

"We cannot have repeats of things, like the same group president for six years, or the same wing president for 10 years, or the same wing president recycled 10 times in 25 years, because that's what is killing us." *Walter Gryba, National President, 1979*

Over many years, the RCAF Association has confronted significant discontent with various governance-related processes, the most damaging of which have involved how Wings manage the election process. At the root of these problems is our reliance on an antiquated (early- to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century) organizational structure for the association – the three-tiered hierarchy – and a dependence on an ineffective and completely inappropriate and outdated leadership model – the "Great Man Theory." These problems are not unique to the RCAF Association, they are core to a staggering breakdown in the volunteer sector, beginning in the late 1970s. The purpose of this policy paper is to provide a

solution to these problems, in part mandated by new federal legislation crafted to support the volunteer sector, without compromising on what defines us, in the RCAF Association.

With effect from 1 January 2019, the RCAF Association will fully implement new election processes

Consider that the reliance on governing bodies featuring a "president" to some board members has been cause not to fulfill their own duties; many believe someone with that title is, after all, ultimately responsible for everything. This is, of course, dubious; modern governance mechanisms and directors' & officers' insurance make clear how critical it is for the entire board of directors to be collectively responsible for appropriate decisions. To illustrate, the new legislation no longer permits abstentions – every board member is mandated to vote on every issue, one way or the other.

reflected in the federal Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act (CNCA). These new processes developed from extensive analysis of the not-for-profit community, beginning with the **February 1999 Ed Broadbent Panel on Accountability and Governance in the Voluntary Sector**. After fifteen years a code of governance "best-practices" was offered, to help non-profit associations deal with problems stemming from the aforementioned hierarchical organizational structures.

To eliminate these and other election-related problems, Wing and Group Executive Councils will be renamed as Boards of Directors, and office titles using the term "president" are to be abandoned. In their place, those elected to the board will be known as "directors", and the director chosen to lead the board will be known as "Chairperson." Other office titles may be retained, including Secretary, Treasurer, Public Affairs, Sports, Welfare and Sergeant-at-Arms (Ceremonial), for example. These changes are especially important to the RCAF Association because Wings with active provincially-incorporated, small-business-licensed venues must come to terms with the need to separate governance of their RCAF Association-chartered activities, from

the daily operations of their provincially-registered businesses. These two separate and distinct functions cannot be managed by the same people, or the same committee, simply because the conflicts of interest are too evident, and too complex. These changes just happen to emphasize the very collective and co-operative nature of decision making on which today's associations thrive. Over many years, the terms "president" coupled with "executive council" have contributed to an evolving autocratic culture with significant negative impact to which our association has not been immune. The scope of disenfranchisement caused by such developments is a serious threat to our future well-being. One only needs to ponder the association's membership statistics to learn of the toll outdated governance practices has taken, over many years.



To help in these processes, Regular (RCAF Association) members of the Wing will no longer elect specific members by name to specific offices by title. Whereas before we called upon members to elect Mr. Smith to the office of 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice-President, for example, now members will simply be asked to elect Mr.

Over many years, elections in community-based volunteer-sector-focused associations have deteriorated to a point wherein a specific nominee would be elected to a specific office perceived as the bottom rung of the learning ladder – 3<sup>rd</sup> vice-president, for example – while the incumbents in all of the offices would go unchallenged and acclaimed to the next higher office, on the ladder. The existence of the “Past President” office, to which the holder was never elected, but simply “fell into,” *ex-officio*, has facilitated this ineffective and sorry practice, exacerbating these and other problems. When a member would accept a nomination directly into one of the higher offices, seemingly in defiance of the foregoing process, he or she would be scorned, abused and sometimes shamed and banished from the wing, simply because they represented a challenge to one or more incumbents. The new legislation puts an end to these ineffective and harmful practices by among other things eliminating the “Past President” office, and prohibits *ex-officio* appointments, owing to the mandate for all office holders to be elected.

Smith to serve as a director, alongside the other elected members of the board of directors (see sidebar example for further information). In addition to Mr. Smith, the members will elect however many other members to the board as the situation requires. Thereafter, only these elected directors, including Mr. Smith, will decide amongst themselves who will occupy which of the various offices, including “Chairperson.”

To the extent recommended in the Wing’s by-laws, members elected to be a director serve for a minimum term of two years. Staggered elections are permitted; in other words, one-half of directors could have their terms expire in an odd-year, with the other half expiring the following (even) year. Depending on the Wing’s membership complement, scope of activities, and recommendations made in the Wing’s by-laws, the minimum number of elected directors shall be four, and the optimum number shall be six. When a director’s term is due to expire, he or she may stand for re-election. However, the maximum number of consecutive terms any director can serve is two, after which the director must step down for a minimum of two years, before standing for election again.

The first duty of the board of directors is to elect from amongst themselves the elected director who will serve as “chairperson.” The only duty of the “chairperson” is to lead the board through its deliberations, with reference to parliamentary procedures and, if so requested, act as spokesperson for and on behalf of the RCAF Association members in their Wing. Should a minimum of directors not be elected, after deciding on their Chairperson the elected directors must endeavor to fill vacancies by appointing a person or persons to serve as director, until the next election is required/held. To the extent permitted by the Wing’s by-laws, appointees could be drawn either from the pool of interested Wing members, or from any interested non-member from the Wing’s community of local or regional stakeholders. The maximum number of appointed directors shall be one-third the number of

elected directors. Should the elected members so desire, any number of non-executive (advisory) directors can be appointed, to help the elected members in their duties.

Election voting by a show of hands is no longer permitted. All election voting shall be done by paper ballot, and ballots must be created as soon as possible following termination of the nominations process, and not less than 30 days before the election is to be held. Amendments to the ballot shall not be permitted at the meeting during which elections are to be held. The ballot shall be made available to

all members, in electronic (e-mail) form or in hard-copy. Members should make every effort to return a completed hard-copy ballot to the Wing at or before the meeting at which the election is to be held, where they can be tabulated by the scrutineer(s), where necessary.

Various aspects of these new electoral processes are negotiable; Wings and Groups who may require modifications and/or special considerations are invited to share their draft modifications with the RCAF Association, for further guidance and recommendations. As regards the need for providing formal separation between the governance of the RCAF Association chartered Wing and the management of the day-to-day operations of the small-business-licensed, hospitality-focused activities of the provincially-incorporated Wing, the association continues to develop guidance that explains the limits to and purpose for the RCAF Association-awarded charter.