

## Writing Motions for Convention: A Guide for BCNU Members

### Introduction

Motions are utilized by members to identify issues or problems, initiate debate, and propose a course of action.

Writing a motion for the annual convention may seem difficult at first, but with proper preparation, it becomes easier to accomplish. A well-written motion is specific, unique, and concise. It efficiently conveys a message.

Perhaps you've attended a meeting or a convention where a filed motion was followed by so many amendments that delegates became confused and struggled to follow the debate. Or, perhaps you've observed a motion that was changed so much by amendments that the final version didn't resemble the original wording.

Changes like that often occur because a motion, and its proposed course of action was vague and unclear. Instead, motions should include all the information needed to help focus debate and reduce time spent on amendments. Clear writing helps ensure your message reaches your audience exactly as intended.

Remember a well-written motion = better use of time and member dues.

There are two types of motions:

1. Resolutions
2. Proposed bylaw amendments

Proposed bylaw amendments seek to revise the rules that govern the union. Resolutions, by contrast, are not intended to change the BCNU Constitution and Bylaws. Most courses of action can be effectively pursued through resolutions, but sometimes bylaw amendments become necessary.

### Resolutions

Resolutions are motions that are not specifically intended to amend the BCNU Constitution and Bylaws – they only require a simple majority of voting delegates to pass.

Resolutions are different from bylaw amendments in that the resolution itself is not an amendment to an existing rule contained within a bylaw article. According to Policy 1.0.3 of BCNU's Policies and Procedures, resolutions may propose changes to Policies and Procedures, position statements, goals, or strategic plans. Members bring forth current issues or problems and give rise to solutions. Once it's debated and passed, it may give direction to Council for the creation of new policy language or action to be taken.

Resolutions often include issues and information related to current events and issues within the BCNU. Generally, if a rule (e.g., a policy), a resolution to an issue, or a governing statement needs to be changed within a year, then it should be brought forward as a resolution. In this case, your resolution would guide the development of policy language rather than bylaw language.

Resolutions are crafted with 'whereas' statements followed by a 'be it resolved' statement. The 'whereas' statements are short summaries taken from your background information.

Examples:

1. *"Whereas, the risks of climate change are supported by significant scientific research and evidence"*

## 2. *“Whereas, the effects of climate change will significantly affect the health of Canadians”*

Once you have crafted three or four ‘whereas’ statements, you are ready to write your ‘be it resolved’ statements which ask the delegates for action. You may have one or more ‘be it resolved’ statements in your motion. It is imperative for these statements to be clear and concise, to avoid confusion among delegates.

Example:

*“Be it resolved, that the BCNU develop a climate risk policy”*

If resolutions are not resolved before the adjournment of the Convention, the resolution “falls to the ground” and BCNU Council later determines its disposition.

## Proposed Bylaw Amendments

Bylaw amendments are a form of motion that seeks to amend the current Constitution and Bylaws articles. Motions may amend the Constitution and Bylaws if approved by a two-thirds majority of voting delegates.

In addition to the general rules above, motions to amend the Constitution and Bylaws should consider the following principles:

- 1) Is there a timeframe for the action or language?
  - Because bylaws can only be amended annually, is there a chance that the amended language may need to change before the next annual Convention? If yes, you may want to consider a resolution that provides policy direction to Council.
- 2) Should a bylaw amendment be written using general or specific language?
  - BCNU follows a modified policy governance model that favours bylaws with general and clearly understood language.
  - More specific language with detailed information is best contained within BCNU policies and procedures that can be more easily evaluated and amended over time to ensure consistency and accuracy.
- 3) Is the bylaw amendment sufficiently flexible to allow the organization to meet any new rules it sets out?
  - If the proposed language is worded so strictly that BCNU may have difficulty complying with the rule, you may want to consider a resolution to provide policy direction to Council.
  - There may be times when the rule is written in a very detailed or strict fashion within bylaws, however, each proposed amendment should be analyzed to determine to which set of rules it belongs.
- 4) Does the proposed bylaw amendment pertain to all members, or is it specific and pertain to a distinct group of members?
  - If the amended language only applies to a portion of the members, you may want to consider a resolution to provide policy direction to Council.

## How to Write a Motion

Now that you know what is required in a well-written motion, you can begin writing it clearly and concisely.

First, think about the motion you want to craft and determine what you hope to achieve. Before writing, anticipate any debate, questions, or details that may come from the floor and include that in your planning. Include any necessary details to support the motion. State a timeframe when applicable.

Background information is also important because it gives delegates more detail than you can provide in the actual motion. The background is where you may provide context to the motion and delegates will analyze the rationale when determining whether to adopt the motion. Any legal concerns may also be addressed in your background summary.

Ensure that all background information you provide with your motion is accurate, factual, and verifiable. The background must be honest and genuine. Any necessary references about either the motion statements or the rationale itself should be provided. There is no specific format for providing references, however, the reference should be clear and the material easily found. Rationale statements are not vetted and are the sole property of the mover.

If there is a cost to approving the motion, include information on how the motion will be funded. Delegates will need an accurate costing to determine whether to support the motion. For example, the cost could reflect aspects, such as staff resources or Council time to draft policy.

Lastly, review your motion to confirm it is clear and accessible. BCNU's diverse membership requires your motion to be easy for everyone to understand.

If you need additional assistance, you may contact your regional chair, the Bylaws Committee chairperson, or the Resolutions Committee chairperson.

## How to Submit a Motion

A call for Convention will be issued containing submission deadlines for members wishing to submit proposed bylaw amendments or resolutions ahead of Convention. The call will include a link to the Member Portal where members can locate the online submission form(s).

Select the appropriate online submission form (proposed bylaw amendment or resolution), fill it out, and submit it. It is recommended that completed motion forms are submitted as early as possible.

Please note the following tips for successful submission:

1. There are separate motion forms for proposed bylaw amendments and resolutions. Please ensure you are using and submitting the correct form.
2. Please submit motions well in advance of the deadline so that any issues can be detected early and corrections can be made.
3. If you have any questions or require assistance with your motion, please reach out to the respective committee chair or staff support person.

## For more information

[BCNU Constitution and Bylaws](#)

[BCNU Policies and Procedures](#) (requires member login)

Committee chairs:

- 1) Sara Mattu, Bylaws Committee

[saramattu@bcnu.org](mailto:saramattu@bcnu.org)

2) Scott Duvall, Resolutions Committee

[scottduvall@bcnu.org](mailto:scottduvall@bcnu.org)

BCNU staff support:

3) Lorne Burkart, Manager, Pensions and Special Projects

[lorneburkart@bcnu.org](mailto:lorneburkart@bcnu.org)