

Basic Motion Making and Processes at UMFA Meetings*

July 27, 2021

General Membership Meetings and meetings of the Board of Representatives are two very important decision making bodies of the Association. Each has the power to direct the work of your union in various ways. To help achieve this end the Association uses its own meeting procedures, as codified in the Standing Rules approved by the Board of Representatives. In the event those rules do not cover a given scenario, the Association relies on Robert's Rules of Order and with reference to the procedures of parliament.¹

However, like the UM's Senate rules, UMFA's meeting rules include the assertion that meeting rules are tools for achieving democratic ends and are not ends in themselves. Substantive motions discussed at meetings should be handled with considerable formality, but whenever possible the Chair of any meeting should try to deal with procedures by general agreement.²

To that end, what follows is a basic primer on how to bring motions, amend motions, raise concerns about process, and move Association business forward.

Speaking at a meeting

- Raise your hand to get on the list of speakers.
- Wait for the Chair to ask you to speak.³ You can speak to an item or to a motion, make a motion, or amend a motion that is under debate.
- The only time a member should 'jump the line' is to request the Chair to rule on a 'point of order', to appeal a decision made by the Chair, or to make a point of privilege (see below).⁴
- The Chair may interrupt a speaker to let them know they are nearing the end of their allotted speaking time.
- The Chair may close the list of speakers if the time allotted to an agenda item is coming to its end.
- Motions to extend debate, limit debate, or call the vote (see below) can only be made by a Member on the speakers list whose turn it is to speak.

Making a motion

- Normally, motions will be presented with the Agenda.⁵
- Motions raised at a meeting must be moved and seconded (with several exceptions – see below).

¹ See section 10 of the UMFA constitution – particularly section 10.3.

² See the preface to Section A of the Standing Rules, which also includes the fundamental principles motivating the creation of use of these rules: a) The right of the majority to decide. b) The right of a minority to be heard, it being agreed that this right requires not only special protection but also practical limitations. c) The right of absentees to be protected from significant deviation from agreed procedures and announced proceedings. d) The right of interested parties to be informed.

³ A.9.2 of the Standing Rules (SR)

⁴ A.9.3 of the SR

⁵ A.12.3 of the SR

- The Chair will rule on whether or not motions moved from the floor of a meeting are in order.

Amending a motion

- A motion may be amended by adding, deleting, or substituting specific words, phrases, or paragraphs, even to the extent of substituting an entirely different motion provided it relates to the subject matter of the original motion.⁶
- Motions may be amended without formal motion, provided that no member objects; otherwise a formal motion, duly seconded, is necessary.⁷
- The Chair may order that amendments to such motions be submitted in writing.⁸
- Amendments may be made to an amendment, but cannot themselves be amended.⁹

Postponing a motion or debate (sometimes called “motion to table”)

Motions can be postponed indefinitely or to a fixed time, or be sent to a committee:

- **Postpone to a fixed time:** this motion can be raised by a speaker when it is their turn to speak.¹⁰ It can be amended only by changing the time specified and is debatable only with respect to the propriety of the postponement. It requires a simple majority.¹¹
- **Postpone indefinitely:** This motion cannot be amended, and is debatable only with respect to the propriety of the postponement. It requires a simple majority.¹²
- An item of business can be **committed to a new committee** or recommitted to the committee from which it came. It may be debated and amended, and requires a simple majority.¹³

Raising a concern about process (“Point of Order”; “Point of Privilege”)

- The Chair may interrupt any speaker on any business at any time to call a member to order, or to rule a motion out of order.¹⁴
- Similarly, a member may interrupt a speaker or business by raising a **point of order** which, when stated, is decided upon by the Chair immediately. There shall be no seconder, and no debate, except that the Chair may, if they wish, submit the question to the meeting and permit a brief debate thereon.¹⁵
- Any member may interrupt a speaker or any business in order to request information regarding proper procedure or to request information with respect to facts under discussion (“**point of privilege**”). The Chair will immediately rule if the request is a proper interruption.¹⁶

Appealing a decision made by a Chair (“Challenge the Chair”)

- Such an appeal must be made immediately after the disputed ruling, and can be raised without the Chair first recognizing the Member. It must be seconded. It can be debated, but not amended. It requires a majority vote. If there is a tie-vote, the challenge shall be considered defeated.¹⁷

⁶ A.13 of the SR

⁷ A.13.1 of the SR

⁸ A.12.2 of the SR

⁹ A.13.2 of the SR

¹⁰ A.9.3 of the SR

¹¹ Appendix to section A: 1.3

¹² Appendix to section A: 1.4

¹³ Appendix to section A: 1.5

¹⁴ A.4.1 of the SR

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ A.4.2 of the SR

¹⁷ Ibid.

Duration of Debate

- No more than **forty-five minutes** of any one meeting shall be devoted to discussion of any one agenda item unless at least **two-thirds** of the members present and voting adopt a resolution to extend the debate.¹⁸ Such a motion is to be raised by a Member whose turn it is to speak.
- Motions to **Close Debate** (“call the question”) can be made when it is a Member’s turn to speak. It must be seconded, cannot be debated or amended, and requires 2/3 majority to pass. Unless otherwise stated, it applies to the principle motion and all related amendments.¹⁹
- Motions to **Limit Debate** have the effect of fixing a time at which debate on a subject shall be terminated. It is not debatable, but can be amended as to time. The amendment may be debated. It requires 2/3 majority for passage.²⁰

Duration of meetings

- After 2.5 hours have elapsed the meeting shall be adjourned unless at least two-thirds of the members present and voting decide otherwise.²¹

Adjournment

- A motion to adjourn, once adopted, terminates a meeting. Such a motion may not interrupt a speaker or a vote, and must be raised by a Member on the speakers list whose turn it is to speak. Such a motion does take precedence over other pending business. If at one point such a motion is defeated, it may be reintroduced at any time, as long as other business has intervened.

**Where language differs from the Constitution or Standing Rules, the latter two take precedence. However, it should always be kept in mind that the Standing Rules state that whenever possible the Chair of a meeting should try to deal with procedures by general agreement.*

The UMFA **Constitution** is available here: <http://www.umfa.ca/images/pdfs/Constitution.pdf>

UMFA’s **Standing Rules** are available here: <http://www.umfa.ca/who-we-are/governance/standing-rules>

¹⁸ A.8.2 of the SR

¹⁹ A.2.1 of the SR

²⁰ A.2.3 of the SR

²¹ A.8.1 of the SR