

Union Processes

Understanding Robert's Rules of Order

April 13, 2022



**SASKATCHEWAN
UNION OF NURSES**

Robert's Rules of Order

- Henry Martyn Robert, an officer in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, published the original Robert's Rules of Order in 1876.
- Robert set out a system, based on fairness, to help a group discuss what it would like to do
- Robert's Rules are based on core principles that are central strengths of our society and our democratic way of life.
- Properly understood, Robert's Rules ensures every voice in the discussion is given a respectful hearing. They enable a group to tap the wisdom and expertise of all its members.

Robert's Rules of Order

When conducting in-person or virtual business meetings, such as the Annual Meeting, the Bargaining Conference or any special meeting of the union, SUN follows Robert's Rules of Order.

SUN currently uses the 11th edition of Robert's Rules.

The purpose of "Robert's Rules of Order" includes the following:

- ensure majority rule;
- provides order, fairness, and decorum; and,
- facilitates the transaction of business and expedites meetings.

Basic Principles of Robert's Rules

- All members have equal rights, privileges, and obligations.
- Full and free discussion of every motion is a basic right.
- Only one question at a time may be considered, and only one person may have the floor at any one time.
- Members have a right to know what the immediately pending question is and to have it restated before a vote is taken.

Basic Principles of Robert's Rules

- No person can speak until recognized by the Chair.
- Personal remarks are always out of order.
- A majority vote (50% + 1) is “the majority of the total number of those who are members of the voting body at the time of the vote.”
- A two-thirds vote is required to:
 - Suspend or modify a rule of order previously adopted.
 - Prevent introduction of a question for consideration.
 - Close or limit debate (calling the question).
 - Implement constitutional changes

Role of the Presiding Officer

- The SUN President is the presiding officer or meeting chair for all business meetings of the Union.
- The chair remains impartial during a debate — the presiding officer must relinquish the chair in order to debate the merits of a motion.
 - In such instances, the First Vice-President takes over as Chair.
- Introduce business in proper order.
- Recognizes speakers.

Role of the Presiding Officer

- Determines if a motion is in order.
- Keeps discussion relevant to the pending motion.
- Maintains order and decorum by ensuring Robert's Rules of Order are adhered to.
- Puts motions to a vote and announce results.

Role of the Parliamentarian

- A parliamentarian is an expert in interpreting and applying the "rules of order" .
- The presiding officer/chair may consult with the parliamentarian.
- The presiding officer/chair may ask the parliamentarian to give an explanation directly to the assembly.
- The parliamentarian can call the attention of the chair if they notice something out of order.

Rules of Debate

- No members may speak until recognized by the chair.
- All discussion must be respectful and relevant to the immediate question.
- No member can speak more than once to a motion.
 - This does not prohibit one from requesting a point of clarification from the chair.
- A member speaking twice will close debate/discussion on the motion currently on the floor.
- All remarks must be addressed to the chair — cross debate is not permitted.

Rules of Debate

- Debate must address the issue.
- No one is permitted to make personal attacks or question the motives of other speakers or the chair.
- Members may not disrupt the assembly.
- The presiding officer must relinquish the chair in order to participate in debate and cannot reassume the chair until the pending main question is disposed of.

Procedures for Speaking to Resolutions

- The Constitution, Bylaws & Resolutions (CB&R) Committee will read the resolution to be discussed.
- The presiding officer/chair will open debate.
- The mover of the resolution has the right to speak first.
- To speak to the resolutions, you must be recognized by the chair.
- Prior to speaking, the speaker must state their name and local.

Procedures for Amending a Resolution

- An amendment is any change made to the resolution being presented.
- A member must have the floor in order to make an amendment.
- When recognized by the chair, the mover must state their name, local, and read the amendment they wish to present.
- A seconder is required for all amendments.
- The seconder will be required to state their name, local and confirm they second the amendment, before discussion on the amendment may begin.
- After the amendment has been moved and seconded, the mover may speak to their amendment.

Procedures for Amending a Resolution

- Discussion/debate on the amendment commences.
 - Only the amendment may be discussed at this time.
- A vote is taken on the amendment.
- If the amendment is carried, then the amendment is applied to the original resolution.
 - The chair will read the amended resolution to the assembly and open the floor for discussion.
 - Following discussion, the vote is called on the amended resolution.
- If the amendment is defeated, discussion/debate returns to the original resolution.

Voting on a Resolution

- Debate is closed when:
 - Discussion has ended
 - A member “calls the question”
- The chair restates the resolution and calls for the vote.
- The chair announces the results – carried or defeated.
- Members must be in attendance of the meeting to cast their vote.
(Bylaw 3.11 – “...Each member is entitled to one (1) vote and there shall be no vote by proxy.”)

Calling the Question

- Any member, in attendance, may “call the question” at any time to halt debate/discussion. This motion requires a seconder.
- This motion **cannot be amended or discussed/debated.**
- When the “question is called” by a member, the chair will immediately call for a vote to determine if the assembly wishes to stop discussion/debate.
- If the vote is carried – the assembly will immediately vote on the resolution on the floor.
- If defeated –discussion/debate continues.

Speakers Out of Order

- “Out of order” refers to actions or behaviour not in accordance with the rules and privileges, and climate goals of the meeting.
 - Published on page 26 of the Annual Operations Report.
- Other reasons speakers will be deemed out of order include, but are not limited to:
 - Makes personal remarks regarding another speaker or chair.
 - Interrupts a speaker or speaks without being recognized by the Chair.
 - Speaks to a motion or matter not currently on the floor/before the assembly.
 - Speaks to a motion or matter previously discussed and voted on.

Quick Speaking Tips

- Only individuals can be recognized by the Chair.
- Groups of speakers are not permitted.
- A speaker cannot call upon another member to speak on a matter or on their behalf.
- Questions and comments must be presented to the chair of the meeting, not to individuals.
- Respectful debate is healthy.



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