



Yukon Legislative Assembly Office

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Guidelines for Witnesses in Committee of the Whole

Committee of the Whole (“the Committee”) is a committee that meets in the Yukon Legislative Assembly Chamber and is composed of all Members of the Legislative Assembly. Whereas the House is presided over by the Speaker, the Committee is presided over by the Chair of Committee of the Whole. No witnesses may appear before the Committee unless either the Committee, or the House, has moved and carried a motion agreeing that the witnesses appear before the Committee.

Arrival

Witnesses should arrive in advance of the time that they are scheduled to appear before the Committee and proceed to the Yukon Legislative Assembly Office. When checking in at that office, witnesses should produce their respective photo identification. The Yukon Legislative Assembly Office is located on the lower level of the Yukon Government’s Main Administration Building, which is located at 2071 Second Avenue in Whitehorse.

Being recognized and speaking through the Chair

As is the case with Members, witnesses should always wait to be recognized by the Chair before speaking. In addition to adhering to parliamentary forms, this helps to ensure that it is clear to those listening to audio of the proceedings, exactly who it is that is speaking. As well, waiting to be recognized by the Chair helps to ensure that remarks will be correctly attributed in Hansard.

Both Members and witnesses should always refer their remarks through the Chair. For example, when responding to a Member’s question, a witness might say, “Chair, in response to the Member’s question, the answer is”). The witness should *not* speak directly to the Member (e.g., “In response to your question ...”).

Witnesses do not participate in debate. Rather, witnesses answer questions posed to them by Members. Witnesses are expected to be brief, forthright and frank when answering questions. Apart from delivering opening remarks, a witness may only answer questions posed by Members, as opposed to raising other matters.

Opening remarks

It is the Committee’s practice for witnesses to be offered the opportunity to make an opening statement.

During the 2019 Fall Sitting, the Chair of Committee of the Whole delivered a ruling limiting the length of opening remarks by witnesses to a maximum of five minutes. This ruling is intended to maximize the amount of time that is available for Members

to ask questions of witnesses during time-limited appearance of witnesses before the Committee. Pursuant to the ruling, witnesses from a given organization have a maximum of five minutes, collectively, to make introductory remarks. This five minutes can be split amongst the witnesses, if more than one witness has an opening statement.

If witnesses would like to present additional information beyond their brief opening remarks, that information should be tabled by a Member as a filed document, preferably well before the appearance of the witnesses, so that all Members have the opportunity to review the document prior to the opportunity to question the witnesses.

Order of questions

Generally, the Official Opposition critic for the entity (e.g., agency, board or corporation) appearing before the Committee will be the first questioner that the Chair recognizes to pose questions to the witnesses. The Official Opposition critic will have more time to question witnesses than will other Members. After the Official Opposition critic, the next questioner that the Chair recognizes will generally be the critic from the Third Party. If time permits, the Chair may recognize other Members to ask the witnesses questions.

Given the limited amount of time available to the Committee to question witnesses, the Chair may, in the interest of fairness, end a Member's questioning if there is a need to recognize another Member.

Privilege

Anyone called to appear before the Committee as a witness must understand that appearing before Committee of the Whole is a serious matter. Witnesses should also be aware that the remarks and answers they provide while appearing as witnesses before the Committee are protected by the parliamentary privilege that applies to Members of the Legislative Assembly when they participate in proceedings of the Legislative Assembly.

Dress code

The dress code for witnesses is the same as for Members of the Legislative Assembly. Business dress is expected. Ties are not mandatory in Committee of the Whole.

Water

Water is the only beverage that is allowed in the Chamber. Each witness will be provided a glass of water by (mask-wearing) pages, who will provide refills as needed. Food is not permitted in the Chamber.

COVID-19 mitigation protocols

Witnesses should sanitize their hands before entering the Chamber. A sanitizing station is positioned just outside all entrances to the Chamber.

As is the case with Members, witnesses are required to wear masks when they are entering and leaving the Chamber. Witnesses are encouraged to bring their own mask, but if necessary a mask will be provided.

In order to allow witnesses the option to physically distance from each other, adjustments have been made to witnesses' seating arrangements in the Chamber. Before the pandemic, witnesses sat at the (two-seat) witnesses' table that is situated on the floor of the Chamber, outside the Bar of the House.

In the current protocol, when there are two witnesses, one witness will be seated at the witnesses' table, in the seat that is closest to the Opposition side of the Chamber. The second witness will have the option to sit at a desk that will be positioned beside the witnesses' table, on the side that is nearest to the center of the Chamber. The stand-alone desk made available to the second witness will be equipped with a wireless (vs. built-in) microphone.

Please note that under this protocol, a maximum of two witnesses can appear before the Committee.