

PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS PROCEDURE

The practice in many Ontario dioceses is for parish councils to hold nominations in November and elections in December, so that the new executive takes over at the beginning of the year, in January.

Unlike the secular election arena, we are not running for office. The Catholic Women's League is a lay association. Our Mission Statement calls us to holiness through service to the people of God.

During CWL elections, we are asked to discern how God is calling us to serve our council and our sisters in the League.

A Short Exercise in Discernment has been included.

The nominations and election committee should plan a pre-election discernment session with the general membership. This discernment session is necessary to pray and think about accepting a nomination for office on the council.

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. The League benefits from our unique talents.

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.

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.

KEY POINTS ON ELECTIONS

1. **Term of office** 2 years
2. **Who is eligible?** All paid up members except associate members

The current president becomes past president. She will be invited to serve the League at the diocesan level. (The election process is a bit different at the diocesan level.)

Treasurers or standing committee chairs who are completing their first term of 2 years are eligible for nomination to a second term in that position, but the standing committee chair must take a new committee.

3. **What are the positions open for nomination?**

Refer to C&B Executive Responsibilities.

- President (if there is no president elect)
- President elect (The president elect will also have a standing committee chair, usually organization)
- 1st and 2nd vice presidents (Will also have a standing committee chair) Treasurer (the only executive position where a second term is permitted)
- Secretary (May be split into corresponding and recording in some parishes.)
- 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?**
 - Enthusiasm and a willingness to serve.
 - Information should be provided regarding the positions (use C&B and Executive Handbook)
 - Training is available if needed. Contact diocesan president.
5. **PROCESS** (at parish level)

Two months before date of election:

- Parish president appoints a nominations and elections committee
- Chair of committee is **NOT** eligible for nomination to the executive
- Two other members of the committee **ARE** 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 of the committee 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 nominations forms. (May be downloaded from national website)

6. **One month before election:**

- The nominations 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 (refer to C&B).
- Members may nominate themselves as well as others.
- Give members time to complete these forms at a meeting.
- The committee then makes these nomination forms available to all 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. A deadline for returning the nomination forms must be included.
- The nomination forms are opened by the committee. They must have been signed by the nominating member to be accepted.

- The committee calls 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 chair.

7. **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.
- It is advisable to have the spiritual advisor present for the counting of the votes.
- For positions where only one candidate has accepted nomination, 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 by the committee and counted by the committee. The results are passed to the president to announce. The successful candidate is the one who receives the majority of votes. The number of votes received by each candidate is announced.
- 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 there are more candidates than positions, there will be a secret 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 received 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 outgoing president will introduce the new executive.
- The nominations and elections committee is dissolved. The meeting is adjourned. All ballots are destroyed by the election committee, and the spiritual advisor.
- The new executive is installed as soon as possible after election, and takes over responsibility at the next executive meeting following the election.
- The installation ceremony can be found in the Ceremonies booklet, or is available online from National Office. It is designed to be used in the context of a mass or liturgical service.