

CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE I - Incorporation

Section 1

This Society shall be known by the name of The Ruskin Literary and Debating Society.

Section 2

The object of this Society shall be the development of its members in the art of public speaking and the study of literary, social, political and economic questions.

Section 3

The Society emblem shall be a design consisting of the Lamp of Knowledge superinscribed with the letter "R" in gold upon a background of royal blue, the whole to be in the form of a shield.

ARTICLE II - Membership

Section 1

The Society shall be composed of two classes of members, Active and Honorary.

Section 2

The Active membership shall be limited to thirty.

Section 3

Applications for membership in the Society, which shall be in writing, may be received at any regular meeting at which the applicant is present, and shall be proposed and seconded by members in good standing.

Section 4

The name of each candidate shall be on the waiting list at the pleasure of the Society.

Section 5

Immediately after an application has been received, the candidate shall be presented with a copy of the Constitution, By-laws and Rules of Order, and shall have stated to him by the President the objects of the Society and the requirements of its members.

Section 6

During probation the candidate shall have the privilege of participating in the proceedings of the meetings, but shall neither vote nor make motions.

Section 7

(a) The Secretary shall notify the Society verbally of the coming election of the candidate at the meeting preceding that at which the election will take place and in writing in the notice to the Society of the meeting at which the election is to take place. The candidate shall be notified by letter and requested to absent himself from that meeting.

(b) The voting shall be by ballot, the President putting the question "Are you in favor of —'s election to membership in this Society?" the ballots being recorded "Yes" or "No". Four-fifths vote of the members

present shall be necessary to secure election.

Section 8

Honorary Membership may 'be conferred, as a distinction upon those who have been members for seven years with an average attendance of 75%, or have rendered signal service to the Society.

Section 9

Notice of motion to confer Honorary Membership shall be given in writing at a preceding regular meeting.

Section 10

Election to honorary Membership shall be by balloting "Yes" or "No" on the motion to confer Honorary Membership. Four-fifths of the used ballots cast shall be necessary to secure election. Spoiled or blank ballots shall not count.

Section 11¹

Honorary members shall be admitted to all meetings of the Society and enjoy the same privileges as Active members, except the right to hold office other than that of Honorary President. They shall be exempt from all dues and assessments.

Section 12

Any member absenting himself from four consecutive meetings, or neglecting to pay his dues, or for any other cause deemed sufficient by the Society, may be expelled or have his membership suspended by a two-thirds vote of the members present at any regular meeting, provided notice of such intention is given at a preceding regular meeting.

Section 13²

From time to time, a Member, owing to various circumstances, may not be able to attend meetings of the Society on a regular basis. At the Society's discretion, a leave of absence may be granted to such a Member. Such a Member will be exempt from dues, will not have his name called at roll call, and will receive only the first notice of the season. He shall have the Society's tacit invitation to attend any of its meetings, at which he would enjoy all the rights and privileges of a guest.³ Active membership may be reinstated on application and approval by a majority vote at any regular meeting of the Society. Leaves of absence may be reviewed at the Society's discretion.

ARTICLE III - Officers

The Officers of the Society shall be: an Honorary President, President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Representative, Critic, Historian.

ARTICLE IV - Officers' Duties

Section 1

It shall be the duty of the President to preside at all meetings of the Society: to enforce the due

¹ Deleted "to vote, or" after "...except the right" February 1, 2017

² Section added April, 1999.

³ Preceding sentence inserted January 21, 2004.

observance of the Constitution, By-laws, Rules of Order, etc. The presiding officer shall make no motion, nor vote on any question or motion, excepting election of members and officers, unless the Society be equally divided in which event he shall give the casting vote. The President shall be ex-officio a member of any special committee.

Section 2

The Vice-President shall perform the duties of President in the absence of that officer.

Section 3

The Secretary shall keep in a book a record of the proceedings of the Society, also a record of the name and address of each member and candidate, and shall send or cause to be sent to each active member and candidate a written notice of each meeting of the Society, at such time as the Society may direct. He shall have charge of all books, papers, documents, chattels, etc., for the current and immediately preceding year, excepting those of monetary value which are held for sale, belonging to the Society. He shall also have charge of all correspondence of the Society for the current and immediately preceding year. At the conclusion of his term of office all books, papers, documents, etc., in his charge shall be handed to his successor in office.

Section 4

The Treasurer shall keep all chattels, etc., which are held for sale and suitable books of account. He shall receive all moneys belonging and payable to the Society, shall keep an account of all receipts and expenditures and shall make no payments without the written order of the President. Two members of the Society shall be required to sign all cheques drawn on the Society's accounts. One of those members must be the Treasurer. The only transactions permitted on the Society's accounts for which an Automatic Teller Machine (ATM) may be used will be deposits.⁴ At the conclusion of his term of office all moneys, books, documents, etc. in his charge shall be handed to his successor in office.

Section 5

The Critic shall make a report at each meeting, criticizing the grammar, style, construction and general delivery of the speeches, also the conduct, etc., of the members, with a view to correcting and improving them.

Section 6

The Historian shall keep a complete and permanent record of the membership and of the more important actions of the Society with a view to the preservation of the History of the Society from the time of its organization. He shall be required to present the History covering his term of office during the succeeding year. He shall be the custodian of all records and chattels not pertinent to the current or immediately preceding year. At the conclusion of his term of office all records and chattels in his charge shall be transferred to his successor in office.

Section 7

The Representative shall represent the members of the Society on the Executive Committee and shall promote the development of the Society by recruitment of candidates through advertising and soliciting inquiries and communications with other similar societies. He shall make an annual report of his activities to the Society.

⁴ preceding 3 sentences inserted January 9, 2002.

ARTICLE V - Nomination and Election of Officers

Section 1

Nomination of officers shall take place at the regular meeting preceding that of election of officers.

Section 2

The election of officers shall be by ballot and held at the last regular meeting in each season. The term of each shall commence on the first day of June following the said meeting.

Section 3

In case of a vacancy occurring in any office, the Society shall go into an immediate election to fill the same, and the officer-elect shall assume the duties of his office immediately after such election.

Section 4

Election of officers shall be determined by a majority vote of members present and proxies in the hands of the Secretary.⁵

Section 5⁶

Voting will be conducted using a single printed ballot. Proxies will be provided with notice of meeting to all members in the same format as the ballot. Completed proxies must be submitted to the Secretary prior to the meeting. It is the responsibility of each member to ensure their proxy ballot is received in time for the meeting.

Section 6⁷

Voting will be by ranked preferential ballot. The candidate(s) for each office receiving the fewest votes will be dropped from the ballot and voters' next choice applied in favour of their successive choices until a candidate receives a majority of votes.

Section 7⁸

Offices will be filled in the same order that they are listed in Article III.

Section 8⁹

No member may be elected to more than one office as listed in Article III.

Section 9¹⁰

No ballots or proxies shall be accepted from members whose dues are in arrears.

Section 10¹¹

The Historian shall be nominated by the Executive Committee, who shall place at least three names before the Society. With this exception and the further exception that the election shall take place every three years, the rules governing the election of other officers shall apply.

⁵ "and proxies in the hands of the Secretary" added April 21, 1982.

⁶ Sections 5-9 added March 23, 2016

⁷ Sections 5-9 added March 23, 2016

⁸ Sections 5-9 added March 23, 2016

⁹ Sections 5-9 added March 23, 2016

¹⁰ Sections 5-9 added March 23, 2016

¹¹ Article 5, Section 5 renumbered Section 10 March 23, 2016

ARTICLE VI - Auditors and Co-signing Officer¹²

Section 1¹³

The Society shall, at the meeting for the election of officers, appoint two Auditors to audit the books and accounts of the Treasurer for the year next following. It shall be the duty of the Auditors to prepare a statement of receipts and disbursements, assets and liabilities and records and chattels of the Society, as at May 31 and to present same at the first meeting following the period of the audit.

Section 2¹⁴

The second member with signing authority over the Society's accounts (co-signing officer) will be elected annually at the meeting for the election of officers. To be eligible for this position a member must have been in good standing for each of the previous five seasons. The member will remain eligible to hold concurrently any Executive Committee position except that of Treasurer.

ARTICLE VII - Executive Committee

Section 1

The President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and Representative are constituted an Executive Committee.

Section 2

The duties of the Executive Committee shall be to provide for any contingencies or unforeseen circumstances that may arise during the year, and to deal with communications and report to the Society.

ARTICLE VIII - Ways and Means Committee

Section 1

A Ways and Means Committee may¹⁵ be formed consisting of three members, each of whom shall have been a member for at least two years, and have attended at least 75% of the meetings of the last year. They shall be elected immediately following the election of officers and by the same method, except that nominations shall be made on the evening of the election. If a Ways and Means Committee is not formed all duties here and after assigned to the Ways and Means Committee shall become the responsibility of the Executive Committee. The question of whether or not a Ways and Means Committee should be formed shall be decided by the Executive Committee placing an appropriate motion before the Society.¹⁶

Section 2

The duties of the Ways and Means Committee shall be:

(a) To inquire into the character, ability and attitude towards the Society of each Candidate and report verbally their opinion to the Society on the evening of the election.

¹² "and Co-signing Officer" added January 9, 2002.

¹³ Heading added January 9, 2002.

¹⁴ Section 2 Added January 9, 2002.

¹⁵ "shall" replaced with "may" January 18, 1989.

¹⁶ Preceding 2 sentences added January 18, 1989.

(b) To make such recommendations as they deem advisable relative to delinquent members and such other matters as they believe to be in the Society's interest.

(c) To submit a detailed report of the attendance of each member for the year at the meeting for election of officers.

ARTICLE IX - The Current Events Committee

Section 1

A Current Events Committee shall be formed consisting of the two newest members and all candidates.

Section 2

The duty of the Current Events Committee shall be to present regular reports on issues having current news value.

ARTICLE X - Special Committees

Section 1

Special Committees may be appointed for any purpose.

Section 2

Every Special Committee shall submit to the Society a written report, duly signed by the Chairman.

Section 3

A committee may be given power to make its decision final by a two-thirds vote of the members present.

ARTICLE XI - Dissolution

The Society shall not have the power to dissolve itself while there are five members dissenting.

ARTICLE XII - Amendment of By-laws and Rules of Order

The Society, by a two-thirds vote of the members present at any regular meeting, may enact, amend or repeal By-laws or Rules of Order provided notice of motion is given in writing at a preceding regular meeting, and provided that such motion shall be made at one of the next four succeeding meetings.

ARTICLE XIII - Amendment of Constitution

The Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present at any regular meeting, provided that notice of motion has been given in writing at the preceding regular meeting.

ARTICLE XIV¹⁷

The Society shall be carried on without purpose of financial gain for its members and any profits or other accretions to the assets of the Society shall be used in promoting its objects.

¹⁷ Article XIV added October 29, 1980

BY-LAWS

No. 1

The Society shall meet, unless otherwise ordered, on every alternate Wednesday evening, commencing the third Wednesday in September, and ending not later than the last Wednesday in April. The meeting, unless otherwise ordered, shall commence at seven p.m., and shall close not later than nine-thirty p.m.

No. 2¹⁸

Seven members shall constitute a quorum of the Society. A quorum of any committee shall be a majority of such committee.

No. 3

At the written request of seven Active members, the President shall call a special meeting of the Society.

No. 4

The business to be considered at any special meeting shall be set forth in the notice to members of such meeting.

No. 5¹⁹

The dues shall be determined from time to time by the Society, and shall be payable in advance at the second regular meeting of each season. The Treasurer shall report to the Ways and Means Committee any member whose dues are 30 days in arrears.

No. 6

An assessment may be levied at any regular or special meeting, by a two-thirds vote of the members present, provided notice of the same has been given at a preceding regular meeting.

No. 7

The order of business, unless otherwise ordered, shall be as follows: Opening; Roll Call; Reading of the Minutes; Applications for Membership; Election of Members; Other Business; Program; Critic's Report.

No. 8

The business part of the meeting shall be terminated not later than 8:00 p.m., except by a simple majority²⁰ of the members present. No motion to extend business shall be entertained, but at the expiration of time for business or extended time for business, the Chair shall interrupt the business of the Society and put the question, "Is it the will of the Society that business be extended 15 minutes?" and the Society shall forthwith vote thereon without debate. In the event that the Society is in Committee of the Whole at the expiration of time, the Committee shall follow the same procedure.

¹⁸ Delete "Active" after "Seven" February 1, 2017.

¹⁹ Current text added April 1999. Original text "The dues shall be \$25.00 per season, payable in advance at the second regular meeting of each season. The Treasurer shall report to the Ways and Means Committee any member whose dues are 30 days in arrears." On September 30, 1987 the dues were increased to \$55.00, and on November 14, 1990 they were reduced to \$40.00.

²⁰ Original text "the vote of three quarters" deleted and replaced by "a simple majority" on November 24, 1982. No clear reason is known as to why this sentence was left as it now reads.

No. 9

Unfinished business which has been rendered ineffective by subsequent action of the Society, shall be dropped automatically.

RULES OF ORDER

1. The President, or in his absence, the Vice-President, shall open and close the meeting, at the time provided in the By-laws. In the absence of such officers, a Chairman pro tem. shall be chosen by the Society.
2. The President shall be privileged to debate on all subjects on calling any member to the Chair.
3. No motion to amend the minutes shall be admissible unless it is in respect to an omission or error of fact.
4. Any member who wishes to speak shall rise, respectfully address the Presiding Officer and await his recognition before proceeding. He shall confine himself to the question under discussion and avoid personalities.
5. If two or more members rise to speak at the same time, the Presiding Officer shall decide who may speak first.
6. No member shall speak more than twice on any substantive motion, and once on each of the amendments to the motion, without first asking and obtaining permission from the Presiding Officer.
7. A motion must be moved, seconded and stated from the Chair before it is open to debate.
8. When a motion or resolution is once moved, seconded and stated by the Presiding Officer, it shall be in the possession of the Society, and cannot be withdrawn without a unanimous vote, unless for the purposes of modifying it or substituting another in its place, in which event the mover may be granted permission to do so by a motion to that effect, regularly made and passed by a majority of the members present.
9. No member shall speak to a motion after the affirmative vote has been taken.
10. A motion shall be placed in writing if any member demands it.
11. No member shall vote on any question in the result of which he only is financially interested.
12. When a member is called to order he shall sit down until the point of order is decided.
13. An appeal may be made at all times from the decision of the Chair. No appeal shall be in order unless it is seconded.²¹ The Presiding Officer shall then put the question: "Shall the decision of the Chair stand as the judgment of the House?" Two-thirds majority shall be necessary to sustain the appeal.
14. A member moving the adjournment of the House shall be allowed to speak for not more than five minutes. A member seconding the motion shall be allowed to speak for not more than five minutes.

²¹ Preceding sentence inserted February 24, 2010

15. The Previous Question may be moved on a substantive motion either before or after it has been amended, unless it shall appear to the Chair that such motion is an abuse of the Rules of the Society and an infringement of the rights of the minority. After the Previous Question has been stated, no amendment shall be entertained, all debate shall cease and the Society shall proceed forthwith to vote. Should the motion be defeated there may be further discussion of the original motion or the amendments, if any, during that meeting.
16. Any of the above Rules may be suspended for any length of time not to exceed one meeting, by a two-thirds vote of the members present.
17. Bourinot's Manual shall be the authority to decide all questions not provided for in these Rules.

BRIEF HISTORY

From small and obscure beginnings, the Ruskin Society can now take pride in a record of more than eighty years of continuous activity. Men who have achieved posts of responsibility in the political, municipal, professional and business life of Canada freely acknowledge their indebtedness to the training in public speaking acquired during membership in this Society.

Ruskin began in a small way. The late James Simpson, later Mayor of Toronto was the leader of a Bible Class at Central Methodist Church. Its members desired to carry on a mid-week activity for the improvement of their minds and for the acquirement of an ability to express themselves. So in 1900 nine young men under the direction of James Simpson and H. H. Bishop organized the club with a membership limited to twenty-five and a fee of five cents a meeting. H. H. Bishop became the first president. The name chosen was Ruskin, not 'because there was any intention to study Ruskin's literary works, but because Ruskin at that particular period was honoured for his promotion of the self-education of the working class.

During the first five years the club had a precarious existence and many of the original members dropped out. About 1905 it began to get firmly established and to take an active interest in many of the leading economic and political questions of the day. One of the most notable agitations it conducted was that involving the opening of the Reference Library in evening hours. It succeeded in having it open two nights a week. Eight men were detailed to use the library on each of these evenings to demonstrate the necessity of having the library open.

The place of meeting constituted a problem in the early days. For a short while, the Society met at Central Methodist Church, then until 1904 at the home of Mrs. Faithful, 16 Maitland Street, then in various members' homes and for a short while in the Temple Building, Richmond and Bay Streets. In 1909, the Society moved to the Foresters' Hall, 22 College Street where it remained until 1921, when during the presidency of C. P. Tisdall, it was successful in being admitted to Hart House. The privilege of meeting for fifty years in Hart House has been an important factor in the robust health of the Society.

During the Second World War because of the transportation problems, it was decided to change the night of meeting from Saturday to Tuesday. Attendance proved unsatisfactory and the Society reverted to Saturday evening meetings.

In 1972, the Society moved to McLaughlin College, York University, in an attempt to gain new members. Membership, however, continued to decline as several senior members retired and few students were interested in the Society. Ruskin suffered a severe loss in 1975, when an outstanding member, Mr. Ian Galt, retired from the Society after completing 53 years of active membership. In 1977, members voted to admit women to membership. During the summer of 1978, the Executive, on behalf of the Society, arranged to hold Ruskin meetings at the Strollers Club, located at 92 Adelaide Street West. The Society also decided to meet on Wednesday evenings from 7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. to attract more guests to the traditional "cut and thrust" of Ruskin debates.

February, 1980.