

Standing Committee Review Task Force

The task force was created by PE at the November 29-30, 2012 meeting.

Standing Committee Structure/Task Force

The President advised that he would like to establish a Task Force out of the PE to review the Committees, their mandates, whether any can be combined, size, etc. with a view to bringing forward a Constitutional Resolution to PE to be forwarded to Convention. Each Sector met and designated one person to sit on the Task Force as follows:

Government Services – Melanie Metcalf

Education – Danielle Nadeau-McMillan

Health Care – Sara Walker

Boards & Agencies – Irene Gaudet

The task force met with President, Guy Smith on Feb 8, 2013 to discuss the terms of reference and direction. Following this, we formulated 3 questions to be asked of each of the Standing Committees as well as one additional question to be asked of each of the chairs of the committees. The questions were:

1. How is the work of your committee pertinent to AUPE's membership and to the core objectives of the Union?
2. Do you feel that your work is duplicated by any other committee(s)? If so, which one(s)?
3. If this committee was eliminated, what is the downside to AUPE and the membership?
4. VP- Question - Does your work with the Committee(s) you sit on detrimentally affect the work you do as a Vice-President (Secretary-Treasurer). If yes, how?

The task force members each interviewed at least one Vice-President or the Secretary-Treasurer in person. The questions were sent out by email on February 9 to the Committee Chairs and they were asked to have their responses from the Committees to the task force by March 15. Responses were not received by 4 Standing Committees. The task force met on March 23 to go over the results of the Standing Committee submissions as well as their interviews and to come up with task force recommendations to PE.

The first point the task force weighed was question 1 – the pertinence of the committee's work to AUPE membership. The second point the task force weighed was question 2 – the duplication of committee's work. For this we used not only the answers received but also the mandate of the committee as outlined in the Constitution. We then weighed the results to question 3 in the formulation of our final recommendations. The task force also weighed the information passed on to them by the Locals within their specific sector.

Recommendations:

The following committees were considered to be essential due to the unique nature of the committee within the structure of the Union or the unique nature of their mandate. We went back

to the Constitution for guidance: Article 3 – Objectives of the Union as well as Article 15.07 for each Committee for their specific mandate.

1. **Legislative Committee** – Due to the nature of dealing with the Constitution and Policies and Procedures, this committee is unique and should remain.
2. **Membership Services Committee** – Due to this committee dealing with membership training and Union Stewards, this committee is unique and should remain.
3. **Finance Committee** – Due to this committee dealing with the finances of the Union, it is unique and should remain.
4. **Committee on Political Action** – Due to this committee dealing with the political process it is uniquely placed. With their knowledge, one additional duty should be perhaps be the coordination, facilitation, and training of lobbying efforts of other committees. It was felt that the committee could become much more politically active. (See further recommendations for the committee later)
5. **Occupational Health and Safety Committee** – Due to this committee dealing strictly with OH&S issues and legislation, it is necessary given the importance of this issue to the Union and to the membership at large. (See further recommendations for the committee later)
6. **Anti-Privatization Committee** – While an increasing number of our Locals are from within the Private Sector, it was felt that the larger part of our membership still is within the public sector. Due to the increased push for the privatization of essential services, the importance of this committee remains.
7. **Pension Committee** – Due to the unique and complicated area in which this committee is mandated and the threats to our pension plans, this committee is required.
8. **Young Activists Committee** – This committee is unique in its focus to younger members within the Union. Perhaps the age limit needs to be looked at (35?). The rationale for increasing the age group is that in the 25-35 age group people become more long-term career oriented. Some very active individuals within our Union got their start either within this Committee or due to some of its efforts, so its value to the Union as a whole should not be overlooked. It was felt that, perhaps this committee needs to push themselves more and should become more involved in other areas as well, such as the Area Councils. In addition, perhaps there could be more information to the Locals so they could more actively recruit younger members. The information is there, it is perhaps not getting to the right people.
9. **Member Benefits Committee** – While this committee does not fall under the realm of a Standing Committee (it is dealt with in Article 27), we did look at this committee as well. Due to its unique nature in assisting members and their families when in need, this committee is absolutely necessary. This committee structure is at 6 members plus the chair within the constitution. There are presently 9 members with the chair. (Was this overlooked when the other committee sizes went to 9 and should it be changed? Perhaps the committee itself should answer this as they know their workload and the need for a quorum for their decisions. Any changes in committee size should probably originate within the Member Benefits Committee.)

Environment Committee

The task force first looked at the mandate with this Committee, with its over-arching concerns with

environmental concerns of the public. While it is acknowledged that environmental concerns are valid, the purpose of the Union as stated in Article 3 is that the membership should be our highest priority. Some of the past initiatives of this Committee are to be applauded (recycling in the offices, reduction of paper within the Union), these appear to have been met. Other broader environmental concerns should be addressed within groups focused on those specific initiatives and members who wish to support them with their time and/or their money will do so, regardless of whether this committee exists or not.

The task force recommendation is to eliminate the Environmental Committee. One further recommendation is that with many site OH&S Committees being OHS and Environment Committees, that an environmental aspect to OH&S Committee be investigated by that Standing Committee, but that it be limited to the same initiatives as are covered by site OHS & Environment Committees. Any such changes should come from the OH&S Committee as they are more aware than the members of this task force, of the exact nature of site committees.

Pay and Social Equity Committee

The first part of this committee that the task force looked at was the social equity portion of this committee. As this was a recent change to the committee mandate, it was felt that this more correctly belonged with the Human Rights Committee mandate. The task force went on further to look at the Pay Equity part of the mandate. That portion of the mandate was originally as an Ad-Hoc committee of the Women's Committee. Several things were looked at including the fact that there is currently no pay equity legislation in Alberta. This committee has, to the best of its ability, tried to educate the membership on the issue of pay equity, but seems stalled as to any further action.

The task force recommendation is to eliminate the Pay and Social Equity Committee and that the responsibility of lobbying for pay equity legislation be given to COPA. It was further felt that perhaps a sub-committee of COPA be tasked with updating, on a regular basis, the information database regarding pay equity.

Women's Committee and Human Rights Committee

The task force looked long at these two committees and in the final analysis, it came down to the mandate of each committee within the Constitution – within their mandates, many subclauses are basically identical.

g (i) and k (i)

g (ii) and k (ii)

g (iii) and k (iii)

g (vi) and k (iv)

g (iv) and k (vi)

g (v) and k (viii)

g (vii) and k (x)

Several comments were made including: we need to make our union more gender neutral, we should not create artificial silos of activity which may overlap, and many issues dealt by the women's committee are not specifically a women's issue, but rather a family issue.

The task force recommendation is to collapse the mandate of the Women's Committee and Human Rights Committee into a new committee – Social Justice and Equity Committee.

Other Recommendations

1. The task force felt that Article 15.04 was under-utilized and that should specific issues arise, the committees should strike Sub-Committees for these very specific issues. One good example would be a Pay Equity Subcommittee from within COPA.
2. PE members to chair Standing Committees should be used more frequently. While under the Constitution, the Vice-President's must chair 1 standing committee and the Secretary-Treasurer must chair the Finance committee, Article 15.03 only states that the Chair must be a member of the Provincial Executive. This would build on the strengths, skills, and knowledge of the Vice-Presidents, the Secretary-Treasurer, and the PE members and, in the long term, benefit the Union as a whole. In addition, the Executive positions would have additional time to focus on initiatives such as mobilization.
3. PE should hold each committee more accountable for working within and meeting their mandate. When committees do work that is not within their mandate or more properly should be done by another committee, this should be addressed by PE. Committees should look at their mandates on a more frequent basis and determine what they have and have not been able to accomplish. If a committee has not been able to address an item(s) within their mandate, why? Perhaps this should be in the committee report to convention.
4. Committee size was touched upon and, while for some committees 9 members may be a large and unwieldy number, with additional responsibilities and possible use of sub-committees, it could be useful to have a larger number of members. While the Constitution says that a committee may have up to 9 members, it does not mean that all these positions need to be filled.
5. PE should review committee mandates and the value to the membership as a whole on a regular basis (2-5 years?). It is the responsibility of PE to ensure that the committees remain focused on what they have been mandated to accomplish.

Possible Resolutions arising from Recommendations

1)

Whereas, the Committee on Political Action is tasked with promoting the education and social action of the members as they relate to the interests of the Union, and

Whereas, many Standing Committees are tasked with lobbying government and it would benefit the Union to have one group who understands and coordinates the process,

Therefore, be it resolved that Article 15.07 (d) be amended by inserting a new subclause and renumbering the following subclauses.

(d) The Committee on Political Action shall:

i) review the social and political practices and interests of the Union and promote the education and social action of the members as they relate to the interests of the Union on matters of political concern;

ii) coordinate and facilitate the lobbying efforts of the Union and the other Standing Committees of the Union.

~~ii) iii)~~ promote the union related political education of the membership;

~~iii) iv)~~ encourage and promote the social action and political participation of members in order to further the interests of the Union;

~~iv) v)~~ act on behalf of members in matters of concern to them relating to the political process;

~~v) vi)~~ recommend priorities from time to time for the Union's activities in the area of political education; and

~~vi) shall-vii)~~ actively pursue election reform to achieve a fair system of proportional representation for Alberta voters.

2)

Whereas, there is currently no Pay Equity Legislation in Alberta, and

Whereas, there needs to be a focus on lobbying for this legislation,

Therefore be it resolved that Article 15.07 (i) be deleted and the following sub-clauses renumbered accordingly

~~(i) The Pay and Social Equity Committee shall:~~

~~i) Educate – to educate members of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees (AUPE), and the public on the issues related to pay equity and social reform;~~

~~ii) Lobby – all levels of government, other unions and the public for legislation addressing pay equity and social reform;~~

~~iii) Information – establish and maintain a database of current information and legislation related to pay equity and social reform;~~

~~iv) Action – prepare and present policies, briefs and information on pay equity and social reform issues as required;~~

~~v) Research – pay and social equity issues within AUPE in relation to classifications, gender and systemic discrimination; recruitment and retention strategies; and~~

~~vi) Research – utilize research initiatives to compare rates of pay and classifications within the public and private sectors.~~

Therefore be it further resolved that Article 15.07 (d) be amended by adding a new subclause

(d) The Committee on Political Action shall:

viii) lobby all levels of government for legislation addressing pay equity.

3)

Whereas, the primary focus of the Union should be on the rights and benefits of its Members, and

Whereas, there are many groups who focus exclusively on Environmental Issues and our Members are free to support them personally and financially as they see fit,

Therefore be it resolved that Article 15.07 (l) be deleted in its entirety.

~~(l) The Environmental Committee shall:~~

~~i) develop a program to respond to environmental issues affecting AUPE members and the Public;~~

~~ii) promote the education of the members and Public as it relates to matters of environmental issues affecting Albertans;~~

~~iii) lobby all levels of Government with respect to ensuring the government respects and responds to AUPE's environmental concerns;~~

~~iv) co-ordinate with all other coalition groups such as other public service unions and environmental groups;~~

~~v) draft presentations to be made by the President or the President's designate regarding matters of the Committee; and~~

~~vi) regularly report to the Provincial Executive.~~

4)

Whereas ?? (will need to work on the rationale)

Therefore, be it resolved that Article 15.07 (j) be amended

(j) The Young Activists Committee shall:

i) establish ongoing connections with AUPE members ~~30~~ **35** years and younger to determine their needs, issues, concerns as younger workers and as AUPE members;

ii) establish a network of AUPE's younger members to share common issues, interests, and concerns as younger workers, and to provide a forum to raise their issues and concerns;

- iii) encourage younger members' participation in AUPE, their worksites and their communities;
- iv) bring forward issues of concern for younger members to the Provincial Executive and Convention;
- v) present appropriate resolutions at Convention;
- vi) to educate younger members on youth movements in the community and to establish links with youth movements which share the same goals and objectives as AUPE;
- vii) keep younger members informed of the issues affecting AUPE through articles in "Direct Impact" and through a Young Activist Committee web-page; and
- viii) establish a network of elected Local contacts to develop a line of communication between the Young Activists Committee and the membership.

5)

Whereas there is currently a large overlap in the mandates of the Women's Committee and the Human Rights Committee, and

Whereas the aim of the Union should be to foster gender neutrality, and

Whereas Alberta Human Rights Act prohibits discrimination based on the protected grounds of race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religious beliefs, gender, age, physical disability, mental disability, marital status, family status, source of income and sexual orientation, and

Whereas many issues such as domestic violence, elder care, and child care are family issues as opposed to strictly women's issues,

Therefore be it resolved that Article 15.07 (g) be deleted in its entirety and any remaining subclauses be renumbered accordingly.

~~(g) The Women's Committee shall:~~

~~i) educate and promote awareness to the members and the public on equality, discrimination, current and related issues especially as they relate to women;~~

~~ii) encourage and support involvement of Women in Union activities, events and educational;~~

~~iii) promote involvement and support by AUPE members at large and communities of women's issues;~~

~~iv) co-operate with, liaise with, and lobby other organizations and various levels of government addressing women's issues;~~

~~v) prepare and present policies, briefs and information on issues of concern;~~

~~vi) initiate action and participate in meetings, conferences, conventions and educational courses on issues of concern to women and co-ordinate these with other committees and organizations; and~~

~~vii) establish a resource base on women's issues including but not limited to, discrimination and equality.~~

Therefore be it further resolved that Article 15.07 (k) be amended as follows

(k) The ~~Human Rights~~ **Social Justice and Equity** Committee shall:

i) educate and promote awareness to the members and the public on equality, discrimination, ~~current~~ and related issues; ~~especially as they relate to human rights issues;~~

ii) encourage and support involvement of members affected by human rights issues in Union activities, events and educational activities;

iii) promote involvement and support by AUPE members-at-large and communities affected by human rights issues;

iv) initiate action and participate in meetings, conferences, conventions and educational events on issues of concern related to human rights **and women's** issues and coordinate these activities with other committees and organizations;

v) lobby all levels of government and respectively human rights committees/commissions regarding human rights issues of concern to members;

~~vi) coordinate with all other public service unions and federations;~~

~~vii) vi) review human rights legislation and regulations and promote and lobby for positive change;~~

~~viii) vii) draft and present policies, briefs and other presentations on issues of human rights concern; and~~

~~ix) report regularly to Provincial Executive and Convention; and~~

~~x) viii) establish a resource base on human rights issues **related to but not limited to discrimination and equality** to identify, analyze and exchange information with other groups.~~

Respectfully submitted by,

Task Force on Standing Committee Review

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