



Union-Management Consultation Framework

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Agriculture and
Agri-Food Canada

Agriculture et
Agroalimentaire Canada

Canada

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Union-Management Consultation Framework

1. Introduction

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) has a longstanding practice of facilitating Union-Management Consultation (UMC) operations. The purpose of this document is to renew the union-management consultation framework within AAFC.

Union-Management consultation provides union representatives with the opportunity to bring matters that are important to their members, to management's attention and allows management to consider and understand employees' perspectives before making decisions or changes to policies or procedures.

Union-Management consultation is widely recognized as an essential component of good human resources management. It also provides an opportunity for AAFC management and unions to promote and maintain a healthier workplace by following consultation best practices at different levels of consultation within a consistent framework.

2. Guiding Principles

AAFC is committed to Union-Management consultation and maintaining a mutually respectful forum to discuss issues relating to the workplace. The existing relationship of trust and respect means that the parties respect each other's roles and integrity.

Meaningful consultation is the cornerstone of the success of the committees. To be effective, this process must be based on an honest and open commitment by all parties. This includes sharing information, providing advice, obtaining views and collaborating on initiatives. It also ensures that committee discussions and decisions are based on a shared understanding of the underlying issues.

Through open and frank discussions, the parties gain a better understanding of workplace issues and the reasons behind employer decisions – even though there may not always be mutual agreement.

Managers at all levels of the organization are to proactively support meaningful comprehensive UMC meetings and associated activities. Union-Management consultation must be a priority for operational managers. Effective consultation must be seen as central to establishing a collaborative work environment.

In addition, managers or Unions may initiate ad hoc consultations when urgent circumstances arise or when issues require ongoing consultation and follow-up.

3. Consultation Framework

Union-management consultations at AAFC will take place through a framework of UMC committees (UMCC) which can encompass national, regional, branch and local committees. For this framework to be effective, issues should be discussed at the appropriate level where they are most likely to be resolved. When resolution is not possible, issues should be referred to the next level of the consultation process. The multi-tiered AAFC framework includes, but is not limited to the following:

- The **National Union-Management Consultation Committee (NUMCC)** – co-chaired by the Deputy Minister (DM) and the Unions to ensure senior-level attention to issues of national importance. It provides strategic direction and deals with issues of department-wide importance, including those referred to it by other consultation committees.
- The **Human Resources-Union Consultation Committee (HRUCC)** – chaired by the Director General, Human Resources Directorate allows ongoing in-depth dialogue on Human Resources initiatives and issues of a broad or national impact.
- The **Local Union-Management Consultation Committee (LUMCC)** addresses issues that are specific to the physical workplaces or to the organizational units they represent. A Local Committee is established for every location where there is an excluded manager who is empowered to make decisions on behalf of the employer at Authority Level 4 or above.

OPTIONAL


- The **Branch Union-Management Consultation Committee (BUMCC)** – co-chaired by the Assistant Deputy Minister of the branch or the Branch Head and the Unions allows for consultation with representatives from multiple regions within the branch. The branch committee normally addresses issues that are branch-specific and are most effectively addressed separately from horizontal issues that cut across different branches. Branch committees are not required for every branch, but will be established when management and union representatives agree that such a structure is appropriate.
- The **Regional Union-Management Consultation Committee (RUMCC)** – co-chaired by management and Unions allows for consultation with representatives from one or multiple branches in one region to address issues that cut across different organizational units and physical workplaces. Although not required for every region, they will be established for regions where management and union representatives agree that such a structure is appropriate.


4. Terms of Reference (ToR)


Each committee is responsible for jointly developing its own Terms of Reference (ToR). Agreed upon common criteria for a ToR are found at Appendix A. Existing committees should review their ToR to ensure consistency with this framework. New Committees may base their ToRs on the [sample](http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=12601§ion=text#appA) (link - <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=12601§ion=text#appA>) provided by Treasury Board Secretariat, but must include the agreed upon criteria as set out in Appendix A to this Framework.

5. Legislative Basis

Section 8 of the *Public Service Labour Relations Act* (PSLRA), states that deputy heads must, in consultation with the bargaining agents, establish a consultation committee for the purpose of exchanging information and obtaining views and advice on workplace issues. The PSLRA also refers to some issues that may be the subject of consultation: harassment in the workplace, disclosure of information of wrongdoing in the public service and the protection from reprisal of employees who disclose such information.



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Appendix A – Terms of Reference – Criteria

While Terms of Reference (ToR) should be jointly established by each level of committee, the following are the agreed-upon criteria common to all committees:

1. Committee Participation

- Union-Management Consultation Committees (UMCC) will be co-chaired by management and union officials who have the authority to make commitments at the level of the committee (national, regional, branch, and/or local).
- Management and unions will appoint members who have knowledge of workplace issues within the committee's scope and are familiar with their organizations' policies.
- All participants should recognize that continuity of participation is a critical element of the relationship-building that underlies effective UMCCs. They may send alternates when necessary but this practice should be kept to a minimum. Alternates must be delegated with the authority to act on the committee member's behalf.
- Management and unions may invite advisors to meetings to support their members in the provision of information and advice.
- Where members of committees are geographically dispersed, teleconferencing should be used to facilitate regular participation. In person attendance at UMCC meetings may be required periodically. The decision to have in person meetings will be reached jointly between the management and union co-chairs.

2. Committee Practices

- Meetings shall be held in AAFC facilities at mutually-acceptable times during normal working hours.
- Management will provide secretariat support, including the preparation of minutes for all meetings.
- Any member may submit agenda items with background information (explanatory notes and/or pertinent documentation) to the committee secretary before the administrative deadline, and the co-chairs must develop the agenda.
- The committee secretary shall prepare and distribute the Minutes as soon as possible after each meeting to the committee members and ensure they are posted at locations as agreed to by the committee in its specific ToR.
- Co-chairs should ensure that responsible individuals are identified and that target dates are established for any action items to ensure follow-up and progress reporting to committee members.
- Provisions of all relevant statutes must be adhered to, and UMCCs must respect the rights of management or employees under their collective agreements.
- Union representatives who are AAFC employees shall not suffer any loss of income as a result of UMCC activities. These duties may be treated as regular work time or be covered as leave with pay for union business under the terms of collective agreements.

- Matters for which other formal channels have been established, including occupational health and safety and National Joint Council matters, will not normally be addressed by UMCCs.
- Potential systemic issues brought to light by individual grievance cases may be discussed in a generic way with the objective of resolving underlying causes or identifying trends, however, the privacy of the parties to the grievance or issue must be respected.

3. Composition and Frequency of Meetings

National Union-Management Consultation Committee

Frequency: Twice every year

- Deputy Minister and/or Associate Deputy Minister
- Assistant Deputy Ministers
- Director General, Human Resources Directorate
- Director, Labour Relations
- National Union Representatives
- Technical or Special Advisors, as required
- Secretary
- Others – could include members of the departmental Executive team who may be affected by items on the agenda, members determined by the bargaining agent(s), or as determined or required by the parties

Human Resources-Union Consultation Committee

Frequency: Quarterly (excluding July and August). Two meetings per year will be allocated for Employment Equity Consultations.

- Director General, Human Resources Directorate
- Director, Labour Relations
- National Union Representatives
- Secretary
- Technical or Special Advisors, as required
- Others – could include members of the departmental Executive team who may be affected by items on the agenda, members determined by the bargaining agent(s), or as determined or required by the parties

Branch Union-Management Consultation Committee (Optional)

Frequency: At a minimum, twice per year - to be determined by committee

- Assistant Deputy Minister of Branch or Branch Head
- Directors General
- Executive Team
- National Union Representatives
- Senior Labour Relations representative
- Secretary
- Technical or Special Advisors, as required
- Others – could include members of the Branch team who may be affected by items on the agenda, members determined by the bargaining agent(s), or as determined or required by the parties

Regional Union-Management Consultation Committee (Optional)

Frequency: At a minimum, twice per year - to be determined by committee

- Excluded Branch Representatives in the region
- Regional Head of Human Resources i.e. Site Director
- Senior Labour Relations representative
- Regional Union Representatives
- Secretary
- Technical or Special Advisors, as required
- Others – could include members of the management team who may be affected by items on the agenda, members determined by the bargaining agent(s), or as determined or required by the parties

Local Union-Management Consultation Committee

Frequency: At a minimum, twice per year - to be determined by committee

- Senior departmental representatives
- Senior line managers
- Labour Relations representative
- Local Union Representatives
- Secretary
- Others – as determined by the parties