

CAPE

Local Leadership

Minutes of Meeting on November 28, 2007 National Office Ottawa, Ont.

Present: 25 local leaders [can someone provide me with the list that went around?]
President, CAPE

Observers: Executive Director, CAPE
Director of Labour Relations, CAPE

Meeting started at 16:00 hrs.

1. **Introductions**

The president invited attendees to introduce themselves. After a roundtable, the president welcomed local leaders and invited them to attend the AGM scheduled for the next day.

2. **Potential Dues increase**

The president introduced the matter by explaining that the Finance Committee (FC) had recommended to the National Executive Committee (NEC) a dues increase. The president further explained that the NEC had asked the president and staff of the national office to prepare various dues increase scenarios. The president then asked the chair of the FC to respond to questions on the matter.

Q. What pressures are warranting the exploration of a dues increase?

R. There are no specific pressures. However, expenditures in general are going up. The budget for the coming year is a conservative budget. Not all of the information is available. There are new expenditures: for example, the cost of a new term classification officer. Next year, we will have a clearer idea. At some point, there will be a need to recommend to members an increase.

Q. Would an increase in dues result in a surplus?

R. It depends on the scenario for the dues increase that is chosen.

It was noted by a member of the FC that he had pushed for action by the NEC, but to no avail so far; he expressed concern over reserve funds that are melting away; the expected deficits for the next two years are \$400,000 and \$600,000 respectively. There is a lack of political will and leadership on this matter. Within a short term, the reserve fund will be completely gone. CAPE needs a way to deal with its financial needs without it becoming an election issue. However, whatever means are used to ensure appropriate increases in dues, there must also be control mechanisms that set parameters to the NEC's discretion.

Q. What are the staffing pressures?

R. There may be a need to increase the number of LROs. This would lead to an increase in the number of clerks.

The president asked that suggestions on the matter of a mechanism to increase dues be forwarded to the chair of the FC.

A local leader explained that the last increase in dues was a shock to most members. If CAPE comes back again with another big increase in dues, it will be less palatable than progressive increases.

A local leader suggested that the dues level should be set according to the needs of the organization.

3. Framework for Local By-Laws

The president introduced the matter by explaining that there was a need expressed by local officers for a framework. The document would be used only for guidance. The approval process would be the following: comments collected from local leaders today would be incorporated into the draft document; the document would then be circulated to the locals for further input; a final draft would go to the NEC for approval. The document does not need to go to the members for approval. It is a living document.

It was explained by a participant of the Atlantic Forum that an earlier draft had been discussed at the forum. The draft is a work in progress. The deadline for comments has changed. Comments should be provided to Michael Zinck by the end of January. Local leaders have already made many comments that have been included in the document.

One local leader commented that it was not clear whether the framework was mandatory or optional for locals. The document reads like a bill of rights for management and the national executive. It needs to reflect the view of members who pay the dues. The wording imposes responsibilities on locals rather than letting the members decide.

Another leader asked for reassurances that the framework would be optional. His local has had bylaws since the inception of CAPE. They were approved by members of the local. He asked for assurances that there would be no document that contradicts the bylaws of his local.

Another local leader could not see the rapport of the document to the bylaws of his local. The local gave itself operational rules. The document is too binding on locals. He asked whether the local could enlist new volunteers if they were to be tied by the framework.

The question was asked whether the document should be prescriptive or more flexible.

A local leader argued that repetition with what already exists in the Constitution and CAPE Bylaws should be avoided. The idea of a framework is excellent. It can help locals. But it must not be binding.

According to a few local leaders, the oath of office should not be included. One leader disagreed and said that the oath underscored the seriousness of being a local leader, as well as the dignity of the position. Another local leader said that an oath is a good idea, but that the local officers should be accountable to the members of the local. There is a need to express this point in the document.

It was also said that the list of local members should always be available to call officers. It was said that it was unthinkable that it would not be available.

It was said by a local leader that the language identifies objectives that should not be considered responsibilities for locals: for example, creating a good relationship with the employer.

A couple of local leaders said that communication problems between the locals and the national office are the fault of the national office. There should be ongoing continuous information coming to the locals from the national office.

A local leader suggested that a contact at the national office play a liaison role with the locals.

Another local leader said that there is a problem of communication between the locals and the NEC. Locals should also review the minutes to NEC meetings. There is a lack of connection between the locals and the NEC.

The president explained that regional councils could be the link and that he hoped to have more regional councils.

A local leader suggested that it would be good to put together a list of services provided by the national office. Another leader added that such a list for locals would also be a good idea.

One leader asked whether CAPE had figures for the different levels of development of CAPE locals. It was suggested that we need a reference point and numbers to measure improvement.

The president of CAPE said that he would do some kind of analysis.

It was said by a local leader that the document identifies duties but not the rights of locals. It was suggested that the governance review committee should put together a framework for the relationship of the national office to locals.

One local leader expressed concern that several meetings were being added to the usual local AGM. A response was given that these other meetings were optional.

One local leader said that what members tell him is that they simply want the union to be accessible, to be available when needed.

Concern was expressed that NEC members would not be allowed to participate in the deliberations of local meetings.

Someone suggested an operational management review to make proposals regarding problems identified today.

It was suggested that CAPE create a page on its web site for locals, that the page should be advertised, stewards should receive posting notices. The national office should run after local information and provide it to other locals. It should be pro-active.

It was said that there are a lot of members that do not have locals. So, the web site must be more informative.

One local leader said that he was surprised by all the information that he found on the web site. But he noted that it wasn't always easy to find.

4. Recommendation from Governance Review Committee

The president introduced the matter by explaining that the terms of office for national officers has been extended to three years. The question is whether the term of office for local executive members should be extended from one year to two or three.

It was said by a local leader that the term for the elected officers of his local was 2 years and that it was up to the local to decide the term.

Another local leader mentioned that management in his department asked that the local establish some kind of continuity in the local leadership; it was added that the local had always had two-year terms; voting is done electronically not at the annual meeting of the members which results in a much higher vote turn out. It was suggested that comments be sent to the president of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee.

Another local leader explained that the term is one year in her local but that it should be up to each local to decide the term.

One member mentioned that there may be a need for special provisions so that people do not stay forever on a local executive.

4. Other

Proposed constitutional amendments: one leader said that there should never be omnibus type proposals such as the one that is currently before the members; in this instance, the package of changes includes some good proposals, and some bad proposals.

Q. Someone asked about the history that led to excluding NEC members from local meetings.

R. It was explained that the committee had discussed the matter and had decided that there was usefulness to giving members who are not on the NEC an opportunity to make recommendations to the NEC.

The president explained that the idea was to allow the Local Leadership Council an opportunity to make recommendations to the NEC, and ensure that the NEC would be responsible to report back to the Local Leadership Council. NEC members should only listen to other members and not try to sway recommendations. NEC members cannot vote but can participate in the deliberations.

A local leader reminded his colleagues that NEC members do not represent on the NEC local interests. They are there to represent all the members. It was said that they should not be stopped from playing both roles. In the end, the NEC is sovereign.

The president of CAPE said that constitutional amendments are not cast in stone.

A local leader expressed the concern that CAPE could become a rules based organization, more concerned with its internal operations than the interests of the members.

Budget: One local leader stated that he would like to get a commitment from CAPE's president that he will address the issue of expected deficit and that he will address the matter of a balanced budget.