



CONFERENCE AND MEETINGS

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS

SECTION 19

CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS

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INTRODUCTION

As a Fire Chief you and your senior officers will participate in many types of conferences. You may participate as a member, as a secretary, as a chairperson or as host. Regardless of your role, you will need to prepare yourself and to apply the skills of speaking, logical thinking and problem solving.

PREPARATION

By the Chairperson - The chair is responsible to :

1. Plan - prepare clear objectives for the conference or meeting;
2. Analyze - character and needs of the participants;
3. Place - select and determine requirements of meeting area;
4. Brief - ensure secretary is briefed early so that they can assist in the preparations and conduct of the meeting.
5. Inform - publish agenda.

By the Secretary - The secretary will perform in accordance with the wishes of the chairperson and should assist in ways as outlined in the Secretary's Check Sheet.

By the Attendees - The attendees are responsible to

1. examine the purpose of the conference and prepare themselves as indicated by the chair, program or agenda;
2. gather additional information as necessary;
3. hold a preliminary meeting when views of your own organization would be helpful;
4. determine views of other participants and prepare counter-arguments if necessary;
5. submit a request for changes in the agenda where appropriate.

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CONDUCTING THE MEETING

Chairperson - The chair is responsible to:

1. Open the conference, introduce the host.
2. Introduce the subject material, format and speakers. Introduce or arrange introduction of attendees if meeting is small.
3. Explain the chair's position or role.
4. Introduce each problem.
5. Lead/control the discussions according to a plan.
6. Guide the group to solutions/recommendations.
7. Summarize each item ensuring each attendee understands the final position or next action required.
8. Summarize the conference and determine the requirements for a subsequent meeting.
9. Conduct an evaluation of conference prior to next meeting if arranged.
10. Brief the sponsor or sponsoring organization.

Attendees - The attendees are responsible to:

1. Show an interest in the views of others.
2. Express own views clearly and concisely.
3. Examine the logic of others.
4. Concede with grace when stronger arguments are offered.
5. Take note of decisions affecting their own organization.
6. Brief their own superiors.

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Secretary - The secretary is responsible to:

1. Brief meeting on old business;
2. Record minutes of meeting;
3. Take notes for follow-up action;
4. Produce supporting documents as required by the organization or chairperson.

MINUTES

Most minutes must be produced and distributed within a specific time period after the end of a meeting. Further, it is best that the secretary draft the minutes immediately following the meeting so that the discussion is still fresh in their mind. Approval by the chair and final typing should be done as soon as practical.

HOSTING

Frequently a conference will include members of the community or members from other locations. If significant numbers are expected, it is usual to name a project officer to ensure all administrative details are well coordinated. This officer may or may not be the chairperson or the secretary. This person assumes additional responsibilities later detailed in Responsibilities of a Project Officer.

As there are several areas of potential overlap or conflict between the duties of a Secretary and a Project Officer there must be a clear understanding by all parties prior to planning an event. After the event arguments or differences are counter-productive and are much easier solved by clearly understood ground rules early in the process.

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SECRETARY'S CHECK LIST

1. Get your terms of reference and direction from the Chairperson including:
 - (a) matters to be covered at the meeting;
 - (b) the names of departments or individuals concerned with the meeting;
 - (c) ascertain any special requirements (e.g., location, audio visual equipment, demonstration space, etc.)
2. Publish an early notice to those interested in the meeting, to include the purpose of the meeting and its probable time and location. Include the scope of acceptable subject matter and a deadline for submission of items for inclusion on the Agenda where applicable.
3. Make technical and administrative arrangements for the proposed location of the meeting.
4. Draw up a Draft Agenda from the items submitted and those provided by Chair. Review the Minutes of any previous meetings and include any outstanding items on the new Agenda.
5. Brief the Chair on the Draft Agenda.
6. Get the Chairperson's advice on:
 - (a) items for which they will require background information;
 - (b) ex-officio members to be invited to attend the meeting;
 - (c) representatives or committee members who will be required "in attendance", and the items for which they will attend.
7. Circulate official notice of:
 - (a) date, time, and location of the meeting;
 - (b) the Draft Agenda;
 - (c) assign responsibility for production of informative Briefs for the Chairperson and the deadlines for their submission (normally not less than 48 hours before the time of the meeting).
8. Review the submitted Briefs, organize them into the sequence of the Agenda, and submit them to the Chair.

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CHAIRPERSON'S EVALUATION CHECK LIST

SUBJECT	YES	NO
Did I make all the necessary preparations for the meeting?		
Did I start the conference on time?.....		
Did all members participate in the discussion?		
Was the discussion spontaneous rather than forced?		
Was the discussion progressive? Did I keep it on the subject and directed toward the objectives of the conference?		
Did I refrain from lecturing, domineering, and offering personal opinions?.....		
Did I try to get the attendees to listen to others and to respect their opinions?		
Did I refuse to take sides in any discussion?.....		
Did I refrain from answering questions by reversing or relaying them?		
Did I refrain from playing the role of expert?		
Did I rephrase contributions only when necessary and then in brief, clear statements?		
Was I in control of group processes at all times?		
Did I maintain the interest of the group throughout the session?.....		
Did I make frequent summaries to crystallize group thinking?		
Did I make full use of the blackboard and other aids?		
Did I cover all essential points, including the applications of the group's conclusions?		
Did I, with the help of the group, make a final summary?		
Did the group leave the conference with something to think about?.....		
Did I close the meeting on time?		

Score

5.3 x the number of items marked YES.

100 - If you have been honest, you are **really** good.

80 - You should improve.

90 - You are above average.

60 - You need help.

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1. Correspondence

- (a) Initial release of related advertising or correspondence.
- (b) Preparation and distribution of program or agenda.
- (c) Preparation and distribution of Administrative Instructions.
- (d) Preparation and distribution of Conference Folder.
- (e) Recording, preparation and distribution of minutes of conference where there is no secretary.
- (f) Preparation, production and distribution of any "Final Report" where there is no secretarial function.

2. Conference Aids

- (a) Booking of conference facilities.
- (b) Arranging security requirements.
- (c) Arranging physical configuration of conference areas.
- (d) Arranging for production of badges, place cards, etc.
- (e) Procurement of stationery supplies.
- (f) Procurement of additional furniture and technical stores such as projectors, screens, tape recorders.
- (g) Coordinating graphic arts requirements.
- (h) Coordinating provision of coffee, water and other amenities in or near conference or meeting area.
- (j) Procurement of reference material.

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3. Administrative Support

- (a) Confirmation of transportation for speakers, etc.
- (b) Arrangements for accommodations if required.
- (c) Transportation if detailed.
- (d) Coordination of luncheons.
- (e) Transportation to and from conference site, accommodation site, dining site and social event site where applicable.
- (f) Procurement of Information Booklets.

4. Financial

- (a) Requests for funds for support of luncheons and other social functions.
- (b) Management and accounting of funds.

5. Miscellaneous

- (a) Preparation of articles for Fire Service magazines, etc.
- (b) Arrangement of appropriate publicity.
- (c) Liaison with conference sponsors or the Fire Chief on protocol for VIPs.