

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA



Fact Sheet No. 5 HOW STANDING COMMITTEES OPERATE

After receiving First and Second Reading, a Bill goes before a Standing or Special Committee, or before a Committee of the Whole House for consideration. It is during this third stage, the Committee Stage, that the content of a Bill is reviewed in detail.

As well as Bills, Committees may consider Annual Reports. During the consideration of Bills, Committees may call witnesses and obtain expert advice. Committees may only examine matters referred to them, and must report their findings back to the House.

Public participation is allowed during the Committee stage of a Bill. Citizens interested in presenting information relating to a particular Bill, or speaking for or against it, may register on a "presenters list" by contacting the Office of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly.

HOW ARE STANDING COMMITTEES SELECTED?

At the start of the first session of each Legislature, a Special Committee of seven Members submits a report recommending the proportional representation of Members by party to serve on the various Committees. On adoption of the Report, the Committees are established.

ARE SUBSTITUTIONS ALLOWED?

At the start of each committee meeting, the Whip or the Whip's designate must provide in writing to the Committee Clerk the membership list of Members to serve on the committee for that particular meeting. Changes can also be made during the meeting by the Whip or Whip's designate providing written notification to the Chairperson.

WHO PRESIDES OVER THE MEETINGS?

Every committee has a Chairperson. At the first meeting of a Committee, the first order of business is the election of a Chairperson.

THE CHAIRPERSON'S ROLE

The Chairperson maintains order and decides all questions of order, subject to an appeal to the Committee.

CAN THE CHAIRPERSON VOTE?

Only when votes are tied, can a Chairperson cast the deciding vote.

MEETING LOCATION AND TIME

Committee meetings are usually held at the Legislative Building. There have been a number of occasions in the past, however, where meetings have been held in rural areas.

WHO CALLS THE MEETINGS?

After consulting with the Opposition House Leader, the Government House Leader schedules the meetings after the Bill receives Second Reading.

REGISTRATION TO MAKE A PRESENTATION

Members of the public may speak on a Bill at this stage. To do so, they must register with the Office of the Clerk, (204) 945-3636, but only after the Bill has received First Reading. Required registration information includes: the presenter's name, address, home phone number, work phone number, whether or not the presenter is a private citizen or is speaking on behalf of an organization - which organization - as well as the name and number of the Bill.

OUT OF TOWN PRESENTERS

Upon arrival, out of town presenters should notify the Committee Clerk or Chairperson that they are from out of town. The Chairperson will usually request that the Committee decide whether or not to hear from out of town presenters first.

NOTICE OF MEETING

There is no way of knowing how far in advance a Committee meeting will be scheduled. However, two-days notice must be given in the House of the first meeting of a Standing or Special Committee considering the Bill, if presenters are registered to speak when the meeting is set.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Presenters are placed on a "list of presenters," in order of registration. Once the Government House Leader has called a meeting, presenters are contacted by staff in the Office of the Clerk as soon as possible and informed of the meeting's date, time and location.

WHAT IF A PRESENTER IS NOT PRESENT WHEN HIS/HER NAME IS CALLED?

Except by unanimous consent, the names of absent presenters' are dropped to the end of the list. If the presenter is absent when called a second time, that name is removed from the list.

TIME LIMITS

Each presenter is allowed a maximum of 10 minutes to make a presentation, and an additional 5 minutes to respond to questions from Members of the Committee. As an exception, the Chairperson may, with the unanimous consent of the Committee, allow a presenter who has spoken for 10 minutes more time to present and to respond to questions.

20 COPIES OF WRITTEN MATERIALS

Should you wish to offer a written version of your submission to accompany your oral presentation (optional), we request that you provide us with 20 copies of that material.

CAN I SEND A WRITTEN SUBMISSION INSTEAD OF MAKING A PRESENTATION?

If you cannot attend the meeting you may send a written submission on a Bill to:

Clerk of Committees
Room 251 – 450 Broadway
Winnipeg MB
R3C 0V8

You may also fax your submission to (204) 945-0038, or send it by email to committees@leg.gov.mb.ca.

It should be noted that in order for a written presentation to be included in the Committee Hansard, consent from the Committee must be granted. Also, written submissions must be received before the Committee considering the Bill concludes its deliberations so that it may be provided to Committee Members.

VIEWING PROCEEDINGS

The public may watch the proceedings of a Committee meeting in Rooms 254 and/or 255 of the Legislative Building. Both rooms are wheelchair accessible.

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Presenters may access committee manuscripts on line by accessing the assembly website at <http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/index.html> or by viewing copies at the Legislative Library.

OPINIONS

Registration alone does not indicate whether a presenter approves or disapproves of a proposed Bill.

Once a Committee considers a Bill, the Chairperson reports all findings to the House. This is followed by the Report Stage, Concurrence and Third Reading, and Royal Assent.

Please see Fact Sheet No. 4: "*How Laws are Made*", for further details.