

GCE 14 Mandate and Nominating Process for Boundaries Commission
Origin: Executive of the General Council

The Executive of the General Council recommends that the recalled 42nd General Council on September 30, 2017:

1. Establish a commission to determine the boundaries for the regions of The United Church of Canada, with a mandate to:
 - a. Consult broadly through meetings or electronic or other means taking into consideration geographic, cultural, linguistic and other affinities and
 - b. Take into account discussions that have already been held across the church;
 - c. Consider the study guide that was made available to the church for remit 1, along with input received through the consultation process and related research, having in mind the history, present day, and future of The United Church of Canada;
 - d. Issue an interim report not later than January 10, 2018, and after receiving and considering the responses, issue a final report by March 15, 2018.

Background:

Remit 1 (Three Council Model) has been approved by an absolute majority of presbyteries and pastoral charges. The decision will not become final unless or until it is approved by the 43rd General Council in July 2018, but in order to be ready for timely implementation after that date, certain work needs to be done in advance, contingent on the passing of the remit approvals.

The 42nd General Council is being recalled on September 30 to establish a commission to determine the boundaries for the regions that are to replace Conferences and presbyteries. In material presented at the spring 2016 Executive of the General Council meeting, it was anticipated that this commission would release an interim report before the 43rd General Council, then a final report in September 2018, incorporating comments heard at General Council. However, after a full discussion and deliberation, the Governance Committee recommended, and the Sub-Executive approved, that the final report be completed and shared *before* General Council in 2018. This will allow for discussion and greater understanding at Conference annual meetings, as well as greater transparency. Transitional steps and preparations will also be able to start at an earlier date. The transition to regions will be a major change for our church. In most parts of the country, conversations are already taking place in Conference and presbytery circles about what future configurations might look like. These are valuable conversations, and will be very important input for the deliberations of the Boundaries Commission.

Under the polity of the United Church (s. E4.7 of *The Manual*) General Council may appoint a commission to make decisions on its behalf. The commission therefore becomes the decision-making body and reports its decision to General Council.

Recognizing that the shorter timelines will require the Boundaries Commission to do most of its initial consultation in the fall of 2017, the General Secretary asked Carol Hancock to work with Conference Executive Secretaries to identify times and places for consultations, and this

schedule will be available to the Commission once appointed. They will, of course, be free to adjust this schedule and to add other consultations. The Commission will work independently, but will receive administrative support through the General Council Office.

As the study guide for remit 1 notes, regional councils will be made up of lay and ministry personnel who will provide advice, support, and services to communities of faith in areas such as human resources and property, as well as providing connections to national and global partners for social justice, pastoral relations, and outreach. Among their other duties, regional councils will be charged with ensuring that communities of faith are living up to their covenantal relationship, and they will step in if a community is not functioning effectively or is failing to meet its responsibilities. These councils, or their executives, will meet at least annually, and they may share staff members.

As with all work of the General Council, the principles and obligations flowing from the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples are to be taken into account.