

# Government of the Members, by the Members, for the Members

Of course, this title is an adaptation of the phrase, “Government of the People, by the People, for the People,” from Abraham Lincoln’s famous Gettysburg address in 1863. It is a popular sentiment often used to describe democratic governance. It applies equally well to condominium corporations and not-for-profit organizations like ACO, although they are governed by different legislation (i.e. the Condo Act vs. the Corporations Act, respectively).



Recently we saw democracy in action as ACO held its 44th Annual General Meeting. The membership elected four new board members; Katherine Gow, Courtney Cartmill, Melissa Kirkaldie and Mark Daye, who will volunteer their time and guidance for three years. Leading up to the AGM, I was a little surprised when a few members contacted me to challenge the nomination process suggesting that it was undemocratic, unfair, and somehow improper. Specifically, they took issue with the fact that the Nominations Committee had evaluated all nominees and recommended a slate of four candidates for consideration by the members, in addition to presenting the other nine candidates.

While admittedly a new practice initiated by the board last year, it is not improper. Notwithstanding what was done in the past, the Nominations Committee simply did its job as specified in the bylaws. Section 4.04.1 states that “the list of candidates and the advance ballot SHALL contain the names of the candidates for office proposed by the Nominations Committee, and

the candidates whose names have been put in nomination under section 4.03.1 (i.e. the call for nominations).”

Recommending a slate of board nominees is widely considered governance best practice for any association or organization. A nominations committee is responsible for recruiting the best-qualified candidates for the board of directors to advance the interests of the members and ensure the sustainability of the association. To find candidates with the right skills, qualifications, expertise, and fit, the nominating committee must identify, recruit, screen, assess and recommend candidates for consideration and election by the members.

There is little point in having a nominations committee if they do not propose and recommend candidates. Simply presenting the members with a list of candidates has the potential to reduce the election to a popularity contest with little consideration for qualifications or fit. It is also true that even the best nomination process may not get it right every time. As such, ACO will continue learning, evolving, and improving our nomination process to serve our members best. It’s worth noting that the ability to challenge the process is a characteristic of a healthy democracy, so I’m glad we have members that are sufficiently passionate about ACO to question our process!

Regardless of the process, it will always be democratic, because ultimately our members will decide who they support and elect. That is the essence of the government of the members, by the members, for the members. ■

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, prominent loop at the end. It appears to be the signature of Paul B. MacDonald.

Paul B. MacDonald  
Executive Director