



Parliamentary Committee Guide

House of Assembly of Newfoundland and Labrador

(October 2025)

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INTRODUCTION

A parliamentary committee is a small group of Members created and empowered by the House to perform one or more specific tasks. There are several types of committees that are formed on a permanent or temporary basis, consisting of Members from all recognized parties in the House. To enable them to perform their work effectively, the House generally delegates to its committees its powers of inquiry and the authority to compel the appearance of witnesses and the production of documents.

The House derives several advantages from the use of parliamentary committees, including the delegation of work the House collectively would find difficult to undertake.

Parliamentary committees also:

- Enhance the democratic process by providing for greater accountability of the Executive branch to the House of Assembly through investigation of questions of government administration and service delivery;
- Provide an important means for Members to carry out detailed investigations, inquiries or examinations before the House of Assembly must come to a decision;
- Enable consultation and collection of the views of individuals, community groups, professionals, businesses, academics and other groups;
- Broaden the role of individual Members by providing an opportunity for them to contribute their experience and expertise in a parliamentary forum outside of the House of Assembly;
- Provide a mechanism to make Parliament more relevant and accessible to the people it represents by allowing more direct contact between the public and elected officials on issues (i.e., take Parliament to the people); and
- Promote public debate on a subject by undertaking an inquiry.

This guide is intended to provide a summary of the role, powers and general practices of Standing and Select Committees of the House of Assembly in Newfoundland and Labrador. It is based on the Standing Orders, accepted practices, conventions, precedents and parliamentary authorities as they exist in the current general assembly.

Questions regarding parliamentary committees can be directed to the Principal Clerk of Committees.

This Guide is provided for informational purposes, with the final authority for the conduct of parliamentary committees as follows:

- [House of Assembly Act](#);
- [Standing Orders](#); and
- accepted practices, conventions, precedents or parliamentary authorities.

STANDING COMMITTEES

Standing committees are the permanent committees of the House as established under the [Standing Orders](#). They may examine and report on the following:

1. Matters referred to them by the House;
2. Matters traditionally considered within their mandate;
3. Draft legislation before its introduction in the House and/or bills which have received second reading; or
4. Estimates as referred by the House of Assembly.

These committees are created at the beginning of a general assembly and continue for the duration of that assembly. The Striking Committee (also established at the beginning of a general assembly, chaired by the Government House Leader) is responsible for determining the membership of the Standing Committees.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, there is provision for six Standing Committees, as follows:

1. Government Services Committee:

The Government Services Committee reviews the annual Estimates of the departments and agencies categorized under the general government sector as contained in the Estimates. This Committee may also be asked to review any policy matter the House wishes to refer to it, typically related to the general government sector departments and agencies.

2. Social Services Committee:

The Social Services Committee reviews the annual Estimates of the departments and agencies categorized under the social services sector as contained in the Estimates. This Committee may also be asked to review any policy matter the House refers to it, typically related to the social services sector departments and agencies.

3. Resource Committee:

The Resource Committee reviews the annual Estimates of the departments and agencies categorized under the resource sector as contained in the Estimates. This Committee may be asked to review any policy matter the House refers to it, typically related to the resource sector departments and agencies.

4. Public Accounts Committee:

Standing Order 65(6) prescribes the Public Accounts Committee's mandate as the Committee to which all reports of the Auditor General shall, upon tabling, stand referred. It may also request the Auditor General to perform special audits on issues it deems to

be of concern, pursuant to section 22 of the [Auditor General Act, 2021](#). In addition, the Committee reviews the Clerk's role as accounting officer, pursuant to the [House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act](#).

5. Privileges and Elections Committee:

The Privileges and Elections Committee deals with matters of privilege referred to it by the House when the Speaker determines there is a *prima facie* case that a breach of privilege has occurred. The Committee also reviews the [Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Assembly](#), and has responsibilities under the [Harassment-Free Workplace Policy Applicable to Complaints Against MHAs](#) (effective April 1, 2020).

6. Standing Orders Committee:

The Standing Orders Committee reviews and makes recommendations to the House on amendments to the [Standing Orders](#).

SELECT COMMITTEES

Occasionally, the House may decide to appoint a Select Committee for a particular purpose. This is done by resolution of the House, which is the order of reference for the committee, specifying such things as:

- The matter(s) the Committee is to examine and report on;
- The membership of the Committee;
- Expectations regarding the content and delivery of the Committee's report;
- Time frame for the Committee to report to the House; and/or
- Expectations regarding consultations/public engagement, extraordinary technology requirements, travel, et cetera.

Select Committees cease to exist once they deliver their final report, or when otherwise specified in the terms of reference.

ESTABLISHING COMMITTEES & COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Only elected Members may serve on parliamentary committees. The Striking Committee, appointed early in a new general assembly by motion, is responsible for assigning Members to the various Standing Committees. That Committee is traditionally comprised of three Members from the Government caucus and two from Opposition.

The Striking Committee deliberates and proposes the membership of the various Standing Committees, reporting its recommendations to the House within 20 sitting days of appointment. **Standing Committees cannot meet or undertake any business until they are established by a resolution of the House.**

Standing Committees exist for the duration of the general assembly after they are established by the Striking Committee.

Rules on Committee membership

The [Standing Orders](#) outline the following rules with respect to Committee membership:

- Government Services Committee to consist of not more than 17 Members and not less than 7 Members;
- Social Services Committee to consist of not more than 17 Members and not less than 7 Members;
- Resource Committee to consist of not more than 17 Members and not less than 7 Members;
- Public Accounts Committee to consist of 7 Members;
- Privileges and Elections Committee to consist of 5 Members; and
- Standing Orders Committee to consist of 5 Members.

Temporary changes to Committee membership (substitutions)

A temporary change occurs when a non-Committee member is designated as a substitute for a regular Committee member for a specified period (usually one meeting). This often occurs when the Committee member is unable to attend a scheduled meeting.

To **designate a substitute**, the following steps must be carried out **in advance of a meeting**:

- Send an email to the Government House Leader (Chair of the Striking Committee), copied to Principal Clerk of Committees, outlining the following information:

- Name of the substitute member;
- Name of the member being substituted; and
- Meeting date or period the substitution will be in effect.

The change will be effective immediately. If this information is **not received in advance of the meeting**, the **substitute member cannot be counted for a quorum and cannot vote**.

Substitute members have the same rights as regular members during the period of substitution. They may vote, move motions, participate in debate and count toward a quorum in the same manner as a regular member. It is the responsibility of substitute members to prepare appropriately for any meeting(s) they are attending, and for regular members to get updates on anything missed. The Committee clerk can assist with this upon request.

Committee members cannot have a substitute designated for a meeting if they attend that meeting (i.e., the regular Committee member will be included in quorum and must vote if in attendance). For example, if a Member of a Standing Committee reviewing the Estimates for a government department wishes to attend the meeting as the parliamentary secretary for that department, they cannot have a substitute replace them on the Standing Committee for that meeting.

Substitutions for the Chair

When **substituting for a Committee Chair**, the substitute **does not automatically** take on the responsibilities of the Chair. It is at the Committee's discretion to decide which member will perform the role of the Chair in the Chair's absence, but typically the Vice-Chair is designated.

However, it is the practice that where there is a **substitution for the Chair** during a meeting of a **Standing Committee reviewing the Estimates**, the **substitute member automatically** takes on the **role of the Chair** for that meeting.

Permanent changes to Committee membership

A permanent change occurs when a non-Committee member is named as a new Committee member for the remainder of the Committee's duration (i.e., until the dissolution of the current general assembly or where replaced). New members may be appointed to replace another member due to the resignation of a seat, change in caucus responsibilities, or for other reasons. New members may also be added to an existing Committee if the Committee does not already have the maximum number of members, and the addition is in keeping with the practice regarding equitable representation of recognized parties in the House.

Permanent changes to Committees require a motion to be introduced by the Chair of the Striking Committee (Government House Leader) and adopted by the House.

Ministers on Committees

While it is not common practice, members of Executive Council (i.e., ministers) may be appointed to Committees of the House in certain circumstances. However, they cannot serve as Chairs and are not appointed to:

- the policy Committees (Government Services, Resource, Social Services) dealing with matters relating to their ministerial portfolio; or
- the Public Accounts Committee.

Attendance & participation by non-Committee Members

Members who are not part of a Committee **cannot attend** in camera meetings. Any Member of the House may attend a public meeting unless the Committee orders otherwise [see Standing Order 67(2)]. If attending a public meeting, they may participate with the approval of and at the discretion of the Committee. In such cases, the Committee clerk can provide procedural advice.

Non-Committee members in attendance **cannot be counted towards a quorum, move motions or vote.**

COMMITTEE AUTHORITY & POWERS

The House delegates certain powers to the committees it creates for them to carry out their duties and fulfill their mandates. Committees have no powers other than those delegated to them in this way and cannot assume other powers on their own initiative. The exercise of their powers is subject to three fundamental rules:

1. They can be exercised only on the territory and within the areas of jurisdiction in which the House of Assembly of Newfoundland and Labrador is entitled to legislate;
2. Committees can invoke these powers only within and for the purposes of the mandate that the House has entrusted to them; and
3. Barring specific instructions from the House, Committees are free to decide whether they will exercise the powers granted to them.

Pursuant to Standing Order 65(5), Standing Committees in Newfoundland and Labrador are empowered by the House to:

- Examine and inquire into all such matters as may be referred to them by the House;
- Report from time to time to the House;
- Send for persons, papers and records, except where the House otherwise orders;
- Print from day to day such papers and evidence as may be ordered by them; and
- Delegate to sub-committees all or any of their powers, except the power to report directly to the House.

Subject matter for Committee examinations

The role of parliamentary committees is to examine selected matters in greater depth than is possible by the House, and to report to the House any conclusions of those examinations, including recommendations.

As set out in Standing Order 65(5), the Standing Committees are empowered to examine any matter referred to them by the House.

A Select Committee must work within its mandate as dictated by the order of reference from the House and cannot expand its mandate without further authority from the House.

Sending for persons, papers & records

Pursuant to Standing Order 65(5), Standing Committees are empowered, except where the House otherwise orders, to send for persons, papers and records.

In most instances, persons invited to appear (i.e., witnesses) comply with verbal or written requests from the committee. If a person refuses to appear or does not respond, the committee usually directs that a more insistent invitation be issued. If that person

continues to ignore the committee's request to appear, the committee may adopt a motion to summon the person. This will result in a warrant or summons being served on the person outlining the time and date of the hearing, the subject matter under investigation and signature of the Chair. If the summons is not complied with, the committee may report the matter to the House for decision on any remedial action to be taken. Disobedience to a summons is a very serious matter and may lead to discipline for contempt of the House.

The procedure for obtaining papers and records is similar. In most cases, the documents can be obtained from the relevant person or organization by verbal or written request from the committee. The committee may also adopt a motion to issue a warrant ordering the required person or organization to produce the documents, if they do not comply with the request.

Committee recommendations to House

Recommendations contained in committee reports **only take effect** when they are **adopted by the House**.

When passed by the House, committee recommendations related to the Legislative branch become orders and are binding on the House to be implemented.

Committee recommendations related to entities in the Executive branch can only urge the House to urge the government to take a certain action. Once passed by the House, they are not binding on the entity to be implemented.

Effect of adjournment, prorogation & dissolution

Committees are not affected by the adjournment or prorogation of a session. Dissolution of the assembly (i.e., when a general election has been called) extinguishes all committees and all outstanding committee business.

The House may revive committee business from a previous general assembly by resolution in a new general assembly. However, the new Committee is not bound by the work of the previous Committee.

Committees with a standing order of reference from the House (e.g., the Public Accounts Committee pertaining to audit reports of the Auditor General; the Privileges and Elections Committee on matters pertaining to the Harassment-Free Workplace Policy Applicable to Complaints Against Members) may pass motions directing privileged records related to matters under consideration in accordance with its mandate, be made available to that Committee in a subsequent general assembly. However, it is the future committee's prerogative how it wishes to use those records and whether it wishes to proceed on those matters, in keeping within the committee's mandate.

Privilege

Parliamentary privilege is the sum of rights extended to Members individually and to the House collectively that are necessary for performance of their duties. Further information on privilege can be referenced in the [Members' Parliamentary Guide](#).

Parliamentary privilege **applies to committee proceedings**. Examples include:

- Members are protected by freedom of speech during Committee meetings as they are during sittings of the House; and
- Committees have some of the same collective privileges of the House, such as the authority to order the appearance of and administer oaths to witnesses.

It is a **breach of privilege** for anyone to:

- Publish or make reference to the content of a committee report prior to its tabling in the House; or
- Publish or make reference to in camera proceedings of a committee.

Members may raise points of privilege during committee proceedings, but committees do not have the power to decide questions of privilege. When a breach of privilege related to Committee proceedings is perceived to have occurred, the proper procedure is for a Member to move that the Committee report the matter to the House.

Contempt

Disobedience to the order of a Committee, if those orders are within the scope of the Committee's authority, is a contempt of the House. Further information on contempt can be found in the [Members' Parliamentary Guide](#).

Authority to discipline

Committees **do not have the authority** to discipline Members, witnesses or members of the public for offences committed in meetings or in relation to Committee business. This authority rests with the House.

When an offence occurs, or is alleged to have occurred, a Member of the Committee can move that the matter be reported to the House. If passed, details of the matter are included in the Committee's report to the House, which is tabled by the Chair in the usual manner (see "[Committee Reports](#)"). The House then determines what, if any, discipline to issue when dealing with the Committee's report.

Examples of matters that Committees may report to the House for possible punishment include, but are not limited to:

- Disorderly conduct;

- Witnesses refusing to attend, answer questions or produce documents;
- Perceived breaches of privilege, such as libel by the Chair or Committee members; and/or
- Interference with a Committee's right to meet.

RULES & PROCEDURES IN COMMITTEE

Committee procedure includes all the rules and practices governing the proceedings of committees. The primary sources are:

- the Constitution and the *House of Assembly Act*;
- orders of reference and instructions of the House,
- the Standing Orders; and
- practices and conventions.

During the conduct of committee business, there are times when a question of procedure may arise which is unforeseen and not provided for in the Standing Orders, parliamentary practice or the accepted practices of the committee. Should this occur, the committee must follow Standing Order 1.

There are **notable exceptions** where the **rules of parliamentary procedure differ in committee proceedings**. These include:

- Motions moved in Committee do not require a seconder;
- There is no limit to the number of times a Member may speak to a question;
- The previous question may not be moved in Committee¹; and
- Members may refer to each other by their personal names, rather than district/portfolio.

Proceedings in committee are generally more informal than in the House.

Procedural freedom

Committees are generally “masters of their proceedings”, which refers to the freedom they normally possess to organize their work as they see fit, and the option they have of defining certain rules of procedure that facilitate their proceedings.

These freedoms are not, however, total or absolute. As outlined previously, committees are creatures of the House, meaning they have no independent existence and are not

¹ The “previous question” is a motion “That this question be now put.” A Member may move such a motion during House proceedings in an attempt to end debate on a question and bring it to an immediate vote. Such a motion may not be moved during Committee proceedings, nor during Committee of the Whole House.

permitted to take action unless they have been authorized or empowered to do so by the House.

At all times, directives from procedural sources higher than Committees (statutes, orders of reference and instructions of the House, Standing Orders, et cetera) take precedence over any rules a committee may adopt.

Points of order

A point of order can be raised at any time during a meeting where a member is of the opinion that a Standing Order or a committee rule has been breached, or the member believes that usual practice has not been followed. Points of order **should be raised promptly** before the matter has passed to a stage where the objection would be out of place.

It is the **responsibility of the Chair** to decide whether a point of order has merit. The Chair may make their ruling immediately or permit debate on the point of order. Such debate is to assist the Chair in making their decision and must be strictly relevant to the point of order. The Chair may also reserve a decision to a future date.

Members may interrupt proceedings to raise a point of order, but they cannot use a point of order to move a motion or do anything else that requires prior recognition by the Chair (i.e., having the floor). Points of order may not be raised during votes.

Examples of things **that do not form** the basis for a **valid point of order** during committee proceedings include, but are not limited to:

- Not liking what a Member has said;
- Correcting the record;
- Objecting to the length of time a Member is speaking;
- Providing information or clarifying a previous statement;
- Asking questions; or
- Moving a motion.

Examples of things that **could form** the basis for a **valid point of order** during committee proceedings include, but are not limited to:

- Interrupting another Member, except when raising a point of order;
- Using unparliamentary, abusive, or insulting language;
- Speaking to a question other than the one under discussion;
- Persisting in needless repetition;
- Making allegations against another Member;
- Imputing false or unavowed motives to another Member;
- Charging another Member with uttering a deliberate falsehood;
- Debating a motion to adjourn;

- Lack of quorum; or
- Not complying with a decision of committee regarding its procedures.

Disorder and Misconduct

Disorder and misconduct may arise if there is a failure to abide by the rules and practices of a committee or to respect the authority of the Chair. Disorder and misconduct also include the use of unparliamentary language, failure to yield the floor or persistent interruption of the proceedings in any manner.

It is the **responsibility of the Chair to maintain order** during proceedings. If disorderly conduct occurs, it is generally sufficient to advise all present that disruption of the committee's business will not be tolerated.

If the **disorder is caused by a stranger** [i.e., someone who is a stranger in accordance with Standing Order 22(2)] the Chair may:

- Declare a recess to restore order;
- Ask for a Member to move a motion that the stranger be excluded from the meeting*; or
- Ask for a Member to move a motion to adjourn the meeting*.

*The above two motions may also be moved by committee members on their own initiative.

If the **disorder is caused by a Member of the House of Assembly**, whether part of the committee or not, the Chair may:

- Declare a recess for order to be restored;
- Ask for a Committee member to move a motion to adjourn the meeting (Committee members may also move this on their own initiative); or
- Ask the offending Member to leave.

Neither Committees nor their Chairs have the authority to censure an act of disorder or misconduct. If a committee desires specific sanctions be taken against those disrupting the proceedings, it must report the situation to the House. The House may then take such measures as it deems appropriate (See also "[Authority to discipline](#)").

Manner of Committee meetings

The Standing Orders provide that a committee may meet in a virtual manner or a hybrid of virtual and in-person, whether those meetings are public or in camera. The Chair, in consultation with the committee clerk, will determine the manner of the meeting.

Members are encouraged to follow best practices for participation in virtual meetings, including:

- using a headset with a microphone; and
- using a device with a hardwired connection to the internet.

Members may consult with the Committees, Policy and Communications division for assistance.

Quorum

A quorum is the minimum number of committee members, including the Chair, required to be present for the committee to make decisions. A simple majority of committee members constitutes a quorum.

Members who are **present** at a **Committee meeting** are **only counted as part of the quorum if**:

- they are a member of the Committee designated by the Striking Committee; or
- they are a properly designated substitute (see "[Temporary changes to Committee membership](#)").

If there is **no quorum** at the **scheduled start time**, the Chair **may delay** calling the meeting to order. Typically, the Chair will wait for a brief period as a courtesy to see if a quorum can be established. If a **quorum is lost partway** through a meeting, the Chair **may recess** the meeting until a quorum is again present or announce that the meeting is over and will be rescheduled.

The Chair may delay the start of a meeting for a few minutes as a courtesy until at least one representative from an opposition caucus is present even if a quorum exists. However, committees may meet and adopt motions in the absence of opposition members if a quorum is established.

Recess

A recess is a break in proceedings within a meeting. When business resumes after a recess, it does so as part of the same meeting. This contrasts with an adjournment, which ends the current meeting and holds over business until the next meeting.

The committee may occasionally find it necessary or desirable to recess for a variety of reasons, such as allowing witnesses time to depart after their testimony, considering a ruling or allowing a motion made orally to be printed. In such cases, the Chair simply states that the committee is in recess for a given duration of time. Recording is suspended during recess for public meetings.

Adjournment of meeting

While a motion to adjourn can be made at any point during a meeting, adjournment is also the last item of business on a meeting agenda. When the committee gets to that point, the Chair will ask for a motion to adjourn either to the call of the Chair or the next scheduled meeting date, if applicable.

A committee is not precluded from scheduling an additional meeting should one be necessary prior to the next scheduled meeting in accordance with the adjournment motion.

Standing Committees reviewing Estimates

When Standing Committees meet to review Estimates, the established practice for speaking times is as follows:

Introductory remarks of the minister of the appearing department/agency	15 minutes
Introductory remarks and questions of the first speaker of the Committee	15 minutes
All other speakers	10 minutes

The Committees, Policy and Communications division can provide further information and guidance on the procedure for meetings of Standing Committees reviewing the Estimates, on request.

Conflict of interest

Committee members who believe they have a conflict of interest in a matter before the committee should disclose the general nature of that conflict to the committee and recuse from the meeting without voting, participating in consideration of the matter or attempting to influence the matter in any way. In these circumstances, a committee member may arrange for a substitute.

Members may consult with the Principal Clerk of Committees and/or the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel for advice.

Use of props

The less-formal environment of a committee meeting provides for the use of what might otherwise be considered props by members and witnesses. It is appropriate for the Chair to permit reasonable latitude in the use of props if they are intended to convey information

to the committee in a respectful and unprovocative manner (e.g., displays, illustrations, slide presentations, audio-video, et cetera).

RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHAIR

Each committee must elect one of its members to be the Chair. The following section outlines responsibilities and expectations of the Chair once elected.

Election of the Chair & Vice-Chair

Each committee must meet to elect a Chair once the report of the Striking Committee is adopted by the House. The election of Chair, by motion, is convened and presided over by the Committee clerk (see "[Guide for Election of Chair/Vice-Chair](#)" in Appendix A).

Any committee member may be elected as the Chair, although ministers on committees cannot serve in that role. Traditionally, Chairs of Standing Committee are elected from the Government caucus and the Vice-Chair from the Official Opposition caucus. However, in the case of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, it is a parliamentary convention for the Chair to be elected from the Official Opposition caucus, and the Vice-Chair a private Member of the Government caucus. Following the election of the Chair, the election of Vice-Chair occurs by motion (see Appendix A).

If the committee has other business to conduct at its first meeting, it may decide to continue after the election of Chair. Otherwise, it adjourns to the call of the Chair or the next scheduled meeting date, if applicable.

Responsibilities of the Chair

The following outlines the responsibilities of the Chair **prior to a meeting**:

- Setting a meeting date in consultation with the committee clerk; and
- Drafting the meeting agenda in consultation with the committee clerk.

The following outlines the responsibilities of the Chair **during a meeting**:

- Calling the meeting to order;
- Advancing the business of the committee;
- Recognizing the next member or witness to speak (i.e., identifying the person who has the floor);
- Ensuring that proceedings adhere to established practices and rules;
- Maintaining order (see "[Rules & Procedures in Committee](#)");
- Addressing disorderly conduct in proceedings (see "[Disorder and misconduct](#)");
- Deciding questions of order or procedure on their initiative, or as raised through points of order (See "[Points of order](#)");
- Putting the question on all motions before the committee and announcing the results of all votes;

- Providing instructions to witnesses such as their rights and obligations (see [“Witnesses in Committee”](#));
- Determining the order in which members may pose questions to witnesses, traditionally alternating between Government and Opposition;
- Declaring recesses when necessary; and
- Announcing the meeting’s end when a motion to adjourn is carried.

Other responsibilities of the Chair include:

- Signing official correspondence necessary to carry out the direction or decisions of the committee;
- Signing reports before they are tabled in the House;
- Tabled reports in the House and giving notice of motion to concur in report, where applicable; and
- Acting as the official spokesperson for the committee in the media, in consultation with the Committees, Policy and Communications division.

The Chair **does not**:

- Move motions; or
- Make decisions on behalf of the committee.

Casting vote of the Chair

The practice in this jurisdiction is for committees to make decisions through consensus. However, should a vote occur, the Chair does not vote unless there is a tie between the yeas and nays, in which case the Chair will cast the deciding vote.

In general, when a **committee cannot by majority** decide a question, the Chair has no obligation to decide on the committee’s behalf and should avoid doing so. In exercising a casting vote, the Chair is guided by the same principles as the Speaker in the House, as follows:

- Vote in such a way as to allow for further discussion; or
- Vote to maintain the status quo.

When exercising a casting vote, the Chair may give reasons for the vote but is not required to do so.

Should a circumstance arise requiring a casting vote, the Chair may seek advice and guidance from the committee clerk.

COMMITTEE OPERATIONS

Committees conduct their business during meetings. A meeting in which one or more witnesses appear before the committee may also be called a hearing, but there is no procedural difference between a meeting and a hearing.

Public & in camera meetings

Public committee meetings are open to the media and the public, but they may not participate unless invited to appear before the committee. A committee may also decide to meet in camera, a Latin term meaning “in chamber” that is used to refer to proceedings that occur in private without the presence of the public or the media. Whether a **meeting is public or in camera** is a **decision of the committee**, and the committee does not need to provide reasons or justification for such a decision.

All matters discussed in camera are confidential and, like public meetings, are protected by privilege. Any publication, reference to or release of such proceedings is an offence and may be raised as a question of privilege in the House.

Members who are not members of the committee cannot attend in camera meetings.

Audio & Hansard

Audio of public committee proceedings is streamed live on the House of Assembly website and social media channels and archived on the House of Assembly website. Hansard is prepared and posted to the website once complete (under “[Webcast](#)” and “[Hansard](#)”).

Notice of meetings to Committee members

When a meeting date is determined in consultation with the Chair, the committee clerk coordinates distribution of a meeting notice via email (or calendar invite via email). The notice is sent to committee members and applicable House of Assembly Services employees supporting the committee outlining the date, time, location and other relevant information. While there are no formal rules respecting notice, committee members are notified as soon as possible.

For public meetings, a press release may be issued and the meeting notification will be posted on the House of Assembly website.

Meeting times

Committees have authority to decide when they will meet, typically coordinated by the Chair in consultation with the committee clerk. Except for Standing Committees reviewing the Estimates, committees may meet during the sitting hours of the House. However, this is not a common practice of committees given the logistical and resource implications of supporting both House sittings and committee meetings simultaneously. Committees considering a meeting during the sitting hours of the House should consult with the Committees, Policy and Communications division.

Meetings of Standing Committees reviewing the Estimates are allocated three hours for each head of expenditure. However, should the committee require additional time to examine a head of expenditure, the committee has the right to summon the witnesses (i.e., minister and departmental officials) for a subsequent meeting, subject to the provisions of Standing Orders 71 to 77.

Location of meetings

Committee meetings are typically held in either the House of Assembly Committee Room or the House of Assembly Chamber, both located in Confederation Building Complex – east block. However, meetings may also be conducted by virtual means or in other locations as determined by the committee.

If an order of reference authorizes travel, committees may meet outside of the parliamentary precinct in other suitable locations across the province if they are examining an issue of broad interest. These meetings are still considered committee proceedings and the standard rules, procedures, powers and privileges apply.

Meeting agenda

Each meeting follows an agenda that lists the items of business for the committee's consideration during the meeting (see "[Agenda Template](#)" in Appendix B). The agenda includes the name of the committee and the date, time and location of the meeting. Each agenda includes a call to order by the Chair, an adoption of minutes of previous meetings and an adjournment. Various other items of business may be listed between the adoption of the minutes and adjournment, such as presentations by witnesses, discussions of work plan and scheduling, and new business.

The committee clerk drafts the agenda in consultation with the Chair prior to the meeting and circulates to committee members and other committee support employees. Committee members may request that the agenda be amended to add and/or remove items or change the order in which items are considered prior to the meeting.

The agenda for an in camera meeting is privileged, and as such is not distributed beyond committee members, the committee clerk and other committee support employees.

Planning the Committee's work

Committees have the ability to plan their work as they see fit, within the mandate or order of reference provided by the House. Committees typically schedule a meeting soon after they are established, and periodically thereafter, for the purpose of planning its work (e.g., deciding on subjects to examine, witnesses to invite, et cetera).

It is recommended that committees consider how much they can reasonably expect to complete in the time frame set to carry out the matter under review when planning its work. If the committee agrees to examine multiple subjects, it may wish to establish an order of priority and estimate how many meetings it wishes to set aside for each subject and the witnesses associated with it (see "[Witnesses in Committee](#)"). The committee may also find it useful to review the work plan periodically to determine what it has accomplished, what remains outstanding and whether there is new work to be added. Doing so can help the committee stay organized and keep its examinations focused such that it can complete a thorough, well-considered report to the House. Acting on the work plan in a timely manner is also respectful of persons and organizations invited to appear as witnesses.

Media relations

Media may attend public meetings but are not permitted to interact with committee members during proceedings. Any media attending meetings are subject to the [House of Assembly Press Gallery and Media Guidelines](#). Media interviews may be held after the conclusion of the meeting, coordinated through the committee clerk.

Media inquiries to committees are directed to the Committees, Policy and Communications division, which coordinates a response on behalf of the committee in consultation with the Chair. Other media relations activities (issuing of press releases, planning media availability, press conferences, et cetera) will also be coordinated by the division.

Meeting cancellations

The decision to cancel a meeting depends on whether the previous meeting was adjourned to the call of the Chair or to a specified date. If a meeting was adjourned to the call of the Chair, the decision to cancel is at the Chair's discretion. If adjourned to a specified date, the Chair must consult with committee members before cancelling a meeting.

Once it is determined that the meeting should be cancelled, the Chair must notify the committee clerk so that members and applicable House of Assembly Service employees can be advised. A date to reschedule the meeting may be included in the notice or determined later. The committee clerk will also coordinate distribution of a press release and ensure that notice is posted to the House of Assembly website for cancellation of public meetings.

A closure or delayed opening of provincial government offices does not automatically mean that committee meetings scheduled for that day will be cancelled or delayed. The Legislature is independent of the Executive branch and makes its own decisions in these matters. When inclement weather or other issues may interfere with a scheduled meeting, the committee clerk will consult the Chair for direction.

Travel expenses of members to attend meetings

The Chair and members of a Standing or Select Committee of the House of Assembly may claim for reasonable expenses for attendance at meetings when the House is not in session. Reasonable expenses include transportation, accommodations and meals reimbursed at the rates provided for under the [Members' Resources and Allowances Rules](#).

WITNESSES IN COMMITTEE

A witness is a person or a group appearing before a committee to present views, opinions or information on an issue under study. Witnesses provide the committee with valuable insight, observations and opinions through their participation in the process.

Selection of witnesses

Private individuals, experts, representatives of groups and organizations, public servants and Ministers of the Crown (see below) may be invited to appear before committees to obtain information relevant to the subject under consideration.

The committee decides by majority decision which, if any, witnesses it wants to hear from. This can occur in several ways:

- The committee specifies one or more witnesses by motion;
- The committee directs the committee clerk to suggest a list of potential witnesses on a given subject, then decides on which one(s) to invite; or
- The committee advertises publicly to seek input from interested parties on a given subject.

Persons or organizations may also contact the committee on their own initiative to seek the opportunity to appear and give their views on an issue related to the committee mandate. It is at the committee's discretion to accept or decline such requests.

Committees often specify the individual(s) they wish to appear from the organization or group they want to hear from. On request, a committee can permit the invited witness(es) to bring other individuals from the organization to best address the committee's questions and concerns. All individuals providing testimony and information to a committee are sworn in or affirmed.

Ministers Appearing Before Committees

When Standing Committees review the Estimates in the budget process, ministers responsible for those Estimates appear as witnesses before the committee. Ministers may also be required to appear before committees in other circumstances.

When conducting its follow-up on reports of the Auditor General, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) follows best practice in the Westminster system, inviting the senior civil servant of an audited department or entity – typically the deputy minister. The PAC operates on principles of cross-party collaboration and focuses on policy implementation. The presence of ministers as witnesses can invite a focus on the merits of policy and threaten the nature of the Committee's work.

Scheduling witnesses

The committee clerk schedules the appearance of witnesses at meetings, subject to the committee's direction.

The committee clerk provides general information to witnesses about the process and reason for their appearance (see "[Instructions to Witnesses Template](#)" in Appendix C), along with the time limit specified by the committee for their introductory statement and/or presentation. Additional time may be permitted at the discretion of the committee depending on the agenda for the meeting, other witnesses scheduled to appear, et cetera. The amount of time allowed for questions following witness presentations is determined by the committee prior to a hearing.

In most cases the appearance of witnesses is confirmed in advance of a committee meeting, and the individual names of the persons appearing and/or the organization they represent are typically listed on the agenda, which is released publicly prior to the meeting.

Witness presentations

When witnesses are called during a meeting, the Chair will welcome them and briefly advise on the process established for the meeting. The Chair will also ask witnesses to introduce themselves for the purpose of committee members, the live audio stream and Hansard.

Once this is complete, witnesses can proceed with their introductory remarks or presentation, followed by questions from the committee. They may submit copies of their remarks or other relevant documents but are not required to do so. Arrangements can be made through the committee clerk if a witness wants to make a presentation through PowerPoint or other means. Witness presentations and any other documents provided may become part of the official public record at the committee's discretion.

If it is apparent that witnesses will run out of time prior to completing their presentation, the Chair may intervene to advise that time is running out and ask for a summary of the presentation. It is important that the Chair follows the agreed-upon time for witness presentations and subsequent questions from Committee members.

Should witnesses not be able to appear in person, the committee may permit them to appear via other means (e.g., teleconference, videoconference, et cetera).

Legal counsel for witnesses

Most witnesses appear without legal counsel, but may ask the permission of the committee to do so. Generally, when committees permit legal counsel to appear with witnesses in committee proceedings, they are allowed to act in an advisory capacity only.

They do not have the right to examine or cross-examine witnesses, or to make submissions on behalf of their clients.

Questions to witnesses

Committees are not restricted in the scope of questions they can pose to witnesses, provided they are acting within an order of reference from the House or a subject of examination as determined by majority decision. Questions should also be expressed in respectful language, not attempt to intimidate or offend a witness, not be hypothetical or based on conjecture and not be repetitive.

A committee may direct the committee clerk and support employees to prepare suggested questions prior to a meeting. It is common practice for a committee to meet prior to the appearance of witnesses to discuss questions, the questioning process and its goals for the meeting in general.

Summoning of witnesses

Most witnesses appear before a committee upon invitation, which is issued on behalf of the committee through the committee clerk. Committees rarely use their power to summon people, but they may decide by motion to do so should a witness refuse an invitation. While the committee can do this without first issuing a simple invitation, in practice such an approach is not normally used (see "[Sending for persons, papers & records](#)"). The Principal Clerk of Committees can provide advice in such circumstances.

Rights of witnesses

Witnesses appearing before Standing or Select Committees of the House of Assembly are entitled to the same rights granted to Members of the House respecting parliamentary privilege. This includes freedom of speech. Anything said by a witness during an appearance before a Standing or Select Committee cannot be used against the witness in a civil proceeding.

Swearing-in of witnesses

Witnesses appearing before committees may be sworn in or affirmed at the discretion of the Chair.

Witnesses are required to tell the truth in their testimony, whether they are sworn-in or not. Witnesses giving false testimony may be charged with perjury by the House even if they did not swear an oath or affirmation prior to giving testimony.

Oaths and affirmations are administered by the committee clerk (see "[Form for Oath/Affirmation of Witnesses](#)" in Appendix D).

Expenses for witnesses

Witnesses who request to be heard by a committee are responsible for their own travel and related costs. Witnesses who appear at the invitation or summons of a committee may be reimbursed for travel and incidental expenses. Should witnesses choose to obtain legal counsel, it is at their own expense.

The Clerk of the House of Assembly is authorized to pay a reasonable sum (per diem) during their travel and attendance, and a reasonable allowance for travelling expenses, to be determined by the Speaker.

COMMITTEE DECISIONS

Committee decisions are made according to the majority of votes on a question. The committee may attempt to come to a consensus on a decision through discussion, but majority vote always determines the final outcome. Should a vote occur, the Chair does not vote unless there is a tie between the yeas and nays, in which case the Chair will cast the deciding vote (see [“Casting vote of the Chair”](#)).

Motions

A motion is a proposal that a committee do something or call for something to be done. Motions put forward in committee proceedings follow the same rules as the House, except they do not require notice and a seconder.

The Chair may rule a motion out of order if it does not comply with the above.

Withdrawing a motion

A Member who has made a motion may withdraw it only with unanimous consent of the Committee. Once a motion is made, it forms a question which belongs to the committee, not the mover.

Decisions made during meetings

Committee decisions must be made during formal meetings, allowing members the full opportunity to debate and express their preference. Committee decisions may not be made during other informal gatherings, regardless of whether most or all the committee’s members are present.

Following a meeting, the committee clerk will distribute the draft minutes, which will indicate any action items to committee members, who may advise if there are any errors or omissions. Otherwise, the committee clerk will proceed with actioning the items listed.

Committee correspondence

Decisions made by committees may necessitate correspondence to individuals or organizations. The usual procedure in these cases is for the committee clerk to draft such correspondence and provide it to the Chair for approval. The approved correspondence is in the Chair’s name, including signature, on behalf of the committee.

Any correspondence received by the committee is distributed to committee members by the committee clerk. All correspondence sent or received is kept in the Committee’s sessional records, which are held by the Principal Clerk of Committees.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

The committee report is the official record of a committee's proceedings, and the power to report its findings to the House is essential to a committee's role. The Standing Orders provide Committees with the power to report as often as they see fit, unless otherwise ordered by the House. A Standing Committee ordered to examine a particular matter by the House may be instructed to do so according to a specific deadline. This may also be the case for a Select Committee established by an order of the House.

Committee reports can only be tabled during House sittings.

Majority opinion

Unanimity among committee members is not required for a report. However, the conclusions and recommendations agreed to by the majority are those of the committee. Should minority opinion need to be reflected in a report, the committee clerk will provide advice at that time.

Drafting of reports

Committee reports are drafted by the committee clerk, subject to suggestions and recommendations by committee members. The draft report is provided for consideration during an in camera meeting. By majority decision, the Committee may instruct the committee clerk to amend, add to, omit, redraft or otherwise alter the draft report until it is in a final form acceptable to the committee.

Contents of reports

Reports to the House can be in a variety of formats depending on the subject matter under consideration and the conclusions and/or recommendations of the committee. Reports typically summarize the activities of the committee since it last reported to the House, and may include the following information:

- Order of reference from the House, if applicable, under which a study was made;
- Regular and substitute members of the committee, and any membership changes during the reporting period;
- Subjects examined and the committee's views on them;
- Witnesses who appeared before the committee;
- Number and purpose of meetings held;
- Decisions made by the committee;
- Committee's recommendations, if any, to the House;
- Appendices, including witnesses heard and briefs submitted on a particular subject; and

- Other information the committee deems pertinent.

Reports **cannot contain recommendations** calling for the **expenditure of public funds**.

It is a **breach of privilege** for anyone to **publish or refer to the content of a committee report before** it has been **presented to the House**. Members should avoid expressing predictions or promises of what a report will say when a matter is under consideration by a committee and it has not yet reported to the House.

Tabling of a committee report

Committee reports are **tabled in the House** under the daily routine proceeding **Reports by Standing and Select Committees**. It is typically the Chair who presents the report, but it can be done by any member of the committee. Regardless of who presents the report, it must always have the signature of the committee member tabling the report. Once a report is tabled and distributed to all Members, it will be available publicly on the House of Assembly website (under [Tabled Documents](#) and on the Standing Committee's dedicated webpage).

If a report **requires a motion** of the House **to concur in the report and/or its recommendations**, that motion must be moved by the committee Chair during **Notices of Motion**. When the motion is called, the Chair opens debate by giving the House information on the committee's activities, as well as its opinions, recommendations and conclusions. The motion for adoption of the report is debatable and any Member, whether part of the committee or not, may speak to it.

The House can also reject the adoption of the report by defeating the motion for adoption. Until the **House makes a decision on the adoption of a committee report**, the report **cannot be considered final** because it may be rejected, amended, referred back to the committee or referred to a committee of the Whole House for further debate.

If a committee report has been tabled but not concurred in prior to dissolution of the general assembly, the report and its recommendations die. It can be revived in a subsequent general assembly by resolution adopted by the House.

SUPPORTS FOR COMMITTEES

Operating under the direction of the Principal Clerk of Committees, the Committees, Policy and Communications division has a mandate to manage and provide all parliamentary and administrative support to enable Standing and Select Committees of the House of Assembly to fulfill their mandates. Employees of the Committees, Policy and Communications division are non-partisan and subject to the [Code of Conduct for Employees](#) of the House of Assembly Service.

Committee clerk

The committee clerk is the chief procedural and administrative advisor to both the Chair and the committee, carrying out these duties and responsibilities in consultation with the Chair and at the direction of the committee. The committee clerk also serves as the liaison between the public and the committee. The Principal Clerk of Committees is typically the committee clerk, unless that role is delegated to another table officer or employee of the Committees, Policy and Communications division.

The committee clerk does not issue rulings on matters of order as that is the responsibility of the Chair, but may be consulted for advice on the operation, procedural rules or mandate of the committee. They also advise witnesses of any requirements the committee may have, and distribute correspondence at the direction of the committee, on behalf of the Chair.

Committee analyst

A committee analyst is assigned to each committee to provide administrative, procedural and research support. Under the direction of the Principal Clerk of Committees (or committee clerk), the committee analyst is responsible for scheduling meetings, preparing briefing materials and conducting research related to matters under consideration.

Research

Committees may request that non-partisan research be undertaken and provided by the House of Assembly Service, provided the subject is within the committee's order of reference. This support is provided by, or delegated to, other areas of the House of Assembly Service by the Committees, Policy and Communications division.

Examples of research committees may request include:

- Gathering of information on issues brought forward by witnesses;
- Legal research and advice by the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel;
- Jurisdictional summaries related to a subject before the committee; and

- Gathering of information or statistics from provincial offices and external agencies.

Caucus support staff

It is the practice that committee members may be accompanied by caucus staff to provide assistance and support during public meetings of Standing Committees reviewing the Estimates, but they may not participate. Caucus support staff are **not permitted** to attend **in camera meetings**.

Expert assistance

A committee may retain the services of an expert to assist and provide advice on its work, if it is deemed necessary and if permission to incur the associated cost is included in the order of reference. Procedural and research support provided by the Committees, Policy and Communications division is typically sufficient for the committee's operations.

Travel & other costs

Should it be determined that a committee requires additional resources, it must be addressed in the order of reference and/or a subsequent resolution of the House. These might include:

- Travel and other related costs to conduct meetings in locations other than the parliamentary precinct;
- Costs to retain the services of expert witnesses; or
- Extraordinary technological requirements.



APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Guide for Election of Chair/Vice-Chair

Clerk: This is the [INSERT NAME] Committee. The first order of business is the election of the Chair.

Are there any nominations from the floor?

Committee members: I nominate the Member for [INSERT DISTRICT NAME]

Clerk: Are there any further nominations from the floor?

Are there any further nominations from the floor?

[Call for nominations is **repeated three times in total**]

Clerk: Hearing no further nominations, the Member for [INSERT DISTRICT NAME] is acclaimed Chair.* [INSERT NAME OF CHAIR] would you please take the chair.

[**If vote is required** - if multiple nominees, they are voted on individually in order of their nomination]

Clerk: All those in favour [allow voice vote].

All those against [allow voice vote].

The Member for [INSERT DISTRICT NAME] is elected Chair.

[Chair takes over presiding meeting. If election of Vice-Chair is next order of business, proceed as follows.]

Chair: The next order of business is to call for nominations for a vice-chair. Are there any nominations from the floor?

Committee members: I nominate the Member for [INSERT DISTRICT NAME].

Chair: Are there any further nominations from the floor?

Are there any further nominations from the floor?

[Call for nominations is **repeated three times in total**]

Chair: Hearing no further nominations, the Member for [INSERT DISTRICT NAME] is acclaimed vice-chair of the Committee.

[If vote is required - if multiple nominees, they are voted on individually in order of their nomination]

Chair: All those in favour [allow voice vote].

All those against [allow voice vote].

The Member for [INSERT DISTRICT NAME] is elected Chair.

APPENDIX B

Agenda Template



**House of Assembly
Newfoundland and Labrador**

Agenda

[Name of Committee]

Meeting #

Date: [Month Day, Year]

Location: [Room], [Block], Confederation Building (or via videoconference, as applicable)

Time: [Time a.m./p.m.]

1. Call to Order.
2. Approval of the Minutes of [Month Day, Year].
3. Recurring business:
 - a. Insert descriptions.
4. New Business:
 - a. Insert descriptions.
5. Adjournment.
6. Next meeting: [if applicable].

APPENDIX C
Instructions to Witnesses
Template

Thank you for your interest in appearing before the House of Assembly [INSERT COMMITTEE NAME] on [INSERT SUBJECT MATTER]. Please note the following information with respect to your appearance before the Committee:

Location/Time:

You are scheduled to appear before the Committee at [INSERT DATE/TIME]. The hearing will take place in the [INSERT LOCATION, ADDRESS]

Visitor parking is available in the parking lot adjacent to the main/front entrance of the East Block (directly off Prince Phillip Drive). **Access to Confederation Building Complex** is also available via the main/front entrance (directly off Prince Phillip Drive).

Please allow **sufficient time to register with Security** prior to your scheduled appearance time (approximately 15 minutes).

Presentation/Documents:

If your submission includes a PowerPoint presentation or other documents, please provide:

- **twelve (12) paper copies of each document;** and
- an electronic version of the **PowerPoint** (if you are using one) **by email** no later than [INSERT DEADLINE].

Please note your testimony will be part of the official public record of the Committee, and will be published in the Hansard transcripts of the Committee. The audio of Committee proceedings will be available through a livestream, and a recording of it will also be publicly available via the House of Assembly website. Other documents you provide may also become part of the official public record of the Committee.

Your Rights & Responsibilities (Parliamentary Privilege):

As a witness providing testimony to a Committee of the House of Assembly you are entitled to the same rights granted to Members of the House of Assembly. You may speak freely, and nothing you say may be used against you in civil proceedings.

Media

Members of the media may attend the Committee meeting, and may ask to interview you following your appearance before the Committee. This is at your discretion. The interview must take place in the designated scum area (just outside the main doors to the Chamber). You should note that what you say in a media interview is not protected by parliamentary privilege in the same way as what you say in your testimony before the Committee, even if it is the same information.

APPENDIX D
Form for Oath/Affirmation of
Witnesses

Affirmation:

I, [INSERT NAME], do solemnly, sincerely and truly affirm and declare that the evidence that I shall give on this examination shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Oath:

I, [INSERT NAME], do solemnly swear that the evidence that I shall give on this examination shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God.



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