

# Bourinot's Rules of Order - A Summary for COSS

By Patrick Fothergill

Bourinot's Rules are based on those used by the Canadian House of Commons, and are employed by various Canadian unions and professional organizations. The authoritative text, now in a fourth revised edition, is divided into sections for different types of bodies. Part II, "Rules and Usages for Assemblies Generally," is the section most applicable to COSS, and contains sub-sections numbered 25-50.

25. **Rules** necessary to ensure free expression of opinion, to protect minority rights, to reach clear majority-supported decisions, and to keep debate relevant.

26. **Changing the Rules** to be carried out by committee recommendation, and requires notice of motion

27. **Suspension of Rules** only by unanimous consent

28. **Assemblies** [not relevant]

29. **Notice of Meetings** served well in advance should include day, time and place, as well as agenda, minutes and supporting documentation (for prior review)

30. **The Presiding Officer** (or chair) is to be the addressee of all remarks made

31. **Absence of Presiding Officer** should be anticipated by the selection of a deputy chair; in absence of both a chair is to be appointed *pro tem*

32. **Duties of the Chair** include facilitating progress of meeting, deciding all questions of procedure (subject to appeal), remaining impartial (in COSS's case) sometimes representing the body

33. **Choosing the Presiding Officer** [not relevant]

34. **Quorum** (for COSS, prescribed in the Memorandum of Agreement) must be present for transaction of business; whenever quorum is lost, a meeting is immediately adjourned by the chair

35. **Order of Business** (or agenda) to be prepared in advance; order: minutes, reports, business arising, new business; amendments to the order to be made with consent of whole meeting; admission of new questions at the discretion of the chair

36. **Motions** should be worded in the affirmative (whenever possible), express full intent of the mover, may not include preambles, should if important or detailed be submitted to the chair in advance of the meeting, and require seconding; once restated by the chair, a motion is property of the assembly; motions adopted constitute formal decisions of the body, and may not be rescinded until a future meeting (with proper notice)

37. **Reconsideration** of failed motions is possible one motions with due notice, and requires a two-thirds vote

38. **Amendments** may not negate the main notions or alter it in principle, in the judgement of the chair (these should be addressed as new main motions); amendments may be amended; only one amendment (or sub-amendment) to be considered at a time, but notices of future amendments are in order

39. **Notice of Motion** is always necessary if the motion concerns the constitution, policies or procedures of a body, does not require seconding at the meeting where notice is given, and is not debatable at that meeting

#### 40. **Special Motions**

(a) *Motion to Adjourn* always in order, requires a second, not debatable

(b) *Proceed to Next Business* requires a second, not debatable

### **Bourinot's Rules of Order at a Glance:**

<b>To Do This:</b>	<b>You Say This:</b>	<b>May Interrupt the Speaker?</b>	<b>You must be Seconded ?</b>	<b>Is this Motion Debatable ?</b>	<b>Is this Motion Amendable?</b>	<b>What Majority is Required?</b>
Consider something out of its scheduled order.	I move the agenda be amended in order to deal with the following item: ...	NO	YES	NO	NO	Majority
Postpone further discussion on a motion until later in the meeting	I move that the motion be tabled until ...	NO	YES	YES- only to time	YES	Majority
Postpone consideration of a motion until a future meeting	I move that the motion be postponed until ...	NO	YES	YES	YES	Majority
Have a motion studied more before voting on it	I move that the motion be referred to ...	NO	YES	YES	YES	Majority
Raise a matter previously tabled (if at a different time from when it was decided	I move that the motion about ... be lifted from the table	NO	YES	YES	YES	Majority

<b>To Do This:</b>	<b>You Say This:</b>	<b>May Interrupt the Speaker?</b>	<b>You must be Seconded ?</b>	<b>Is this Motion Debatable ?</b>	<b>Is this Motion Amendable?</b>	<b>What Majority is Required?</b>
Reconsider a motion already voted on earlier in the meeting	I move that the motion about ... be reconsidered at the next meeting” and provide written notice that the matter be raised at the next meeting	NO	YES	YES	NO	2/3 Majority
Object to something which prevents your continued participation (e.g. excessive noise)	Point of Privilege	YES	NO	NO	NO	No vote taken, chair rules
Seek clarification from the previous speaker	Point of Information	YES if urgent	NO	NO	NO	No vote taken, chair rules
Overturn the ruling of the chair	I challenge the chair on ...	YES	YES	YES	NO	Majority
Enquire about procedure or consequences	Point of Order	YES	NO	YES, only to the point	NO	No vote taken, chair rules
Object to Incorrect procedure being used	Point of Order	YES	NO	Yes, only to the point	NO	No vote taken, chair rules