



Parliamentary Procedure Glossary

A

Abstain

Decline to vote on a question or motion.

Acclamation

When someone wins an election because there are no other candidates.

Ad hoc

A temporary committee, set up for a specific purpose; it ends when its work ends.

Adjourn

A motion to end the meeting.

Adopt, adopt a report

Accept a motion; accept a report, including actions described in the report.

Affirmative vote

A vote in favour of the motion.

Alternate

A member who substitutes for another member.

Amendable

A motion that can be changed (amended).

Amendment

A motion that proposes a minor change to a motion without changing the intent.

Appoint

Name or assign a person to hold a position or be part of a committee.

Approve

Confirm, authorize.

Assembly

A meeting or larger gathering; a group of people gather to discuss issues and make decisions.

B

Ballot vote

A secret vote on paper; the meeting collects and counts the ballots and announces a final count.



Business

Items that come before a meeting.

Bylaws

The rules that apply to operation of your local union, as approved by CUPE National President's Office.

C

Caucus

A meeting of a sub-group of members to discuss and plan an issue or motion.

Chair

The person who leads a meeting, also known as a Presiding Officer.

Challenge to the Chair

During a meeting, an appeal of a decision that the Chair made.

Close debate

The Chair stops discussion on a motion.

Close nominations

The person in charge of elections at a meeting ends the part of the election that allows members to nominate candidates to a position.

Committee

Group of people that the local appoints or elects to investigate, recommend, or act on an issue.

Committee report

When a committee provides details on its work to the local's executive and members.

Counted vote

A vote where members raise their hand or stand; different from a ballot vote.

D

Debatable

Motions that members at a meeting can discuss and question.

Debate

The time set aside for members to discuss, question and argue on a motion.

Dispose of (a motion)

When members are finished with a motion; when members at a meeting have voted on a motion. See Reconsider (the opposite).

Divide the question

A motion to separate a main motion and an amendment; if approved, the meeting will vote on the motion and amendment separately.

E

Entertain a question

The Chair asks members for a formal motion on an issue.



Executive board

The local executive, which consists of elected officers.

Executive committee

A committee of the local executive that normally consists of the president, vice-president, recording secretary and secretary-treasurer. A local's bylaws may allow other positions to be part of this committee. The group is also called table officers; they are responsible for functions of the local union when the full executive is not meeting.

Expanded negative

An amendment which, if carried, would produce the same result as a "NO" vote on the main question. Such an amendment is not in order if it contradicts or opposes the main motion.

F

Floor, 'to have the floor'

A member speaks at a meeting; the Chair recognizes a member, which gives them the right to speak.

G

Gavel

A mallet (wooden hammer) the Chair uses during a meeting, to keep order. It symbolizes rules of order and the role of the Chair.

I

Item of business

An agenda item, such as a report, an issue or a motion.

Incidental motion

A motion about another motion that is on the floor.

L

Lay on the table

A motion to put aside (or table), a main motion until a later, unknown time.

Limit or extend debate

A motion that reduces or increases the number and length of speeches, or the length of debate, on a main motion.

M

Main motion

The motion that brings an issue to the floor of the meeting.

Majority (vote)

More than half the votes cast.

Meeting

When members gather to discuss issues and make decisions.

Member

A person who belongs to the union.



Minutes (of a meeting)

A written record of what happened at a meeting and what the meeting decided.

Motion

A formal proposal that asks members at a meeting to decide on a certain action; it is also called 'the question'.

Move

How a member launches a motion at a meeting: "I move that..."

Mover

The person who makes a motion.

N

New business

Agenda items that relate to new issues.

Nomination

During an election, a member suggests someone as a candidate for an office or position.

Nominee

A person nominated for a position during an election.

Notice of meeting

An official, written announcement that provides union members with an agenda for an upcoming meeting.

Notice of motion

An official announcement that describes a major issue the local wants members to debate and discuss at an upcoming meeting.

Null and void

Cancelled or invalid.



Objection

A member formally opposes or challenges an item or procedure at a meeting.

Officer

A union member who is elected to act on behalf of the local or union.

On the floor

The time when a motion is being discussed and debated at a meeting.

Order of business

The items on an agenda.

Orders of the Day

An agenda item that the meeting will deal with at a specific time.

Out of order

A motion, action, request or procedure that does not follow the rules of order.



P

Parliamentarian

A person who knows parliamentary procedure and provides the Chair with advice on the rules.

Parliamentary procedure

A system of rules to conduct effective meetings.

Point of information

A question to the Chair for information about the business the meeting is discussing.

Point of order

A formal question to the Chair about whether the meeting is following correct procedures.

Point or question of personal privilege

An urgent question that asks the Chair for an immediate ruling; often relates to misconduct by another member, illness or a desire to leave the meeting.

Point or question of privilege

An urgent question that asks the Chair for an immediate ruling; it relates to the rights of members and how well they can participate, in the meeting; points may include comfort or safety in the room, and ability to hear the proceedings.

Postpone to a certain time

A motion to postpone discussion and voting on a motion until a later date or time.

Postpone indefinitely

A motion that stops discussion on a main motion and avoids a vote.

Precedence of motions (order of precedence)

The ranking of motions from highest to lowest; this determines the order in which the Chair must deal with motions.

Present

When a member is physically present at a meeting; a certain number of members must be present to achieve quorum.

Preside over

To chair a meeting.

Presiding officer

The person in charge of the meeting, also called the Chair.

Previous question, call the question

A motion to stop debate of the motion on the floor. If the motion passes, the Chair calls for an immediate vote on the motion.

Put the question

The Chair asks members to vote now on a motion.

P

Q

Question

Another term for a motion.

Quorum

The number of members who must be present (in the room) for the meeting to be valid and to proceed.

R

Receive a report

Hear a report without taking action.

Recess

A short break that does not end the meeting.

Recognize a member

The Chair acknowledges a member's right to speak; allows the member to speak.

Reconsider (Motion to)

A motion that, if approved, will allow a meeting to debate and vote again on a motion already decided.

Recount

Count the vote again.

Refer to a committee

A motion that sends a main motion to a smaller group within the local; this group will think about and discuss the motion outside the meeting;

the committee may bring the motion to a future meeting so members can debate and vote on it. The referral can be with or without instructions.

Report

A formal communication to a meeting from a committee or officer.

Resignation

A member gives up an office, position or appointment.

Resolution

A formal proposal on an important issue, raised at a convention. A resolution calls for action and states the reasons for the action.

Roll call

At the start of a meeting, announcing the names of officers to determine who is present; this roll call becomes part of the minutes of the meeting.

Roll call vote

A way of voting on a motion; when a member's name is called out, they state their vote, for or against the motion.

Rules of order

Written rules apply to how the local union conducts meetings.

Ruling

A decision made by the Chair.



S

Second a motion

A member who did not launch a motion states his or her support for having the motion considered.

Seconder

The member who seconds a motion.

Secret ballot

A ballot vote where members' votes are kept secret.

Show of hands vote

A way of voting on a motion; members raise their hand to express their choice, for or against, the motion.

Speaker

A member who has the floor; “the Chair will first recognize the speaker as having the right to speak at the meeting.

Standing committee

A permanent committee of the local; it holds regular meetings.

State the motion

The Chair reads the motion to the meeting before discussion and again before the vote.

Subsidiary motions

Motions that change, postpone or put aside a motion (question) that the meeting is dealing with.

Substitute amendment

A motion that deletes words from a main motion and inserts new words to replace them.

Suspend the rules

Members decide by a two-thirds vote to stop the meeting to deal with urgent business.

Sustain the decision of the Chair

Members at a meeting decide to support and uphold a Chair's ruling after someone challenged it.

T

Table

A shorter way to refer to the motion to “lay on the table”.

Table officers

The local executive committee; it normally includes the president, vice-president, recording secretary, and secretary-treasurer. A local may expand the committee to include others, such as a membership officer and chief steward; a local's bylaws define this.

Take from the table

Take another look at a motion that was laid on the table, or “tabled”; resume debate on such a motion.



Term of office

The length of time a member serves in an elected or appointed role.

Tie vote

An equal numbers of vote for and against a motion. The motion fails because there is no majority vote.

Tile the doors

Closing the doors to prevent anyone from coming in or leaving the room until a vote is complete.

Two-thirds vote

At least two-thirds of members present and voting must vote in favour of a motion for it to pass.

U

Unanimous vote

All members voted in favour of a motion; there was no opposition.

Undebatable

No debate is allowed on certain kinds of motions.

Unfinished business

Issues and motions that come from a previous meeting.

V

Vacancy

An office or position that is empty (unoccupied).

Vacate the Chair

When the Chair wants to be part of a debate, he or she will request that another member Chair the meeting temporarily; usually the vice-president or recording secretary will take over if the president is Chair.

W

Withdraw a motion

A member who moved a motion requests that the meeting no longer consider it. Once the Chair has stated the motion aloud, only a majority vote can withdraw the motion.

Acknowledgement: This glossary is based on a glossary developed by Nancy Sylvester, a writer and trainer on parliamentary procedure.

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