



# ABOUT COUNCIL MEETINGS

One of your main responsibilities as a councillor is to prepare for, attend and participate in Council, including sharing decisions and results with members in your local association. Many teachers find their first Council meeting a little overwhelming. There is much to read, different points of view to consider and you are expected to discuss and cast your vote on an impressive array of issues. However, you are not alone in these tasks as veteran councillors and members of the STF Executive and senior administrative staff are always available to provide assistance and information on Council processes and issues.

## TYPES OF COUNCIL MEETINGS

The STF Executive determines when and where Council meetings will be held in accordance with Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation legislation, bylaws, policies and past practices. The Executive must call one Annual Meeting of Council each year and may call a Special Meeting of Council as circumstances require. *The Teachers' Federation Act, 2006* also allows for a Special Meeting of Council to be held by petition of 25 percent of councillors.

There are four different types of Council meetings:

- 1 Annual Meeting of Council** is held in the spring each year and has an agenda that includes governance and administrative reports, elections to fill vacancies on the STF Executive, and approval of the previous year's audited financial statements and next year's budget, membership fees and per diem for councillors. The business of this meeting usually requires three days of councillor time, and the dates and place are set by the Executive at least two years prior to enable the Federation to appropriately plan for the event.
- 2 Special Meeting of Council** agendas must be set specifically through a decision of the STF Executive in accordance with Bylaw 2 (Council) Section 2.4.2. These agendas are narrower than the one for the Annual Meeting of Council, typically focusing on specific matters of policy, governance and/or provincial collective bargaining. No other matters may be considered at this meeting except those that have been identified by the Executive and duly communicated to councillors. Only resolutions that fit the agenda will be considered.

- 3 Councillor Conference** is held in the fall of each year and is when drafts of bylaws and policies and other governance issues are brought forward to councillors for discussion and feedback. This is an opportunity to learn about the legislation, bylaws and policies of the Federation as well as current issues in education and the profession.

- 4 Information meetings** may also be held when there are emergent issues or significant developments that the STF Executive and administration needs to communicate with councillors and/or local association leaders. These are typically called a week in advance and may last only a couple of hours. These meetings are typically held in the evenings or on a Saturday and may be held locally, at a central location in the province or by conference call.

## PREPARING TO ATTEND

Councillors will have access to materials related to upcoming meetings of Council ahead of time. It is important that you read and analyze the agendas, reports and other resources provided to help in your discussions and decision making.

The Federation often holds sessions prior to Council meetings such as Councillor Orientations or Council Resolutions Study Sessions. Local associations may hold their own reviews of the resolutions and notices of motion. These occur between mid-March and leading up to the Annual Meeting of Council. These are great opportunities to learn more about Council and the issues at hand.

It is important to remember that the role of councillors is to act in the interests of the Federation as a whole. As representative of your local membership it is important to share the perspective of your local membership and hear the perspective of other local memberships. Councillors vote on the basis of all the information presented to them in the interests of all teachers. Often it is not until you participate in the discussions of Council that you learn of factors which may lead you to adopt a view that is different from other councillors or your colleagues back home.

## LEAVE TO ATTEND

All teachers elected as a councillor are expected to attend every meeting and conference of Council during their term of office.

Unforeseen circumstances sometimes arise to prevent a councillor from attending; local associations may appoint and inform the Executive Director of a replacement councillor for that particular meeting.

Pursuant to Section 12.3 (Leave for Officials) of the Provincial Collective Bargaining Agreement, when any part of a Council meeting or conference falls on a school day, councillors require leave from their directors of education in order to attend the meeting. The Federation will contact your director of education with a reminder you have leave to attend and to invoice the Federation for reimbursement of substitute costs.

## REGISTRATION

All councillors are automatically registered for each meeting of Council. If you are unable to attend a Council meeting, you need to inform your local association president as soon as possible so that adequate information may be provided to your replacement. All replacement councillors serve in that capacity for the entire meeting of Council.

You may typically register at the host hotel on the evening prior to or the morning of the opening day of the meeting scheduled.

## EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT

Councillors are entitled to reimbursement of travel expenses as a result of attending meetings and conferences of Council. Information about eligible expenses can be found in the document *Travel Reimbursement for Members*, located on the STF website.

Councillors receive a per diem for days Council meets. The per diem is intended to provide reimbursement for the cost of meals and related incidentals that are not provided by the Federation.

### NETWORKING AND CELEBRATING

Informal social opportunities are part of every Council meeting including receptions, breaks and lunches.

In scheduling events and activities of Council, an effort is always made to leave councillors with some free time.

There is also a dedicated time in the agenda where the profession recognizes individuals who have merited the highest honour – the Arbos award. This recognition is a highlight of the Annual Meeting of Council.

These opportunities for collegial conversations and celebration are an essential part of being a councillor and leader of the profession.

## OFFICIALS AT MEETINGS

At each Council meeting, you may see numerous people carrying out specific official roles:

- **Plenary chairperson(s)** lead the plenary sessions of Council. The President and Vice-President typically share the duties of chairing the meeting with the two often alternating the introduction of sessions and conduct of business in plenary. The Candidates' Forum and the closing plenary is chaired by an individual with extensive Council experience who is not a member of Council, the Executive or Federation staff.
- **Group session chairs and recorders** are individuals who support group sessions.
- **Plenary recorders** are Federation staff present to record the proceedings and decisions.

- **Resource people** are Federation staff who provide additional information as requested by councillors and/or correct factually inaccurate information when necessary.
- **Election officials** are Federation staff who oversee and conduct the process for electing members of the Executive. The Chief Election Official is appointed by the Executive Director.

## RELATED RESOURCES

- STF Bylaw 2.4 (Meetings of Council)
- STF Policy 4.1 (Council Meetings)
- STF Bylaw 2.5 (Resolutions Committee)
- STF Policy 4.3 (Council Resolutions)
- *Elections and Candidate Statements Information booklet*
- *Resolutions and Notices of Motion Information booklet*

- **Group sessions** that allow for councillors to get to know one another and to facilitate debate and votes on the resolutions and notices of motion presented at Annual Meeting of Council. Councillors are divided into groups that move through various sessions, with each session assigned a set of resolutions grouped together by topics. The results of these preliminary votes are compiled and inform the final plenary voting.
- **Closing plenary session** that is held on the last day of the Annual Meeting of Council and is reserved for decision making. A final vote is taken on all resolutions and notices of motion.

## WHAT HAPPENS AT MEETINGS

The Annual Meeting of Council program has evolved over time into a set pattern that reflects the needs and priorities of Saskatchewan teachers and is approved annually by the Executive, then communicated to members and distributed to the media. Although the order and length of activities may shift slightly from year to year, the Annual Meeting of Council program generally includes:

- **A reception** prior to the opening of Council.
- **Councillor orientation or education sessions** held prior to the group sessions.
- **Opening plenary session** that includes the opening of the meeting, remarks and reports from the President and the Executive Director, and speeches by representatives of major educational partners.
- **Candidates' Forum** where councillors get to hear from, and ask questions of, candidates for Executive office.
- **Elections** for Executive office that begin on the second morning of the Annual Meeting of Council. Voting is conducted throughout the day until all vacancies are filled. Election results are posted as they become available.
- **Presentation of Arbos awards** that is held during Council. These awards celebrate those who have made outstanding contributions to education and the teaching profession.



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