffee? And I thought the trustee-at-large was asking me to go to coffee. Like, really?

I got in my room and forgot what floor I was on, fifty-something or 32nd floor. I looked out and there was the moon over Manhattan, and I thought, woah, I've made it. And actually, it was just the light on the building next door. But, you know, I was so emotional that whole week. I didn't get out of the building until Wednesday, but we were at the General Service Conference. We were doing the business of A.A., and even to this day, I still get the goose bumps. I get really emotional about that because here I was. I was just this garden-variety drunk.

I'm emotional like Bob. I can cry at the drop of the hat. But I thought, why me? I was just this drunk. But here I was, in New York City, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, doing the business for A.A. My area trusted me to do that. And you can do that too. If you have the time and you're willing to do it, put up your hand. And if your Higher Power sees you're to be there, you're to be there. You know what? You can do it.



So that was 2004-2005. And mind you, that it is work. It is a lot of work. Don't get me wrong. The Conference started on a Sunday, and I didn't get outside until Wednesday. Someone said, you lucky dog, you get to go to New York. I said I'm not going there to go to theaters. I'm not going there to go to Broadway. I didn't see New York at all. I got outside with the smokers, and I wasn't smoking at the time, but I just went outside on the Wednesday so that I could get a breath of fresh air in New York. And I do have a picture.

At the time of the Conference, Scott was the trustee-at-large. Do you remember that? You were the trustee-at-large. So we not only served as trustees together, you were trustee-at-large when I was delegate. I was a panel 61 down the road. I met you then because you were there, and Joe was a non-trustee director. So that's a different story. Okay. Never mind. I don't have time for that one. I have a picture of Scott. We were at the Stardust diner eating ice cream, so we did have time for some social stuff.

I want to skip to when I was trustee. That was in 2005. That was a lot of work because they did report back to Area 86, Western Ontario, which is a huge area. You drive all over, and I loved it. I met so many people. I went from Windsor up to Sunridge, over to Milton, down to Niagara Falls. It was huge. I had to buy a new car just to get all over the place, but it was fabulous. I had a great time. Lots of work, and I was working still, but I made the time, and it has just enhanced my sobriety.

Fast forward to 2018, I let my name stand to be nominated for Eastern Canada Regional Trustee. Never in a million years thinking that I would be elected. My name went to the Conference, and my name got pulled from the hat. Elaine McDowell, our Class A trustee, pulled my name from the hat, and Dale called me at home. I was sitting there minding my own business, but I knew the election was going on, and he said congratulations. And I thought, *uh-oh. I'm in trouble now.*

My first Conference was live, but then the next two were online, and then the fourth one was live. So, it was an interesting time. We had to cancel the international convention. That was heartbreaking, very heartbreaking. I remember being on the phone. We were dabbling on Zoom in some of our committees, so we were just getting used to that. Thank goodness. We were discussing the International Convention and getting reports from epidemiologists. That was my new word of the day. It was like I'd never heard of these people. It was a terrible time. It was so heartbreaking. But we pulled together, and we saw the Fellowship pull together. And it was just heartwarming to see the Fellowship pull together. We had a great time.

I had the most wonderful experience on the Board through those 4 years with trustees rotating on and rotating off, like Sister Judith said. You made friendships, and then they'd leave, but then new people would come on. The years on the board were so rewarding. But as Joyce said, if I can do it, you can do it. So if you have the time, and you're willing to put in the work, please let your name stand. Put up your hand. And I look forward to hearing from the first-time attendees here today because it's you that we rely on. You're

going to carry forward this Fellowship. And take home the enthusiasm that you find here today.

This program is relying on you, and I thank you for your attention. Thank you.

## CLOSING REMARKS

### Joyce S., Eastern Canada Regional Trustee

Thank you, Bob. I'm Joyce. I'm a Class B alcoholic, Eastern Canada Regional Trustee, and I am currently serving as your Grapevine Chair.

This has been a great weekend. We're all ready to go home, but I kind of don't want it to end, you know? I live alone. I've got all these people around me. We'll see how long that lasts, right? It was such a great weekend. I always get emotional when I'm at these things towards the end of the weekend. Basically because I'm tired, too, so I'm vulnerable.

My first regional forum was in 2000, in Kingston, where Jan was. I don't remember seeing her there. She must have been quiet then. (Laughter) It's been quite a journey since then. I never thought, in 2000, when I was a late bloomer GSR, that I would ever, ever be in the position that I'm in. It still blows my mind when I said, there's no way you're going to catch me up there. How did this happen? Well, Marita told us how it happens, right?

Some of you have traveled a long way to get here and come here, and we appreciate that. The lengths that our Fellowship goes to is amazing for what you do to carry the message and learn how to carry the message even more so. That's always refreshing and it touches my heart, the lengths that members go to. And for those of you who asked me questions over the weekend, and I'm supposed to be looking for answers for you, please send me an email at [ECRT.Joyce@bell.net](mailto:ECRT.Joyce@bell.net). I'm trying to run through all the questions and who asked me over the weekend — that's not going to happen. I'm going to blame it on an age thing, but I don't know whether I'll get away with that, either.

Quite often when I'm at the board weekends, and I hear the other regional trustees go through some really tough challenges. I say it quite often, I think, and they're probably getting ticked off that I say it, but I don't care, you know, I just say I love my region. They're so good, and they're so kind. Yes, James, I love you too. The Eastern Canada region is such a pleasure. I feel so comfortable talking to our delegates, the alternate delegates, and the members, and I don't have the fear that they're going to attack me for something that I don't and I'm not even responsible for. I just love it, and I did say at the last board weekend we were talking about it. I just said, regionals, you have to get your fellowship in order, you know. Because some of them are getting, you know, bashed about all certain things, all kinds of things. I don't know what the answer is. I think we're probably the example, and I just love you for it. I really appreciate it.

For the newbies today, keep coming back. On that note, I'm going to give you the tally for the weekend. Our final attendee count was 418, with 272 first-timers and 40% of attendees were Francophone, so thank you so much for being here.

As mentioned earlier, please go back to your groups, your districts, and your areas and pump this up. I can't think of anybody who's here this weekend, and if you are having difficulties, or you didn't enjoy something, or you're not happy with something that you saw, please let us know. Because we would like you to go back to your respective places and pump it up and get your service sponsees or get your sponsees involved. That's where it all starts. It all starts with being a sponsor. And if you are a sponsee, talk to your sponsor to see if they want to get active. You be the example.

I don't like pushing being active in service, so keep in mind that not all members feel comfortable at this level of service, and they do service in their own way at the home group or whatever they do. And that's okay too. We need that type of service as well.

Being active in service has really enhanced my sobriety, and it's helped me grow. I remember sitting at the back of the room in 2000 in the early 80s, when I came as a first-time GSR to an assembly and I said, "There's no way...there's no way you're going to catch me up there. There's no way." Like Marita said, you just let your hand, you raise your hand and let my Higher Power, and I really didn't believe in a Higher Power in those days, I don't think, but he was there somehow, somewhere. And that's what you do, and He'll decide for me what's good for me and what's not good for me.

I was a nominee three times for trustee, Eastern Canada regional trustee, or Trustee-at-Large. The first two, I was not elected or selected. But that's okay, too, because God knew what was in store for me between the times when I was. And I'm going to say selected because my area 83 nominated me as an Eastern Canada Regional Trustee, but my Higher Power pulled my name out of the hat. Dale, I love you. Sorry, he said, "It's you." He said, "It's me, not you, and didn't give up."

And that's my message, which I want to relay as well. Don't give up, because if it's meant to be, it is meant to be. Go back to your areas or wherever you're going back to today and have safe travels. We have to keep this going. You're all so energetic and enthusiastic. I look forward to seeing you again somewhere down the road. Remember, you can always invite me to your area. I love going to your areas.

Mark your calendars. Now get your AA Grapevine pocket planners out. I still use one, and I will never not use one. Mark it on your calendar; well, you don't have 2026 yet. But plan to attend the 2026 Eastern Canada Regional Forum from August 21st to the 23rd, 2026. At the Hôtel Montagne in Boucherville, Quebec. Please plan on doing that.

Thank you so much, Eastern Canada. I love you.

**Bob W., General Manager, GSO**

Hi y'all, my name is Bob, and I am an alcoholic.

**Commented [CE4]:** EDITOR: Should "didn't" be "don't"

**Commented [CE5]:** Or is there a word missing? Should this be reworded?

"It's me, not you. And he didn't give up."

This sums it up. These are rocket ship socks...I am rocketed into the fourth dimension. That's what this weekend has done for me. And Joyce still didn't get any jewelry. Do we have any Tiffany's around here at all or anything? No. It's good to have fun, like I've said.

What a wonderful weekend. Thank you so much, Joyce, for your service to this region and this weekend. Scott, to serve with you again is just always such a thrill. And to all of you, to our employees that are here from all departments, Eileen and Rainer and Stephanie and Clement and Annie and Attallah and Rebecca. Thank you to all of you for all that you've brought here.

Oftentimes we hear as trusted servants, I like to refer to all of us as "Board Servants." We all serve around the General Service Board, whether you're a corporate board non-trustee director, an employee, and those sorts of things. Sometimes we hear the phrase, thank you for your service. Thank you for your service (addressing attendees) in that we do this together. This is a WE program, and it's on the ground where the rubber hits the road really with the member and the group, and you do that. So, thank you for all you do and to our interpreters, thank you so much for all that you've done. I know Marita and Scott would concur. We've had people whispering in our ears for a long time, and we would not be able to get the message if we didn't have that. So, your skill and your service to A.A. is so needed and helpful.

I mentioned when we opened that this would be an opportunity for all of you to meet our Boards and our office folks. Based upon all of the first times sharing, and we talked about connection and reaching out and having conversations with folks. I have heard that happen here. This has been such a successful forum, in that sense for sure, and I've appreciated getting to know and getting connected to all of you. It fills my heart. It renews my spirit. These weekends really are a supercharge for sobriety. These kinds of things, those of us that get involved in service, it keeps us in the middle of A.A. Like that pea on the middle of the plate, it's hard to fall off when you're surrounded by a bunch of potatoes, so you're my potatoes. I'm the pea and I'm in the middle. Thank you for that.

A lot of the questions in the sharing, and I've heard so much about, "How do you get to be a trustee-at-large?" I never thought I could get up to the microphone. And watching people walk through the fear and all of that. We've all done that and that goes back to those sentiments that you've heard many of us up here say, that we're just people. We put our pants on one leg at a time, and we're just all alcoholics and human beings.

Twenty-five to 30 years ago, whatever it was in that range of time, I was going to retire from my service as I was giving my rotation talk as a DCM. And I was sitting in an assembly with my wife and our newborn son who was in a baby carrier. And somebody said they were doing elections and nominations, and they said alternate delegate and area chair, I nominate Bob W...and I was like, "What?" And they were like, "Do you accept?" And I raised my hand. I said, "Okay." My wife looked at me and said, "You do?" Never made that mistake again. And I've been here ever since.

I say that with so much emotion now. I want to share this with you because you're my people. On Friday night, my son Facetimed me, that little boy. He Facetimed me with his girlfriend, and they got engaged. I just, and it's because of you, it's because of Alcoholics Anonymous, it's because of being a pea surrounded by potatoes that I could keep showing up as a dad and a husband and, and doing what we do and, and you keep helping me keep my 12 Steps first and raising my family. And they wanted to tell me they couldn't wait. They couldn't wait to tell everyone else, and it was here, and it was totally fine. So that little boy who was not even three months old, and here we are. That just reminds me to bring thanks to all of our families. We're here and there's people back home that are cutting the lawn and grocery shopping and cleaning and that sort of thing. We're here taking care of our recovery and serving and, doing what we do. So, our families and friends back home who are carrying the bag are serving Alcoholics Anonymous as much as we are.

Thank you so much for all of your enthusiasm that you brought here this week. Enthusiasm is the number one ingredient in attraction, and you've seen it with all the presentations, and you want what people have when you're hearing these presentations, and that's because of the enthusiasm that they bring to it. We're not a glum lot. We didn't get sober to just go crawl under a rock. Keep that going and keep your hand in the air.

One of the things I hope that maybe got snuffed out if it existed in any one of you, and it's inherent within our alcoholic personality sometimes, is that little bit of defiance sometimes and maybe a little bit of lack of trust. I have this quote on my wall from Herbert Spencer from the Spiritual Experience Appendix II in the Big Book:

*"There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance — that principle is contempt prior to investigation."*

You're here to investigate, and you've heard truth that's here. And I hope that hearts have changed with certain conceptions that you might have had before. And that you find facts or at least know where to get them. And before forming opinions that, as we move forward, that we remember these types of things, and there's people that you can ask.

For all of us as we carry forth, I think it's important that we remember kindness and that we remember our 12 Steps first when we're serving in Alcoholics Anonymous. The Traditions and the Concepts are very important, but kindness, above all, is always best, and that's what's attractive. Many of us were very scared in different environments when we heard folks come at it in different ways, and that is not attractive and it's important for me to remember to try to be an example to serve in that way. To serve with kindness.

I close with this in some of the various talks from the podium that I give and it's non-A.A. approved literature. It's actually lyrics from a song that I love. This is from Tim McGraw from a song called "Humble and Kind."

*Don't take for granted the love this life gives you. When you get where you're going don't forget to turn back around and help the next one in line. Always stay humble and kind.*

Thank you all so much for a wonderful weekend.

**Scott H., General Service Board Chair**

Scott H., alcoholic. Class B Trustee and the Chair of your General Service Board.

I'll begin with a reminder that Eileen asked me to make, which is to please fill out your evaluation questionnaire. It's what allows us to shape these events to do more of what you find most interesting.

I want to begin by thanking the staff that are here, Eileen, Attallah, Rebekah, Rainer, Annie, Stephanie, Clément and our interpreters André and Alexander. This is where a lot of the work gets done so that the likes of us can just show up and look good.

I want to thank all of the Board servants who were here this weekend and for showing yourselves to our Fellowship and showing our Fellowship that there are people that you can trust who are serving you. So, thank you for that.

I do want to answer one question that was asked during the first-time sharing session and that was, "I don't know where Calgary is." So, for those of you who may be driving to the International Convention, you drive through Calgary just before you get to the really interesting part...an interesting part. How about that (laughter)?

I do want to acknowledge Bob and echo his thoughts about the relationship that we have. A special thanks for all the softball questions over the course of the weekend.

Thank you all for what has been a wonderful weekend. I think we probably agree.

For those who are here for the first time, I hope that you found it a special weekend. Not just because you got a star and for some of us getting a star it has been a while (laughing), but because you were made to feel welcome and valued. That's what we always want to be doing with people in Alcoholics Anonymous, whatever kind of first experience it is.

I hope through the reports that you've seen, the presentation that Marita gave, you've had a chance to see just how large and magnificent Alcoholics Anonymous is and the effect that it has in our world. I have a friend who used to say that Alcoholics Anonymous is the biggest organization in the world whose members have absolutely no idea how big and important an organization it is that they belong to.

Most of us hear this in our home group when they read that green card — how the amount of our contribution is secondary to the spiritual connection that unites us all around the world, and I hope you got a sense of that this weekend.

All around our structure, the U.S./Canada structure, not the North American structure because Mexico is in North America and they have their own structure, but the U.S./Canada structure. I remind them when we go there, the Canada/U.S. structure.

I hope as I suggested on Friday night that you had a chance to meet “those” people from New York and find that they really are just exactly like you.

I particularly want to acknowledge the opportunity to participate in what was Sister Judith's last Regional Forum. I had the opportunity to be on the Board and on the nominating committee when she was selected and elected to the Board, and this is the first chance I've had to serve with her. I think you heard from her just the wealth of experience from a business and Board perspective that she brought, and also that wonderful historical connection. I want to acknowledge that part of what she brought to our Board is contact with Kevin. Bringing Kevin on as our treasurer, and he's just absolutely magnificent.

For those who came looking for information, I hope you found that and I hope you found a lot more. I hope you found what I suggested, which brought me back to my second one. I heard it in some of that first-timers sharing that you met new people that you look forward to coming back and seeing. I know I experienced that this weekend.

I've been to your region before, a couple of times, several times, a dozen times. I've made friends here and I had a chance to see those people and reconnect with them. I had a chance to make some new friends. I was here for an A.A. event and I happened to be staying with Dale and Carol. I was staying with them in their home, and their granddaughter came home from the hospital, two days old. She was out in the lobby earlier this weekend and she's 5. It's incredible the gifts that Alcoholics Anonymous gives us. They're so meaningful. And it's really about the people that we meet. I've particularly enjoyed meeting so many of you this weekend.

I wasn't going to share this, but Marita's story about the penlight reminded me; some of you have heard me tell this story. It's also about being in Peru and being in a room that was probably about this big, that had about 800 people in it. It had one set of exit doors like that at the far end. It got to be Saturday night, and they weren't doing a countdown, but they were going to do something else, and the interpreter that was with me, Hernán, he and I had eaten something that we ought not have eaten, and he was back at the hotel at that moment. So, I'm there and the limits of my Spanish are being able to find a bathroom and order ice cream, which if you're a Trustee-at-Large are pretty much the first words that you learn in every language in every place that you go to. So, they started to wander around and hand out candles to people. I think of myself as fairly clever and so I figured out what they were going to do with these candles, which was they were going to light them. I'm looking around the room and the walls are decorated with all of this highly flammable material. I start to think, oh no, because they've dragged me up to the front of the room, which is as far as you can get from the exit. And to get



through the exit, you have to go up all of these old stone steps, some of which are this high and some of which are this high, because those are the sizes of the stones they found when they built the building. I start to think about me, of course, because that's what I do. I start to think, oh my God, they're going to light these candles. There's going to be a fire and if there's one person in the whole room who's going to die in the fire, it's going to be me, right?

So, they found this guy from Mexico City who speaks a little bit of English. He comes and he says to me, "What they're going to do is they're going to find the newest person in the room, and they're going to bring that person to the front and as the special guest they're going to light your candle and you are going to light the candle of the newest person in the room and the two of you in turn are going to light the candles of others and so on and so on." So, they find this guy one day and he's standing beside me and he's like this (hands shaking). His family's hugging me. They turn off all the lights and the room is quite dark and they light my candle, and I light his. We in turn light the candles of others and pretty soon, exactly what Marita described with those penlights, the room is just aglow with this beautiful candlelight.

It struck me just how symbolic it is of what we do in Alcoholics Anonymous. What I hope we did this weekend is just lit each other's candles. I hope you go away from here and you light the candle of someone else in Alcoholics Anonymous. Thank you all for being here.

We'll bring the 2024 Eastern Canada Regional Forum to a close with a responsibility statement.

I am responsible...When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: **I am responsible.**

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