











## FACT SHEET

### Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic (COVI)

A motion was adopted by the House of Commons on [April 20, 2020](#), establishing a [Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic \(COVI\)](#). A subsequent motion was adopted by the House of Commons on [May 26, 2020](#), extending the Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic until Thursday, June 18, 2020. The motion also states the following :

- The House is adjourned until Wednesday, June 17. The House can also be recalled earlier by the Speaker after consultation with the Government.
- The [Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) will continue to be composed of all Members of the House and will meet at noon every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday until June 18, 2020.
- **The Special Committee will meet in the Chamber and Members may participate either in person or by videoconference. (These will be hybrid meetings.)**
- The Speaker remains the chair of the Special Committee, which will meet to:
  - consider ministerial announcements,
  - allow Members to present petitions,
  - allow Members to make statements, and
  - question ministers of the Crown, including the Prime Minister, in respect of the COVID-19 pandemic and other matters.
- Quorum for the Special Committee is seven Members.

#### Schedule, as of May 27, 2020:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Format:  HYBRID	Format:  HYBRID	Format:  HYBRID	Format:  HYBRID	
Duration:  2 hours approx.	Duration:  2 hours approx.	Duration:  2 hours approx.	Duration:  2 hours approx.	

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

Notices of meetings of the Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic will be published on [ourcommons.ca](https://ourcommons.ca) and disseminated through the [@HoCCommittees](https://twitter.com/HoCCommittees) Twitter account. The proceedings will be broadcast on ourcommons.ca via the regular [ParIVU](#) system, and will also be available on the Parliamentary Television Network, as well as via CPAC, the Cable Public Affairs Channel. Blues of the meetings will be completed within two hours of the meeting ending and, when available, the evidence presented at public meetings will also continue to be posted in the [committees section](#) of ourcommons.ca.

### **How will the meetings take place?**

The meetings will take place in the House of Commons Chamber, in West Block, and Members may participate either in person or by videoconference (hybrid). There will be two screens installed on either side of the Speaker's Chair.

### **Who will be supporting the Speaker as chair of the Special Committee?**

The Clerk of the House of Commons is also the Clerk of the Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic, and he will be working closely with Table Officers and other staff from the House Administration to support the activities of the Special Committee.

### **Can the Deputy Speakers fill in as chair of the Special Committee?**

Yes.

### **What technology will the House of Commons be using for the hybrid meetings of the Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic?**

The House of Commons Administration, at the request of the Speaker, has made arrangements to allow Members to participate in the proceedings of the Special Committee in one of two ways: either in person in the Chamber or remotely via videoconference. Members participating in the proceedings maintain their usual privileges.

For Members in the Chamber, the experience is very much as it was before. Once recognized by the Chair, they simply rise to speak, and they can use their earpieces to access simultaneous interpretation. One noticeable difference is the addition of large screens on either side of the Speaker's Chair, where Members participating by videoconference can be seen when they speak.

Members participating remotely may access the proceedings by logging into the House videoconferencing platform with their account and House of Commons-issued device.

The House has existing solutions for simultaneous interpretation, closed captioning in both official languages, as well as streaming and broadcasting of the proceedings. In order to accommodate the videoconferencing requirement of COVI virtual meetings, the House Administration has adapted available technologies and integrated the Zoom platform. This version of Zoom differs from the free and paid consumer versions in that it enables the Administration to manage and configure the technology

and impose security controls. The House Administration has close working relationships with other legislatures and is continuing to liaise with its counterparts throughout this unprecedented time.

It is also working closely with national and international security partners and leaders in the technology industry to ensure that all appropriate security measures are in place, in keeping with existing threat-management protocols. The House Administration continues to be poised to adapt and refine the experience as required and at the direction of the House.

### **Who are the members of the Special Committee?**

The Special Committee is composed of all Members of the House of Commons. The House of Commons' Digital Services team is working with individual Members to ensure that they each have suitable technological equipment. Where there are connectivity challenges in remote locations, Digital Services is working with Members and partners to find alternative solutions.

### **Are meetings of the Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic considered a House sitting or a committee meeting?**

The meetings of the Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic are committee meetings. All Members of the House are members of this committee. While the meetings take place in the House of Commons Chamber, the Mace will not be present as the meeting is not a sitting of the House or a Committee of the Whole. Likewise, the Speaker's Parade will not take place before the hybrid meetings of the Special Committee.

### **How does the Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic differ from a virtual Parliament?**

Meetings of the Special Committee are focused on a few specific rubrics and do not include every component of a sitting day or week. As part of the motion adopted by the House on April 11, 2020, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs (PROC) studied ways in which Members can fulfill their parliamentary duties while the House stands adjourned on account of public health concerns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, including the temporary modification of certain procedures, sittings in alternate locations, and the implementation of technological solutions such as a virtual Parliament. Before proceeding with alternate sitting arrangements, all parties would need to be in agreement. Procedural and legal implications would need to be considered in the selection of any approach. PROC presented its report [Parliamentary Duties and the Covid-19 Pandemic](#) to the House on May 15, 2020.

As part of the motion adopted by the House on May 26, 2020, PROC has been instructed to review ways of modifying the *Standing Orders* for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic as part of an incremental approach—beginning with hybrid sittings of the House as outlined by [the report](#) provided to the committee by the Speaker on Monday, May 11, 2020, and including how to enact remote voting—and to make recommendations by presenting a report no later than Tuesday, June 23, 2020.

### **Will the Special Committee follow committee or Chamber rules?**

The Special Committee will follow the provisions of the orders made by the House on April 20 and May 26, 2020.

## **Can the media and the public attend meetings in person?**

Members of the Parliamentary Press Gallery will be able to watch the proceedings via the House of Commons website or attend meetings in person. Public health guidance and physical distancing directives must be followed for the meetings that take place in the Chamber. Public access to the House of Commons precinct is currently [closed to visitors](#).

The public is encouraged to watch the meetings of the Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic via the House of Commons website or via CPAC broadcasts.

## **How many House of Commons Administration employees will be on site to support the meetings of the Special Committee?**

For the hybrid meetings, it is anticipated that there will be approximately 55 House Administration and Translation Bureau (PSPC) employees on site. This includes employees working in procedure, digital services and operations. It is likely that slightly more IT specialists will be required on site to support the initial hybrid meetings of the Special Committee. Employees are kept informed of public health recommendations, including physical distancing requirements. They also have access to disposable face masks if they wish to take this additional precautionary step.

### **You may be interested in:**

- [Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- [Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs](#) study on virtual sittings of the House
- Briefs submitted by the Speaker to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs:
  - [May 13, 2020](#)
  - [May 11, 2020](#)
- [Letter](#) from the Speaker to the Government House Leader on virtual sittings of the House

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### **For more information:**

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