

Running Effective Meetings



NSGEU
EDUCATION

Statement of Respect

Harassment or discrimination of any kind will not be tolerated at NSGEU functions.

Whenever NSGEU members gather, we welcome all peoples of the world. We will not accept any unwelcoming words, actions, or behaviors against our union members.

We give respect to all persons, regardless of age, political affiliation, including people of colour, women, men, First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples, members of ethno-racial groups, people with disabilities, gays, lesbians, bisexual, transgender/transsexual people, gender diverse persons, and all persons whose first language is not English.

In our diversity we will build solidarity as union members.

We recognize the dignity and worth of all individuals. To protect their rights we confront bias, prejudice, and discrimination.

The Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union acknowledges that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaw People.

This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" that Mi'kmaw and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) People first signed with the British Crown in 1725.

The treaties did not deal with surrender of lands and resources but in fact recognized Mi'kmaw and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations.

Unceded means that the land was never given to a government entity by the First people of Canada who held the original title to the land.

If you have input on the content of these materials, please contact the NSGEU Education department at 902-424-4063, toll free 877-556-7438, or email: NSGEUeducation@nsgeu.ca.

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How to Run an Effective Meeting

Well-run and efficient meetings make members feel like they are respected, their time is valued, and their input is appreciated. This, along with relevant information sharing and debate, will make people want to attend and come back.

It is the responsibility of the person who chairs the meeting to ensure that meetings reflect the values of democracy, open participation, and fairness, and defend the values of union – justice, fairness and collective solutions.

A union meeting should do three things:

- Inform the members of what is happening in the local and in the larger union, what might happen in the near future, and explain why.
- Make decisions that guide the local, council or committee and complete all necessary union business, e.g. hold local elections.
- Increase solidarity amongst the membership, bring people together, and grow support for the union.

Small attendance at union meetings means that important decisions are made by a small group of members. Although, you may not have 100% attendance at meetings, you should make an effort to get a large, representative turnout.



Setting the meeting time and date

It is important to make sure the membership know about upcoming meetings well in advance. Members need time to make arrangements to attend.

Here are some suggestions about setting the date:

You can set a regular meeting time each month and let people know what it is at the beginning of your term in office, e.g. every second Thursday of every month except December, July and August; or every second month on the second Wednesday; or a

set of dates that are set out at the beginning of a calendar year or term.

If members are on shift work or work in diverse departments, you may choose to rotate or change the time and location of meetings so that everyone has an opportunity to attend. However, if meetings are scheduled on a more ad-hoc basis then the officers need to ensure that the members know when and where the meetings are going to be held.

Creating the agenda

There is a standard agenda for a regional or occupational council and local meetings that includes reports, and new business. Each meeting should have at least 10-15 minutes to educate or inform members of important items e.g. on a campaign, an article in the collective agreement, on pensions, or on an issue like mental health, bullying or OHS.

Preparing for the meeting

The president and or other executive members should review the minutes for errors and have the secretary correct them.

Follow up with any persons who were given any tasks at the previous meeting to ask them to report on their progress with the task. If the person is not able to attend, ensure they have passed their update to an officer or member who will be in attendance.

If there is going to be an election, and if the chair or president is running, ensure there is someone else who can conduct the election (you can request assistance from the NSGEU office) and that you have the items you need to conduct the election.

Items needed to conduct local elections:

- Ballots (blank pieces of paper)
- A box or ballot box
- A flip chart or white board for writing down names

The meeting notice

The meeting notice may be the first thing a person sees from the union. It may be their introduction to what unions are all about. Keep this in mind when you are deciding what to say in the notice.

Here are some suggestions about the notice:

The notice should make people feel that they are truly welcome and encouraged to attend.

It should give people something to look forward to, or a reason to attend, e.g. let members know about a decision that will be made or an election that is happening, a special guest or speaker, or even an interesting item on the agenda.

Getting the word out

For each meeting please ensure that the NSGEU office is informed of the date, time and place of the meeting and a notice is put on the website calendar. You can send your meeting notice to inquiry@nsgeu.ca, or, you can complete the form on the website. It can be found at the top of the screen under CONTACT in the drop-down menu and is called: "Local Event Submission."



Ideally, each meeting notice along with date, time and location, will provide an agenda, and notice of election if any are being held. It should be clear that for each meeting the union pays mileage and childcare/eldercare and provides refreshments as per NSGEU financial policies.

Besides the calendar on our website, it is important that you use the most appropriate method of communication for your members. If everyone works in one location and uses the same lunch room, perhaps a meeting notice on your union bulletin board will work. It will be up to your local executive, council, or committee to decide how best to get the word out.

Here are some suggestions about getting the word out:

If you have an email list of your members then meeting notices may be circulated by email.

If you have a bulletin board at work, you should post a notice. If there are multiple work locations with bulletin boards, you should develop a network of members who can post notices in all, or most, of the workplaces in your local.

If your members have mail slots, you can print one for each person.

If your local has a large number of members, and no accessible internal mail system, it is possible for the NSGEU office to send the notice (as they already do for some Locals) using software we subscribe to called "Constant Contact". Please contact Bruce Thomson, Director of Finance and Administration at NSGEU, for approval and details or your ERO's secretary.

At the meeting

Have a "greeter" at the door to sign people in (have them sign a card if they are not a "signed" member.) Make sure that everyone feels welcomed, and knows their attendance is noted, and appreciated. Make sure the "greeter" introduces themselves to new people, and thanks people for coming. The "greeter" can be an executive member or another member that regularly attends local meetings and can greet people warmly.

The role of the chair

The chair's role is to maintain order and make sure that the meeting is democratic. The chair uses the "rules of order" to make decisions fairly and ensure that all views are heard. They practice using the rules of order and are skilled at using them. The chair:

- Is in charge of keeping order;
- Is accountable to the group for reaching good decisions;
- Keeps the group to the agenda, and on time (unless the chair has assigned a "time keeper");
- Does not participate in debate (if the chair wishes to speak to an item on the agenda other than to introduce it, the chair usually gives up the chair to do this);
- Is not a "rules" fanatic;
- Should move debate forward, not stand in the way;
- The chair SHOULD NOT speak to each item or participate in debate.

The chair conducts debate generally in this order:

- a) What is the motion?
- b) Does it have a seconder?
- c) Is there any discussion or debate?
- d) Is it time for a vote (usually by way of a show of hands), counting those for, those against, and those who do not vote (abstentions)?



Who should chair?

The local president or designate, or chair of a committee or council, should chair. Or you could decide to rotate the chair through the executive in order to give others the experience of chairing a meeting. Rotating the chair has the benefit of mentoring others so in the event that the elected chair or president is not able to attend, someone will feel confident in chairing the meeting after they have done so with an experienced person at their side.

Meeting follow-up

At the end of the meeting, assess how people felt. At an effective meeting, members will feel welcomed, informed and heard. They feel that their time was well used. They have had their concerns addressed and have a more positive attitude about the union when leaving.

Make sure that any tasks identified during the meeting are assigned and that someone is responsible for each task and reports back at the next meeting.

A follow-up sheet can be downloaded from the NSGEU website.

Local executive meetings

For local executive meetings, meeting dates and times should be mutually agreed to and meeting notices should be sent in a timely manner.

Your executive meeting is where you can plan the agenda for the local meeting, discuss any issues you anticipate may arise at the meeting, and report to each other on assigned follow ups from the last meeting. Some locals hold their local executive meetings directly before their local meetings.



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