



FACT SHEET

Virtual Committee Meetings

A motion was adopted by the House of Commons on March 24, 2020, authorizing, during the period the House stands adjourned, the Chair of the Standing Committee on Health (HESA) and the Chair of the Standing Committee on Finance (FINA) to convene meetings via videoconferencing or teleconferencing for the sole purpose of receiving evidence concerning matters related to the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, provided that, for greater certainty, each committee may receive evidence which may otherwise exceed the committee's mandate under Standing Order 108(2). The full text of the motion can be found [here](#).

While the House of Commons has previously had witnesses testify before committees remotely, this will be the first time that Members of Parliament will also be participating remotely in order to hear witnesses.

How will the media and the public be made aware of the details of the meetings?

Committees will continue to follow their normal practice of publishing notices of meetings on ourcommons.ca and sending information via the [@HoCCommittees](https://twitter.com/HoCCommittees) Twitter account. The proceedings will be broadcast via ourcommons.ca using the regular [ParlVU](#) system. Blues of the meetings will be available in the usual way and, when available, the evidence of public meetings will also continue to be posted to the website of each committee.

How will the meetings take place?

The motion adopted by the House allows for committee members to attend and witnesses to participate by either teleconference or videoconference. Meetings scheduled for the week of March 30, 2020, are expected to take place via audio teleconference (audio only via ourcommons.ca). The House is currently testing a videoconferencing system that will allow committee members to attend and witnesses to participate via video. It is anticipated this system will be in place next week and the video of these meetings will be available via ourcommons.ca.

Other parliaments and legislatures are already using videoconferencing systems for their proceedings.

The House of Commons has additional requirements including, and most importantly, the need to ensure that the solutions fully support simultaneous interpretation, so that Members of Parliament and Canadians can follow the proceedings in the official language of their choice. While committees regularly hear from witnesses via videoconference, this is the first time the House has permitted Members of Parliament to participate in committee proceedings in this manner.

Can the media and the public attend meetings in person?

No. The meeting is taking place online and, therefore, the only way to attend is to watch via ourcommons.ca. The House of Commons is following the recommendations of public health officials in relation to physical distancing, so only a small number of staff will be on-site to support the virtual meeting.

How can the media and the public access the meeting?

Meetings will continue to be available live on ourcommons.ca. Teleconference meetings will be available by audio only and the videoconference meetings will be webcast. Recordings of the meetings will also continue to be available on ourcommons.ca after the meeting has concluded.

Could other committees also meet via teleconference or videoconference?

Under the terms of the motion adopted by the House, only the two named committees, HESA and FINA, can meet by teleconference or videoconference.

Updates every two weeks to FINA

Section (i) of the motion adopted by the House includes additional provisions for FINA, specifically, updates every two weeks and a mechanism to report to the House:

- (i) starting the week of March 30, 2020, the Minister of Finance or his delegate shall provide the Standing Committee on Finance with a bi-weekly report on all actions undertaken pursuant to parts 3, 8 and 19 of the COVID-19 Emergency Response Act and shall appear before the committee to discuss the report, provided that, until April 20, 2020, or any date to which the adjournment period is extended pursuant to paragraph (f), if the committee is not satisfied with how the government is exercising its powers under the act, it may adopt a motion during a meeting by videoconference or teleconference to report this to the House by depositing a report with the Clerk of the House which shall be deemed to have been duly presented to the House on that day;

For more information:

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