



Canadian Council of Ministers
of the Environment Le Conseil canadien
des ministres
de l'environnement

CONSENSUS BUILDING A TABLE GUIDE & TOOL KIT

CCME uses a consensus decision-making process in which jurisdictions work collaboratively to craft decisions that best satisfy their respective interests. This “Table Guide & Tool Kit” is designed to assist participants in that process.

ENCOURAGE

- Searching for the best solution that meets the interests of all jurisdictions
- Seeking a creative solution
- Moving from debating positions to creating solutions
- Team work

REINFORCING THE CONSENSUS PROCESS

- Focus on definable issues
- Seek out interests (underlying needs) not positions (a party’s perceived solution to meet their needs)
- Involve all participants
- Turn discussion from debating positions to creating solutions
- Generate options for possible solutions
- Look for creative solutions, not compromise
- Advance creative solutions

USEFUL TOOLS

- Clarifying - Asking questions to seek out interests
- Short breaks, opportunity for caucus
- Brainstorm - develop options
- Humour
- Defer topic until later in meeting, or another meeting
- Strike sub-committee, or delegate to another group to do analysis or follow-up on specific questions

Consensus building is the shared responsibility of all participants.

AVOID

- Seeking compromise
- Finding the lowest common denominator
- Opting for the will of the majority
- Accepting might as right
- Debating positions

Interests are more often compatible than *positions*.

Consensus Building:
A Table Guide and Toolkit

The Problems	The Solutions
Issue appears too complex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify the issue, or ask someone else to do so • Break the issue into logical parts and proceed • Suggest a short break • Assign issue (or parts) to a working group for analysis and recommendation
Parties tabling or arguing <i>positions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note that discussion should focus on <i>interests</i> • Initiate process to identify interests, or re-state what you believe the interests to be • Explore options to satisfy interest • Discuss the evidence of facts supporting the interests • Move from <i>positions</i> to <i>interests</i> by asking “Why is this position important to you?” or “What is the underlying interest?”
Disagreement on facts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify the disagreement – What facts are in question? • Call on a member present or expertise to help clarify • Defer discussion and assign responsibility to resolve factual disagreement
No solutions are emerging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss components/elements/criteria for a solution • Brainstorm suggestions • Generation options or suggest a solution • Suggest a short break • Assign the issue or parts of it to a working group for further work and recommendations
If consensus is elusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify where consensus has been reached on components of the issue • Agree to as much as possible (principles, priorities, policies) • Agree that each jurisdiction will operate within the context of what has been agreed • Assign outstanding issues to a working group for further work and recommendations

Build on Small Wins

Replicate the Process

Celebrate Success