



In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

الإسلام في أمريكا الشمالية - كندا

The Islamic Society of North America – Canada

June 6, 2016

ISNA Canada Board An Open Letter to the Community

Assalam Alaykum wa Rahmat Allah wa Barakatuh.

This letter is in response to the open letter addressed to ISNA Canada Board by some members and presented at the annual meeting of members on Sunday, May 22, 2016 held in conjunction with the 42nd ISNA Canada Annual Convention.

The open letter raised seven points. These points will be addressed one by one after some comments on ISNA Canada as a corporation.

ISNA Canada operates under the Government of Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act (NFP Act). This act describes some basic requirements applicable to corporations. NFP act specifies the requirements that can be met in a number of ways depending on the context and circumstances. It also provides a framework to enact context specific solutions. Some of these context considerations includes nature of the corporation whether it local or national, and the size of the corporation in terms of the number of members.

Point One:

General members meeting minutes: As it is the practice in most Not-for-profit organizations, member meeting minutes are an important organizational record, unfortunately current ISNA members don't have easy access to read and / or approve them.

Associated requested action: We would like to have the minutes from the general members' meetings posted on the ISNA website for all members to access and we also would like the approval of the minutes to be the first agenda item at each members meeting.

Response One:

NFP Act mentions the requirements of keeping the minutes in terms of (1) where and when the meeting was held; (2) who attended; and (3) the results of any voting in the form of resolutions. The resolutions arise from motions presented by the Board. The minutes are very specific, kept as part of the corporation's record and are made available to the members for information. There is no requirement for approval of the minutes by members.

Point Two:

Membership process: It is a fact that several individuals in our community have applied for the ISNA membership, their account have been debited for the membership fee but they have neither received their membership card nor any other communication on when they should expect to receive it.

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Associated requested action: We would like to see a commitment to a specific turnaround time for when membership cards should be received by members, as well as a renewal reminder message to help members remember to renew their membership

Response Two:

The Executive Director has already responded to this point at the meeting. He announced that he will expedite the process to the satisfaction of members.

The floating period of membership applications and renewals is not practical. It is often event driven such as the annual meeting of the members. It creates unpredictable peaks of requests that are difficult to process all within a short period. The ISNA Canada Board will look at ways for improving the membership process. Generally, most organizations have a membership period that coincides with calendar year, allowing for a more predicable processing of applications. ISNA Canada membership is open to Muslims who are adults of age 18 or higher.

For those younger, there is a Muslim Youth of North America (MYNA), operating as a program of ISNA Canada. As is the case for other organizations like ISNA Canada, there is a need to have verifiable information for membership application such as a copy of the driver's license or a similar document. It is necessary to confirm that an applicant is duly qualified as a voting member.

Point Three:

Communication and community engagement: active and engaged ISNA members would lead to an inclusive and strong community. At this time, however, there is minimal updates and two-way communications between the board, administration and members.

Associated requested action: We would like to have quarterly members' meetings to discuss with the board and the administration updates on finances, progress on goals and organization current and planned activities.

Response Three:

There has been periodic communication addressed to ISNA Canada members, and members are expected to interact by feedback as they see fit. Some members have done it. However, a regular quarterly schedule can be developed for these communications. Members should feel free to provide feedback or provide suggestions and advice on ISNA Canada operations. It is not practical to have quarterly physical meetings of the members for a national organization such as ISNA Canada, keeping in mind all the notice and related requirements described in the NFP Act.

However, ISNA Canada Centre (ICC) Committee appointed by the ISNA Canada Board can hold physical meetings locally, and quarterly or as required. It is appropriately stated in point four. The outcomes of ICC meetings can then be presented to the Board by the Chair of ICC.

ISNA Canada is a national organization, similar meetings can be held in other cities across Canada.

Point Four:

ICC Committee: ISNA is a national organization while the ICC (Islamic Center of Canada) is a local community center and mosque serving the local community. Many of the local community members are not satisfied with the level and type of activities at the ICC, and it is important that a local community center listens and acts on the community feedback.

Associated requested action: We would like to have a specific committee made up of local community members to guide the activities of the ICC. The purpose of the committee would be to listen to the local community and customize the activities at the ICC to fit the community needs.

Response Four:

ICC Chair made an announcement at the meeting of members, promising to duly activate the ICC. ICC can discuss what has been requested and bring the recommendations to the attention of the ISNA Canada Board. The Board will also consider appropriate initiatives for meeting the local community expectations more effectively.

Point Five:

Succession plan for critical roles: It is common best practice for an organization to have succession plans for critical roles. One of the vital roles for the well being of ISNA is the Executive Director. Our dear Sheikh Abdalla Idris Ali has served the Muslim community as an executive director and spiritual leader for over 30 years by being available 7 days a week and dedicating his time, knowledge, network and support.

Associated requested action: We would like the board to immediately start a succession plan for the Executive Director role with a view to recruit urgently a deputy executive director to be mentored by Sh Abdalla. We also would like members to be part of the selection committee of the deputy executive director.

Response Five:

ISNA Canada Board has engaged in informal discussions on the succession plan for the position of the Executive Director. However, a reasonable solution has not emerged for a number of reasons. This matter has been discussed with Shaykh Abdalla. He feels that some preparatory work is required within the current administration team before creating a position that matches Shaykh Abdalla with what he performs best, and a position that effectively mentors human resources for corporate management.

Point Six:

Volunteers and youth support: ISNA is a grassroots organization that relies on the support and dedication of volunteers and youth. Those groups need to be nurtured, respected and supported.

Associated requested action: We would like the board to create a position of Director of Volunteer and Youth Affairs to support volunteer retention and youth engagement and to give enough attention, development and positive experience to those groups.

Response Six:

ISNA Canada volunteers and their work has been recognized as outstanding, both in numbers and the quality of their work, even by prominent visitors to ISNA Canada events. ISNA Canada bylaws recognize management of volunteers as a component of ISNA Canada operations, largely handled by the Director of Operations, and it has proven its merit beyond doubt. At this time we have the Muslim Youth of North America (MYNA) as a program of ISNA Canada, just as is the case for the continental ISNA. At ICC, we

have a youth group that does not appear to be engaged nationally. Having a youth group locally may well be justifiable in view of the youth living in close proximity in the GTA. If the local youth group wishes to continue locally, then we may have to take that into account before creating a suitable support position at ISNA Canada.

Point Seven:

Review of By-Laws: ISNA Canada is currently operating with by-laws that have not been approved by the members since Aug 2014 and hence it is not complying with the Not-for-profit Corporations Act. Requests have been sent in the past to organize discussions with the members and get their input and approval of the by-laws but we have not received any supportive response. We do not want to see ISNA being challenged by Innovation, science and Economic Development Canada (previously known as Industry Canada) or Canada Revenue Agency for not complying with the Canadian regulations. And most importantly we want to see ISNA's By-Laws properly drafted and ratified such that it lays the ground work for any elected personnel, volunteer or member in ascertaining their rights, obligations, rules and regulations.

Associated requested action: We would like a special meeting of the members to be called urgently to review and provide suggestions on the by-laws, and then for the by-laws to be tabled for approval by the members.

Response Seven:

As it was explained that the Bylaws approved by the previous Board in 2014 should have been presented to the members for ratification at the 2015 annual meeting of the members coinciding with the 2015 ISNA Canada Annual Convention, or shortly thereafter. However, that action did not take place due to an oversight. The Board is thankful to the members for bringing this matter to our attention, and steps are already underway to correct that situation.

The first step towards bylaws approval has already been taken. A motion on quorum for a meeting of the members, as defined in the 2014 bylaws and approved by the Board, is now being mailed to the members for approval. Once that motion is approved then a special meeting of the members can be called to approve the bylaws the 2014 bylaws. Alternatively, we could hold a meeting of the members to discuss those bylaws first before presenting them to the members for approval.