

Committee Process

The committee process may vary from inquiry to inquiry, but usually consists of the following steps:

- 1 The Legislative Assembly issues a terms of reference to a Committee.
- 2 The Committee receives initial briefings from committee staff and expert witnesses.
- 3 The Committee collects evidence, which may include public consultation.
- 4 The Committee considers all evidence and prepares report.
- 5 The report is presented to the Legislative Assembly, where it may be debated and adopted.
- 6 Print copies of the report are distributed, and an electronic version is posted on the Internet. Electronic copies are sent to all witnesses who participated in the committee inquiry.

How to Contact Us

For further information on the work of parliamentary committees, please contact:

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Appearing as a Witness



Legislative Assembly of British Columbia
Office of the Clerk of Committees
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About Parliamentary Committees

Parliamentary committees undertake much of the detailed investigative work of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia. They examine policy proposals and topical issues of public interest, scrutinize the operation of government organizations, as well as review legislation and government spending.

As part of a public consultation process, a committee often seeks public input on topics or questions contained in the committee's terms of reference. This brochure provides information to assist a person or a group wanting to appear as a witness at a public hearing before a parliamentary committee.

The Role of a Witness

A witness is simply an individual or group who appears before a parliamentary committee to present their views or opinions on issues related to the committee's mandate.

By making an oral presentation, you are providing the committee with your own insights, observations and opinions. Your input assists the committee in making informed decisions.

All oral presentations and written submissions receive careful consideration by the committee members.

How to Appear as a Witness

A parliamentary committee announces public hearing dates and locations on its website, as well as in newspapers and radio advertisements. Individuals and organizations wishing to make a presentation need to contact the Office of the Clerk of Committees to reserve a speaking time.

Once you have reserved your speaking time, you will be e-mailed, faxed or mailed a witness confirmation form, containing the date, time, location and other details.

It is not necessary to forward a written summary of your presentation to the committee prior to the public hearing. However, if you wish to provide additional written material, you may be asked to supply up to 20 copies for distribution to the committee members and staff at the time of the hearing.

Each presenter usually has 10 minutes to address the committee, by making a short oral statement followed by responses to Members' questions. If you intend to make a computer-aided presentation, please check with the Clerk of Committees Office in advance to ensure that the required technology is available at the hearing location.

If the speaking schedule is fully booked, interested individuals and organizations are welcome to attend the public hearings and may still make a written submission. For information on preparing a written submission, please see the brochure entitled "Preparing a Written Submission for a Parliamentary Committee."

What to do on Arrival

When you arrive at the hearing, introduce yourself to the committee staff, who are usually seated at a table near the entrance to the meeting room. They will verify your name, ask if you are appearing on behalf of an organization and confirm your speaking time. If you have written material to distribute to the committee, please leave your document(s) with the committee staff.

If the public hearing is in progress, you are welcome to observe the proceedings before being called to speak.

What Happens at a Hearing

When the committee is ready to proceed with the public hearing, the Chair will call the meeting to order and invite the first witness to come to the table at the front. When it's your turn, the Chair will ask you to state your name and the organization you represent, if applicable.

If you have any written material, staff will distribute copies to the members of the committee before you start speaking.

After your presentation, committee members may ask you questions to clarify points you have made and/or to seek your views on the topic of inquiry.

Making Your Presentation

The information that witnesses provide to a committee is formally known as evidence and becomes part of the official record of the committee's work.

Hansard Services record what witnesses say at a hearing and makes a public transcript of the proceedings. Speaking clearly and directly into the microphone(s) on the witness table will assist Hansard staff in producing an accurate account of what you said. The microphones also make it easier for everybody else in the room to hear what you have to say.

Evidence given before a parliamentary committee is made public. One or two days after the hearing, the verbatim transcript is posted on the committee's web site at <http://www.leg.bc.ca/cmt>. Written materials submitted by witnesses may also be made publicly available once a committee has completed its work.

Media Coverage

The news media often attend parliamentary committee hearings. An audio-only web cast of the hearing may also be broadcast on the Legislative Assembly's website at <http://www.leg.bc.ca/cmt/index.htm>.