



Office of the
Grand Exalted Ruler

To: Delegates of the Virtual 2021 Alberta Provincial Conference

Hi everyone.

First off, thank you for the kind invitation to attend the first ever 'virtual' Alberta Elks Provincial Conference. As this virtual setting does provide a unique opportunity for members who may not have been able to attend in a 'normal' year, due to work or financial issues, I would encourage everyone on the call to actively participate in a positive fashion in the discussions to come.

A quick recap since our last convention...As you are all probably aware, the past 2 years have been very challenging for our organization. The global pandemic has severely impacted our ability to hold meetings, fundraise, and ultimately caused the cancellation of all 2020 Provincial Conferences, and the National Convention.

After the 2019 National Convention, the national executive appointed a committee to perform a complete organization/operational review of the Order. This committee was chaired by IPGER Brother Ron Potter, to review our entire organizational structure to ensure we are delivering our mandate and programs in a cost effective and efficient manner. The results of this review was shared with the membership in April 2020.

Using this review as a starting point, we immediately acted on the two main recommendations of that report. The first this was the selection of 4 members who would sit on the new Strategic Planning Committee, (SPC) and be supported by our Executive Director, Kevan McBeth. The goal of the SPC was to determine both a short term and a longer term strategy for our organization to address the concern of declining membership. The first step in that analysis was to determine if our current governance structure was effective, and recommend any changes resulting from the consultations with the Grand Executive, the Association Executives, and the PGER's. Upon completing this exercise, the SPC distributed the approved report by EBlast to the membership in May 2021. A copy can also be found on our website.

As a result of the recommendations contained in the SPC report, our Judiciary Committee has prepared the necessary Resolutions for distribution to the Lodges, and ultimately be discussed and dealt with appropriately at the 2021 national convention.

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The second recommendation of the Organization Review report was the sale of the Grand Lodge office in Regina. This sale, while regrettable, was completed in the summer of 2020, and our staff are now located in leased space not far from our old location. While the sale greatly improved our financial situation, we still need to continue our efforts in attracting new members if we are to survive.

In March 2021, we asked our lodges to plan an Elks Appreciation Day for essential workers. We had a lot of Lodges participate and 11 Lodges ask for funding support. It was a huge success and a great idea to show relevance in our communities. Since December, we have had 14 lodges apply for the membership dues relief, projects or deferral initiative for 2021 dues hardships because of Covid – 19 and the associated health restrictions imposed by our local and provincial governments.

Grand Lodge office staff worked with the White Rock lodge from BC, to create a program called Fundscrip. It is a gift card buying program that will save our members money and also provide a percentage of proceeds towards our national charity, the Elks and Royal Purple Fund for Children. This initiative was recently communicated to our membership on our Facebook page, and the Elks website I encourage you to check out this program by clicking on the link <https://group.fundscrip.com/en/E5GLKT/fund-for-children>

Grand Lodge staff are also working on a “Join the Elks” microsite. This site will be available to our lodges to help with their social media posts, content and to draw in the public to check more out about the Elks. In conversations with Rick Gathen of the USA Elks, we are taking a piece of their success to launch this in July so stay tuned.

Our Member Services/Marketing Committee have also started to advertise different members to the public as a recognition and marketing strategy. Our first member was Darren Etner of Balgonie Lodge in Saskatchewan. The goal is to advertise through social media and Google ads to promote that being an Elk gives something back to our community, and that we are not who you think we are.

We will have more members in ads going every 2 weeks throughout the spring and early summer. Our website continues to be updated including the addition of a ‘member’s portal’ that provides members with a variety of information and tools to assist lodges in their fundraising and membership efforts. Check it out...its password protected...just type in ‘elksproud’ and it will take you right to the portal.



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Our Charities Coordinator, Alissa Hill, also recently completed her work on a new website specifically geared to our national charity, which hopefully will enable us to fundraise more effectively. She is also hosting regular Zoom calls in which she shares information on the charity and also 'Tech Tips'. These 'seminars' are proving to be quite popular and I would encourage you to sign up and take advantage of these events.

I would also encourage our members to consider taking that next step by volunteering to take chairs/executive positions in our Order. Most Associations are offering leadership training seminars to provide our members with the tools and confidence to move forward in their lodges, Associations and perhaps into the National Executive. So I encourage you to seriously consider this opportunity, let your name stand this year, and contribute your leadership skills to move our Order forward.

I would also like to thank every lodge/member that offered their help to others in their communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Your service and kindness will always be remembered. And lastly, let's all remember why we became Elks...to help those less fortunate, to belong to a caring organization, to make lifelong friends.

Enjoy the conference, share some good stories, have some laughs, and be thankful for our many blessings. With the uptick in vaccinations, hopefully we can all get back to normal sooner than later.

Thank you again for the kind invitation to attend your conference, and THANKS FOR CARING. It has been an absolute honor and privilege to serve as your national leader these past 2 years.

Derek Barkley,
National President/GER
Elks of Canada

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