

Resolutions and Strategic Directions

Resolutions are primarily submitted by local chambers, but may also be proposed by the Board of Directors or the Policy Committee. The submitted resolutions are then discussed, possibly amended and then rejected or approved by local chambers during the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce (MCC) Annual General Meeting (AGM). Each resolution has an effective lifespan of three (3) years. This change was made at the 2014 AGM through a by-law change to bring us more in line with Canadian Chamber policy and the fact that a number of the issues are complex, have multiple layers and require more work over a longer time period. Resolutions largely set the advocacy mandate for any given year. All resolutions are brought to the attention of appropriate government officials and other bodies to which recommendations are directed. The method of presentation may vary by resolution due to a number of factors, including: timing, subsequent events and legislation which may affect the subject matter, or additional information that may become available. Throughout the year, members are kept informed of the advocacy action taken on each of these positions by way of summaries and reports in the Chambers' publications.

Emerging Issues

Emerging issues arise during the year, often on short notice. They have medium- to long-term effects and relate in some way to the core values, resolutions or multi-strategies. These issues can run the gamut from new government initiatives to new opportunities facing the province. MCC efforts on these usually involve dealing with the media (often on very short notice), taking short-term action, and distributing information in our various communications.

How It All Fits Together

Resolutions play a key role in giving MCC our grassroots nature as they depend upon the will of the local chambers. True to MCC's commitment to those grassroots, resolutions are not limited by the core values, strategic directions, or the positions taken by the Chambers on emerging issues. Interestingly, for all the diversity of MCC's membership, the chamber movement has demonstrated an amazing consistency among the elements of its policy structure – in fact, the core values, strategic directions and positions on emerging issues often lead to new resolutions. Not only does the policy structure display a consistent and compelling system of values, by addressing members' immediate needs through emerging issues, short-term needs through resolutions, and long-term challenges through Strategic Directions, it is able to simultaneously be responsive and proactive – to see the forest as well as the trees.

Steps to Creating a Resolution

Step 1 - Define the Issue

What is the problem or opportunity that needs to be addressed and what provincial government action is required or desired?

The process of developing a policy will often be a complex and an organic development; however, there tends to be a number of key steps to developing a robust policy document. These are:

- **Policy Justification**

At the beginning of policy development it is essential to be clear about the purpose of the policy and how the resolution will help to resolve the problem that we are trying to fix. For example, consider whether a policy is the right method for resolving the problem, or is another approach or combination of approaches likely to be more appropriate? When thinking through the options it is important to be clear about the boundaries of what a policy will and will not be able to resolve.

- **Research, Analysis & Direction Setting**

It is essential to spend time gathering and analyzing information about what we currently know of the nature of the problem we are trying to fix, to gain views, ideas and analyze information and good practice that we can apply from other organizations.

- **Policy Design**

In reaching this stage you should have a good idea how the policy will support the organizations overall strategic direction and resolve the problem or difficulties in question. Therefore this stage usually involves the identification of the guiding principles of the policy, possibly a definition of vision, and clear aims and objectives.

Your finished resolution must contain the following formatting:

- An issue statement – the statement sets out the aspirations for a desired future;
- Background on the issue ; and
- Recommendations – targeted objectives and outcomes at the provincial government that need to be achieved in order to realize these

At this point, depending on the complexity of the issues involved it may be necessary to develop several policy options (e.g. what do we need to do to fix the problem one policy or a framework of policies?). There will be a menu of possible options depending on the issues involved.

Step 2 - Meet the Four Criteria

As the voice of Manitoba business, the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce represents businesses of all sizes from all sectors and regions in Manitoba. Guided by our policy resolutions, MCC is a strong advocate for — and works to unite and serve — the best interests of the business community and Manitoba as a whole.

All resolutions must meet the following criteria:

1. The resolution deals with an issue relevant to Manitoba business that is within provincial jurisdiction and is of national significance.
2. The issue is current, timely and requires action.
3. The resolution is complete, detailed and supported by factual information.
4. The resolution does not align one sector, industry or region of Manitoba against another.

Step 3 - Managing the Policy Development Process

When a draft policy is in a reasonably advanced state it is important to create the opportunity for others to scrutinize and make suggestions on the draft document. Turn to your Board, stakeholders or experts in the field the policy lives in. Having experts in a particular field review your policy will create a more robust policy as it benefits from a wider range of views, knowledge and challenges, as well as demonstrating standards of good governance in policy making. The extent of the consultation process will depend on a number of factors such as the nature and complexity of the policy; the extent to

which it will require change; and the number of service users, staff and other stakeholders the policy is likely to have impact upon.

Following the consultation, if there are no adverse effects, the policy is submitted to the Director of Policy and Communications with MCC.

During the policy development process the author should retain all draft versions in a file where general access is prohibited.

Step 4 - Review Content

Review the resolution checklist (see below), to ensure that your resolution has all the needed elements to ensure an informed debate at the annual meeting

Step 6 - Submit on Time

Send your resolution by email at policy@mbchamber.mb.ca by the resolution deadline.

Resolution Checklist

What follows is a series of questions which can guide you through the process of defining your resolution. By answering these questions, you should have a quality resolution which will provide an informed debate at the annual meeting and a strong policy position for MCC.

What is the issue?

- It is important to carefully define what the problem and/or opportunity is and what the federal government should do about it.
- What are the key concerns, problems or challenges that this issue/opportunity brings to the business community?
- Define a possible solution (be as specific as possible).

Helpful Hints

The more specific that you can be, the more likely it is that you can provide a workable solution to the federal government. Also, a specific recommendation is more likely to get a specific answer rather than a general one.

Example

Instead of *“taxes are too high and should be lowered”*, be specific and say *“the corporate income tax rate is too high and should be lowered by 2 percentage points”*.

Is this issue a Manitoba one?

- Does it affect businesses in more than one region of Manitoba?
- The resolution deals with an issue relevant to Manitoba business that is within provincial jurisdiction and is of provincial significance.
- Does the issue affect all businesses or is it specific to a particular segment of the business community?
- Background information should be broadly-based. Information from various regions can help to indicate the issue's provincial relevance. Anything primarily focused on one area must clearly demonstrate why the resolution is so nationally important that an exception should be made.

Helpful Hints

If the resolution was previously passed at provincial annual meetings, revisions may be required before submitting to the Manitoba Chamber to give it a more provincial focus. Provide statistics and eliminate recommendations targeted at provincial governments.

If the issue is specifically targeted, it might be useful to include information as to why the business community at large would want to see the requested action taken.

Is the issue current and timely?

- The issue should be timely and one which the provincial government should take action on now or within a specified timeframe.
- The background should include information and statistics that are the most recently available. This includes renewals of resolutions passed at previous annual meetings.
- If this is a renewal from a previously submitted resolution, is the issue still important? Are there new facts that can help advance it from its previous version?

Helpful Hints

Ensure that any references to proposed legislation include the name of the bill and the bill number. This will help clarify the resolution in the future once the bill is passed or defeated, since bill numbers change with each session of the Legislature.

Does the resolution make the case in a factual and succinct way?

- Consider whether someone who is not an expert on this issue could make a decision on the recommendations based on the information included in the background.
- The background should be concise but still provide enough information to build the case for the recommendations and explain what benefits will accrue from their implementation.

Helpful Hints

While there is no firm limit on the size of resolutions, if your resolution is longer than a page, you may be including too much information.

REMEMBER!

As a general rule, anything longer than 1-1½ pages will not get read by ministers or senior officials.

Does this resolution conflict with or duplicate existing Manitoba or Canadian Chamber policy?

- Have you checked to ensure your issue is not the same, or substantially the same as an existing resolution?
- If you see that approval of your resolution would be contrary to existing Manitoba or Canadian Chamber policy, include a note at the bottom as to which policy (and specific recommendations, if applicable) it would supersede.
- It would be useful to include, either in the background or in the note at the bottom, an explanation as to why this change in policy direction should be made.

How much will implementing this resolution cost?

- If what is being recommended will increase government expenditures (such as new spending programs) or decrease government revenues (tax cuts), does the resolution include an estimate of how much implementation will cost? If there is an increase in expenditures, where should the money come from (for example, from increased taxes or redirected from other programs)?
- Is the resolution asking for a business subsidy? If so, is it fair to all sectors and regions.

Helpful Hints

Including information about the cost of the recommendations will increase the credibility of the resolution.

Does the resolution have a sponsor?

- Each resolution must have a sponsor when it is submitted. Each local Chamber of Commerce/Board of Trade and each Manitoba Chamber policy committee may sponsor up to two resolutions.
- A chamber/board/committee may co-sponsor as many resolutions as it wishes.
- If the resolution is a renewal or update to an existing resolution, Manitoba Chamber staff can help to determine the original submitter; you should then contact the submitter of the original resolution to find out whether they plan on resubmitting it themselves.

Helpful Hints

Including co-sponsors from several different regions can help demonstrate the national importance of an issue.

Is your resolution formatted correctly?

- A proposed resolution begins with an issue statement. The first paragraph (no more than 2-3 sentences) should state concisely the issue that is being covered by the resolution.
- Next is the background, the main body of the resolution. It should include case-building facts and data demonstrating why this issue is relevant and why it matters to the business community.
- There should be an explanation of the impact this issue/opportunity is having, or would have, on the bottom line of business and its ability to compete, and/or how it is affecting, or could affect, Manitoba economic growth and development. If you include specific statistics, note the source.
- Reference to further background data from other reputable sources can be a helpful way of providing access to related information without actually including it in the resolution.
- The final part of the resolution is the recommendation. The recommendation begins with: “That the provincial government...” and is followed by specific actions that the provincial government should take; i.e., “That the provincial government, reduce the PST rate by 2 percentage points.”

Helpful Hints

If you have more than 2-4 recommendations, consider whether you are diluting the effect of the resolution by focusing on too many objectives. When writing recommendations, ask yourself “what do I want the provincial government to do about this issue?”

Is all relevant contact information included?

- It is important that we have your chamber contact information (relevant name, e-mail, and phone number) for the resolution when it is submitted.

Helpful Hints

A phone call to the Policy Director at the Manitoba Chambers can ensure that you are in a better position to determine which resolution(s) to submit. Our Policy Director can provide useful information, including:

- Suggestions as to timely topics that might make good resolutions.
- How to position a resolution if other chambers are working on similar resolutions.
- Where you might be able to find supporting facts/statistics.
- Suggestions as to where you might be able to find a co-sponsor for your resolution.
- Some sense as to how your resolution might be received by the government – i.e. some issues has existing traction and others can be dead on arrival.

The Policy Committee

The Policy Committee is appointed annually by the Board of Directors as authorized in the bylaws.

“6.2 Policy Committee - The Board shall appoint annually a Policy Committee consisting of the President or designate and a minimum of three (3) or more Directors and at least two (2) additional persons, as the Board may determine.”

The Policy Committee Roles

1. Review draft Resolutions prior to the AGM to ensure each Resolution meets the three criteria set out in the bylaws. The three criteria are:
 - Is the Resolution provincial or national in character
 - Timely in importance and
 - General in application to both economic and public wellbeing
2. Advise Policy Department staff (President and Director of Policy) on improving the policy advocacy process and advice on specific issues.
3. Deal with Board of Directors on policy related issues, both by offering information, advice, or recommendations to the Board, and by dealing with issues as directed by the Board from time to time.

The Policy Committee also offers the local chamber sponsors of the resolution advice on adding more information to create a better informed debate at the AGM, or making the wording the request to government more specific and tangible so that it is more likely to be effective.

The Policy Committee usually meets every six (6) weeks and more often prior to the AGM.

Submissions of Resolutions

As it relates to the resolutions, the MCC Bylaws specify:

“5.5 Policy Resolutions: No policy resolution may be discussed at any Annual General Meeting unless:

- (a) It is provincial or national in character, timely in importance and general in application to both economic and public well-being; and
- (b) Has either:
 - (i) been submitted by a Category 1 Member (local chambers) in writing to the Policy Committee at least sixty (60) days before the Annual General Meeting, and approved by the Policy Committee for compliance with subsection 5.5(a) hereof; or
 - (ii) is proposed by the Board or the Executive Committee or the Policy Committee; and
- (c) has been appropriately communicated to all Members at least twenty-one (21) but not more than fifty (50) days prior to the Annual General Meeting.

5.6 Introduction of Policy Resolutions in Emergency: Notwithstanding any provision contained herein, in the case of an emergency, a Local Chamber, the Board, the Executive Committee or the Policy Committee may introduce policy resolutions to a duly constituted meeting of Members without previous notice to Members.

5.7 Saving Clause: At the Annual General Meeting or a Special Meeting, any subject, even though it has not satisfied the requirements of these by-laws for presentation to the meeting, may be brought to the floor of the meeting for discussion if a motion to do so is carried by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the votes cast. If the subject is then placed on the floor of the meeting, and a motion is introduced, then such motion will require a majority of not less than two-thirds of the votes cast for passage.

Such motions shall be prefaced with an explanation for the failure to meet the normal requirements.” (Emphasis added.)

It should be noted that if a local chamber submits a resolution and the Policy Committee decides it does not meet the requirements of 5.5.a above, the local chamber can still bring it forward to the AGM under clause 5.7. This highlights the power of the grass roots to control the MCC, and one of the ways that power is enshrined in the MCC bylaws.

The proposed resolutions were distributed, as required, at least 21 days in advance of the AGM so delegates can study them in advance.

Submission of Expiring Resolutions

Due to some resolutions needing to be renewed in the year following their submission, to have them continue in effect, re-submissions of resolutions will occur.

When re-submitting, please ensure research is conducted and new information is included, to update the resolution. Re-submissions cannot contain text that is identical to the prior year’s version.

Late Resolutions

Proposed resolutions submitted later than the deadlines specified above can still come before the AGM, under section 5.7 *Saving Clause*.

At the AGM

A specified time period is allotted at the AGM for discussion and debate of the proposed resolutions. Each motion is voted on only by the accredited delegates that are given voting cards. The MCC Bylaws specify that a majority of the votes cast is required for approval of a motion, including amendments; unless specific clauses designate otherwise – e.g. *5.7 Saving Clause*.

The result of the voting on a proposed resolution may be one of the following:

- Rejection – no further action required
- Approval – the approved resolution becomes policy of the MCC and action will be taken, or
- A motion of “Referral” – proposed resolutions may be referred to the Board of Directors for further study and/or consultation with the submitting chamber

Who Can Make Motions, Who Can Speak and Who Can Vote

Only accredited delegates with a voting card can make motions (including amendments) and vote. These accredited delegates are representing the Category 1 Members (local chambers).

All members of the MCC, including individuals and businesses (non-voting delegates), are encouraged to speak during the policy session.

Policy Session Processes at the AGM

The Chair of the AGM policy session is specified by the MCC bylaws:

6.4 Policy Session Chair At the AGM the Chair of the Policy Committee or designate shall chair the policy session, which will be conducted in accordance with the procedural rules from time to time governing Annual General and Special Meetings."

All votes will be considered final at the time they are recorded.

Time Allotment for Speaking

The normal time allotted to any one delegate for speaking to any motion or amendment will be a maximum of five minutes. The Chair may, at his/her discretion, extend this limit.

Number of Times Delegates May Speak

A delegate will normally be allowed to speak only once to any motion. The Chair may, at his/her discretion, allow delegates to speak more than once to a motion.

Speaker Should Identify Self & Chamber to Chair

Each delegate, before speaking shall identify himself/herself by name and state the Chamber that he/she represents (this allows the meeting everyone to be clear on who is speaking, and assists with transcripts and recording).

Procedure for Motions

The following procedure will be followed on each motion:

1. Member obtains the floor and is acknowledged by the Chair.
2. He or she makes a motion.
3. Another member seconds the motion.
4. The Chair opens the motion to discussion.
5. The Chair calls for the motion to be put to a vote.
6. The motion is put to a vote.
7. The Chair declares the results of the vote.

Amendments

Procedure on amendments will be the same as procedure on the motion, and all amendments will be presented in writing. Amendments to a motion may be proposed at any time during the discussion. No amendment will be entertained which has the effect of nullifying the main motion. Any amendment must be relevant to the subject matter.

No more than two (2) amendments may be put before the meeting at one time. However, as soon as one amendment has been accepted or rejected, another may be proposed, provided of course, that it is different in intent from the one already defeated.

Order of Voting

Voting on motions and amendments is in the reverse of the order in which they are made:

1. On the amendment to the amendment (the second amendment);
2. On the amendment;
3. On the motion, or the motion as amended.

Quorum

The bylaws state:

“5.10 Quorum – Meetings: Accredited voting representatives from at least ten (10) Category 1 Members will constitute a quorum at any Annual General Meeting or Special Meeting of the Manitoba Chambers.”

Advocacy Action Program

Following the Annual Convention, all approved policy resolutions are acted upon. This may include any or all of the following, as well as other actions:

- A written submission to the government;
- A transmittal letter to the Minister(s) responsible;
- A meeting and discussion with the Minister (s) responsible;
- Inclusion of the resolution in a written submission to the Minister(s) or agency responsible;
- Dissemination to local organization and/or corporate members for action; or
- Public announcements and Media Coverage

Any questions concerning policy procedures or structure should be addressed to the office of The Manitoba Chambers of Commerce.