



FACT SHEET

Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic (COVI)

A motion was adopted by the House of Commons on [April 20, 2020](#):

- The House is adjourned until Monday, May 25, unless there is agreement from the four House Leaders to remain adjourned to a later date. The House can also be recalled earlier by the Speaker after consultation with the Government.
- Starting on April 29, a [Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) composed of all Members of the House will meet at noon every Wednesday in the Chamber.
- The special committee will also meet by videoconference at noon every Tuesday (starting April 28) and every Thursday (starting May 7).
- The Speaker is the chair of the special committee, which will meet to:
 - consider ministerial announcements,
 - allow Members to present petitions, and
 - question ministers of the Crown, including the prime minister.
- Quorum for the special committee is seven Members.

Schedule:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	Format: VIRTUAL	Format: IN PERSON	Format: VIRTUAL	
	Duration: 2 hours approx.	Duration: 5 hours approx.	Duration: 2 hours approx.	
	Starting: April 28	Starting: April 29	Starting: May 7	

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 and disseminated through the [@HoCCommittees](https://twitter.com/HoCCommittees) Twitter account. The proceedings will be broadcast on ourcommons.ca via the regular [ParlVU](#) system, and will also be available on the Parliamentary Television Network. 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 on the [committees section](#) of ourcommons.ca.

How will the meetings take place?

The meetings will take place both virtually, on Tuesdays (and Thursdays, as of May 7), and in person, on Wednesdays.

Where will the Wednesday in-person meetings occur?

In-person meetings will take place in the House of Commons interim Chamber, in West Block.

Where will the Speaker be for the virtual meetings?

The Speaker will be in a committee room in West Block.

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 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 virtual meetings of the Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic?

The House of Commons 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 Administration has adapted available technologies and integrated them with a Zoom platform. This version of Zoom differs from the free and paid consumer versions in that it enables the House 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 of transition.

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.

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 in-person meeting will 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 in-person meetings of the special committee on Wednesdays.

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

The special committee is a committee meeting focused on one topic and does 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 is studying 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.

Will the special committee follow committee or Chamber rules?

The special committee will follow the provisions of the order of the House of April 20, 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 the Wednesday 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.

How many House of Commons Administration employees will be on site to support the meetings of the special committee?

For the in-person 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 virtual meetings of the special committee. Employees are kept informed of public health recommendations, including physical distancing requirements.

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
- [Letter](#) from the Speaker to the Government House Leader on virtual sittings of the House

For updates, please follow [@HoCCommittees](#) for tweets from [#COVI](#).

For more information:

Heather Bradley
Director of Communications,
Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons
613-995-7882
heather.bradley@parl.gc.ca