

REPORT OF THE GOVERNANCE WORKING GROUP TO GENERAL SYNOD 2025

- A. The Governance Working Group (“GWG”) met during this biennium to address two motions referred from General Synod/CoGS:

1. C009: Consensus Decision-Making

This motion directed CoGS to determine what would be necessary to implement a consensus model of decision making for future meetings of the General Synod (“GS”), drawing on existing models currently used by other churches, as well as the Sacred Circle, the Canadian Council of Churches, and the World Council of Churches. GWG was asked to look into this and report back to CoGS.

GWG first looked to define what the hallmarks are of consensus decision making and determined that these include:

- Cooperation
- Collaboration
- Egalitarianism
- Inclusion; and
- Participation.

GWG then looked at various models and determined that a critical part of the process is having a so-called “blocking rule”, that determines when consensus has not been reached. Additionally, GWG learned that some matters are commonly excluded from consensus decision making, for example, the passing of an operating budget.

GWG concluded that for GS itself to proceed by way of consensus decision-making on all current legislative matters is likely to be cost prohibitive and non-inclusive as it would require GS to gather for a much longer period of time (perhaps several weeks) making it even more difficult for those members of the laity who are working to attend. The committee then consulted with CoGS and, after discussion, it was agreed that consideration should be given to:

- Making changes to Pre-Synod meetings to better reflect the hallmarks of consensus decision-making; and
- Making use of the time as Committee of the Whole at GS to better reflect the hallmarks of consensus decision-making by, for example, table discussion that is then reported into the plenary.

2. C012: Process of Election to the Council of General Synod

When looking into this, GWG determined that the impetus for the motion was a concern for the difficulty that some Provinces have in finding GS members who are prepared to serve as members of CoGS. In the result, GWG recommended that no change be made to the process

for election but rather a change be made to the way that GS members are recruited so that a willingness to serve as a member of CoGS is one of the things expressly to be considered by individuals before they agree to serve as a member of GS.

B. GWG additionally met during this biennium on an ad hoc basis to address various matters at the request of the Acting Primate and/or CoGS. Set out below is a summary of those issues.

1. Motion C001 being the motion to amend Canon 3 to permit the Primate in their sole discretion to retain the offices of Metropolitan and/or Diocesan Bishop as well as the Office of Primate.

GWG was asked to consider the matter of whether, if passed at GS2025, this motion would be effective in respect of the election of a new Primate at GS2025.

GWG is unanimously of the view that this motion cannot be effective in respect of the election of a new Primate at GS2025 because:

- The Primatial election and discernment process started at the April meeting of the Order of Bishops as which nominees were selected, and it is not canonically sound to change the Canon as it relates to the Primate in the midst of the election for that Office; and
- The motion must be passed at two successive sessions of GS in order to be effective as, among other things, it engages matters of discipline.

GWG also discussed this matter with the Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors in attendance at the National Chancellors' Conference in April where the overwhelming majority agreed that Canon 3 should be reviewed in its entirety following the election of the new Primate and not in a piecemeal fashion.

2. **The Motions from GS2023 which were withdrawn but which sought to amend Section 11 of the Declaration of Principles in order to:**

- a. **Remove the phrase “voting at two successive sessions of Synod” at 11(a)(ii) in respect of any change to the Declaration of Principles; and**
- b. **Change the requirement for a 2/3 majority in each house to effect such a change to require that the requirement be a 2/3 majority of GS with a minimum of a simple majority in each house.**

GWG was asked by the Acting Primate to consider whether these motions should be brought back to GS 2025 for consideration by General Synod.

The Chancellor and the Prolocutor consulted extensively about this question and are of the view that these motions are unlikely to pass by the required 2/3 majority at this time. In the result, GWG after discussion with the national Chancellors and Vice Chancellors has decided not to bring these motions to the floor of GS2025 for a vote.

However, GWG has asked the General Synod Planning Committee to make time in the GS2025 agenda for these matters to be discussed in the committee of the whole and to design a modified consensus decision making process to allow General Synod to have a fulsome discussion. The feedback from GS2025 can then be considered by CoGS and appropriate follow-up arranged in the context of the recommendations of Primate's Commission.

Submitted by,

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Chancellor and Chair of the Governance Working Group