

FORMATTING & PRESENTATION OF OVERTURES TO CLASSIS

A. Definition

1. An overture is a **request for action** made by an assembly to a higher assembly, or by an individual to their council.
2. A **council** may overture **Classis**; a classis may overture **Synod**.
3. Individual **members** of churches may only overture a Classis or Synod after first overturing their Council and respective Classis. A council may only overture Synod after first overturing Classis. Only when overtures are not acceded to, do individuals, councils, and classis appeal by overturing a higher assembly.

B. Format

The first part of the overture is a statement of three parts:

- a. **who** overtures **whom** - e.g., “the Council of 1st CRC overtures Classis BCNW”
- b. what specific **action** is being requested - e.g., “to instruct Classis BCNW to study...”
- c. what mode of **implementation** is being requested - e.g., to report to the Spring 2015 meeting of Classis BCNW”
- d. The second part of the overture is a presentation of **grounds** in support of the action being requested. Unless such grounds are brief, they are customarily itemized.
- e. If the overture affects the rate of classical assessments, include an approximation of the **costs** involved and the impact on assessments.
- f. Be as **succinct** as possible while still making the overture **definitive**.
- g. If the **Bible** is quoted, the version used **must** be cited.
- h. If other publications are quoted or referred to (e.g. book, Bible, article), they must be **referenced properly**. If the *Acts of Synod* are referred to, list the title, year, the recommendation number (if there is one) and the page number (e.g., *AOS, 2013, R-4, p. 255*).

C. Cautions

“**Careful and prayerful deliberation**” (Church Order Commentary, 2011, p. 184) ought to precede the submission of an overture. Grounds must demonstrate that “the petitioner’s conscience is inappropriately infringed upon” (COC, 184) by the matter raised.

Overtures which deal with matters concerning the **discipline or charges** against persons must be dealt with **sensitively**. Individuals and Councils must bear in mind Church order articles 78 ff. In certain cases, the Council may request and/or Classis will invoke Judicial Code (C.O. Art. 30c & its supplement).

D. Procedure

An overture being submitted should be accompanied by a **cover letter**, stating the place and date of the meeting of the assembly at which the overture was adopted; the letter is to be signed by the council clerk and/or chair.

If **more than one** overture is being submitted, each should begin on a **separate** page. A single cover letter will suffice.

Council overtures to classis **must be submitted** to the stated clerk **seven (7) weeks prior**

to a classis meeting in order to be on the agenda. Overtures received late will be deemed out of order, unless Classis rules otherwise.

E. Sample Overture

A. Canadian Coffee Crisis

The council of Java Nut CRC in Beanery, BC overtures Classis BCNW to **call on the Tim Horton's Corporation and demand that it provide decaffeinated dark roast coffee** at each of their locations throughout Canada, and report back to the following meeting of Classis their success in this urgent matter.

Grounds:

1. The pastoral concerns associated with coffee addiction compromise the ability of councils to work effectively without excessively frequent coffee breaks.
2. Scripture clearly speaks to this issue: Colossians 1 teaches that we are to “reconcile ... all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven.” (NIV) Undoubtedly this includes the dual offering of caffeinated and decaffeinated coffee.
3. The CRC Synod of 1856 mandated that churches speak clearly into the social ills of their day. (AOS 1856, R-185, p. 1282).
4. The needs of the CRC members in Canada require swift action.