

Guidelines for virtual hybrid proceedings

This document has been prepared as a companion to the proposed rule changes in Chapter 22: Virtual Hybrid Proceedings, which would enable the Legislative Assembly to meet with members present in the House and participating from remote locations.

Throughout these guidelines, members participating from a remote location will be referred to as “virtual members”. The Table Officer responsible for monitoring the virtual platform will be referred to as the “moderator”.

Key guidelines:

- *In order to be counted as part of quorum, vote, and move/second motions, virtual members must have their video function enabled and be on screen.*
- *Microphones should be muted at all times, unless virtual members have been recognized by the Speaker or have been called on to vote during a recorded division.*
- *While present on screen, virtual members are participating in proceedings as if they were in the Chamber.*
- *The Speaker may use discretion to accommodate virtual members experiencing technical issues.*

Procedural guidelines:

1) Participation

Virtual hybrid proceedings will be carried out using a hybrid model, with a combination of members present in the Chamber and participating virtually, recommended that at least 10 members required to be present in the Chamber to achieve quorum in person. The Speaker, in consultation with the House leaders (and independent members, if any), will determine the maximum number of members recommended to be physically present in the Chamber during virtual hybrid proceedings.

House Leaders shall advise the Office of the Clerk their caucus planned attendance in advance of each sitting week (attendance for members in-person and virtual members may vary week to week).

2) Quorum

Virtual members will be counted towards quorum for the purpose of the virtual hybrid proceedings. The number of members participating in-person and virtually may vary depending on the instances for which virtual hybrid proceedings have been invoked; however, it is recommended that at least 10 members required to be present in the Chamber to achieve quorum in person, in the event that a major technological issue arises.

3) Decorum

- The use of props/exhibits/slogans are not permitted for virtual members, including those that are displayed in background shots.
- Eating or taking telephone calls while visible on screen is not permitted.
- Members may not unmute to heckle.

Members are reminded that the attire for all members (those participating in person or virtually) remains business attire, that is, a jacket and tie for male members and the equivalent level of formality for female members.

4) Points of order/privilege

- Virtual members wishing to raise a point of order or matter of privilege may do so by signifying their intention in the chat function of the platform to the moderator.
- If more than one point of privilege or matter of privilege is raised simultaneously, the time stamp in the chat will be used to determine who indicated first.

5) Discipline

The procedures outlined in Rule 38 of the *Rules of the Legislative Assembly*, if a member is named by the Speaker, will apply. If a virtual member is suspended from the services of the House, the virtual member will be ejected from the virtual platform by the moderator.

6) Admission of strangers

Other than virtual members, there may be times where strangers are admitted to the virtual hybrid proceedings to assist the promoter of a bill or a minister. For members and ministers (participating in person or virtually) who require the assistance of a stranger, their staff must inform the Office of the Clerk of their participating at least 2 hours prior to the start of the sitting day, and include their electronic contact information.

For committee proceedings, the committee clerk will coordinate with the presenters.

7) Voting

- As soon as a question is put by the Chair (ie., when the question is decided by an audible “yea” or “nay”), virtual members will participate by clearly displaying either a blank white card for “yea”, or a black “x” upon a white card for “nay” (provided to virtual members by the Office of the Clerk).
- Should a virtual member wish to request a recorded division, the virtual member should do so in the chat function of the platform to the moderator.
- When a recorded division has been requested, all Members will cast their vote verbally, by indicating “I vote yea” or “I vote nay”. As described in the rules, the roll call will begin with members present in the Chamber, in the normal order that is used now. The vote will then proceed to virtual members, in alphabetical order, by district.
- During Committee of the Whole House, recorded divisions are not permitted; however, if necessary to determine decision of the Committee of the Whole House, the Chair may request that members present in the Chamber raise their hands at the appropriate time to indicate if they are voting “yea” or “nay”, and virtual members will participate by clearly displaying either a blank white card for “yea”, or a black “x” upon a white card for “nay”.

8) Presenting documents in the Chamber

- Additional rules observed during virtual hybrid House proceedings includes a provision for virtual members to participate in tabling documents, presenting petitions and introducing reports.
- The rule requires that documents are sent electronically to the Clerk prior to the intervention during House proceedings. This ensures that when virtual members present documents in the House, the documents are available if requested by other members, the media, or the public.
- Additional guidelines will be drafted regarding timelines for receiving these documents. Following the guidelines will help ensure that the proceedings run as efficiently as possible; however, it's important to note that virtual members will still be able to present documents if something should arise during the Ordinary Daily Routine.
- In these instances where virtual members would like to present a document after the start of the sitting, virtual members will coordinate with the moderator, who will confirm receipt.
- Once receipt has been confirmed by the moderator, the virtual member may present the document during the appropriate time.

Technical Guidelines

9) Video-conferencing tips

- A quiet location with sufficient lighting is ideal (avoid too much lighting from behind; for example, sitting in front of a window or lamp).
- A neutral backdrop is required. A background should ideally be a wall without personal photos, decorations or memorabilia. Virtual backgrounds are not permitted for technical reasons.
- On screen image should be of virtual members head and shoulders, with looking directly at the camera from a seated position (virtual members may remain seated while speaking).
- To ensure the best possible video quality and internet connection, it is strongly recommended to use Assembly provided equipment (laptop, camera, and headset). Devices should be placed on a stationary surface to ensure best video quality.
- To ensure the best connection to the meeting when joining from a private residence, please ensure members of the household avoid the use of other broadband intensive apps or programs during the meeting times.

10) Audio and video functions

- In order to be counted as part of quorum, vote, and move/second motions, virtual members must have their video function enabled and be on screen.
- While present on screen, virtual members are participating in proceedings as if they were in the Chamber.
- Microphones should be muted at all times, unless virtual members have been recognized to speaker.
- Once virtual members have completed their remarks, microphones should be muted; the moderator will be monitoring the microphones and will be able to mute any microphones that are not on mute, but assistance from virtual members on this matter is very helpful.

- If you must step away from the device, virtual members may disable the video function. This is the same as leaving the Chamber in person.
- Please do not log out of the meeting. If a virtual member logs off from the meeting, please contact the moderator.

11) Signing in

- In advance of every House sitting, the moderator will send a meeting invitation to all virtual members.
- To join the call, virtual members click the link to the meeting invitation.
- Please join the meeting at least 30 minutes before the start of the sitting. This will allow time to troubleshoot any technical issues.

Additional procedural guidance for House and committee virtual hybrid proceedings and contact information

If virtual hybrid proceedings are invoked, the Office of the Clerk will provide additional detailed guidelines in relation to the Ordinary Daily Routine and the Order of Business; this may include guidelines around speaking lists, distribution of documents, and providing electronic files for the purposes of presenting documents to the House. This will ensure that the business of the House will run as efficiently as possible during the virtual hybrid proceedings. Priority use of House resources for meetings shall be established by an agreement of the House Leaders for virtual hybrid committee meetings.

Additional contact information will be provided for the host moderator in the Chamber and technical assistance.