



# Parliamentary Procedure Glossary

## A

### **Abstain**

Decline to vote on a question or motion.

### **Acclamation**

When someone wins 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**

A person or 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 their support for having the motion considered.

### **Secunder**

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**

A meeting decides by a 2/3 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 votes 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, they 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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