

## Robert's Rules of Order for Senate and Standing Committees of Senate

Senate and Standing Committees of Senate meetings are conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order. The following document provides an overview of Robert's Rules of Order and apply to Senate and Standing Committees, unless the bylaws or committee rules of order states otherwise.<sup>1</sup>

### Quorum

- Quorum for meeting is minimum of fifty percent (50%) of voting membership.<sup>i</sup>
- Normally the chair of any given meeting does not vote and is not counted towards quorum except in the case where the chair's participation is required to meet quorum. Leaves of absence will reduce quorum requirements accordingly.
- Where there are vacancies on standing committees, quorum is 50% of available voting membership – vacant positions are excluded from the count.
- If a quorum does not exist at a meeting, any action taken in the absence of a quorum is invalid. Once quorum is declared the meeting continues, unless bylaws or committee rules of order states otherwise.<sup>ii</sup>

### Motions

A motion is a formal proposal that the decision-making body will vote on.

- Motions must be made by voting committee members, unless bylaws or committee rules of order states otherwise.
- See Appendix 1 on Steps in a motion and Appendix 2 How to handle specific motions.

### Role of mover and seconder<sup>iii</sup>

Moving and seconding are steps that enable the introduction of motions to be put on the floor and debated. The mover is generally presumed to be in favor of the motion when he or she moves it, but is entitled to change his or her mind and vote against the motion.<sup>iv</sup> The individual seconding a motion does so only to get the motion debated, and it should not be assumed that the mover and/or seconder are in favour of the motion.<sup>v</sup>

The chair may ask the mover and seconder if they agree to amend or withdraw the motion they put on the table. This is incorrect. Neither the mover nor the seconder own the motion once debate on it begins; ownership shifts to the group. A decisions to amend or withdraw the motion is to be made by the group, collectively, and not unilaterally by the mover and seconder.<sup>vi</sup>

### Main motions

Motions introduce a new piece of business or propose a decision or action to be taken.<sup>vii</sup> The following are some aspects of main motions:

- Main motions cannot be applied to any other motions.
- There can be only one main motion on the floor at one time.

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<sup>1</sup> Contact the Secretariat office for further clarification on Roberts Rules of Order

- They are debatable, amendable, and can be reconsidered.

### Subsidiary motions:<sup>viii</sup>

Motions that affect or change how a main motion is handled. Subsidiary motions are voted on before the main motion. Examples include:

**Postpone to a certain time<sup>ix</sup>:** To move to a later, specified time on the agenda or to the next meeting.

**Amendments<sup>x</sup>:** Used to clarify or modify a motion under consideration.

- Must state exact wording and where in the main motion the change is to be made.
- Amendments must be germane
- When an amendment needs to be amended, a secondary amendment results. Secondary amendments may not themselves be amended.
- A friendly amendment is an amendment to a motion that is perceived by all parties as an enhancement to the original motion, often only as clarification of intent. A friendly amendment should be handled the same as a regular amendment and must be adopted by the full body, either by a vote or by unanimous consent.

**Commit or refer<sup>xi</sup>:** Assigns the motion to a delegated committee for action (e.g., investigation or a report). The motion should specify the committee (or committee make-up if a special committee is to be formed) and deadline.

**Table<sup>xii</sup>:** To lay aside the business at hand in such a manner that it will be considered later in the meeting.

**Withdraw:** Before debate begins, a motion may be withdrawn by the mover. Once debate begins, only the assembly – by a majority vote or general consent – can withdraw it.

**Limit or Extend Debate<sup>xiii</sup>:** Use when circumstances call for shorter or longer speech.

**Previous Question<sup>xiv</sup>:** To close the debate and bring to an immediate vote.

**Adjourn<sup>xv</sup>:** A motion to end the meeting.

### Motions that Bring a Question Before the Assembly Again:

- **Take from the Table<sup>xvi</sup>** - resume consideration of a main motion.
- **Rescind, Repeal or Annul<sup>xvii</sup>** - cancel something that has been previously approved.
- **Amend Something Previous Adopted<sup>xviii</sup>** - proposal to modify wording or text previously approved.
- **Discharge a Committee<sup>xix</sup>** - if a question has been referred to or a task assigned to a committee that has not made a final report, the committee may be discharged to allow the committee to take action or to drop the motion.
- **Reconsider<sup>xx</sup>** - within the same meeting that a motion has been voted on, the question may come before the assembly again as if it had not been voted on.

### Debating<sup>xxi</sup>

Each speaker must first be acknowledged by the chair. When there are several people wishing to speak, each may speak in turn, and may not speak again until all others have had a turn. Speakers must keep

remarks relevant and appropriate to the discussion, on subject, and adhere to time limits.

A person may interrupt a speaker for these reasons only:

- to get information about business – point of information
- to get information about rules – parliamentary inquiry
- if he/she can't hear, safety reasons, comfort, etc. – question of privilege
- if he/she see a breach of the rules – point of order
- if he/she disagrees with the chair's ruling – appeal

## Voting

- *Putting the question* is when the chair calls for a vote on a motion. Voting is usually by show of hands, after the chair clarifies to the assembly what they are voting on.<sup>xxii</sup>
- Motions proposed usually require approval by a majority of all voting members present (i.e. more than 50% of the votes cast) although some motions, such as motions to limit or end debate, or suspend the rules require 2/3 of the votes cast. The committee chair may vote, unless by-laws or committee rules of orders state otherwise.
- Ex-officio means “by virtue of office”; an ex-officio member is a person who is entitled to a position on a board or committee for as long as he or she holds a certain office. Ex-officio members of boards and committees have the same rights and privileges as all other members, including the right to vote, unless the by-laws or committee rules of orders state otherwise.<sup>xxiii</sup>

## Abstention<sup>xxiv</sup>

In tallying the votes, abstentions do not count towards the in favour votes. If a vote fails as a result of abstentions, then the discussion will reopen and the vote will be called again on the majority of those present and voting (this time excluding abstentions).

Members should abstain when they have a direct personal interest in the matter that amounts to a real or perceived conflict of interest.

## References

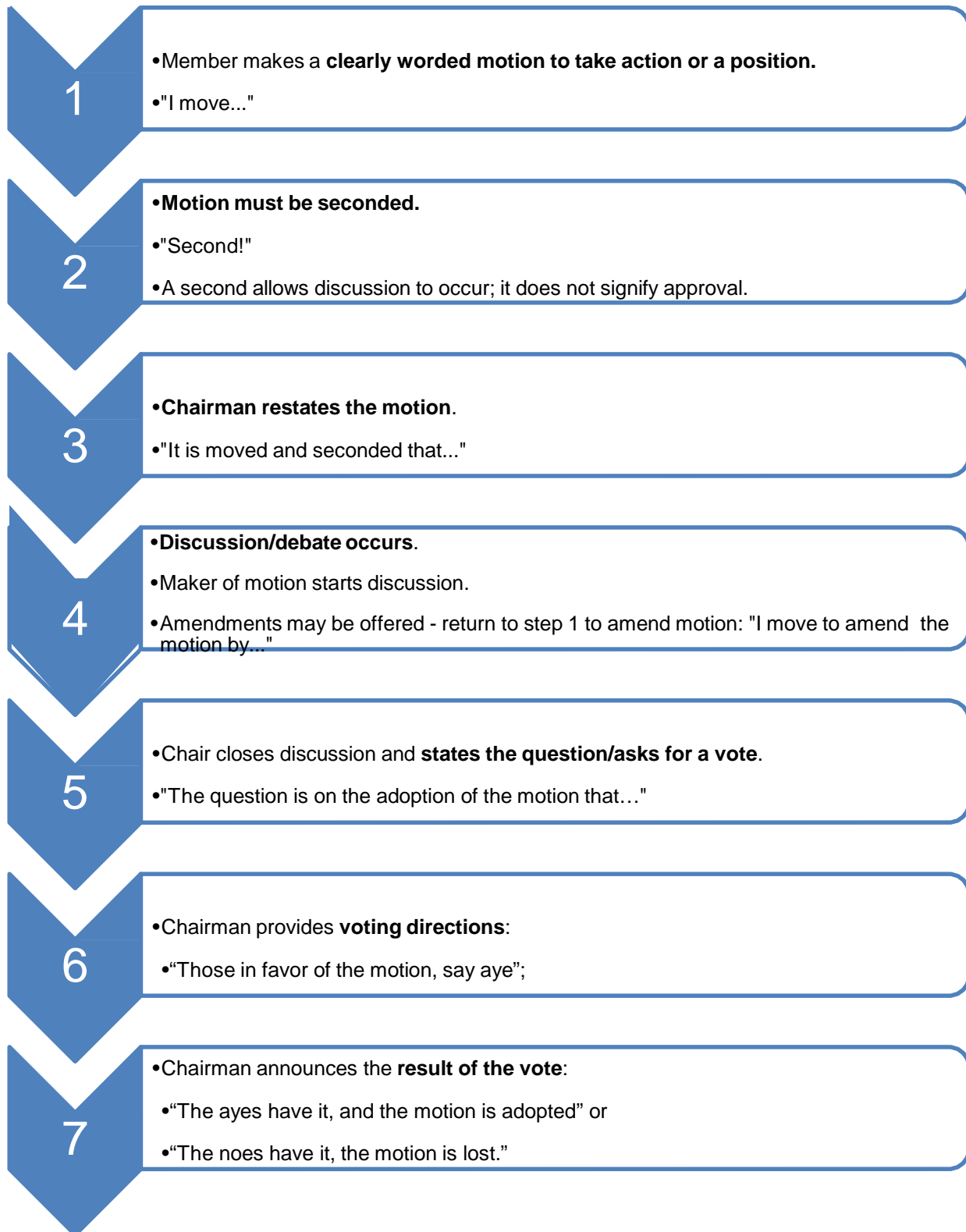
Henry M. Robert III and others, *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 11th ed. (Da Capo Press, 2011).

UFV Senate Bylaws – see <http://www.ufv.ca/senate/>

SGC Rules for the Conduct of Business – see <http://www.ufv.ca/senate/standing-committees/senate-governance-committee/>

Senate Standing Committee Rules for the Conduct of Business - see <http://www.ufv.ca/senate/standing-committees/>

## Appendix 1 - Steps in a motion



## Appendix 2 - How specific motions are handled

These motions are listed in order of precedence. A motion can be introduced if it is higher on the chart than the pending motion.

**S** indicates the section from Robert's Rules.

PURPOSE:	YOU SAY:	INTERRUPT?	2ND?	DEBATE?	AMEND?	VOTE?	S
Close meeting	I move to adjourn	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	21
Make to follow agenda	I request regular order be resumed	Yes	No	No	No	None	18
Lay aside temporarily	I move to lay the question on the table	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	17
Close debate	I move the previous question	No	Yes	No	No	2/3	16
Limit or extend debate	I move that debate be limited to ...	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3	15
Postpone to a certain time	I move to postpone the motion to ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	14
Refer to committee	I move to refer the motion to ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	13
Modify wording of motion	I move to amend the motion by ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	12
Bring business before assembly (a main motion)	I move that [or "to"] ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	10

**Incidental Motions.** No order of precedence. These motions question procedure and are decided upon immediately.

PURPOSE:	YOU SAY:	INTERRUPT?	2ND?	DEBATE?	AMEND?	VOTE?	S
Enforce rules	Point of Order	Yes	No	No	No	None	2
Request for information	Point of information	Yes	No	No	No	None	33

**Motions That Bring a Question Again Before the Assembly.** No order of precedence. Introduce only when nothing else is pending.

PURPOSE:	YOU SAY:	INTERRUPT?	2ND?	DEBATE?	AMEND?	VOTE?	S
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Take matter from table	I move to take from the table ...	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	34
Cancel previous action	I move to rescind ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	2/3 or Majority with notice	35

<sup>i</sup> Senate bylaws and Rules for the Conduct of Business for Senate Standing Committees

<sup>ii</sup> RONR (11th ed.), S.44, p. 400

<sup>iii</sup> RONR (11th ed.), S.4, p. 33

<sup>iv</sup> RONR (11th ed.), S.4, p. 40

<sup>v</sup> RONR (11th ed.), S.4, pp. 35-36

<sup>vi</sup> RONR (11th ed.), S.4, p. 40

<sup>vii</sup> RONR (11th ed.), S.10, p. 100

<sup>viii</sup> RONR (11th ed.), S.11, p. 126

<sup>ix</sup> RONR (11th ed.), S.14, p. 179

<sup>x</sup> RONR (11th ed.), S.12, p. 130

<sup>xi</sup> RONR (11th ed.), S.13, p. 168

<sup>xii</sup> RONR (11th ed.), S.17, p. 209

<sup>xiii</sup> RONR (11th ed.), S.15, p. 191

<sup>xiv</sup> RONR (11th ed.), S.16, p. 197

<sup>xv</sup> RONR (11th ed.), S.21, p. 233

<sup>xvi</sup> RONR (11th ed.), S.34, p. 300

<sup>xvii</sup> RONR (11th ed.), S.35, p. 305

<sup>xviii</sup> RONR (11th ed.), S.35, p. 305

<sup>xix</sup> RONR (11th ed.), S.36, p. 310

<sup>xx</sup> RONR (11th ed.), S.37, p. 315

<sup>xxi</sup> RONR (11th ed.), S.43, p. 385

<sup>xxiii</sup> [RONR (11th ed.), S. 49, p. 483

<sup>xxiv</sup> RONR (11th ed.), S. 4, p.45; S.44, p. 400, 401; S.45, p. 407