

GOVERNANCE POLICY #1 – PRACTITIONERS
FOR SOKA GAKKAI INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CANADA
ASSOCIATION DE LA SOKA GAKKAI INTERNATIONALE DU CANADA
(a federal corporation)
hereinafter referred to as “SGI Canada”

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Policy #1

This Governance Policy emanates from General Operating Bylaw No. 8 for SGI Canada, as amended from time to time, and is to be read in conjunction with Bylaw 8 and the other Policies adopted pursuant to Bylaw No. 8.

The definitions contained in Bylaw No. 8, as amended from time to time, shall apply to the provisions of this Governance Policy.

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INTRODUCTION

The Practitioners of SGI Canada are the fundamental reason for the existence of the organization. The spirit of the Soka Gakkai, as established by its founding presidents, has always been to treasure the people and to regard them as Buddhas and bodhisattvas. SGI President Daisaku Ikeda writes:

Nichiren Buddhism is a “religion for all human beings.” It was Nichiren Daishonin who firmly established the great path of the “human religion” elucidated in the Lotus Sutra, the essence of Mahayana Buddhism, and who left behind the means for all people to realize genuine happiness and lasting peace. (Lectures on “The Opening of the Eyes,” Part 1)

The organization exists for the sake of the people, to share Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism and to support and encourage people in their pursuit of the three elements of faith, practice and study, as described in the Statement of Faith in SGI Canada’s General Operating Bylaw.

SGI Canada’s primary purpose is to spread the humanistic teachings of Nichiren Buddhism. The organization therefore welcomes all people who are interested in learning about this philosophy, including guests who are invited to attend meetings. There are no restrictions with regard to age, gender, race or personal beliefs, nor is there any monetary cost involved in attending SGI Canada meetings.

For those who wish to join SGI Canada, the guidelines contained in this policy explain the qualifications and procedure for joining. The Practitioners Policy also contains the guidelines concerning duties and privileges, standards, and the conditions for termination as Practitioners.

BRIEF EXPLANATION OF THIS POLICY

This Policy applies to Practitioners who are eighteen (18) years of age and older. There is a separate Policy on Junior Practitioners that applies to youth who are thirteen (13) to seventeen (17) years of age, inclusive.

A new applicant may qualify to become a Practitioner of SGI Canada if he or she professes belief in Soka Gakkai Nichiren Buddhism, is actively engaged in the daily Buddhist practice of Soka Gakkai Nichiren Buddhism by reciting portions of the Lotus Sutra and chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo on a regular basis, has attended at least two (2) District meetings and has completed a written form confirming his or her respect and support for the procedures of SGI Canada expressed in the Constitutional Documents. Applicants should subscribe to SGI Canada's monthly publication and SGI Canada Leaders should inform Practitioners about the opportunity to make financial contributions to SGI Canada. Application forms for practitioner applicants are to be approved and signed by the applicable District, Chapter and Area leaders once they have confirmed that a new applicant meets all the qualifications that apply to become a Practitioner. Thereafter, the Individual may be formally approved as a Practitioner by the Board of Directors.

However, everyone who was a member of SGI Canada prior to the adoption of General Operating Bylaw No. 7 will automatically become a Practitioner of SGI Canada.

Anyone who is a member of an SGI Organization from another country can be recognized as a Practitioner of SGI Canada upon provision of a letter of introduction from the SGI Organization from the other country and completion of the necessary forms to be recognized as a Practitioner of SGI Canada. The Individual must be physically present in Canada at the time the application is made. The Individual will be recognized as a Practitioner of SGI Canada upon acceptance of the letter of introduction by the SGI Canada Board, although the Board may request further information concerning an Individual's letter of introduction, or the Board may refuse the letter of introduction if the Board has any concerns in that regard.

Once approved, a new applicant will receive a certificate confirming the Individual's status as a Practitioner and will have the duty to respect and agree to the procedures of SGI Canada described in the Constitutional Documents. Practitioners are eligible to participate in SGI Canada's programs, receive a Gohonzon for their household, provided that the requirements in the Board Policy on the Conferral of the Gohonzon have been met, and are eligible to make financial contributions to SGI Canada.

In order to protect the collective of the Practitioners of SGI Canada in accordance with the teachings of Nichiren Buddhism, Practitioners are to abide by the Practitioner Standards described in Section 1.03 of this Policy. The Practitioner Standards generally prohibit the furthering of personal interests among Practitioners, including prohibition on the lending or borrowing of monies, actively promoting or soliciting business within SGI Canada, or wilful behaviour that causes pain and suffering to other Practitioners or harm or risk of harm to the organization itself. Any other behaviour that would undermine the teachings of Nichiren Buddhism is also prohibited. Where a Practitioner is alleged to have breached a Practitioner Standard, there will be several opportunities to try to resolve the matter through informal discussions with responsible Leaders as described in Section 1.04 of this Policy. Where the matter is not resolved through the informal discussions and the General Director, in consultation with the local senior

leadership, determines that Practitioner Status Review is needed, the provisions outlined in a separate Governance Policy on Status Review for Practitioners will be followed to attempt to restore the Practitioner to a healthy relationship with SGI Canada and to protect the other Practitioners from further harm.

1.01 Qualifications to Join and Become a Practitioner of SGI Canada

(a) Qualification to Join and Become a Practitioner of SGI Canada

Practitioners of SGI Canada shall consist of those Individuals who:

- (i) profess adherence to Soka Gakkai Nichiren Buddhism;
- (ii) have evidenced their written agreement to respect and support the leadership and agreement to the procedures of SGI Canada as expressed in the Constitutional Documents including the Practitioner Standards contained in the Governance Policy on Practitioners;
- (iii) have actively engaged in the daily Buddhist practice of Soka Gakkai Nichiren Buddhism by reciting portions of the Lotus Sutra and chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo on a regular basis and have attended at least two (2) District meetings, as determined in the sole discretion of the Board of Directors;
- (iv) are eighteen (18) years of age, or older;
- (v) understand the importance of SGI Canada's publications, which contain the monthly study materials of SGI Canada's Buddhist study program and other materials that contribute to the fulfilment of the three elements of faith, practice and study. It is therefore recommended that new Practitioners should subscribe to the primary SGI Canada publication; and
- (vi) whose application to become a Practitioner has been approved by a Consensus Resolution of the Board in accordance with the written approval first provided by the applicable District, Chapter and Area Leaders.

(b) Admission or Confirmation as a Practitioner of SGI Canada

- (i) Upon Consensus Resolution of the Board, members of an SGI Organization from another country may be recognized as Practitioners of SGI Canada, provided that the following requirements have been met:
 - (1) The Individual has applied in writing to obtain recognition of status as a Practitioner of SGI Canada and is physically in Canada at the time of such application; and
 - (2) The Individual has provided SGI Canada with a letter of introduction from an SGI Organization from another country confirming the Individual's status as a member of the SGI Organization from another country, although the Board of Directors for SGI Canada retains the discretion to accept or refuse the letter of introduction, or to require that

the Individual must provide further information relating to the contents of the letter of introduction;

For greater certainty, existing members of an SGI Organization from another country who are recognized as Practitioners of SGI Canada are hereby deemed to meet all of the qualification requirements that apply to Practitioners.

(c) No Fees to Apply

There shall be no fees that apply to become a Practitioner unless otherwise directed by the Board of Directors.

(d) Record of Practitioners

A record of the Practitioners of SGI Canada shall be kept by the Secretary of SGI Canada.

1.02 Duties and Privileges of Practitioners

(a) Duties of Practitioners

A Practitioner of SGI Canada shall have the following duties:

- (i) the duty to adhere to the Practitioner Standards outlined at section 1.03 of this Policy;
- (ii) the duty to respect and agree to the procedures of SGI Canada as expressed in its Constitutional Documents, including the Status Review for Practitioners referred to in section 6.03 of General Operating Bylaw No. 8 and outlined in the applicable Governance Policy, as amended from time to time; and
- (iii) the duty to participate harmoniously in the SGI Canada community as fellow Practitioners.

(b) Privileges of Practitioners

A Practitioner of SGI Canada shall have the following privileges:

- (i) the privilege to participate in SGI Canada's programs and activities as personal circumstances permit subject to the extent allowed by the Constitutional Documents;
- (ii) the privilege to make financial contributions to SGI Canada as each individual wishes; and
- (iii) the privilege to receive a Gohonzon for his or her household in accordance with the provisions of the Board Policy regarding the Conferral of the Gohonzon.

1.03 Standards for Practitioners

The following Practitioner Standards have been established in order to: 1) protect the collective body of SGI Canada Practitioners from potential harm or wrongdoing committed by another Practitioner and 2) to restore any Practitioners who may have committed any wrongdoing into relationship with SGI Canada and other Practitioners of SGI Canada. Failure to abide by the Practitioner Standards may result in Practitioner Status Review in accordance with the terms of the applicable Governance Policy on Practitioner Status Review. For greater certainty, more than one Practitioner may be subject to Practitioner Status Review under the said Policy at any given time. All Practitioners are prohibited from carrying out any of the activities described in subsection 1.03(a) to (c), inclusive of this Policy, as determined in the sole discretion of the Board of Directors.

- (a) Furthering personal financial interests among Practitioners, including but not limited to, the following:
 - (i) Lending or borrowing of any monies within SGI Canada;
 - (ii) Active promotion or solicitation of business within SGI Canada;
- (b) Conduct or behaviour that would undermine or prejudice the fulfillment of the charitable objects of SGI Canada contrary to the teachings and beliefs of Nichiren Buddhism;
- (c) Conduct or behaviour that would be disruptive to the harmonious unity¹ of SGI Canada, including, but not limited to persistent abusive behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological pain to fellow Practitioners; creating schisms or cliques that are purposely attempting to lead people away from the teachings of the organization; the violation of a Individual's right to privacy; human rights violations; defamation; harassment; or criminal activity that would negatively affect the organization and/or those who belong to it, as determined in the sole discretion of SGI Canada.

1.04 Informal discussion process to review suspected breach of Practitioner Standards

Where a Leader becomes aware of a suspected breach of the Practitioner Standards by a Practitioner (“Practitioner Under Consideration”), the said Leader shall describe the alleged wrongdoing verbally (but not in writing nor by email in order to maintain privacy and discretion) to the Regional Coordinator. Upon being advised of the said wrongdoing, the Regional Coordinator will then consult with the divisional Regional Leader for the Region to which the Practitioner in question belongs. Provided there are no known criminal charges or investigations pending or processing against the Practitioner in question, the Practitioner Under Consideration will progress through the informal discussion process outlined in section 1.04 herein. The

¹ Harmonious unity is based on the Buddhist principle, “many in body, one in mind.” In his writing of the same name, Nichiren Daishonin states, “If the spirit of many in body but one in mind prevails among the people, they will achieve all their goals, whereas if one in body but different in mind, they can achieve nothing remarkable” (WND-1, 618). Another of his writings, “The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life,” says: “All disciples and lay supporters of Nichiren should chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with the spirit of many in body but one in mind, transcending all differences among themselves to become as inseparable as fish and the water in which they swim. This spiritual bond is the basis for the universal transmission of the ultimate law of life and death. Herein lies the true goal of Nichiren’s propagation” (WND-1, 217). This expression can also be translated as “different in body, same in spirit.” “Different in body” can be interpreted as suggesting the uniqueness of individuals, and “same in spirit,” a goal or commitment shared among individuals.

Regional Coordinator will then ask the appropriate Area or Regional Leader to informally speak with the Practitioner Under Consideration in an attempt to resolve the alleged breach.

- (a) If the Leader appointed by the Regional Coordinator (“First Leader”) is not able to resolve the matter, the matter will be referred to a Leader who is one level higher than the First Leader (the “Second Leader”) who will then informally speak with the Practitioner Under Consideration in an attempt to resolve the matter.
- (b) If the Second Leader is not able to informally resolve the matter, the matter will be referred to a Leader who is one level higher than the Second Leader (the “Third Leader”), who will then informally speak with the Practitioner Under Consideration in an attempt to resolve the matter. Where the Third Leader is unable to resolve the matter, the matter will continue to be referred up to each ascending Level of Leadership as follows: Area Leader to Regional Leader to National Leader and then to the General Director.
- (c) If the General Director is not able to informally resolve the matter, the General Director may, in his or her sole discretion within a one-month period, refer the matter to the Chair of the Board pursuant to the procedure set out in the Governance Policy on Status Review for Practitioners. The General Director shall consult with one or more of the Leaders who were involved with the informal discussion process outlined in section 1.04 of this Governance Policy on Practitioners before making a decision to proceed with Practitioner Status Review.

1.05 Resignation and Termination of Status as a Practitioner

(a) Resignation as a Practitioner

Practitioners may resign at any time from SGI Canada by delivering a written notification of their resignation to the General Director of SGI Canada, which resignation shall be deemed to have been accepted as of the effective date stated in the resignation.

(b) Termination of Status as a Practitioner of SGI Canada

Status as a Practitioner of SGI Canada shall automatically terminate upon occurrence of any of the following:

- (i) Upon completion of the Status Review procedure for Practitioners in accordance with the provisions of the Governance Policy on Practitioner Status Review that leads to termination, if applicable; or
- (ii) on the death of the Practitioner provided that the names of deceased Practitioners are kept as part of the records of SGI Canada and in remembrance of those individuals.