ANNUAL MEETING OF COUNCIL

GUIDE TO DEBATE AND DECISION MAKING

Debate and decisions about notices of motion and resolutions at Annual Meeting of Council.

GROUP SESSIONS

Decision Making

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

Chairpersons, with the assistance of recorders and resource persons, will facilitate how the resolutions and notices of motion are debated and voted on in each group session. Federation staff may serve as resource persons who work with the chairperson to ensure that each group has the same background information and details regarding the matter under consideration.

A vote is conducted by a show of hands with the chair announcing to the group the number of votes either in favour or against.

Votes taken on resolutions in the group sessions 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 at the request of 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 group sessions are intended only for the information of councillors. Each notice of motion must come to the plenary for a decision.

Roles and Responsibilities

Chairperson

1. Reminds those present to engage in appropriate use of electronic devices for communication 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 members or guests from the Canadian Teachers’ Federation.
3. Introduces the Council officials (i.e., chairperson, recorder and resource persons), guests, Federation staff and other observers who are present.
4. Asks councillors to introduce themselves by 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* booklet.
6. Where appropriate, invites the councillor who moved the resolution or notice of motion to open debate and provide the opportunity for all other councillors present to speak. The councillor who opened the debate may continue to participate in debate and respond to clarifying questions. The councillor who opened the debate will also be invited to close the debate. The same procedure will be used for resolutions or notices of motion that have been moved by a local association or the STF Executive.

7. Invites participation from councillors in the debate.

    (a) Requests that councillors state their name and local association 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).

    (c) When there are no more councillors remaining on the speakers' list, the chairperson or a councillor "calls for the Question" to close the debate.

8. Provides opportunities for the group to hear information and perspectives that will assist the decision-making process about each resolution.

9. Ensures that the established procedures for the debate and decision about each resolution during the group sessions are followed, including the requirements for the chairperson to:

    (a) Ensure that the 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 group about a resolution.

    (c) Refrain from disclosing information provided by any other group about a resolution before this resolution is discussed by the group in session.

10. Attends to appropriate procedures and voting for the type of motion before the group.

11. Tests the group on its readiness to vote by inviting "the Question" when debate appears to be complete.

12. Conducts the vote by a show of hands/place cards and indicates when the vote count is complete.

13. Announces to the group the number of votes either in favour of or against the resolution.

14. 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.

15. 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. Maintains the confidentiality of the record of votes.

4. Promptly delivers the record of votes to the Council administration office following the conclusion of each 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 additional information as requested by councillors and/or correct factually inaccurate information when necessary.

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

4. Provide support to the chairperson regarding procedural questions.

5. Participate in the counting of the vote.

DEBATE AND DECISION MAKING

Notices of Motion

Group Sessions

- Debate and vote on each individual notice of motion.
- Preliminary vote for information only.

Plenary Session

- Debate and vote on each individual notice of motion.

Resolutions

Group Sessions

- Debate.
- Preliminary vote.

Final Plenary Session

1. At the request of a councillor, resolutions may be pulled from the blocs of resolutions approved or defeated by 70 percent of councillors.
2. Resolutions approved by 70 percent of councillors in group sessions presented en bloc in one motion.
3. Resolutions defeated by 70 percent of councillors in group sessions presented en bloc in one motion.
4. Debate and vote on each individual resolution not approved or defeated by 70 percent of councillors in group sessions and those resolutions pulled from en bloc motions. Amendments, motions to table or refer may occur at this time prior to the voting.

PLENARY SESSION

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 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 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 at the request of a councillor. The first motion made by the Resolutions Committee will be to approve those resolutions that were approved by 70 percent of councillors voting in groups. The second motion will be to approve those resolutions that were defeated by 70 percent of councillors voting in group sessions.

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

The chairperson deals with each of the resolutions in this category in numerical order as they are listed in the *Resolutions and Notices of Motion* 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 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 two-thirds 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 Teachers' Long-Term Disability Plan premiums or Saskatchewan Teachers' Retirement Plan contribution rates. All notices of motion require approval by two-thirds of those councillors present and voting to pass.

Late Resolutions

A late resolution is any resolution received after the resolution deadline. All late resolutions must be adjudicated by the Resolutions Committee prior to consideration by Council. The Resolutions Committee will meet prior to group sessions to adjudicate all late resolutions received prior to the start of Council. The Committee may only accept a late resolution if the subject matter is of an urgent nature or could not have been anticipated prior to the deadline for submissions. Late resolutions received prior to the start of Council and that have been accepted by the Resolutions Committee will be considered by Council in group sessions. No additional information is provided for late resolutions.

Emergent Resolutions

Any councillor may introduce an emergent resolution on the floor of the Council during the final plenary session. Such a resolution may arise as a result of the debate taking place during the course of Council. However, before the emergent resolution can be brought to the floor of Council, it must be adjudicated by the Resolutions Committee. The councillor must present the resolution in writing to the chairperson with the name of the mover and seconder prior to the end of the vote on the last resolution at the final plenary. The Resolutions Committee will meet at the end of the final plenary to adjudicate any late or emergent resolutions received during Council. If the Committee believes the resolution is of an urgent nature or could not have been anticipated prior to the deadline for submissions, it will be brought to the floor of Council for debate and vote. The mover will be notified if the Committee decides the resolution does not meet the urgent or emergent criteria.

Setting Aside a Decision of the Resolutions Committee

The Council may set aside a decision of the Resolutions Committee when a motion to do so is accepted by 80 percent of those present and voting. A councillor may make a motion in the final plenary as follows: "I move that Council grant leave to deal with the following resolution." The motion requires a seconder. The mover reads the resolution and may speak to the reasons why it may be considered urgent or emergent. Debate as to the urgent or emergent nature of the resolution may follow. A vote is then taken, in which 80 per cent of those councillors present must vote in favour of the motion to grant leave. Once Council votes to accept a resolution for consideration, the resolution itself is debated and a vote is taken in the same way as for other resolutions.

Amendments

Please refer to the STF Council Procedures Quick-Reference Guide and the Amendment Process Flowchart.

During the group sessions and the final plenary session, councillors may introduce amendments. If at least 70 percent of all those voting in the group sessions 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. All such amendments by groups are recorded on the list of resolutions distributed at the plenary to councillors. Any councillor may propose an amendment to a resolution in plenary that has been passed by one or more groups but not by a minimum of 70 percent of councillors.

An amendment requires a seconder to proceed. Debate may then take place on the proposed amendment but not on the substance of the resolution. An amendment must be passed through a majority vote of those councillors present and voting. If the amendment passes, then debate proceeds on the amended resolution. If the amendment does not pass, then debate continues on the original resolution.

An amendment to an amendment may be made, but only one amendment to an amendment can be considered at any one time. The secondary amendment can only amend the initial or primary amendment and not the resolution itself.

A secondary amendment requires a seconder to proceed. Debate may then take place on the proposed secondary amendment but not on the substance of the resolution or primary amendment. A secondary amendment must be passed through a majority vote of those councillors present and voting. If the secondary amendment passes, then debate proceeds on the primary amendment as amended. If the secondary amendment does not pass, then debate continues on the primary amendment unchanged.

Once an amendment has been processed, other amendments may be introduced. When all amendments have been decided, Council proceeds to consider and decide the amended resolution or notice of motion.

MAKE IT MEANINGFUL

Decisions made by Council significantly impact 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 the 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.

Motion to Refer

A motion to refer to the STF Executive may be made when the group discussion reveals that a resolution requires further study or additional information. Any councillor may make a motion to refer, which then requires a seconder. Discussion follows on the motion only and a vote is conducted. 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 reports to members and in the Council *Resolutions Progress Report*.

Motion to Postpone Indefinitely

A motion to postpone indefinitely may be made to retire a resolution. Moving to postpone indefinitely may be used to cease consideration when it is not desirable to either approve of defeat the resolution. Any councillor may make a motion to postpone indefinitely, which then requires a seconder. Discussion follows on the motion only and the motion is passed by a majority vote. No action is taken by the STF Executive on resolutions that are postponed indefinitely.

Motion to Table

A motion to table is to set aside a resolution to be considered at another time. Any councillor may make a motion to table, which then requires a seconder. No further discussion takes place and a vote is conducted. A councillor may move to take from the table a resolution or notice of motion that was tabled at the current or the previous Annual Meeting of Council or Special Meeting of Council. Tabled resolutions can be found in the Resolutions Progress Report. This requires a seconder, is not debatable and takes a majority vote to pass. If a resolution has not been taken from the table by the end of the next meeting the resolution is functionally dead.

RULES OF ORDER

Meetings of Council 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 chairperson asking for information relevant to an issue or procedure at hand. The chairperson then asks the councillor to state the question, and the chairperson may answer the question or refer it to a Council official or another councillor for an answer.

Withdrawal of Motion or Late Resolution

A motion or late 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* 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 chairperson 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 chairperson may invite the mover of the resolution to open debate. All councillors are given an opportunity to speak, with the chairperson ensuring that any remarks are focused on the decision at hand. The mover or councillor who opened debate 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

Procedures will be provided prior to Annual Meeting of Council. Prior to voting, the chairperson ensures that councillors understand the vote needed to pass each resolution or notice of motion. Then the chairperson asks councillors to vote if they are in favour or opposed. The chairperson does not ask for an indication of abstentions unless a recorded vote is being taken.

Each resolution is declared either carried or defeated. The chairperson will announce the results of the vote. If there is a tie vote, the resolution is considered defeated.

Prior to voting on a resolution, councillors can request a recorded vote be conducted. Upon receiving the request, the chairperson must call on each councillor, in turn, to indicate whether they vote for or against the resolution or if they are abstaining from the vote. Meeting records will subsequently list the names of the councillors who voted for, against, or abstained from voting. A recorded vote is time-consuming and is generally used only when one or more councillors believes it is important to have a record of positions that councillors took on an issue.

Point of Order

At times during the debate and decision making, either in group sessions or plenary sessions, a councillor may address the chairperson on a point of order. The chairperson will announce this and the councillor's concerns. The chairperson will rule on any suggestion that the rules of Council are not being observed or that a different procedure should be followed at the meeting. On points of order and all other matters, the chairperson's ruling is final unless a councillor formally challenges the chairperson.

Challenge to the Chairperson

Any councillor may challenge a ruling of the chairperson to accept or disallow a proposed motion to table, or on their ruling on a point of order.

The councillor must first formally move a challenge to the chairperson by raising their hand and identifying the matter at issue. If another councillor seconds the motion to challenge, the chairperson will then ask for a vote of Council to sustain the chairperson's ruling. The chairperson is sustained if a majority of those present and voting indicate their support. If the chairperson is sustained, there is no further debate on the ruling of the chairperson. If the chairperson is defeated, the ruling is changed accordingly.

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

In the event that additional information or new circumstances arise related to a notice of motion or resolution that was passed or defeated earlier at the current meeting of Council, a motion may be made to reconsider. Any councillor may make a motion to reconsider on the floor of the Council during the final plenary session. The motion requires a seconder. A motion to reconsider takes precedence over other motions, such as refer or table, and must be passed by a majority of those present and voting. If the motion to reconsider is passed, then the original resolution or notice of motion is debated and decided by Council. If a motion to reconsider is lost, it may not be renewed.

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