Debate and decisions about resolutions and notices of motion at Council meetings take place in two complementary formats: small group sessions and plenary sessions. Except for those dealing with provincial collective bargaining, these sessions are open to the public and media may be present.

Small Group Sessions

Each resolution or notice of motion is debated and voted on in small group sessions according to established procedures.

- Independent chairs, with the assistance of recorders and resource persons, will facilitate how the resolutions and notices of motion are debated and voted on in each small group session.

- Senior administrative staff members serve as resource persons who work with the chairperson to ensure that each small group has the same background information and details regarding the matter under consideration.

- The chairperson, where appropriate, will invite a councillor from the local association that moved the resolution or notice of motion to open debate and provide the opportunity for all other councillors present to speak.

- When there are no more councillors remaining on the speakers’ list, the chairperson or a councillor “calls for the question” to close the debate.

- A vote is conducted by a show of hands, with the recorder announcing to the group the number of votes either “in favour” or “against.”

- Votes taken on resolutions represent a preliminary vote. Resolutions approved or defeated by 70 percent of councillors are then grouped together into two separate blocs and brought to the closing plenary session for final decision. Any resolution included in these blocs may be set aside for consideration through a motion by a councillor in the plenary session. These, together with resolutions under the for or against 70 percent threshold, are brought before the plenary for separate debate and decision making.

- Votes taken on notices of motion in small group sessions are intended only for the information of councillors during the closing plenary. Each notice of motion must come to the plenary for a decision.

- An amendment to a resolution or notice of motion will be considered by the chairperson provided they are satisfied that the intent remains unchanged. A mover and seconder are required to introduce a motion to amend and debate is permitted prior to voting on the motion to amend. If an amendment is satisfactory to the chairperson and approved by the majority of those who are present and voting, the group then votes on the amended resolution or notice of motion.

- A referral of a resolution or notice of motion to the STF Executive will be considered by the chairperson if councillors wish to request that further investigation into the matter be undertaken prior to Council consideration. A mover and seconder are required to introduce a motion to refer and debate is permitted prior to voting on the motion to refer.
- Tabling of a resolution or notice of motion that removes it from consideration by councillors will be considered by the chairperson. A mover and seconder are required and no amendment or debate is permitted prior to voting.

- A councillor may challenge a decision of the chairperson (e.g., to accept or refuse an amendment or motion). If the challenge is seconded by another councillor, the chairperson asks the group for a vote to sustain the chairperson. If the majority of those present and voting sustain the chairperson, the decision of the chairperson stands. If the vote does not sustain the chairperson, the decision of the chairperson is overturned.

### Roles and Responsibilities

#### Chairperson

The chairperson of each small group session has a responsibility to act as an impartial facilitator who:

1. Reminds those present to engage in appropriate use of electronic devices such as smartphones or tablets during the session.
2. Ensures that group sessions dealing with resolutions related to provincial collective bargaining are open only to councillors, Council officials (i.e., chairperson and recorder), Federation staff and, where appropriate, invited guests.
3. Introduces the Council officials (i.e., chairperson, recorder and resource person), guests, Federation staff and other observers who are present.
4. Asks councillors to introduce themselves stating their name and local association.
5. Determines the order in which the resolutions will be debated. Unless the chairperson suggests otherwise, each resolution is debated in the order in which it is listed in the Resolutions and Notices of Motion Information booklet.
6. Checks with the resource person to see if there is additional information on a particular resolution.
7. Where appropriate, invites a councillor from the local association who was the source of the resolution to open debate and, following the opportunity for all other councillors present to speak to the resolution, close debate.
8. Invites participation from councillors in the debate.
   (a) Requests that councillors state their name before speaking to a resolution.
   (b) Keeps a speakers’ list, as needed, of those councillors wishing to participate (acknowledges councillors with a nod [for example] as they are put on the list).
9. Provides opportunities for the group to hear information and perspectives that will assist the decision making process about each resolution.
10. Ensures that the established procedures for the debate and decision about each resolution during the small group sessions are followed, including the requirements for the chairperson to:
   (a) Ensure that the small group sessions do not become a forum for councillors to introduce new resolutions or distribute written comments or other materials about resolutions without the appropriate vetting process by the Resolutions Committee.
   (b) Refrain from disclosing the decision of any other small group about a resolution.
   (c) Refrain from disclosing information provided by any other small group about a resolution before this resolution is discussed by the group in session, and to exercise discretion as to when and if such information (i.e., the common wording of amendments) should be shared.
11. Attends to appropriate procedures and voting for the type of motion before the small group. (See Guidelines for Voting on Resolutions and Notices of Motion).
12. Tests the group on its readiness to vote by inviting “the question” when debate appears to be complete.
13. Conducts the vote by a show of hands and indicates when the vote count is complete.
14. Invites the recorder to announce to the group the number of votes either in favour of or against the resolution.
15. Encourages each group to discuss all resolutions allotted to it. Where this is not possible, it is suggested that the next group begin with resolutions not discussed by the previous group.
16. Gives the group the option to indicate preferred resolution(s) for discussion if the session is coming to a close (possibly five to 10 minutes remaining) and there will not be sufficient time to vote on every resolution allotted to the session.
17. Ensures that the session is concluded on time.

#### Recorder

The recorder of each small group session has a responsibility to act as a reliable scribe who:

1. Participates in conducting the count of the voting.
2. Ensures recording on the forms provided regarding each resolution of the votes in favour of and against, resolutions as amended and subsidiary motions.
3. Reports each vote to the small group that is in session.
4. Maintains the confidentiality of the record of votes.
5. Promptly delivers the record of votes to the Council administration office following the conclusion of each small group session.
Resource Persons

The resource persons have a responsibility to:

1. Identify and/or clarify current Federation policy statements as needed regarding each resolution or topic that is being debated.

2. Provide and/or clarify background information, including the perspectives of the Federation’s advisory or working committees as needed regarding each resolution or topic that is being debated.

3. Provide additional information that has become available since the publication and distribution of Council documentation.

4. Make suggestions as needed about issues that should be considered regarding each resolution or topic that is being debated.

5. Provide support to the chairperson regarding procedural questions.

6. Participate in the counting of the vote.

Collective Bargaining Proposals

Chairpersons and Recorders

1. The Proposals for Teachers’ Consideration booklet will be mailed to local association presidents and councillors in March. This booklet is used in the small group sessions at the Annual Meeting of Council for discussion or amendment to the noted proposals only in years when the Federation is preparing to enter a new round of provincial collective bargaining.

2. The chairperson or recorder will be provided with the Proposals for Teachers’ Consideration in their orientation session at Council.

3. The recorder will be given a Recorder’s Summary Sheet which will include the numbers assigned to each proposal. The assigned numbers will be manually written in the Proposals for Teachers’ Consideration booklet.

4. Within the small group session, councillors are given an opportunity to review all of the proposals and identify specific proposals for discussion or amendment. Each proposal does not need to be discussed – only those that councillors request to discuss or amend. The amendments that are proposed will follow the same format (i.e., mover, seconder and the vote by the group). The recorder will record the amendment and all votes onto the summary sheet.

5. The recorder will forward the completed summary sheet to the resolutions administrative support in the Council office at the end of each group session.

6. The main resolution approving all of the provincial collective bargaining proposals is included in the recorder summaries for resolutions. The main resolution that the STF Executive sponsors is worded as follows:

   BE IT RESOLVED that Council receive the Proposals for Teachers’ Consideration and approve the contents as the Proposals for Teachers' Provincial Collective Bargaining.

Make it Meaningful!

Decisions made by Council have a significant effect on teachers and the Federation. As a leader and representative of the profession, you are expected and encouraged to engage in the debates and voting that occur in all of the small group and plenary sessions. Your participation in these processes can be made more meaningful if you:

Become familiar with the resolutions and notices of motion to be debated and voted upon prior to coming to Council meetings.

Carefully consider the intent of the movers, issues under consideration and the implications of passage.

Seek understanding and ask questions during the debates and opportunities for informal conversations with other councillors.

Encourage your colleagues to participate as well by being open to different points of view, new information and constructive criticism.
Plenary Sessions

The Federation has established plenary session rules of order, including voting procedures, that have evolved over time.

The opening plenary session sets the stage for decision-making by councillors. The only business actually conducted during this session involves standard motions introduced on the floor of Council. Executive members move and second motions to receive the report of the Secretary-Treasurer (Executive Director) and refer the proposed budget to the small group sessions for study. These motions are decided by a majority vote of those present and voting.

The closing plenary session is when final decisions are made about all resolutions and notices of motion. Councillors are provided with a list of all matters to be voted on.

Resolutions Approved or Defeated by 70 Percent of Councillors Voting in the Small Group Sessions

These resolutions are presented to councillors en bloc in two separate motions made by the Resolutions Committee. Any resolution included in these blocs may be pulled for individual debate and decision making through a motion by a councillor. The first motion made by the Committee will be to approve those resolutions that were approved by 70 percent of councillors voting in small groups. The second motion will be to approve those resolutions that were defeated by 70 percent of councillors voting in small groups.

Resolutions Not Decided by 70 Percent of Councillors Voting in the Small Group Sessions

The chair deals with each of the resolutions in this category in numerical order as they are listed in the Resolutions and Notices of Motion Information booklet. After debate, each resolution is decided by a majority vote of those present and voting. Any resolution pulled from en bloc voting by motion of a councillor will also be handled in this manner.

Notices of Motion

Although notices of motion are voted on in the small group sessions, these votes are only for the information of councillors. All notices of motion must come individually to the closing plenary session for decision and must pass with no less than two-thirds majority of councillors present and voting.

Financial Matters

Financial decision making is opened with a standard motion to receive the audited financial statements for the previous year. As a rule, other decisions regarding the finances of the Federation are left to the end of the plenary session. Councillors consider notices of motion to adopt the proposed budget and establish the membership fee for the coming year. The fee decision requires a change to STF Bylaw 8 (Fees) and, since it is a major determinant of the budget, these two decisions are dealt with together. Additionally, one or more notices of motion may be necessary either to continue or change the Contingency Fund levy paid by each Federation member, or to approve Income Continuance Plan premiums or Saskatchewan Teachers’ Retirement Plan contribution rates. All notices of motion require approval by two-thirds majority of those councillors present and voting to pass.

Debate and Decision Making

Notices of Motion

Small Group Sessions

- Debate
- Amendment
- Referral to Executive or table
- Preliminary vote for information only

Plenary Session

- Debate and vote on each individual notice of motion

Resolutions

Small Group Sessions

- Debate
- Amendment
- Referral to Executive or table
- Preliminary vote

Plenary Session

1. Resolutions approved by 70 percent of councillors in small group sessions presented en bloc in one motion.
2. Resolutions defeated by 70 percent of councillors in small group sessions presented en bloc in one motion.
3. Debate and vote on each individual resolution not approved or defeated by 70 percent of councillors in small group sessions and those resolutions pulled from en bloc motions.
Emergent Resolutions

Any councillor may introduce an emergent resolution on the floor of the Council in plenary. Such a resolution may arise as a result of the debate taking place during the course of Council.

Before such an emergent resolution can be debated, the councillor must ask leave of Council to consider the matter and shall present to the plenary chairperson the resolution in writing and name the individual(s) or organization(s) submitting it. The motion to grant leave requires a seconder and must be passed by 80 percent of those councillors present and voting. If leave is granted, the emergent resolution is then debated and decided by Council. No additional information is provided for emergent resolutions.

The chairperson determines the point in the meeting that is most appropriate for dealing with late or emergent resolutions. Generally these resolutions are presented after Council has voted on all other resolutions or notices of motion.

Amendments

If at least 70 percent of those voting in the small groups have supported a particular amendment to a resolution or notice of motion, it is automatically presented to Council for consideration in plenary in its amended form. Also, any councillor may propose an amendment to a resolution in plenary that has been passed by one or more small groups but not by a minimum of 70 percent of councillors. All such amendments by small groups are recorded on the list of resolutions distributed at the plenary to councillors.

The chairperson must rule on whether or not an introduced amendment is acceptable. If the chair finds that the amendment is frivolous or changes the intent of the original resolution, the motion to amend is not allowed. Once a notice to amend is accepted, it must be seconded by another councillor. Debate may then take place on the amendment but not on the substance of the resolution. An amendment must be passed through a majority vote of those councillors present and voting.

Once all amendments have been decided, Council proceeds to consider and decide the amended resolution or notice of motion.

Motions to Refer or Table

A motion to refer a resolution or notice of motion to the STF Executive may be made by any councillor. It must be seconded and may be followed by debate on the merits of the referral. If the motion is passed by a majority of councillors present and voting, the Executive will consider the resolution or notice of motion and provide councillors with further information as needed in the Council Resolutions Progress Report.

A motion to table allows the Council to put a resolution or notice of motion aside. It is sometimes used to stop or postpone a decision indefinitely. The chair may rule the motion out of order if its purpose seems to be the suppression of debate or a vote. The motion requires a seconder and is not debated prior to voting. It must pass by a majority of those councillors present and voting, and the matter may not be reconsidered at the meeting once passed.

No action is taken by the STF Executive or senior administrative staff to follow up on tabled resolutions or notices of motion. A councillor may move to take from the table a resolution or notice of motion that was tabled at the previous Annual or Special Meeting of Council. Voting on the motion follows the same process as the original motion to table.
Rules of Order

Council meetings do not use Robert’s Rules of Order exclusively or any other set of meeting procedures with which you may be familiar. Instead, over time, Council has established its own set of meeting procedures to ensure that the business of the Federation and every resolution and notice of motion is dealt with fairly and efficiently. In general, meetings proceed according to the will of Council on the basis of policy and custom.

Speakers’ Time

Council has a tradition known as speakers’ time. Any councillor may request of the Executive Director an opportunity to speak to the Council during the business portion of the opening plenary session. Speakers’ time is generally limited to three minutes for each councillor.

Point of Information

At any point during a plenary session of Council, a councillor may direct a question to the chair asking for information relevant to an issue or procedure at hand. The councillor may state, “I rise to a point of information.” The chair then asks the councillor to state the question and they may answer the question or refer it to a Council official or another councillor for an answer.

Withdrawal of Motion or Emergent Resolution

A motion or emergent resolution may be withdrawn from the consideration of Council at the request of the mover and with the agreement of the seconder. Once a motion has been withdrawn, it is as if it never existed, and the same motion or resolution may be introduced again. Once a resolution or notice of motion is published in the Resolutions and Notices of Motion Information booklet, it may be withdrawn only at a plenary session of the Council with the consent of the mover and seconder.

Clarification and Debate Prior to Voting

The chair identifies each resolution or notice of motion as it is brought forward for decision by Council. Each one may be read in full if it is not too long. The chair may invite the mover of the resolution to open debate. All councillors are given an opportunity to speak with the chair ensuring that any remarks are focused on the decision at hand. The mover is invited to close debate once all other speakers have had their say. Unless time pressures dictate otherwise, debate on resolutions and notices of motion is not usually limited.
**Call for the Question**

Councillors frequently call “Question” to indicate to the chairperson that sufficient debate on a motion on the floor has taken place and Council is now ready to vote on the motion. The chairperson, who is responsible for preserving councillors’ right to full and open debate, will then make a judgment regarding the appropriate response to this call. If there is any doubt that debate on the motion is completed, the chairperson will ask the Council if it is ready for the question. When the response to this query indicates that councillors are ready to end debate, the vote is taken.

A formal motion to end debate and move to a vote may also be made by any councillor. Such a motion requires a seconder and takes precedence. The motion is not debatable and may be passed through a two-thirds vote of those present and voting.

**Voting Procedures**

All votes of the Council in plenary are conducted by a show of hands. First, the chair ensures that councillors understand the vote needed to pass each resolution or notice of motion. Then the chair asks councillors to raise their hands if they are in favour. After scanning the floor for the number of hands raised, the chair thanks the councillors and carries out the same procedure with councillors who are opposed. The chair does not ask for an indication of abstentions unless a recorded vote is being taken.

Each resolution is declared either carried or defeated on the chair’s assessment of the show of hands. If the vote is too close to be determined visually, the chair, on their own or upon request of a councillor, will call for a counted vote. The chair will reconduct the vote with a reminder that councillors may not change their vote from the first time. This time, senior administrative staff will count the votes and report to the chair. The chair will announce the results of the count.

If there is an equality of votes, and if the chair is a Federation member, the chair has the deciding vote but shall not vote at any other time. By convention, the chair will always vote with those opposing the motion so it is defeated.

A recorded vote will be conducted on the request of any councillor. The chair calls on each councillor in turn to indicate whether he or she votes for or against the resolution or is abstaining from the vote. The records of the meeting will subsequently list the names of the councillors who voted for the resolution, voted against it or abstained from voting. A recorded vote is time-consuming and generally used only when one or more councillors believes it is important to have on record the position that councillors took on a serious issue.

**Point of Order**

At times during the debate and decision-making, either in small group or plenary sessions, a councillor may rise and address the chair on a point of order. You will hear the councillor suggest that there is a procedural issue that Council needs to address. The chair will rule on any suggestion that the rules of Council are not being observed or a different procedure should be followed at the meeting. On points of order and all other matters, the chair’s ruling is final unless a councillor formally challenges the chair.

**Challenge to the Chair**

Any councillor may challenge a ruling of the chair to:

- Accept or disallow a proposed amendment.
- Declare a resolution passed or defeated on the basis of a show of hands.
- Recount a vote.
- Exclude debate as not focused on the issue at hand.

The councillor must first formally move a challenge to the chair and identify the matter at issue. If another councillor seconds the motion to challenge, the chair will then ask for a vote of the Council to sustain the chair’s ruling. The chair is sustained if a majority of those present and voting indicate their support. If the chair is defeated, the ruling is changed accordingly.

**Reconsideration of Notices of Motion and Resolutions Passed or Defeated by Council**

A motion to reconsider a notice of motion or resolution passed or defeated by the Council may be made to take into account additional information or new circumstances. The motion to reconsider a notice of motion or resolution previously approved by Council must be put forward by a councillor who was among those who voted in favour of the motion.

Similarly, a notice of motion or resolution defeated by Council may be reconsidered if a motion to reconsider is put forward by a councillor who was among those who voted against the motion. In either case, the motion must be seconded, but the seconder may be any councillor, regardless of how the seconder voted on the original motion. Motions to reconsider take precedence over other motions and may be passed by a majority of those present and voting. If a motion to reconsider is lost, it may not be renewed.
Motion to Refer
- Discussion
- Motion to refer (to the STF Executive)
- Seconder
- Discussion on referral only
- Vote (Record vote in column “Refer” if carried)

Motion to Table
- Discussion
- Motion to Table
- Seconder
- (No discussion)
- Vote (Record vote in column “Table” if carried)

Amendment
- Discussion
- Proposed amendment (write on scrap paper to read)
- Chair ruling (accept the amendment if it maintains the intent)
- Seconder
- Discussion on amendment only
- Vote to accept the amendment (record the amendment if carried)
- Discussion on the amended resolution
- Vote on the resolution as amended (record vote in column “Amend” if carried)

Amendment to Amendment
- Discussion
- Proposed amendment (write on scrap paper to read)
- Chair ruling (accept the amendment if it maintains the intent)
- Seconder
- Discussion on amendment only
- Proposed amendment to the amendment (write on scrap paper to read)
- Discussion on amendment to the amendment only
- Vote to accept the amendment to the amendment
- Vote to accept the amendment (record the amendment if carried)
- Discussion on the amended resolution
- Vote on the resolution as amended (record vote in column “Amend” if carried)

Challenge to the Chair
- Chair ruling (accept the amendment if it maintains the intent)
- Challenge to the chair (disagreement with the ruling)
- Seconder
- Is there support for the chair?
- Vote (carried supports the chair’s ruling)
- Return to original or amendment as appropriate