



Structure to Form or Form to Structure?

Who cares? At CUSW we just make it work

The structure of the CUSW Constitution has been built piece by piece by members over a number of Conventions. We have aligned the way that CUSW is structured with the Laws of Canada and the Provinces while at the same time taking into consideration the advancement of Civil and Social Society. We have designed CUSW to be “open” to the changes in the Economic, Civil and Social environment around us while at the same time setting clear expectations about how we respond to these influences. The Constitution, in Article 2, sets out the objectives that we are committed to.

The “Objects” of CUSW include:

- **Legal** requirements such as – regulate the relations between employers and employees; enter into collective agreements; refer members to employment; promote gender and ethnic equity in the workplace and in the Union.
- **Civil Society** requirements such as – encourage progressive legislation; build, maintain and protect democratic trade unions and employers; maintain CUSW as a free and democratic Union; maintain Canada as a free and democratic country.
- **Social Society** requirements such as – provide health, safety, social, economic and political benefits to members and retirees; improve political, social, economic conditions of CUSW members and the people of Canada; assist any persons or organizations with demonstrated need; organize unorganized workers; provide an opportunity for every worker to join a free and democratic union.

The structure of our Union is designed based on the lessons learned by the struggles of the “Workers” who came before us, as well as by insight into the local and global environment that is moulding the future ahead of us.

As members we have taken the time to understand that being a worker is not just about going to work and we have designed our Union to respond to this broader responsibility.

We have also taken the time to ensure that as we move forward in implementing our objectives that we will maintain our connection to our purpose by having membership participation in all parts of the organization.

The decision to move from a top down, command control service provider union model to the participation model was discussed and debated at the CUSW Convention in 2012. The Delegates confirmed this direction was the right approach for realizing our goals and committed to taking the Participation Model message back to their workplaces.

The implementation of the Participation Model has caused a healthy discussion within the membership as we implement the roles outlined in the Constitution. Some of the current CUSW members

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moved to CUSW from an American Style of unionism and are struggling to understand the roles and responsibilities of the CUSW Model. They have a predetermined definition of “union” and CUSW does not fit with their expectation. Many others of our members have come to us through apprenticeship or through recruiting and are not familiar with the operation of unions at all.

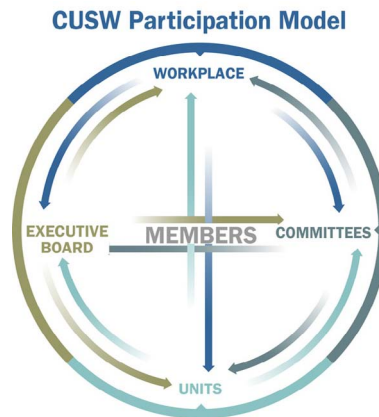
The debate can be confusing, however if we focus our attention on the defined objectives of our union, it all fits nicely into place.

When we are electing representatives we first have to look at the purpose of the position and the role they are taking on.

From a Legal perspective CUSW must fulfill the requirements outlined by the Legislation and the Charter. The President and First Vice President must oversee the legal obligations of the Union at the same time as being responsible to participate as part of the NEB in implementing the Civil and Social requirements of the Constitution.

The NEB must provide oversight and Governance of the Legal operation of CUSW at the same time as they oversee the implementation of the Objects of the Constitution outlined above.

The Units provide the opportunity for members to come together outside the workplace. The elected Unit representatives oversee this mandate while at



the same time providing the coordination of organizing, training, grievance committees and other supports that contribute to the success of members and CUSW as a whole.

National Committees contribute to policy development on behalf of members while at the same time promoting Civil and Social policy that will benefit our members.

In the workplace, members are responsible for day-to-day life at the workplace. These members elect their workplace representatives to fulfill the Legal responsibilities required by rules and Legislation.

Going full circle the members on the NEB are responsible to ensure that all of the parts are working together to advance the interests of the members and their families.

We are all in this together and when we all pull together there is no confusion. As workers we have centuries of experience on which to plan our future. We just need to Participate.

– Joe Mulhall

“Experience without theory is blind, but theory without experience is mere intellectual play.”

– Immanuel Kant