

HANDBOOK



**Parliamentary
Procedure
Handbook**

CUPE

“I like this book. I believe it will be very helpful in the conduct of union meetings, and I recommend that it be studied carefully... I congratulate CUPE on its publication.”

Stanley Knowles, 1918 – 1997

With thanks to Jim Dowell

Jim Dowell, CUPE’s first Education Director, wrote the first edition of this Handbook. He came to CUPE from the United Auto Workers in 1963 and set up CUPE’s education program so it would reach CUPE members in the workplace. He developed these courses: Leadership Training, Grievance Handling, Steward Training, Local Union Administration, Public Speaking, Parliamentary Procedures, Collective Bargaining and Contract Interpretation. To this day, his positive efforts are felt in the union. Jim retired from CUPE in March 1987.



Support for Locals and Chairs

RESOURCES

For the Chair:

Our Parliamentary Procedure kit includes this handbook, and:

- **A Guide for the Chair**
- **Glossary**
- **Rules at a Glance**

For Members:

- Welcome to Your Union Meeting

WORKSHOPS

Go to cupe.ca/unioneducation to find Parliamentary Procedure workshops and other learning tools for your local.

YOUR CUPE SERVICING REPRESENTATIVE

Your CUPE servicing representative can support and advise your local on the rules that result in good meetings.

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Background on Parliamentary Procedures

HISTORY

In North America, two versions of parliamentary procedure developed over time, based on the British system.

- The Canadian authority, Sir John George Bourinot, developed *Bourinot's Rules of Order*, which Canada's Parliament uses.
- An American, Henry M. Robert, created *Robert's Rules of Order*.

Some organizations in Quebec and in Acadia also use a third version, called the *Code Morin*, inspired by Robert's Rules.

Canada's labour movement includes national and international unions. Most international unions use *Robert's Rules of Order*, while the national unions rely on *Bourinot's*.

CUPE and the Canadian Labour Congress use *Bourinot's Rules of Order* to conduct all meetings and conventions.

Your local's by-laws describe the rules of order that apply to your meetings. Some of those rules may differ from rules set out in this handbook.



THE FOUR PRINCIPLES

Meetings can be efficient and democratic when we apply rules of order. These four principles should guide your meetings.

1. *Notice of Meetings*

Members should receive enough notice about the date, time and place where the union meeting will be held. They should also receive an agenda for the meeting. It outlines the main issues to be discussed.

2. *Impartial Chair*

The Chair of a meeting helps members discuss important issues and moves those discussions from disagreement to agreement, as needed. CUPE members need a chair who is fair and who knows the rules. The Chair must be impartial.

- Most local by-laws allow the Chair to vote on motions, and to cast a vote to break a tie.
- If the Chair wants to move a motion, or speak to a motion, they must allow another officer in the local to be the Chair for that part of the meeting. The Chair can resume the role of chair once the vote on that motion is complete.

3. *Separation of Proceedings (dealing with one thing at a time)*

The local's business proceeds during the meeting by using motions. Motions should be clear and focused. Members propose, debate and vote on one motion at a time.

The Chair must use the rules of order to ensure the meeting deals with one issue at a time.

4. *Freedom of Speech and Everyone has a Voice*

Every member has the right to speak on any issue. The Chair invites members to speak. The Chair also applies rules of order to ensure that people have an equal chance to speak. This may require the Chair to set time limits for each speaker.



Section 1 — Understanding the Big Picture

This handbook contains many new terms and new ideas.

- > Go to the glossary of terms when you need a definition.
- > Reading this handbook over and over will help you learn what you need to know.
- > This first section of the handbook will make more sense after you have read all the other sections.
- > Rules at a Glance will help you decide what needs to happen next when you are at a meeting.


DEALING WITH MOTIONS IN THE CORRECT ORDER

Precedence means the order the Chair deals with motions.

Rules at a Glance lists all the types of motions and their order of precedence. The highest-ranking motions appear at the top. Lowest ranking motions appear at the bottom (the main motion).

At a meeting, the Chair deals with motions in order of highest to lowest. A motion from the floor is not in order if a higher-ranking motion is already on the floor.

For a motion to be in order it must be moved in the right order. Up to seven motions may be pending at one time, as long as these motions are made in the right order, and before voting occurs on the main motion.



Here is an example of common use of privileged, incidental and subsidiary motions during a debate on the main motion. This example uses point of order, lay on the table, previous question and adjourn.

A member states this motion:

“I move that we elect an education committee.”

MAIN MOTION

There are no amendments and debate on the main motion takes some time. A member then makes the following motion:

“I rise on a point of order.”

Or simply says, *“Point of order.”*

**INCIDENTAL
MOTION**

The Chair must deal with the point of order before the meeting can continue discussing the main motion. This means the Chair must suspend debate on the main motion.

The Chair hears the member’s point of order and agrees. Debate on the main motion continues. A member rises and states this motion:

“I move that the main motion be tabled.”

SUBSIDIARY MOTION

Discussion on the main motion now stops until the Chair deals with this subsidiary motion. The motion to table is defeated and the Chair re-opens discussion on the main motion.

After several minutes, a member calls for the previous question, which is a motion asking for a vote to stop debate. Another member seconds the motion.

The Chair calls for the vote and the members at the meeting vote against closing debate. Debate then continues on the main motion. The debate goes on for 35 minutes and the hour is late. Someone rises and says:

“I move that the meeting adjourn.” **PRIVILEGED MOTION**

A member seconds the motion to adjourn and this motion is now the question before the meeting. The main motion must be set aside until the meeting decides what to do with the motion to adjourn.

The members vote in favour of adjourning the meeting.

The Chair must say, *“The meeting stands adjourned.”*

In this example, the main motion is not resolved. It must be put into Unfinished Business on the meeting’s agenda and dealt with at the next meeting.



Section 2 – Getting Ready to Meet

THE CHAIR'S ROLE

Be solid and comfortable in your role as chair. The more you do it, the easier it becomes! CUPE members need you to:

- keep the meeting moving,
- encourage participation,
- maintain order, and
- create a spirit of solidarity.

The Chair must know the rules of order well. Review this booklet often. It will help you feel more confident in your role.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS CHAIR

Quorum

- Make sure enough members are at the meeting, based on your local's by-laws. The Chair cannot begin a meeting until the right number of members are in the room (quorum).

Be aware of time

- Start and end the meeting on time.
- Keep the meeting to 2 hours or less.
- State the time available for discussion on each agenda item. Keep track of discussion time or ask someone on the executive to do so.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS CHAIR

- The Chair should wait 15 minutes after the meeting's start time before deciding no quorum exists.
- If there is no quorum, set the time for a new meeting the next day or week, not later that same day.
- Decide when enough discussion time has passed and when it is time to move on. Summarize the discussion by saying what the points of agreement are. Suggest a vote.

Be helpful

- Make sure new members know the rules that apply at the meeting.
- Include all who want to speak. Encourage members to speak out.
- Make sure all members know what they are voting on.

Stay in charge of the meeting

- Only the Chair can recognize (allow) someone to speak.
- All discussion and questions occur through the Chair.
- Keep and follow a speakers' list.
- Allow people who have not yet spoken to have priority in a long discussion.
- Be impartial. At a formal meeting, the Chair should focus on being the Chair. This means that if you want to speak on an issue, step aside as Chair during that discussion.
- If the meeting is stalled or getting too complicated, suggest a simple way to resolve the issue. Suggest clear wording for a motion, when needed.



THE AGENDA FOR YOUR MEETING

A good meeting is a planned meeting. The agenda for your meeting will follow the format set out by the *CUPE National Constitution*.

Good planning before the meeting will help make your local's meeting a success.

- > Consult with the full executive about the agenda. Include items that the executive wants to approve at the meeting.
- > Prepare the agenda in advance. Send it to the members.
- > Make sure that items on the agenda apply to the whole local. Handle individual issues at a different time and place.
- > Make sure the number of items on the agenda fits the time set aside for the meeting. Meetings should not exceed 2 hours.
- > Does the agenda contain controversial issues that will require a lengthy debate? Have a plan to limit the discussion.
- > Prepare reports from table officers and committees in advance. Make sure the reports focus on what members need to know.
- > Use an accessible place for the meeting. For example: Is the location easy to get to by bus, walking, etc.? Is it close to the workplace, which makes it more convenient? Will stairs create a barrier?
- > Set up the room so members feel included. Can members hear what's being said? If not, you may need to have microphones in the room. Think about members' needs, and ask what helps them to participate.

Create the agenda

CUPE locals create their meeting agendas based on an outline from the CUPE *National Constitution*. The booklet *A Guide for the Chair* provides details on how to use the agenda.

Here is a list of the main items that need to appear on your meeting's agenda:

1. Roll call of officers
2. Reading of the Equality Statement
3. New members
4. Read and adopt minutes of the last meeting
5. Matters arising from minutes of the last meeting
6. Financial report
7. Correspondence (communications)
8. Local executive report
9. Committee reports
10. Nominations and elections (if elections are to occur at the meeting)
11. Unfinished business
12. New business
13. Good of the Union
14. Adjournment

The local's executive decides what issues will appear on the agenda. Local members may add items to the agenda at the start of the meeting, if everyone agrees, or under New Business later in the meeting



Section 3 — Motions and Amendments

Union meetings work best when discussions focus on a series of motions.

A motion is a statement that brings attention to an issue, and allows members to decide what to do about that issue.

HOW MOTIONS WORK, STEP-BY-STEP

Step 1. Chair recognizes speaker

The Chair must recognize a member before they have a right to speak. Being firm about this practice allows the Chair to maintain order in a meeting.

Say:

“The Chair recognizes _____ (person’s name)”

Step 2. Member makes a motion

The member now has the floor and the right to speak.

If the member wishes to propose an action, this proposal must be made in the form of a motion.

Motions usually describe:

- > Who will act
- > What action will occur

Example: *I move that our Local donate \$100 to the fundraising campaign for the food bank.*

Sometimes the motion includes more detail, such as timing.

A motion that proposes a new action is called the main motion.

Step 3. A different member seconds the motion

After someone makes a motion, another member needs to second the motion. This shows that at least one other person agrees with the motion. If no one seconds the motion, it cannot proceed.

Some types of motions do not need to be seconded. Refer to Rules at a Glance.

If no member seconds a motion, the Chair may ask for a seconder, to help with the process.

However, the Chair does not have to ask for a seconder. If no one seconds a motion, the Chair may ignore the motion.

Step 4. Chair restates the motion

After someone seconds the main motion, the Chair or the recording secretary repeats the motion, and calls for debate on the motion. The motion that the meeting is dealing with is called the question.

There are two reasons to say the motion aloud:

- > Confirm the motion is worded correctly for the minutes and for follow-up action.
- > Clarify what is being discussed and voted upon.

Step 5. Discussion

The Chair usually gives the person who moved the motion the first chance to speak. After the mover speaks, the Chair will invite other members to speak.

The Chair is impartial, fair, and uses good judgement during the discussion. A decision is stronger when the local hears all views on an issue.



During discussion on a motion, members may decide to amend a motion. This handbook deals with amendments to motions later in this section.

During the discussion, if the same points begin to repeat, the Chair may ask if the members are ready to vote on the motion.

When members are ready to end discussion, and hold vote, they will often say out loud, “Question! Question!” The Chair may then hold a vote to decide whether to launch a vote on the main motion. Look for details about *The Previous Question*, which is a motion to close debate, in section 6 – *Subsidiary Motions*.

Step 6. Chair restates the motion before a vote

After debate on a main motion, the Chair will read aloud the main motion so that all members know the motion they are voting on.

Step 7. Chair holds the vote

The Chair will know whether the type of motion calls for a two-thirds majority, or a majority, before the vote proceeds. If the group is large, the Chair may require an attendance count to know the numbers required for a majority. The Chair then asks members to vote.

The Chair will specify the way voting will occur, such as a show of hands, standing vote, secret ballot, etc. The first vote calls on members to show who supports the motion. The Chair will pause so there is enough time for members to vote. Then the Chair will then call on members to show who is opposed to the motion.

The Chair needs to be prepared to handle a demand for a standing vote, division of the house, a secret ballot, and in extreme cases, a roll call vote. These demands are more likely when the issue is controversial, and when members do not trust the Chair. If the Chair promotes confidence among the members and acts in a fair way, this is less likely to occur.

Step 8. Chair announces the result of the vote

A majority vote means that more than half of members at the meeting must support a main motion for it to pass.

In a two-thirds majority vote, two-thirds of voting members must vote for the motion.

The Chair announces whether the motion is carried or not carried.

RULING A MOTION OUT OF ORDER

A motion is out of order if:

- It violates local by-laws or the *CUPE National Constitution*.
- The local does not have authority to deal with the matter.
- It relates to an item elsewhere on the agenda.
- It is a main motion and there is already a main motion on the floor.
- It is an issue decided at a previous meeting.
- It is a motion to reconsider or rescind, when the previous motion has already been acted upon.
- There is a higher-ranking motion (a motion that takes precedence), on the floor.
- A notice of motion was required but not provided.
- It is worded in the negative, meaning that it is a motion to not do something. A motion must be worded in the positive. It needs to say what the local will do.

If the Chair rules that a motion is out of order, the Chair will:

- > Declare the motion out of order.
- > Provide reasons.
- > Confirm that the mover understands the reasons for the ruling.
- > Move to the next speaker or item of business.



TYPES OF MOTIONS

Some types of motions are not main motions. They are called procedural motions.

Here's how we define main motions and procedural motions.

Main motion

The main motion is the main issue that the members are discussing and deciding upon. There can only be one main motion on the floor at any one time.

Procedural motions

Procedural motions can alter the main motion, interrupt business to deal with urgent matters, change how the main motion is dealt with, or bring it back to the meeting. These motions are called

- Motions of privilege (see Section 4).
- Incidental motions (See Section 5).
- Subsidiary motions (See Section 6).

They must be dealt with before the main motion.

The Chair must know the rules, use them well, and support members so they can debate and decide on issues important to the local. Rules at a Glance helps the Chair understand how to handle procedural motions.

AMENDMENTS TO A MOTION

An amendment is a motion that suggests a minor change to a main motion without changing the intent of the main motion.

Members at a meeting may decide to amend the main motion by:

1. Adding words
2. Removing words
3. Removing words and replacing (substituting) them with other words.

An amendment to the main motion is called a first-degree amendment.

An amendment to the amendment is called a second-degree amendment, or sub-amendment.

The meeting can only deal with one amendment to a main motion, and one sub-amendment, at the same time. There is no such thing as a third-degree amendment. No other amendment or sub-amendment can be put on the floor until the meeting deals with a sub-amendment or amendment.

COMMENT

It can be hard for the Chair to keep track of amendments and sub-amendments. Take your time and ask the recording secretary to help by taking notes of changes to wording.

These rules apply to amendments:

- > Amendments can only be made after a member seconds the main motion and the Chair has opened the issue for debate.
- > A sub-amendment can only be made after an amendment to the main motion is properly made and seconded and the Chair has opened the debate on the amendment.
- > The debate must be limited to the one immediate question, i.e., the sub-amendment or amendment only.
- > Voting is in the reverse order, i.e., (1) sub-amendment, (2) amendment (as amended or not), (3) main motion (as amended or not).
- > Amendments should limit the area of debate rather than enlarge it.

BE AWARE OF THE RULES

Bourinot's Rules of Order state that:

- > the Chair will not allow amendments if they are used to expand or introduce debate which is irrelevant to the main motion
- > when an amendment is rejected by the members, it is the practice that the Chair will allow debate to continue on the main question, or allow the introduction of another amendment.
- > an amendment once rejected by a meeting cannot be proposed a second time.

Parliamentary procedure has many technical rules, and there are times when the Chair's common sense and good judgement will enhance the meeting.

AMENDMENTS CANNOT NEGATE THE MAIN MOTION

An amendment is not in order if it contradicts or opposes the main motion.

This is called an expanded negative. It refers to an amendment which, if carried, would produce the same result as a "NO" vote on the main question.

Example 1:

Main motion: *To send six delegates to the Division convention.*

Amendment: *To delete the number 'six', and replace it with 'zero'.*

This amendment would be out of order because it negates the main motion. The intent of the main motion is to send delegates to the convention.

Members who want to send no delegates to the convention should speak against the main motion and urge its defeat.

Please note, that an amendment to send ‘one’ delegate would be in order, since the number of delegates is amendable.

Example 2:

Main motion: *To adopt the committee’s report*

Amendment: *To delete the word ‘adopt,’ and replace it with the word ‘reject.’*

The amendment to reject would be out of order because it opposes the main motion. The proper way to proceed is to speak against the main motion and urge members to vote against it. The vote would decide the question.

How to amend the main motion, step-by-step

STEP 1. A MEMBER MAKES A MOTION

“I move that we elect an education committee to complete an education plan for the local.”

MAIN MOTION

Another member seconds the main motion and discussion begins.

STEP 2. A MOTION IS AMENDED

Several members have spoken on the main motion. A member rises, and makes an amendment that adds words:

“I move that the main motion be amended by adding the words: ‘with a focus on steward training and health and safety.’

**FIRST DEGREE
AMENDMENT**

Another member seconds this motion. Debate resumes. The debate must only deal with whether steward training and health and safety will be the focus, if the local decides to have an education committee.

When the discussion ends, the Chair calls for a vote by saying:

CHAIR: *“This vote is on the amendment to the main motion, that we add the words: ‘with a focus on steward training and health and safety.’* **VOTE 1**

Those in favour? Those opposed?”

Vote 1 is carried because a majority of members vote in favour of the amendment.

COMMENT

If members at the meeting defeat the amendment in this example, the Chair announces the result of Vote 1 and debate returns to the main motion.

A member may then decide to move another amendment.

Amendments may continue until the main motion expresses the views of the majority voting ‘in favour’ of the main motion.

If the amendment (Vote 1) is carried, the meeting can continue to discuss the main motion — as amended — which now reads:

“I move that we elect an education committee to create an education plan, with a focus on steward training and health and safety.”

The members are now discussing the pros and cons of electing an education committee to create an education plan.

When this discussion ends, the Chair reads the motion aloud, and proceeds to the vote. The Chair will then announce whether the motion is carried. **VOTE 2**

Once a vote occurs on the main motion, no one can make further amendments.

Let's assume that the main motion as amended (Vote 2) is carried. The life of this motion has ended. The result of this motion? The local will elect a committee to create an education plan with a focus on steward training and health and safety.

How to sub-amend a main motion, step-by-step

This is called a second-degree amendment or a sub-amendment.

Using the motion and the first-degree amendment in the example above, a member decides to suggest an amendment to the amendment.

MEMBER: *"I move that we amend the amendment by adding the words 'and human rights.'"* **AMEND THE AMENDMENT**

Another member seconds the sub-amendment. Discussion begins but is limited to the question raised by the sub-amendment, namely: shall there be a focus on human rights? Debate ends and the Chair is ready to read the sub-amendment aloud and call for the vote.

The Chair says:

CHAIR: *"The vote is on the amendment to the amendment, which reads: '**that we add the words 'and human rights.'** Those in favour? Those opposed?"* **VOTE 1**

If the members vote in favour (YES) to the sub-amendment (Vote 1), the Chair proceeds immediately to the amendment as amended, which now reads:

"... by adding the words: 'a focus on steward training, health and safety and human rights.'"

The Chair states the question for a vote:

CHAIR: *“This vote is on the amendment as amended, which now reads that we add the following words: ‘with a focus on steward training, health and safety and human rights’. All those in favour? Opposed?”* **VOTE 2**

Vote 2 is carried (a majority votes in favour). What happens now?

If there is no objection, the Chair may proceed right away to a vote on the **main motion as amended and sub-amended**, without further discussion. The Chair will state this, as follows:

CHAIR: *“We will now vote on the main motion as amended and sub-amended, which reads: ‘that this local elects an education committee to create an education plan with a focus on steward training, health and safety and human rights.’ Those in favour? Opposed?”* **VOTE 3**

Vote 3 is **carried**. The Chair announces the motion as carried and the recording secretary records this in the minutes. This is the end of this part of the meeting. The result of the motion and the two amendments? The local will elect an education committee to create an education plan that will focus on steward training, health and safety and human rights.

Summary: voting sequence when the main motion is amended and sub-amended

Sub-amendment: **VOTE 1**
“and human rights” — Carried

Amended amendment is dealt with:

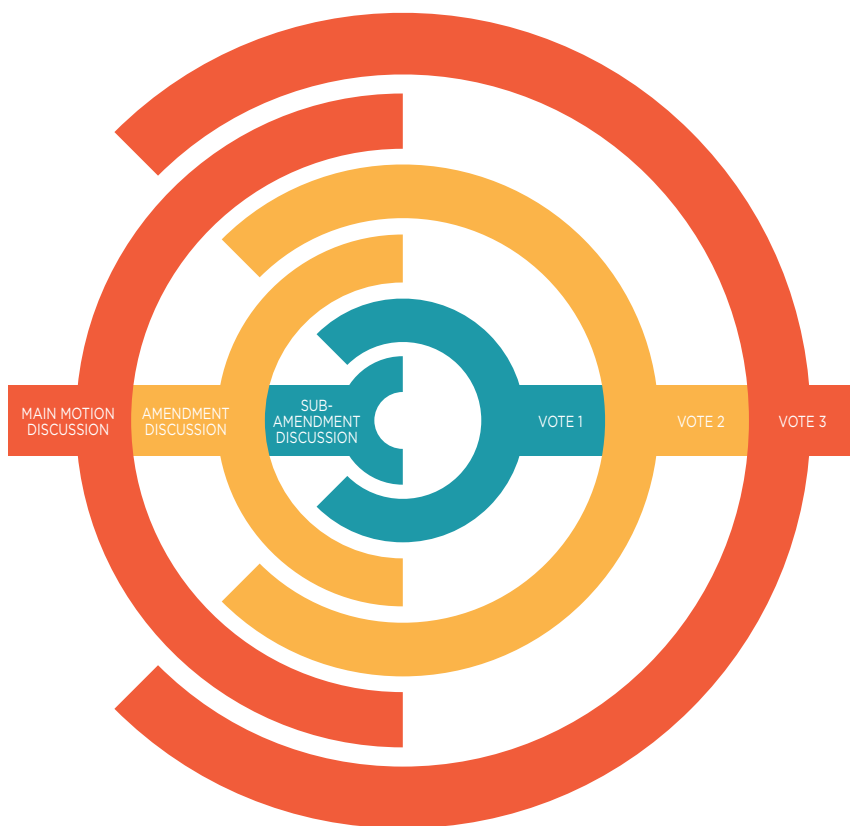
“with a focus on steward training, health and safety and human rights” – Carried

VOTE 2

Main motion as amended and sub-amended:

“That Local 1234 elect an education committee to create an education plan with a focus on steward training, health and safety and human rights” – Carried

VOTE 3



What happens when an amendment is defeated

In this example, a member moves, and someone seconds this motion, which moves to discussion:

*“I move that the social committee
organize a dinner to honour local
activists.”* **MAIN MOTION**

A member moves this amendment:

*“I move that the main motion be
amended by adding the words
‘and the Mayor’”* **AMENDMENT**

Another member seconds the proposal to invite the Mayor. The meeting begins to discuss the amendment. During this discussion, a member states an amendment to the amendment:

*“I move that the amendment be
amended by adding the words ‘and
retired local leaders and activists’”* **SUB-AMENDMENT**

Another member seconds the sub-amendment and the meeting begins to discuss only the issue of retired local leaders and activists being honoured at the dinner.

This is what the Chair is facing:

MAIN MOTION: *“That the social committee organize a dinner
to honour local activists.”*

AMENDMENT: *“and the Mayor”*

SUB-AMENDMENT: *“and retired local leaders and activists”*

In this example, here is how voting proceeds based on the rules and based on ONE of the amendments being defeated:

The Chair calls for the vote on the **sub-amendment**, “and retired local leaders and activists”. It carries. **VOTE 1**
Carried

Then the Chair calls for the vote **on the amendment as amended**, “and the Mayor and retired local leaders and activists”. **VOTE 2**
Defeated

The meeting defeats the motion to amend the main motion because most of the members at the meeting do not want the Mayor to be honoured at the dinner. The result is no amendments to the main motion.

What happens now?

The Chair calls for a vote on the **main motion** with its original wording, without any amendments. Why does this occur? Because the meeting defeated the amendment and sub-amendment in Vote 2. The vote on the main motion carries. **VOTE 3**
Carried

COMMENT

A majority of members wanted the social committee to organize a dinner to honour local activists. They also supported having retired leaders and activists at the dinner.

Most members, however, did not want the Mayor at the dinner.

When the members voted against the Mayor in Vote 2 (on the amendment to the main motion), they also voted against the sub-amendment, “and retired leaders and activists.”

How could supporters who wanted retired leaders and activists to attend the dinner have handled this situation?

1. Instead of proposing a sub-amendment, they could have let the amendment “and the Mayor” come to a vote. Then, they could propose a new amendment to the main motion that would include “retired local leaders and activists”.
2. They could have waited for the main motion to pass. Then, they could propose a new main motion that referred to “retired local leaders and activists.”

In both cases, the meeting would have discussed one issue at a time.

Amending a main motion by deleting certain words

In this example, the main motion is,

“that the local strike a workload committee consisting of three stewards, elected by the membership, and two executive members”

Someone amends this motion to delete, “elected by the membership and two executive members.”

Let’s assume this is the only amendment, that the amendment is carried, and that the main motion is also approved at the meeting.

The result is that the local will strike a workload committee with three stewards, but we do not know how those stewards will be chosen. The local executive will need to decide how to choose the three stewards.

Here are two ways members can use the meeting rules to become involved in the choice about stewards:

- > When the amendment is carried, and before the meeting votes on the main motion, a member may move a different amendment, such as ‘chosen by the Chief Steward’, or ‘chosen by the Executive’
- > After the main motion is carried, a member may create a new main motion that describes how the three stewards will be chosen.

Amending a main motion by deleting and substituting

Another way to amend a motion is to delete certain words and replace (substitute) them with other words.

Let’s use the same example of a main motion:

“that the local strike a workload committee consisting of three stewards, elected by the membership, and two executive members”

A member can create an amendment that says, *“that the words ‘elected by the membership’ be deleted and replaced by the words, ‘chosen by the Chief Steward’.*

After the meeting discusses and votes on the amendment and the main motion as amended, both are carried. The motion is recorded for the minutes as:

“that the local strike a workload committee consisting of three stewards, chosen by the Chief Steward, and two executive members”.

COMMENT

A member at the meeting may argue that the amendment is out of order because it changes the idea of the members electing the stewards on the committee. This argument would not be valid because:

- > The amendment does not change the motion's basic idea, which is to strike a workload committee, and
- > The amendment does not change the committee itself; the committee will still have three members.

Here is the amended motion again:

“that the local strike a workload committee consisting of three stewards, chosen by the Chief Steward, and two executive members”.

If the amendment changed the word “workload” to “benefits”, it would be out of order because it would change the motion's basic idea.

A few rules:

- > When an amendment is moved and seconded, debate can only be on the amendment.
- > If the amendment is defeated, debate may continue on the main motion.
- > If the amendment is carried, debate may continue on the motion as amended.
- > An amendment that negates (reverses) the intention of the main motion is out of order.



Section 4 — Motions of Privilege

Motions of privilege (sometimes called privileged motions) need to be heard immediately. They are so important that they outrank all other motions.

When someone brings a motion of privilege to a meeting, the Chair must deal with it before dealing with any other motion.

There are five motions of privilege:

1. Fix the time of the next meeting
2. Adjourn the meeting
3. Motion to recess
4. Points of privilege
5. Call for orders of the day

Privileged motions are ranked from 1 to 5, with number 1 being first in line.

Rules at a Glance puts these motions at the top of the chart. It provides details on whether they are debateable, can be amended, require a seconder, whether a vote is required, whether they are in order if another member is speaking and whether they can be reconsidered.

1. FIX THE TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

This motion is rarely used at union meetings because locals schedule regular membership meetings. When a union meeting ends (is adjourned), everyone understands that it is adjourned until the next regular meeting.

The Chair only treats this as a privileged motion if there is no schedule of regular meetings.

The motion looks like this:

“I move that when this meeting adjourns, it adjourns to meet at (date and time) in (location).”

COMMENT

A motion to fix the time of a next meeting is not privileged when the Local by-laws already state the time of the next meeting. In this situation, a motion is not necessary.

2. ADJOURN THE MEETING

Adjourn means to end the meeting. A member may move to adjourn at any time during the meeting.

The motion to adjourn looks like this:

“I move that the meeting adjourn.”

Another member must second the motion before the Chair deals with it.

COMMENT

1. The motion to adjourn is always in order. This means the Chair must deal with it right away and that no debate is required before it comes to a vote.
2. A motion to adjourn is not a motion of privilege when the local has not set a time for its next meeting. In this case, the Chair treats it as a main motion.

Before dealing with the motion to adjourn, the Chair should look at whether the agenda contains business that has not been covered. The Chair can let the meeting know what remains on the agenda before they vote. If there are important announcements, the Chair can announce them before the vote, or before announcing the results of the vote.

3. MOTION TO RECESS

A motion to recess is a motion to pause the meeting (for a few minutes or for several hours). Then, the meeting will start again. Because it is a motion of privilege, it is not debatable and the Chair must deal with it right away.

A member might move this motion if the meeting has gone on for a long time and people want a break.

The motion needs to state the length of the recess.

The motion looks like this:

“I move that we recess for (length of time).”

The rules say that:

- Subsidiary motions cannot apply to the motion to recess—refer to section on subsidiary motions.
- Only the length of the recess can be amended.

4. POINTS OF PRIVILEGE

The rules say there are two kinds of points of privilege.

- **First class points of privilege** relate to the place where the meeting is being held. They include things like comfort, safety and whether people can hear the proceedings.
- **Second class points of privilege** are called points of personal privilege. They relate to illness, bad conduct by another member, or a desire to be excused from the meeting.

The member rises on a points of privilege. Next, they introduce a motion that relates to that point of privilege.

A point of privilege looks like this:

MEMBER: *“I rise on a point of privilege.” Or, “Point of privilege”*

CHAIR: *“Please state your question/point*

A member may interrupt a speaker when rising on a point of privilege. But the Chair should not accept the point of privilege unless it is clearly urgent.

This point (along with points of order) can be used to disrupt a meeting.

If the Chair feels that the mover only wants to disrupt the meeting or the speaker, the Chair can ignore the point and allow the speaker to continue.

The Chair may decide that the point of privilege is valid but not urgent enough to interrupt the speaker. In that case, the Chair may allow the speaker to continue, with the promise of recognizing the member who raised the point of privilege later.

If members misuse this motion, the Chair may stop the meeting to explain the proper use.

BE AWARE OF THE RULES

When someone rises on a point of privilege, the Chair:

- > Does not need to recognize the speaker; it is okay to interrupt the meeting to introduce a point of privilege
- > Must decide if the motion is truly a point of privilege (is it urgent? Is it valid?)
- > May interrupt the speaker to deal with the point of privilege

A point of privilege

- > May be disposed of (approved or defeated by a vote) from a subsidiary motion. See Section 6 for details on subsidiary motions.
- > Is not debatable.

5. CALL FOR ORDERS OF THE DAY

This motion of privilege is a demand by members at the meeting for the Chair to follow the agenda or order of business.

For example, this motion is valid if a special time was set aside to debate a question but the Chair failed to raise the issue at that time.

It looks like this:

“I call for orders of the day”

If the orders of the day are called for and passed, the meeting stops discussion of the issue on the floor, and proceeds with the meeting agenda (order of business).

When the Chair follows the meeting’s agenda, including times set aside for business, members will not need to call for orders of the day.



Section 5 — Incidental Motions

An incidental motion is a motion about another motion that is on the floor. The Chair must first deal with an incidental motion before moving on to the motion it relates to. Remember that motions of privilege rank higher (take precedence over) incidental motions.

There are five incidental motions:

- Appeal the decision of the Chair
- Point of order
- Objection to consideration of the question
- Withdraw a motion
- Suspend the rules

There is no rank among incidental motions.

Rules at a Glance puts these motions in the middle of the chart. It provides details on whether they are debateable, can be amended, require a seconder, whether a vote is required, whether they are in order if another member is speaking and whether they can be reconsidered.

1. APPEAL THE DECISION OF THE CHAIR

The Chair preserves order at meetings and decides on questions of order. However, the meeting has the right to challenge the Chair's ruling on a point of order through a motion to appeal the decision of the Chair.

The motion looks like this:

“I challenge the decision of the Chair.”

Another member must second the motion.

Now the Chair may take a moment to check on the rule under dispute, or to consult a person in the role of parliamentarian, such as the national servicing representative.

Sometimes, the Chair may agree with the challenge, and the meeting continues.

If the Chair disagrees with the challenge, here is what often happens:

1. The vice-president takes over chairing the motion.
2. The member making the challenge gives reasons for challenging the Chair's ruling.
3. The Chair who was challenged explains the parliamentary rule behind their ruling.
4. The vice-president states the following motion:
“Will the decision of the Chair be upheld? (or “sustained”?)”
5. The vote happens immediately, without further discussion.

BE AWARE OF THE RULES

- > Any challenge to a chair's decision must occur immediately after the Chair makes the ruling.
- > A challenge is in order even when another speaker has the floor.
- > An answer to a question about parliamentary procedure is simply an explanation, not a ruling. It cannot be appealed.
- > It takes a majority vote to overturn the Chair's original decision. A tie vote means the Chair's decision is upheld.

2. POINT OF ORDER

A member in a meeting can use a point of order to bring a parliamentary error to the attention of the Chair so that it can be corrected.

Here is an example:

MEMBER: *“I rise on a point of order.” Or, “Point of order!”*

CHAIR: *“State your point of order.”*

MEMBER: *“The motion just proposed is out of order because we already have a motion on the floor.”*

CHAIR: *“Your point of order is well taken; the last motion is out of order.”*

In this example, the Chair agrees with the member’s point of order, corrects the problem, and the meeting continues.

If the Chair disagrees with the point of order, they may simply say they disagree, explain why, and proceed with the meeting. When this happens, and if a member still disagrees with the Chair, the member may appeal the Chair’s decision. (See the section on Appeal the decision of the Chair.)

Members can misuse this motion. They may not understand how to use a point of order. The Chair can explain its proper use.

In general, the Chair should not allow members to use points of order to:

- Slow down the meeting to avoid a vote or decision.
- Interrupt a speaker they disagree with.
- Make a speech.
- Criticize the Chair.

The Chair needs to be sure that the member’s point of order relates directly to the rules of order being used at that moment.

COMMENT

A member can use a point of information to stop a discussion, and to ask the Chair to clarify the issue being discussed, or the process being used.

BE AWARE OF THE RULES

- > The member moving the motion must rise (speak up) and address the Chair.
- > The member may call out “Point of order!” without being recognized by the Chair.
- > A point of order may be used to correct another member, as well as the Chair.

3. OBJECTION TO CONSIDERATION OF THE QUESTION

A member can make this kind of motion if they believe that a motion on the floor has no merit. Remember that a motion on the floor is called “the question.” This motion applies, for example, when a member finds the motion to be irrelevant, objectionable or not worthy of the members’ time.

The motion looks like this:

“I object to consideration of the question.”

The member must object before the debate on the main motion.

BE AWARE OF THE RULES

- > The Chair moves immediately to a vote, with no seconder and no debate.
- > The vote to not consider the question requires a two-thirds majority.

4. WITHDRAW A MOTION

The mover of a motion can withdraw the motion, with consent from the seconder, and before the end of the debate.

Once debate on a motion has ended, the motion can still be withdrawn, but only with a unanimous vote of the members at the meeting.

The motion looks like this:

MEMBER: *“I move to withdraw my motion.”*

CHAIR: *“X asks to withdraw the motion.*

If there is no other objection, the motion will be withdrawn.”

If the seconder, and no one else objects, the Chair moves to the next item on the agenda.

5. SUSPEND THE RULES

A motion to suspend the rules can only be used to

- change the order of business in a meeting, and
- deal with urgent business.

In most locals, these kinds of changes happen informally, without an official motion. However, if a member objects, the Chair must follow the correct rules.

For example:

“I move that Item X on the agenda be moved up for immediate discussion.”

BE AWARE OF THE RULES

- > This motion cannot set aside or overrule any rules in the local's constitution or by-laws.
- > The motion is not debatable and cannot be amended.
- > It requires a seconder.
- > It requires a 2/3 vote to carry.



Section 6 — Subsidiary Motions

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

There are seven subsidiary motions:

1. Lay on the table
2. The previous question
3. Limit or extend limits of debate
4. Postpone to a definite time
5. Refer or commit
6. Amend
7. Postpone indefinitely

Subsidiary motions are ranked from 1 to 7, with number 1 being first in line.

Rules at a Glance lists these motions near the bottom of the chart. It provides details on whether they are debateable, can be amended, require a seconder, whether a vote is required, whether they are in order if another member is speaking and whether they can be reconsidered.

NAME OF SUBSIDIARY MOTION	THE MOTION SEEKS TO...
Lay on the table or “table”	Postpone (put aside) discussion and voting on a main motion.
Previous question	End debate on a motion.
Limit debate or Extend debate	Limit how long the meeting will continue to discuss a motion. Provide more time to discuss a motion; it delays a vote on the main motion.
Postpone to a definite time	Delay a decision on the main motion to a specific time.
Refer (or commit) to a committee	Delay a decision on the motion by sending the motion to a committee that will do more work on the issue.
Amend	See Section 3 of this handbook.
Postpone indefinitely	Stop a main motion by not holding a vote.

1. LAY ON THE TABLE

Members often shorten the wording to “table the motion.” A member who uses this motion wants to suspend debate on a main motion and delay a final vote.

It looks like this:

I move to table the motion ... (member reads aloud text of the motion)

This motion ranks higher than (takes precedence over) all other subsidiary

motions. This means the Chair must deal with it first. The motion to table is in order until debate ends, and until just before the vote.

When a member wants a tabled motion to come back to the meeting, they need to make a new motion to “take the question from the table.” Someone needs to second this motion and the meeting must vote on it.

BE AWARE OF THE RULES

If the meeting accepts a motion to lay on the table, all other motions or amendments that apply to the main motion are also taken out of the meeting (tabled).

For example:

The meeting is debating an amendment to a main motion.

A member rises and makes a motion to refer the amendment to a committee.

Then, a different member makes a motion to table the main motion.

In the list of 7 subsidiary motions, the motion to table ranks higher than the motion to refer to a committee. This means the Chair must deal with the motion to table, first.

If the meeting votes to table the main motion, the amendment and the motion to refer are also tabled.

BE AWARE OF THE RULES

The motion to table is often confused with a motion to postpone (to a certain time). You cannot “table” a motion “to a certain time.” If the member wants the issue to come back to the floor at a certain time, they should use a motion to postpone to that time.

The Chair should ask the member if the goal is to postpone or table the motion. Explain how the different rules apply:

LAY ON THE TABLE

Not debatable

Not amendable

A majority vote is needed to “table” and “to take from the table.”

POSTPONE (TO A CERTAIN TIME)

Debatable

Amendable

Requires a majority vote

2. THE PREVIOUS QUESTION

This is a motion to stop debate and move immediately to a vote. A member will launch this motion when they want to end debate on an issue.

If the motion for the previous question is carried, the Chair moves immediately to a vote on the main motion.

It looks like this:

“I move that the previous question be put.”

OR

“I call the question.” OR “Question!”

If we follow the rules of order strictly, this motion should apply only to the issue on the floor. Here are two examples:

- If the motion comes up when a main motion is being discussed, debate ends and the meeting votes on the main motion.

- If the meeting is discussing a sub-amendment, the motion to put the previous question would apply to the sub-amendment only.

The Chair may ask the member to be clear about whether they want the motion to apply to the **amendment** or to the main motion, too. If the member wants the motion to apply only to the **amendment**, they may decide to make the wording of their motion more specific:

*“I move that we cease debate on the **amendment**.”*

If a majority of members support this motion in a vote — which is required on the motion for the previous question — then voting on the amendment happens right away, without further debate.

Debate will then continue on the main motion. If a member wants to launch a motion for the previous question on the main motion, they can do so.

COMMENT

Informal rules

Many locals automatically close debate on all motions (the sub-amendment, amendment and main motion) when the meeting accepts a motion to put the previous question. The Chair then calls for a vote on the sub-amendment, amendment and main motion, without further debate.

If a member challenges a chair who uses this unofficial process, the Chair should deal with the motion on the previous question in a way that follows the strict rules.

Some locals describe and explain this rule in their by-laws.

COMMENT

A motion to call the question is not debateable. Some members may try to rise on a “*point of privilege*” or “point of order” to keep debate going. The Chair needs to stay focused on the motion to end debate (motion for the previous question).

The chair:

Have the members vote immediately on the motion to end debate (motion for the previous question). If members vote in favour of ending debate, move to a vote on the main motion. Resolve all other points immediately after the vote on the main motion.

BE AWARE OF THE RULES

- > Strict parliamentary process requires that another member second a motion that calls for the previous question. However, if there has been a lot of debate, and many members are calling for the “Question!” it seems clear that the meeting wants to end debate. The Chair may then hold a vote on whether to close debate without need of a formal motion and seconder.
- > Anyone who has spoken on the main motion cannot move a motion to end debate.
- > A majority vote is required to pass a motion on the previous question.

3. LIMIT OR EXTEND LIMITS OF DEBATE

A motion to limit or extend limits of debate can take various forms. Here are some examples:

“I move that debate be closed and that we vote on the main motion at 7:30 p.m.”

“I move that discussion on the pending amendment be limited to thirty minutes.”

“I move that the discussion on the pending motion and its amendments be limited to one speech of three minutes from each speaker.”

CUPE’s Model by-laws for locals suggests these time limits during meetings:

- 3 minutes for speakers
- 5 minutes for the member who moved a motion to speak about their motion, and
- 5 minutes to provide committee reports.

Some locals set different limits in their by-laws.

The CUPE National Constitution says:

“The mover of a motion can speak for five minutes. All other speeches are limited to three minutes” and “No delegate can speak more than once on a subject until all others who wish to speak have been able to do so.”

BE AWARE OF THE RULES

- > Any debatable motion is subject to a motion to limit debate.
- > A motion to extend debate applies only to the motion on the floor, or to others as described in the motion.
- > Motions of privilege and incidental motions outrank (have precedence over) a motion to limit or extend debate.

4. POSTPONE TO A DEFINITE TIME

A member may use this motion to postpone a vote on a motion until a later date or time.

It looks like this:

MEMBER: *“I move that we postpone consideration of this motion until the next general meeting.”*

Refer to the section on motions to lay on the table, so you do not get confused between a motion to postpone to a definite time and a motion to table.

A motion to postpone to a definite time takes precedence over motions to refer, amend or postpone indefinitely.

BE AWARE OF THE RULES

- > A motion to postpone to a definite time requires a majority vote.
- > If the meeting wishes to deal with the original motion before the time set out in the motion to postpone, this requires a two-thirds majority vote.

5. REFER OR COMMIT

A member may use this motion when they want to send the discussion and the motion to another group, for example, to the local executive or a committee.

The motion may refer back, for example, to a committee. It may require more detail, for example:

“I move that the question be referred to a committee of five, to be appointed by the Local Executive, with instructions to bring back resolutions covering the issue to the next regular membership meeting.”

BE AWARE OF THE RULES

- > A motion to refer cannot be tabled.

6. AMEND

See Section 3 of this handbook.

7. POSTPONE INDEFINITELY

A motion to postpone indefinitely prevents a vote on a main motion. It looks like this:

“I move that we postpone indefinitely the consideration of (member reads aloud text of the motion).”

Members may use this motion to:

- Test the voting strength of the supporters of the motion.
- Dispose of an ill-advised motion that could prove embarrassing, whether carried or rejected at the meeting.

The motion to postpone indefinitely opens debate on the main motion. Members who are opposed to the main motion have a chance to argue against it. This provides a way for a local’s members to see how much opposition there is to the motion.

- When the meeting votes in favour of the motion to postpone indefinitely, then the main motion cannot be brought back to the floor of the meeting, except by a motion to reconsider.
- When the meeting votes against the motion to postpone indefinitely, then the main motion is re-open for debate.

COMMENT

How long is indefinitely? When can a motion be brought back? In his book, *Bourinot’s Rules of Order*, J. G. Dubroy suggests that the motion may be considered at the next meeting, under unfinished business.

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Section 7 – Three Motions that Stand Alone

These motions may be treated as main motions because they do not fall within the categories of privileged, incidental or subsidiary motions:

- To take from the table
- Reconsider
- Rescind

Rules at a Glance includes motions to reconsider and rescind. They appear under the line for MAIN MOTION because they are like main motions.

The motion to take from the table is the opposite of the motion “to lay on the table” (or more simply, “to table”). We describe it here because it is not included elsewhere.

1. TAKE FROM THE TABLE

A member may move this motion to bring a tabled motion back to the meeting for debate and a vote.

The motion looks like this:

“I move that we take from the table the motion (member reads aloud the motion that was tabled).”

BE AWARE OF THE RULES

- > A motion to take from the table is only in order after the meeting has dealt with other business since the main motion was tabled.
- > If the meeting votes against the motion to take from the table, members must wait until some other business has been transacted before they can use it again.
- > If the meeting votes in favour of the motion to take from the table, the main motion may only be tabled again after further discussion of the main motion has taken place.

COMMENT

Members may use motions to table and take from the table often. Although annoying at times, this is in order.


The Chair may urge members to use the motion to table correctly.

- A motion to table should set aside a main motion, to allow the meeting to deal with more urgent business.
- When the more urgent business ends, it is correct to bring back the main motion by making a motion to take from the table.

2. RECONSIDER

The motion to reconsider is a motion that was already voted on. CUPE's Model By-laws for locals suggests this rule of order:

“At a membership meeting where a question has been decided, any two members who voted with the majority can give notice of a motion to reconsider the decision of the membership at the next membership meeting.



The motion to reconsider requires the support of a two-thirds majority of members who vote. If a two-thirds majority of members support reconsideration, the question will be placed in front of the membership for debate and a subsequent vote.”

BE AWARE OF THE RULES

Bourinot's Rules of Order do not include this rule. Check whether your local's by-laws include it. If so, members may use this motion.

The first step at the meeting where members have already voted on a motion looks like this:

“I rise to give notice of motion that we reconsider the following motion (state the motion) at our next meeting.”

The Chair confirms that the mover and seconder voted with the majority when the vote on the motion occurred. If so, the recording-secretary records the notice of motion to reconsider in the minutes.

The motion to reconsider is placed on the agenda of the next meeting.

At the next meeting, usually under unfinished business, the Chair announces a motion to reconsider a motion previously dealt with by the members.

The Chair reads aloud the notice of motion to reconsider. They will then allow the meeting to discuss whether it wants to reconsider the motion that is the subject of the motion to reconsider.

The motion to reconsider needs a two-thirds majority in favour to re-open the original motion. If the motion to reconsider carries, the Chair re-opens the original motion for debate and a vote.

BE AWARE OF THE RULES

What motions CANNOT be reconsidered?

Motions to adjourn, take a recess, lay on the table, take from the table, suspend the rules or the order of the agenda CANNOT be reconsidered.

The motion to reconsider CANNOT apply to a motion where the action has already occurred. For example, if the original motion was to spend \$100.00 and the money has already been spent, no one can launch a motion to reconsider.

Please note: It is not possible to postpone indefinitely or to refer a motion to reconsider.

When can the meeting debate a motion to reconsider?

- > A motion to reconsider is not debatable when the motion being reconsidered is not debatable.
- > A motion to put the question, and motions to limit and extend debate, may be applied to a motion to reconsider, when it is debatable.

If a motion to reconsider is tabled or postponed to a certain time, the main motion that is being reconsidered and **any amendments to that motion** are also postponed or tabled.

A motion to reconsider can be made during the meeting that dealt with the original motion, or at the next meeting. After that, the correct motion is the motion to rescind.



3. RESCIND

A motion to rescind allows a meeting to change its mind on a question it dealt with at two, or more, previous meetings.

A motion to rescind is rare because most locals use a motion to reconsider in a timely way. The motion to reconsider applies to the meeting that comes after the meeting where the original motion was dealt with.

A motion to rescind looks like this:

“I move that we rescind the following motion (state the motion).”

A motion to rescind is not in order if an action linked to the original motion (such as donating \$100.00 to a food bank) has already happened (the money was donated).



