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Dear Friends across Canadian Yearly Meeting,

Last Sunday, we completed a couple of days of face-to-face Representative Meeting. I expect that, with that statement, I'm causing responses varying from "Ah, yes!" to "Huh?" I know that Representative Meeting has a very low profile among many Friends, but I don't know why. Every Monthly Meeting but one in CYM has named a representative to Representative Meeting, and these representatives bring their Meetings' views on larger issues to Rep Meeting, and return to their Meetings with reports of the activities and business of CYM between sessions, as well as other Monthly Meetings.

Every Representative Meeting I've attended (and I've been attending for a long time, in one capacity or another – about 25 years, I think!) has felt special: seeing Friends from across the country with some time to get to know one another, being hosted by a Monthly Meeting so that we can become acquainted with those Friends as well, considering issues important to the whole of Canadian Yearly Meeting and the Friends who are part of it. But the Rep Meeting just finished seemed especially special.

Why was that? I think it was because of the sense of hope. If you've been attending Yearly Meeting, reading the minutes of YM or RM, or in any other way following the affairs of CYM, you know that we've had deficit budgets for several years, a clearly unsustainable situation. So why did I feel hope at this Representative Meeting? One reason was the presence of young adult Friends from several different Monthly Meetings – people around the age of George Fox in 1652 when he walked through northern England creating the Quaker Way. They are informed, concerned, caring, involved, and inspiring. (I don't like to hear the oft-repeated sentence, "Young people are our future." They and other Friends of all ages together are *WE*, and *WE* are our present as well as our future.) But the fact that *WE* includes Friends who have more future to look forward to than I do provides great hope.

Another reason for hope was the attitude of Friends of all ages there from all parts of the country. I didn't hear sighs of defeat or dire predictions. People were asking each other what they valued about CYM, what they needed CYM to be and do, and how they themselves could help bring about the change we want. There were smiles and encouragement and lively conversations over coffee and meals. The atmosphere was positive – and full of hope.

Yes, we still have vacancies on standing committees, but we *do* have the Friends to fill them – we just have to match the people to the needs. There are many different ways to get involved, and they're all rewarding – and often even fun! Yes, we have forecast a deficit budget again for 2020, but the deficit for 2019 was smaller than predicted, and we *do* have the Friends to turn this around. If every active Friend donated the price of a coffee-shop coffee every other week we'd be fine. The Friends at Representative Meeting last weekend gave me the feeling that all this is possible.

I hope that your Meetings' representatives felt the same lifting of the spirit that I did, and that they will share it with you. Let's cherish the present of our beloved community and nourish the hope for its future.

In the Light,

Beverly Shepard, Presiding Clerk