

A quick guide to NFU Conventions



The National Farmers Union (NFU) National Convention is held every year as set out in our constitution. Policy decisions are made through a clearly defined democratic process at Convention, and the Executive, Board, and Locals are all bound to uphold them. National officers are elected at Convention. Some years there may also be constitutional amendments to consider. Convention offers a way for NFU members to meet face to face and to hear from speakers on issues of importance to our organization. It is similar to a regular conference in many ways, but if you are new to the NFU you may not be familiar with the governance aspect.

The National Farmers Union was founded after the farmers unions of BC, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and PEI determined that having a national organization to advocate for the interests of all farmers in Canada in solidarity with each other was needed in order to effectively counter the power of agribusiness corporations and to influence federal and provincial policies in a constructive manner. As stated then:

“The history of the farm union movement extends back to 1901. Since that time, many changes in business organization and farming have taken place. The major problems confronting farmers in our modern industrial society are national and international in nature. In order to successfully countervail the power of the large corporations which economically exploit them, farmers must take collective action on a national basis to strengthen their bargaining power in order to solve some of their problems.” *Union Farmer*, October 1969.

The Founding Convention was held in July 1969 and later that year an Act of Parliament was passed which created the legal basis for the NFU. The NFU Constitution was created after lengthy study and consideration by the respective memberships and boards of the provincial unions in a process that thoroughly engaged their democratic structures and traditions.

Resolutions: The NFU’s Policy Statement compiles all policies -- including position statements, policy recommendations to government, action directives, etc. – that have been passed by a majority vote of delegates at previous national conventions. Each year members bring forward new policy

proposals in the form of resolutions for debate on the floor of Convention. Resolutions that pass are added to the NFU Policy Statement.

There are two ways that resolutions may be brought to Convention. Each NFU Region holds an annual Regional Convention where resolutions are debated and voted upon. Resolutions that have been passed at the regional level come forward to the national Convention. Resolutions from the floor of the Convention may also be presented as long as 2/3 of the delegates approve. The Convention elects a Resolutions Committee, which is responsible for coordinating the resolutions and deciding upon the order in which they will be considered.

Only delegates and elected officials may vote at Convention. A member can become a delegate by being elected by her/his local. Locals are entitled to elect one delegate for each 20 units of membership or major fraction thereof. A member who lives in an area where there is no active local may request delegate credentials from the national office at least 60 days prior to Convention, subject to approval by the Regional Coordinator.

Debate at Convention is done according to the rules of order published in *Parliamentary Procedure at a Glance, New Edition* by O. Garfield Jones. The Convention Steering Committee recommends specific additional rules to deal with matters that are particular to our own Convention, which are adopted by a vote at the outset of Convention. These rules are then printed and distributed for reference. The goal is to have as many policy resolutions as possible heard and thoroughly debated with the least amount of time wasted.

Elections: The annual Convention also elects the President, 1st and 2nd Vice Presidents, Women’s President, Women’s Vice President, Youth President and Youth Vice President, all by secret ballot. One of the last items of business at Convention is the installation of officers – the Presidential and Vice Presidential officers as well as the Board members, Women’s Advisory Committee members and Youth Advisory Committee members who were elected at their own Regional Conventions. —nfu—

*This year, Convention will be held
November 24-26, 2011 in London, Ontario.*

