

Report of Governance Review

Mandated with the task of reviewing the Governance Structure established in 2019 and the Governance handbook compiled following the inaugural meeting, we are pleased to provide an accounting of our work.

The review has been guided by the lived experience of five years, the accumulated questions and consultation with the Team Leaders. While this report will largely identify items to change, and items missing from the documentation, it is important to acknowledge the affirmation of the underlining pinning of the ECORC Regional Council Structure.

The governance structure sought to address two significant complaints that are common to governance. Voices external to the governance structure perceive that everything is done and decided by a powerful few. From those engaged in the structure came the complaint that endless meetings and cascading appointments left little time and energy to exercise the gift they sought to share. The resulting structure differs from the familiar executive model made up of Committee Chairs. A structure in which those leading committees exercise oversight of the same committee work. Addressing the issues of accountability and transparency, the governance structure of the East Central Ontario Regional Council operates with Forums and Leadership Teams. Members of the Regional Council may join with like-minded people to exercise the ministry of the Regional Council, or they may serve as part of a representative body providing oversight and direction. It is a structure that others are looking at with genuine interest. The governance review:

affirms that those who are knowledgeable, experienced, and committed, and best able to support the purpose and ministry of the Regional Council, whether individually or gathered as a Forum, should do so unencumbered to the extent possible.

affirms the importance and necessity of oversight, accountability, and transparency and that those undertaking the work and recommending direction and course of action, be guided and accountable to Leadership Teams that are representative bodies of the Regional Council.

The governance review seeks to respond to the concerns with small changes to the structure, providing clarity and consistency in the Teams and Forums, identifying and providing missing components and policies, and to provide an updated Governance Handbook.

The governance review is making the following proposals.

Assembly of Elders

1) Executive Committee

It is proposed:

That the executive committee of the Regional Council, currently known as the Assembly of Elders be renamed the Council and that the presiding officer relating to the General Council be called the Lead Commissioner. These changes to be in effect upon the rise of this Spring 2024 meeting of the Regional Council.

Background

There has been an unease with the executive name “Assembly of Elders” and that it might be confused with term used by the Indigenous Church. It is proposed that we respect the historic language of the Church and continue to use the title Elders to define the individual role but adopt a name that reflects that collectively they are a regional leadership team.

This proposal would be implemented immediately.

2) Speaker

It is proposed:

That the Regional Council elect annually an individual to serve a three-year term on the Assembly of Elders/Church Council as Speaker designate, Speaker, past Speaker.

And further,

That the Nominations Team receive expressions of interest and that the first Speaker -Designate be elected in the Fall of 2024 to assume the role of Speaker Spring 2024 and thereafter elect a speaker designate at each Spring meeting starting in 2025.

Background

This proposal provides greater engagement by the Regional Council in the naming of its executive body and provides a more predictable and greater continuity in the leadership.

This proposal would be implemented over the next couple of meetings.

3) Adding clarity and consistency to governance structure

It is proposed that

1. **The terms of reference of the Formation Nurture Justice, Covenant Support, Nominations, and Mission through Property Team be revised for consistency, accuracy and thoroughness by:**
 - a. **Confirming the number and role of elected (voting) members determined through the Nominations process and distinguishing from the non-elected, non-voting corresponding members serving by appointment.**
 - b. **Including within the Terms of Reference sections describing and answering questions relating to Purpose, Accountability, Membership, Meetings, Quorum (50% elected members plus 1), Role of Members, Chairperson (selected from elected members), Vacancies, Forums, Duties, Mandate.**
 - c. **Removing sections that are solely descriptive of process (how to) and expanding upon those that describe outcome (the what).**
2. **The terms of reference of all Forums be revised for consistency, accuracy, and thoroughness by:**
 - a. **Including within the Terms of Reference sections describing and answering questions relating to Purpose, Accountability, Membership, Meetings, Role of Members, Responsibilities.**
 - b. **Removing sections that are solely descriptive of process (how to) and expanding upon those that describe outcome (what).**
3. **The Governance review Team in consultation with the Teams prepare the revisions for approval at the Fall 2024 meeting of the Regional Council and that the Teams may be guided by the revisions prior to approval.**

Background

This proposal seeks to answer several uncertainties in the practice of the Teams (ie: what is Quorum) and to ensure consistency in practice throughout the Regional Council structure.

Implementation of these revisions would be adopted over the next few months to receive approval Fall 2024.

4) **Changes to reflect current practices.**

It is proposed that

The Governance Structure be revised immediately to reflect the adopted practices of the Regional Council, namely.

- a. **the Terms of reference of the Nominations Team be revised to clarify that the Team is not responsible for naming Team Chairs and Forum Members.**

- b. that the Facilitation Team become a Forum accountable to the Assembly of Elders**
- c. that the Equity Team become a Forum accountable to the Assembly of Elders.**
- d. That the membership of the LLWL (Licensed lay Worship leaders) Forum be limited and appointed by the Covenant Support Team and to be inclusive of both LLWL and others.**
- e. That the accountability of the Affirming Forum be to the Formation Nurture and Justice Team.**

Background: This proposal seeks to bring the written terms of these Forums in line with practice.

These changes have already been implemented

5) Granting Commission Powers

It is proposed that

That Teams be granted limited powers of a Commission to provide timely service to communities of faith and that

- 1. the Covenant Support Team is granted Commission powers for specific matters, namely,**
 - a. The appointment of Liaison Officers**
 - b. The appointment of Pastoral Charge Supervisor**
 - c. The approval of a vacancy and the initializing of a search when the needs of the Community of Faith/Pastoral Charge have not changed.**
 - d. Approval of a Call when it matches the terms set out by the approved Search.**

These powers do not extend to any circumstance that emerges from conflict, uncertainty or deviates from precedent.
- 2. the Mission through Property and Finance Team is granted Commission powers to conclude the sale of Property declared surplus by the executive body of the regional council when the sale meets any imposed criteria and falls within 20% of the proposed sale price.**

Background

Effective leadership often requires prompt action and for these limited roles it is deemed appropriate that within stated criteria the Teams are directed to conclude specific actions.

These powers of Commission become effective immediately

6) New and revised Policies

It is proposed that

The Governance Review Task Group in consultation with the Teams and others deemed necessary to develop and present to the Regional Council for approval, no later than Spring 2025,

1. New Policies

- a. **Regional Meeting Guidelines** - to name objectives, agenda items etc.
- b. **Reimbursement of costs** - incurred by leadership required to be physically present at Regional Council Meetings.
- c. **Investment guidelines**- addressing ethical investment practices.
- d. **Use of investment funds** – sustaining the present activities and protecting future resources
- e. **use of surplus properties** – (manse, churches, cemeteries) balancing land and financial options

2. Revised current policies.

- a. **Travel reimbursement** – updated to reflect approved budget
- b. **VAM** – separate from Marriage Policy
- c. **Marriage** – separate from VAM Policy
- d. **Retired Ministers** – provide guidance for engagement in communities of faith.
- e. **Policy for Electing Commissioners** – to reflect practice

3. And further provide links to Denominational Policies.

Background: This proposal ensures that practice is codified and may be readily referenced.

New policies must be approved by the Regional Council and will be approved at the Fall 2024 or Spring 2025 meetings.

7) Directed Actions

It is proposed that

- 1. The Covenant Support Team ensure that the terms of Call/Appointment include.**
 - a. in the position description, expectation of participation within the Regional Council, local Clusters and Networks, and that it reflects an appropriate percentage or hours of time:**
 - b. in the terms of remunerations and support, community of faith responsibility for costs to attend Spring and Fall meetings of the Regional Council be included.**
- 2. That the Regional Council respond to the request of the Indigenous church to avoid the use of the word 'mission', replacing it as appropriate with alternatives such as 'purpose' or 'ministry'.**

Implementation of these directives is immediate, but it may take some time for the full replacement of 'mission' in our documents and language.