

Recommendation from CYM Clerks' Committee to Canadian Yearly Meeting to Lay Down the CYM Food Co-op.

The Food Co-op at Canadian Yearly Meeting in session began over 40 years ago as Friends co-operated to prepare simple meals outdoors. This food co-op grew over the years, making attendance at CYM affordable for families and low-income Friends. It acquired equipment (including large pots, gas stoves, a series of sinks and plumbing, and a trailer for storing and hauling) for both eastern and western Canada. An adhoc committee organized; a co-ordinator was modestly paid to prepare menus, do the advance shopping and organize cooking teams; and large tents were rented to shelter cooks and diners from bad weather. The meals became more elaborate; fresh farm produce was sourced; and organic food was prioritized. Food co-op diners increased, reaching a high one year of about 90 Friends. As the numbers dropped back to around 60 it became difficult to cover the cost of the co-ordinator and tent rentals. Although it had always been intended that food co-op fees would cover its expenses, in recent years CYM began covering food co-op deficits. It has become difficult to find an experienced qualified co-ordinator to organize the menus, shopping and preparation. Friends have become concerned about whether food co-op does (or even can) adequately follow health regulations for large gathering food preparation. Roughly half of the Friends attending CYM-in-session eat in the co-op and half in the dining room: does this create social division in our gathering?

We received recommendations from Friends who had agreed in 2019 to organize food co-op in 2020 that it is time to lay it down. Clerks' Committee considered this in December and we agree (with some sadness over losing food co-op) that the time has come for all of us eat together when we can resume in-person gatherings. Perhaps, as food co-op has done in recent years, the food costs for children and teens could be assumed by all, rather than only by the families. We are bringing this recommendation to CYM a year and a half before we could hold an in-person CYM-in-session, because, if approved, we could donate our equipment being stored in Miami, Manitoba to another charity that provides meals. Laying down food co-op could be a first step in simplifying our complex organization.

Proposed minute for CYM-in-session:

We agree that it is time to lay down our Yearly Meeting Food Co-op and donate its assets to another charity that is engaged in food preparation. We ask Winnipeg Monthly Meeting if it would find an appropriate charity in Manitoba. We ask Program Committee to organize a memorial meeting for the food co-op, to give Friends who have treasured this service an opportunity to grieve its loss and share memories.