

# THE CONSENT AGENDA

## BACKGROUND

*Sturgis Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure* explains the consent agenda:

Organizations having a large number of routine matters to approve often save time by use of a *consent agenda*, also called a *consent calendar* or *unanimous consent agenda*. This is a portion of the printed agenda listing matters that are expected to be noncontroversial and on which there are likely to be no questions.

Before taking the vote, the chair allows time for the members to read the list to determine if it includes any matters on which they may have a question, or which they would like to discuss or oppose. Any member has a right to remove any item from the consent agenda, in which case it is transferred to the regular agenda so that it may be considered and voted on separately. The remaining items are then unanimously approved en bloc without discussion, saving the time that would be required for individual votes.

A number of Canadian university Boards have employed the consent agenda format to include not only routine approval items, but also information items. One reason for using this format is to allow the Board to focus on major items of business. While approval of an omnibus motion saves time at Board meetings, Board members will want to review the agenda materials carefully in order that they properly discharge their responsibilities.

## HOW IT WORKS - GUIDELINES:

Business items that are routine and/or likely non-controversial are identified through consultation with the Bishop, Vicar-General, relevant committee chairs, and principal resource persons. Such items normally include: the adoption of the minutes, the ratification of grants, the reception of written committee reports that require no action, and other routine business circulated in advance of the meeting.

The Agenda is divided into two sections: a Main Agenda, and a Consent Agenda. In adopting the Main Agenda, members decide the division of business between the two sections of the agenda.

When members receive their Council agendas, they should review all reports in the usual manner. On the Agenda, each document carries the name of a contact person. To the extent possible, and in advance of the meeting, members with questions and concerns are asked to make direct contact with the person listed on the Agenda, in order to discuss these issues. Following such discussions, **if any member wants to ask a question, discuss, or oppose an item that is listed on the consent agenda, he or she can have it be removed from the consent agenda** by contacting the Programme Office prior to the meeting.

The Consent Agenda  
Guidelines for  
2006-2007 Session

During the Council meeting, at the time of the adoption of the Agenda, the Chair (1) will advise the Council of items that are to be removed from the list, based on prior requests from Council members; and (2) will ask if there are any other items that should be removed from the list. The remaining items are then unanimously approved *en bloc* without discussion, thus saving the time that would be required for individual presentation and voting. Those matters that have been struck from the consent agenda will revert to the main Agenda, and be considered in their usual order during the meeting.

Members should be aware of the parliamentary practice of seeking unanimous consent. In seeking unanimous consent, the Chair might ask, "If there is no objection, may I take it that I have your consent to the adoption of the resolution printed on the Consent Agenda?" [Pause, and assuming no objection] "There being no objection, the items contained in the Consent Agenda are received, ratified, or adopted by unanimous consent of Diocesan Council, as indicated by the column in which the document number appears." As Robert's Rules of Order puts it, "'Unanimous consent' does not necessarily imply that every member is in favour of the proposed action; it may only mean that the opposition, feeling that it is useless to oppose or discuss the matter, simply acquiesces." In response to an objection, the matter is treated by formal motion, debate, and vote.

The minutes of the Council meeting will report each matter approved or ratified as part of the consent agenda. Information items received as part of the consent agenda will be reported as received.

A Consent Agenda and the use of 'unanimous consent' procedure do not relieve a member from his or her fiduciary duty of skill, competence, and loyalty. Each member is responsible for comprehending the issues, applying his or her gifts to the task at hand, and guarding against conflicts of interest. This duty continues to apply even where parliamentary procedure may not require that a member explicitly concur with the action being proposed.