

Elections and Parish Council Responsibilities

Key Points on Elections

1. Term of Office

2 years

2. Who is eligible

- All paid up members except associate members.
- President becomes the Past President
- Treasurers who are completing their first term of 2 years are eligible for nomination to a second term in that position, for a total of four years.
- Standing Committee Chairs who are completing their term of two years are eligible to stand again for election but, on election, will take a new committee chair position.

3. What are the positions open for nomination? (Refer to handout on C&B executive job responsibilities)

- President** (if no president elect)
- President-elect**
If you are unable to get a President-Elect, it is a good idea to have an understudy for the president who is able to move smoothly into the office in 2 years' time. The President -Elect also has a standing committee chair position – usually organization).
- 1st and 2nd vice presidents** (These positions are not mandatory at the Parish Levels. The 1st and 2nd Vice President positions also have a standing committee chair position)
- Treasurer**
- Secretary** (This position may be split into corresponding and recording at some levels, however may be combined into one position at the Parish level.)

Standing committee chairs:

- Not elected to a particular committee but appointed to one by the president after the election

4. What is the experience required?

- For most positions no experience is required, just enthusiasm and a willingness to serve
- If standing for the Treasurer position, the candidate should have some experience with keeping financial records
- If standing for the Secretary position(s), the candidate(s) should have access to a computer and printer
- Information is available on the positions and in the C&B and the executive handbook

5. Process

Two months before elections-

- Parish President appoints a nominations and elections committee
- Chair of committee will not be eligible for nomination to the executive
- Two members of the committee who are also not eligible for nomination
- Spiritual Advisor is an ex officio member of committee.

- ❑ President will not be an ex officio member of this committee.
- ❑ The chair contacts the president-elect to see if she will agree to be president. If there is no president elect then the position for president is open for nomination.
- ❑ Chair of committee prepares the list of positions open for nomination , a list of eligible members and nomination forms.

A month before elections

- ❑ The nomination committee hands out nomination forms and a list of those eligible for nomination to all members,
- ❑ Include with this a brief description of each position - use the C&B
- ❑ Members may nominate themselves as well as others
- ❑ Give members time to complete these forms.
- ❑ This can be done at a meeting to make it easy for members to complete and return them on time.
- ❑ The committee then makes these nomination forms available to members who did not attend the meeting- by mailing them or having them available at the back of the church along with a box to drop off the completed forms works best.
- ❑ The nomination forms are opened by the committee and must be signed by the member
- ❑ The committee calls all those who have been nominated and asks them if they will agree to stand for the position or positions they have been nominated to. You may not tell a member how many others have been nominated to the positions or who nominated them
- ❑ Members may be nominated for and accept a nomination to more than one position but will only be elected to one.
- ❑ The nomination and election committee must keep all nomination and election information confidential until it is presented during the election process by the election committee chair.

The night of the election

- ❑ At the end of the business meeting the president will ask any current officers to leave the head table
- ❑ The president will remain in the chair during the election process and will appoint someone who is not running for office to take the minutes of the election process - the meeting is still in session and won't be adjourned until after the election is complete.
- ❑ The president will call on the chair of elections to give a report on the nomination process and explain how the election process will proceed
- ❑ The committee shows, on a flip chart or overhead, the names of all those who have accepted to let their name stand for election and the positions for which they are standing. She then introduces them to the assembly.
- ❑ For positions where only one candidate has accepted the president will ask for a motion that the candidate be declared elected ;

- ❑ For officer positions where more than one candidate has accepted nomination the members vote by secret ballot. Ballots will be handed out by the committee and counted by the committee. And the results passed to the president to announce. The successful candidate is the one who receives the majority of votes.
- ❑ For election of standing committee chairs, the chair will tell members how many positions are required. If only that number of candidates are listed the president will ask for a motion to declare all these candidates elected; if not there will be a ballot and members will be asked to list only sufficient names to meet the positions open. The successful candidates will be chosen from those who have the highest number of votes to fill the required number of positions
- ❑ If all positions are not filled, nominations from the floor on election night are not acceptable; members may offer to fill vacant positions and the new president may appoint that member or another member to take on vacant positions, after discussing this with her new executive.
- ❑ The out going President will introduce the new executive
- ❑ The meeting is then adjourned
- ❑ The new executive is installed as soon as possible after election and takes over responsibility at the next executive meeting following the election.

Date of Election

C&B says the elections must be completed in January or February.

- ❑ The practice in many parish councils in the Toronto Dioceses is to hold the nominations in October or November and the elections in November or December so that the new executive takes over at the beginning of the year in January; however if elections are held at the beginning of the year they must be completed by Feb at the end of the second term.

4. Responsibilities of members

When you were installed as members of the CWL you made a promise “to promote the interest and growth of the league in every way” one way to fulfill that is to **take your turn** on the executive.

Unlike the secular election arena we are not running for office, it is not a power struggle or an ego trip - The CWL is a lay association – our mission statement calls us to holiness through service to the people of God.

During CWL elections you are asked to discern how God is calling you to serve your council and your sisters in the League.

The council belongs to the members and its success is their responsibility

We all have individual gifts - given to us by God to be used to serve the people of God.

It is important that we all take our turn in offering this service to our council so that the League may benefit from our unique talents.

Every year we hear from councils that they are having difficulty getting members to take their turn.

ACTIVITY:

You can try doing the following exercise as a group at one of your monthly meetings or you can just quietly take the time to review and ask yourselves these questions.

If doing the exercise at a group meeting, break those in attendance into small groups and give half of them question 1 and the other half question 2

(Total Activity approx. 15 mins.)

Question 1 Would I let my name stand for office if not why not? Is there anything that would change my mind?

Question 2 What things should we do to encourage members to take a turn on the council executive?

- Ask each group to present their answers and facilitate discussion (allow another 15 mins. for discussion)

Summary:

Every year we hear from councils that have problems finding members who are willing to serve a term on the executive - yet they want the council to continue.

If all members don't take a turn on the executive the council suffers and in some cases may not be able to continue.

When the same people feel they must stay in the job to keep the council going they are not free to move up where their service is needed in the League and the council misses the opportunity to hear new ideas.

Why do some people not offer to stand:

- No time
- Looks like too much work
- Not asked
- No room for new ideas
- Don't feel qualified
- Transportation

What can we do to encourage them:

- Encourage their involvement through out the year not just at election time by getting them involved in small tasks
- Ensure current officers are not doing all the work- officers are meant to lead or encourage others not do all the work themselves
- Be welcoming to members when they attend events- make sure no one is left on their own
- Team up new members with older members for the first year
- Arrange to buddy up members who need transportation with others who drive from their area
- Provide training opportunities on the role of the executive and the CWL
- Be open to new ideas and ideas from new people - avoid saying "we always do it this way"
- Support the current members of the executive by participating in projects they bring forward
- Tell people about the time commitment involved
- Survey members to find their interests and match them with standing committees that fulfill that interest; have standing committee chairs form sub committees to get members doing small tasks so that in a few years they will feel comfortable taking on a larger one or a position.
- Remember to provide only constructive criticism to current executive. Remember they are all volunteers doing their best and therefore deserve your support.

Diocesan Elections

For those Parish presidents who have finished your term you will be invited to serve the League at the Diocesan level. The process is a bit different at this level.

Who is Eligible?

- ❑ Present diocesan officers who, at the time of election have served a full term
- ❑ Parish Presidents who, at the time of election, have served a full term

Officers and council presidents shall remain eligible for three elections following their term last served. These names are kept in the diocesan election register and are used to form the eligibility list.

Process

- ❑ On or before the 15th of December the diocesan president shall appoint a nominations and elections committee which will include a Chairperson (usually the past president) and two other committee members who will not be someone eligible for office.
- ❑ The chairperson will first confirm with the president elect if she is willing to take the position of president. This will determine if a nomination for the office of president will be required.
- ❑ On or before the **15th of January** the chairperson sends a letter, which includes the list of offices open , to each member whose name is on the eligibility list to ask if she is willing to let her name stand **and** for which position. The letter will request a written reply by a certain date and a brief resume.
- ❑ These members reply in writing by the date requested and may let their name stand in more than one position.
- ❑ The reply letters are opened by the committee members and the response recorded on the acceptance list.
- ❑ If there are still positions left without names the committee members will call those on the eligibility list to try and find candidates.
- ❑ The diocesan chairperson will then send a letter to all those who have offered to stand, with a copy of the acceptance list, and may give a copy of this list to the president and president-elect as a courtesy.
- ❑ A copy of the acceptance list and a nomination form is then sent to each parish president with instructions to have it completed by **the parish council executive** at an executive meeting and returned to the nominations chair at diocesan. The result is recorded in the executive minutes.
- ❑ It is important to note that you do not have to nominate a person for any position just because they have let their name stand. If you don't think the person is right for the job then don't nominate them.
- ❑ The nomination form your parish executive completes then becomes the instructed vote the parish president or her representative will carry to the diocesan convention and will identify how she is to vote on the first ballot.
- ❑ The diocesan nominations chair will create the candidates list from the nomination forms submitted by the parish councils.
- ❑ Election will take place at the end of the annual diocesan convention and only the voting delegates (parish presidents or their representative) may vote in elections. They must follow the instructed vote from their executive on the first ballot. Your council must have submitted an instructed vote and must be present at the time of diocesan elections to vote on the first ballot.
- ❑ The new diocesan executive will be installed at the convention closing Mass and will take office at the Post - convention meeting.

- If all positions are not filled, the new president may appoint a member to take on vacant positions, after discussing this with her new executive.

Provincial Elections

The process for Provincial council elections is the same as Diocesan council except the members eligible are:

Diocesan presidents who have served a full term
Current provincial officers who have served a full term

Diocesan presidents and provincial officers will remain eligible for 3 elections after the last term served.

Parish council presidents, as members of the diocesan executive, will be sent the nomination form for the provincial election along with a copy of the acceptance list and the resumes of those women who have offered to serve at this level. This is confidential and may not be shared with your members.

This information will be sent to parish presidents by the diocesan president several weeks prior to the diocesan pre convention meeting so that you may read about those members and be prepared to vote for those you think are best suited to be on the provincial executive.

At the pre convention meeting members of the diocesan executive present (officers and parish council presidents) will vote by secret ballot for each position. The outcome of this vote will create the instructed vote for the diocesan president to carry to the provincial convention and will indicate how she is to vote for the first ballot. The outcome of this vote is confidential and may not be shared outside this meeting.