

Editing EAC: The Next Chapter

In the months leading up to the national AGM in 2010, the national executive council (NEC) rolled out plans to review and revise the association structure. Our concerns and preliminary plans were distributed to all members in a discussion paper called [Editing EAC](#) <www.editors.ca/files/private/Editing_EAC-Discussion_Paper-2010-05-27-FINAL.pdf> (PDF, 23 KB). The structural review was discussed at the AGM and was the focus of the [closing plenary](#) <www.editors.ca/files/private/CONF2010-MP3-EN-closing_plenary.mp3> (MP3, 45 MB) at the 2010 national conference.

In the months following the AGM, a thread was started on [Interactive Voice](#) <www.editors.ca/bb/viewtopic.php?f=1&t=1322> to give all members a chance to voice their concerns or perspectives regarding the NEC's plans. A new version of our discussion paper, called [Editing EAC: A Closer Look](#) <www.editors.ca/files/private/Editing_EAC-A_Closer_Look.pdf> (PDF, 106 KB), was drafted and distributed to members. In the fall, the association president, Michelle Boulton, or the vice-president, Greg Ioannou, visited each of the association's six branches to talk to branch members face-to-face about the changes being proposed. In e-News Updates over the summer and into the fall, members were kept informed about the Editing EAC discussion and reminded to add their voices to the Interactive Voice discussion or to contact the [president](mailto:president@editors.ca) <president@editors.ca> or [vice-president](mailto:vicepresident@editors.ca) <vicepresident@editors.ca> directly by email. The idea was to talk to as many people as possible and to get as much feedback as we could.

As a result, we have received a tremendous amount of feedback and lots of good ideas from members. What follows is the compilation of that thinking into a series of proposed structural changes. Voting members will have a chance to vote on these changes in a referendum from February 1–15, 2011.

If all of the proposed changes are approved in this referendum, changes will also have to be made to *Rules and Regulations No. 2: Branches of the Association*. Any changes to that document will be discussed at length with branch executives over the coming months and the results will be presented to members for ratification at the AGM in May. Changes to any Rules and Regulations require a simple majority of the votes cast in order to pass.

If it is not yet clear to you, it will become clear as you read through the following document, that EAC is an ever-evolving organization. Who among us has not come across a long-finished project that we had worked really hard on and were really proud of, only to quickly spot a few things we would do differently if we had it to do again. And so, true to an editor's nature, and we would argue in the best service to EAC, the NEC will revisit in one year any changes resulting from this referendum. And we will encourage those who come after us to take a look again in three to five years to make sure the structure and policies we put in place now are still serving the organization well.

What We Are Proposing

After carefully considering and discussing the feedback we received, the NEC now proposes the following changes. A full discussion of each point is provided later in this document.

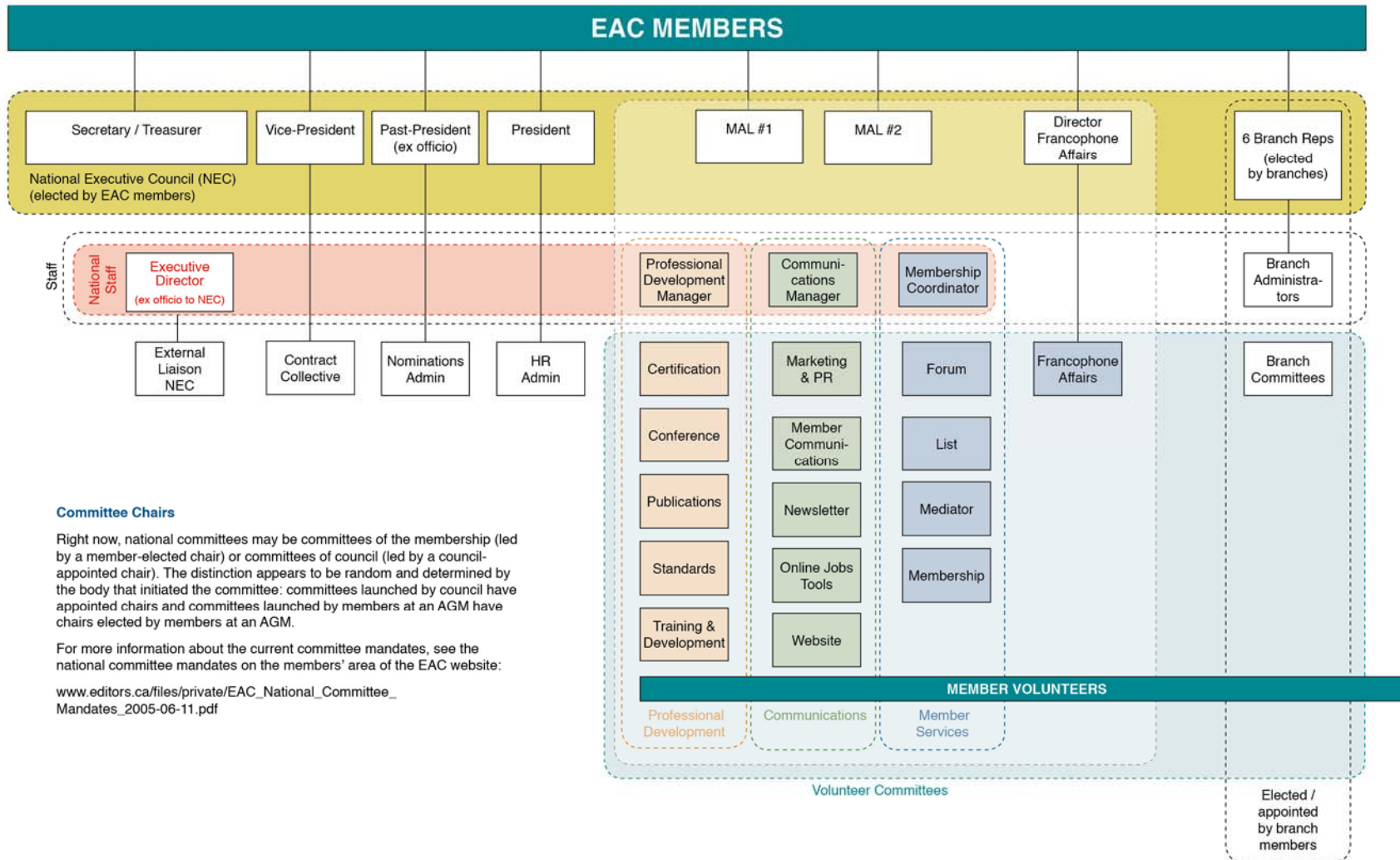
- 1) Replace the two elected Members-at-Large positions (MALs) on the national executive council (NEC) with six elected Directors. These Directors will take a more active role in the work of the committees to improve communication and to increase accountability, productivity and coordination.
- 2) Appoint all national committee chairs through the elected NEC. Addressing this longstanding governance issue will eliminate the disparity between elected and appointed committee chairs, and empower the association with the flexibility to assign financial and volunteer resources to the areas of current strategic or financial importance.
- 3) Shift the date when new NEC members elected at the AGM take office from May/June (immediately following the AGM) to September. This shift will allow for a more orderly transition to a new executive and provide an orientation period for new executive members.
- 4) Provide recognized status to small groups by creating a new, smaller category—twigs. A number of small groups have already emerged, and giving them formal status within the organization and financial support will encourage their development.
- 5) Replace the six Branch Representatives on the NEC with two Regional Directors of Branches and Twigs, one for the east and one for the west. Regional Directors, who will represent the interests of branches on the NEC and facilitate communication with and among the branches, will also maintain the number of members on the NEC at a sustainable and efficient number.

Note: The current NEC has 13 members. The revised council, as proposed, will also have 13 members. It is generally advised that an effective board have five to 15 members, and that there should be an odd number.

Section 2.3 of EAC's *Rules and Regulations No. 2: Branches of the Association* entitles each branch to a representative on the NEC. We currently have six branches and six branch representatives, but at least two of our new "twigs" are already considering becoming branches. Section 4.2 of EAC's *Constitution* stipulates that "the number of Executive Council members may be increased or decreased, to not fewer than five (5) or more than nineteen (19)."

If we replace the two MALs with six elected Directors and also keep the branch representatives on the executive, and if two of our current twigs becomes branches, we will exceed our maximum capacity of 19 members on the NEC. For that reason, the NEC believes the first and fifth proposed changes must pass or fail as a package.

Current EAC Organizational Chart



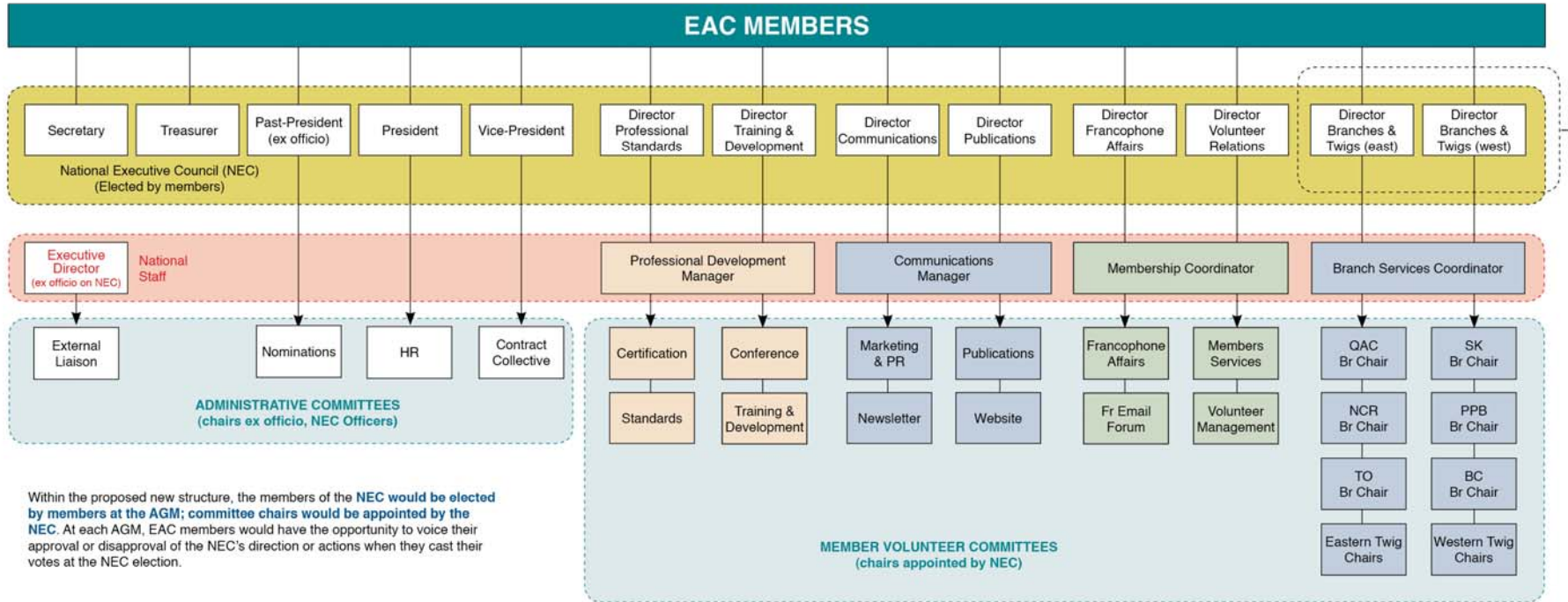
Committee Chairs

Right now, national committees may be committees of the membership (led by a member-elected chair) or committees of council (led by a council-appointed chair). The distinction appears to be random and determined by the body that initiated the committee: committees launched by council have appointed chairs and committees launched by members at an AGM have chairs elected by members at an AGM.

For more information about the current committee mandates, see the national committee mandates on the members' area of the EAC website:

www.editors.ca/files/private/EAC_National_Committee_Mandates_2005-06-11.pdf

Proposed EAC Organizational Chart



Within the proposed new structure, the members of the NEC would be elected by members at the AGM; committee chairs would be appointed by the NEC. At each AGM, EAC members would have the opportunity to voice their approval or disapproval of the NEC's direction or actions when they cast their votes at the NEC election.

Email Forum No longer committees. Instead, have appointed coordinators under website committee.

IV Forum

Mediator No longer a committee. Instead, have appointed coordinator under Members Services committee.

In the past, **Branch Representatives** have either been Branch Chairs, or representatives elected by branch members. In the revised structure, those representatives formerly elected by branches to participate in the NEC will instead be elected by the members of their respective regions by digital ballot.

Further Discussion: Proposed Change 1

Replace the two elected Members-at-Large (MALs) on the national executive council (NEC) with six elected Directors.

What is the role of a Director? How is a Director different from a Member-at-Large?

Right now, the job description for Members-at-Large (MALs) is quite vague. In the EAC [National Executive Council Roles and Responsibilities](#)

< www.editors.ca/files/private/EAC_National_Executive_Council_Roles_2005-06-11.pdf> (PDF, 24 KB) (approved in June 2005), the role of the MALs is described as follows:

A Member-at-Large represents the wider membership and provides a voice on the council for the national-level committees of the association . . . Each Member-at-Large presents to the council quarterly reports from a designated group of national committees and voices the interests of those committees, liaises with committees and the Executive Director as required, respects the day-to-day administration and oversight of committees by the Executive Director, [and] intervenes at the request of a committee chair or the Executive Director if the chair and the Executive Director cannot resolve a particular issue.

So, the MALs are liaison officers who are supposed to intervene only when required, but defer all other management and facilitation of committee activities to the Executive Director (ED). In practice, it has proven to be very difficult for MALs to fulfill their role as the “voice on the council for the national-level committees” when they are so far removed from the day-to-day activities of those committees.

The role of the ED, who is an ex officio member of the NEC, is described in the National Executive Council Roles and Responsibilities as follows:

Working to implement the executive council’s annual strategic plan, the Executive Director is responsible for the day-to-day management and administration of the association, for the hiring and supervision of other employees, and for the management of national projects, including the coordination of committee work. The Executive Director supports national committees in drafting action plans and schedules, tracks the activities of the various committees, lends practical and moral support to committees as needed, maintains close contact with the two Members-at-Large, respects the role of the Members-at-Large as voices for the committees within the council.

In reality, what happens is that the committee chairs and their assigned staff support person (one of the four national staff members) lead committee work. The chair defines the vision and guides volunteer recruiting and supervision. The designated staff person organizes and leads operations. So, the MALs often end up as outside observers to the work of the committees they are supposed to represent.

The NEC has a different vision for the Directors. We are proposing that Directors have an active role in a portfolio of either committees or branches (see more about the Directors of Branches

and Twigs below) and that they remain informed about operational activities within their portfolios so as to adequately represent the interests of their committees on the NEC.

We are not suggesting that the Directors lead the initiatives of their committees. Instead, they will bring the strategic direction and policies of the association to the work of the committees and to help the committees find their own place and direction within that framework.

Instead of making the ED and national staff responsible for “supporting national committees in drafting action plans and schedules,” and “tracking the activities of the various committees,” we want the Directors to work with the committees to set goals and objectives, to develop a plan to meet those objectives, and then to keep tabs on the committees’ activities to ensure they are staying on track. The work of the office staff, then, will be to work with the committees to implement their goals and objectives. So, the Directors will not be directly involved in committee work, but they will help to direct it and to represent the interests of their portfolio of committees at the NEC table.

Further Discussion: Proposed Change 2

Appoint all national committee chairs through the elected NEC

One of the goals of the 2002 restructuring of EAC was to make the NEC smaller, which was accomplished by removing the committee chairs from the NEC table. However, that proposal did not adequately deal with another longstanding governance issue regarding committee chairs—the disparity that has developed over time between electing some chairs while appointing others.

Currently, committees may be committees of the membership (led by a member-elected chair) or committees of the executive council (led by a council-appointed chair). The distinction now appears to be random and determined by the body that initiated the committee—committees launched by council have appointed chairs and committees launched by members at an AGM have chairs elected by members at an AGM. (For more information about committee structure and mandates, see the [National Committee Mandates](http://www.editors.ca/files/private/EAC_National_Committee_Mandates_2007-07-13.pdf) <www.editors.ca/files/private/EAC_National_Committee_Mandates_2007-07-13.pdf> (PDF, 28 KB) in the members’ area of the EAC website.)

Why does this matter? While national committees differ in origin, governance and mandate, they all share a common purpose—to carry out the work of the association at the national level and to advise the national executive council on policy and opinion growing out of that work. Poor performance or non-performance of a committee chair can have significant operational, financial and/or other outcomes for the association.

When a committee chair is appointed by the NEC and does not meet the committee’s mandate or obligations, even after repeated attempts to provide assistance and support have failed, the NEC can find a more suitable candidate for the position. However, when a committee chair is elected at an AGM and does not meet the committee’s mandate or obligations, the NEC is powerless to do very much about it. If attempts to offer encouragement and support fail, we can ask the non-functioning chair to step down, but we can’t dismiss him or her.

Strong committee chairs build strong committees and do important work on behalf of EAC. As an association, we put a great deal of effort into recruiting for, nurturing and funding committees that have high strategic importance for the association and we have tried to appoint strong chairs for these committees. This is a prudent use of volunteer energy and resources. However, we also need to populate committees even when we don't have adequate resources to support them or when they don't have high strategic importance for the association at that particular time, which is not a very efficient use of volunteer energy and resources. This situation can be frustrating for committee chairs who don't feel supported and whose efforts could be put to better use elsewhere.

Some people have asked if we could leave a committee chair position vacant when it's not strategically important or when there isn't enough money to make its work a high priority. Because of our current structure, and because of the option of self-nomination for elected committee chair positions, the NEC tries to fill all the slots, whether or not the association's strategic priorities warrant the positions that year.

To equalize the disparity between elected and appointed committee chairs, and to empower the association with the flexibility to assign resources, both financial and volunteer resources, to the areas of current strategic or financial importance, the NEC is proposing that all national committee chairs or officers be appointed by the elected NEC, effective 2011.

This proposal does not eliminate the right of members to initiate the development of new committees at an AGM when they feel there is an issue of initiative that should be pursued. Only the means by which the committee chairs are selected will change.

In a nutshell, this proposal vests accountability for committee work in the NEC—committee chairs, who are appointed by the NEC, will be accountable to the NEC; the NEC, who are elected by members, will ultimately be accountable to the members for the actions (or non-actions) of our committees. At each AGM, members will have the opportunity to voice their approval or disapproval of the NEC's direction or actions when they cast their votes at the NEC election.

This model also ties in well with the directorships we have proposed. In some ways the model we have presented here is a hybrid of the pre-2002 model, where all of the committee chairs were members of the executive council, and the post-2002 model, where the committees were represented on the council by MALs who may have had little actual interaction with the committees they were supposed to represent. The model we are presenting here defines clear links between the Directors on the executive who will facilitate the strategic planning of a portfolio of related committees and the committee chairs they have appointed to implement mutually defined objectives.

Further Discussion: Proposed Change 3

Shift the date new NEC members elected at the AGM take office from the May/June to September

We propose that the date new NEC members, elected at the AGM, take office be pushed forward to September. Right now, newly elected NEC members take office immediately following the AGM. However, delaying this until the fall will give new members the summer to get up to speed / be mentored by outgoing members.

It has always been cost effective to hold one of the NEC's quarterly meetings immediately following the AGM because we have already paid to bring the council members together for the AGM. Even when a position appears to be uncontested, candidates are often unable or unwilling to pay for a trip to the AGM unless their expenses are reimbursed, which only happens if they are actually elected. So, new council members are sometimes absent from their first meeting.

When new NEC members come to their first meeting, they are usually a bit like deer caught in headlights—they are not aware of the history surrounding issues that the NEC has been working on or even the basics about how meetings are run or the procedures that the NEC follows. Consequently, the council spends much of that first meeting helping the new members get caught up and explaining how things work. This is important, but not an efficient use of meeting time.

As an alternative, we propose that the NEC term run from September to September instead of from June to June. The existing executive will meet following the AGM (usually held at the end of May or early June), and then the outgoing members will use the summer months to coach and mentor their incoming replacements. Before their first meeting in September, the new executive members will learn how the council operates, what will be expected of them as members of the council and the background surrounding the issues at hand.

Further Discussion: Proposed Change 4

Provide recognized status to small groups by creating a new, smaller category—twigs

EAC hopes to expand our membership and we believe one of the best ways to do this is to encourage the development of new groups in areas where EAC branches do not currently exist. When EAC members begin to meet and hold events (meetings, workshops, social events, etc.) in new communities, they attract new people to the organization, creating a demand for even more local seminars and networking. People are more likely to join the association if there are EAC activities in their area.

The most important service that EAC provides to its members is the opportunity to meet and interact with other editors—our most basic function as an organization is social. Much of that social side of the organization is only accessible to members who live in or near the “branch cities.”

There are a number of communities with pockets of EAC members that would be logical places to begin to develop new branches. In fact, there are several new groups of members already beginning to emerge. For example, groups have started meeting in Guelph, Kingston and Hamilton/Halton, and there's a French-speaking group in Ottawa. We expect one or more of these groups to seek branch status soon.

Currently, new groups are more like sub-groups of an adjacent branch. It has usually fallen to that adjacent branch to foster the new group. Because the branch receives a portion of the membership fees paid by all branch members, including the members in the new twig, the branch is expected to support the new twig both financially and through their efforts to encourage or organize events in the twig community. This is not always as easy as it sounds, especially when the twig is hours away.

In Kingston's case, twig members may actually belong to either the Toronto branch or the National Capital Region branch in Ottawa. Kingston is two hours from Toronto and two hours from Ottawa, so members there could easily belong to either branch. This makes the decision about which branch should foster the new group very unclear. Whose job is it to support this new twig, and where does the money come from?

The NEC believes it is important to support these small groups. The reasons for this are obvious for anyone who lives outside one of our branch cities. It is difficult to appreciate the benefits of membership when you don't live close enough to a branch to attend meetings, professional development opportunities or networking events.

The first step is to give status to twigs by establishing a smaller category of branch for them. Right now, twigs don't formally exist in our organizational structure. A local group is either a branch, or it doesn't officially exist.

Along with their new status, twigs will be allocated the portion of their membership fees that would otherwise have been transferred to their branch. This money will remain in the national coffers, but it will be allocated for use by the twig. They can use this money to cover meeting expenses, or pay for a speaker to come to one of their meetings, or simply spend it on a social event for their members . . . it is their money to spend on their members.

It is also becoming clear that it would be easier for twigs to be supported by a staff person in our national office (and by our new Regional Directors of Branches and Twigs, if that position is approved). However, with much of the support for new groups falling on the national office instead of on branch volunteers, the office will require another staff person to cover the additional workload. This new staff position appears on the proposed organizational chart earlier in this document.

Of course, twig members will still be welcome to take part in activities held by adjacent branches. EAC branches have always been welcoming and inclusive—members are welcome to attend events at any branch and to receive the member discount at these events.

Why can't these new groups just become branches?

On the surface, the requirements for becoming a branch do not appear very onerous [see EAC's *Rules and Regulations No. 2: Branches of the Association* <www.editors.ca/files/private/Rule_2_Branches_2006-06-29_APPROVED.pdf> (PDF, 75 KB)]. From the association's inception, the requirements for forming a branch were purposely made simple so as to encourage the development of new branches. However, instead of developing a large number of small branches, the association has a handful of large branches.

When the only examples to follow are large, well-established branches, the perceived expectations for a new branch are significantly increased. The experience of the Saskatchewan branch, the association's newest and, by far, smallest branch, illustrates the challenges of being a small branch. From their membership of about 30, the Saskatchewan branch is expected to have an elected executive, to hold executive meetings and membership meetings, to put on workshops, to produce a newsletter, and to send representatives to the NEC and national committees. After a few years, when the available and willing volunteers begin to burn out, a potential volunteer base of 30 is quickly exhausted.

It can be argued that many of these are only perceived expectations, and that a new branch is not required to keep up with the much larger, more established branches. However, Saskatoon has discovered that the perceptions are very real, and they can be very difficult for a small group to sustain when they have few volunteer resources to draw from.

Ideally, small groups, or twigs, will have some autonomy and status within the organization, but they should not be encumbered with the demands of running a full-fledged branch. In this way, twigs can focus on meeting the needs of local members and developing their group.

If you approve the creation of a new, smaller branch category—twigs—the NEC will draft changes to EAC's *Rules and Regulations No. 2: Branches of the Association* to include twigs. These changes will be presented for approval at the 2011 AGM. The draft guidelines for twig development and governance are as follow:

The criteria for the establishment of a twig include the following:

- (a) that the twig be composed of a minimum of five (5) members
- (b) that the activities of the twig be coordinated by two (2) twig coordinators, who are elected by the twig members
- (c) that the coordinators serve two-year terms, with one new coordinator being elected each year to promote succession planning (Obviously, someone will have to serve a one- or three-year term in the beginning to make this work.)
- (d) that the coordinators recruit other volunteers as required to support the activities of the twig
- (e) that the twig holds a minimum of four membership meetings a year

Further Discussion: Proposed Change 5

Replace the six Branch Representatives on the NEC with two Regional Directors of Branches and Twigs

The final, and perhaps most critical, concern with the development of new branches and twigs is the representation of these groups on the NEC. Section 2.3 of EAC's *Rules and Regulations No. 2: Branches of the Association* entitles each branch to a representative on the NEC. We currently have six branches and six branch representatives. If we successfully establish new branches or twigs in a number of new communities, it could cost the association as much as \$3,000 per year

for each new representative added to the executive. It would also become increasingly difficult to try to accommodate all of these people around a board room table, and difficult for some of the smaller branches to find volunteers to commit the time and energy required to participate on the NEC.

What are the alternatives?

As part of the proposed structural changes to the NEC, we suggest that EAC move to regional representation of branches and twigs on the NEC by two Regional Directors—Eastern Director of Branches and Twigs (Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic Canada) and Western Director of Branches and Twigs (the Territories, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia).

Following the example of our Directors of national committees, the Regional Directors of Branches and Twigs will each be responsible for representing the interests of a portfolio of branches on the NEC. Again, these Directors will not lead or be responsible for the activities of branches and twigs. Instead, the Directors will bring the strategic direction of the association to the planning and activities of the branches and twigs within their portfolios, and help those branches and twigs find their own place and direction within that framework.

The Regional Directors will communicate regularly with representatives from the branches and twigs within their portfolios to stay abreast of their activities, challenges and successes, and to effectively represent their interests on the NEC.

Facilitating communication—between and among the branches and twigs, and between national and the branches and twigs—will be a key role for the Directors of Branches and Twigs. Currently, there is not a lot of communication or coordination among branches, but the NEC believes this should be encouraged. If branches and twigs are encouraged to support each other, they will be stronger for sharing their experiences and advice.

Some people have expressed concern that branches and twigs will begin to feel disconnected from the national organization and from each other. There are a number of ways this can be avoided. For example, it has been proposed that branch and twig chairs, along with the Regional Directors of Branches and Twigs, and the Branch Services Coordinator, hold regular teleconferences, or even have annual face-to-face meetings in order to encourage them to stay connected. Alternatively, the chairs of branches and twigs might want to participate in a council of branches and twigs. Whatever happens, this has to be a decision reached after much discussion with the members and the dedicated volunteer executives who are running the branches. Branch executives have already offered a lot of feedback and advice, and the NEC will continue the dialogue with the branches even after this referendum is over.

Finally, a new staff position—the Branch Services Coordinator—will be created to provide administrative support for the Regional Directors of Branches and Twigs and for branches and twigs themselves.

How will the Regional Directors be selected?

It is important that the Regional Directors be selected by the members they are going to represent. In fact, Section 4.4 of EAC's *Constitution* stipulates that, while “the members of the

Executive Council shall be elected annually by the members at the annual general meeting . . . branch representatives shall be elected by their branch members.” So, the current thinking is that these directors should be elected by digital ballot before the national AGM. Candidates will be nominated, or will self-nominate, for the positions, and then the members in each region will have an opportunity to vote for their preferred candidate using a similar system to the one used for this referendum.

Referendum Questions:

The following changes are proposed for implementation following the 2011 AGM. These changes require majority support (more than 50%) of the legal votes cast.

Do you support:

- 1) the proposed structural changes to the national executive council (NEC) as outlined in *Editing EAC: The Next Chapter?*
 - Replacing the two MALs with six Directors
 - Replacing six Branch Representatives with two Regional Directors of Branches and Twigs
- 2) the proposal to appoint all national committee chairs through the elected NEC?
- 3) the plan to shift the date NEC members elected at the AGM take office from the May/June (following the AGM) to September?
- 4) the creation of a new, smaller category of branches, called twigs, as outlined in *Editing EAC: The Next Chapter?*