

Notre maison citoyenne

Witnesses' Guide

PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS
IN PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE

JULY 2023



This guide is for individuals and organizations who are invited or wish to take part in a public consultation held by a parliamentary committee of the Assemblée nationale.

Parliamentary committees may hold consultations on bills, documents or other matters of public interest in order to find out what people think. They do so either on their own initiative or under an order of reference from the Assemblée nationale, and the consultations generally take the form of public hearings at the hôtel du Parlement in the city of Québec. At a public hearing, individuals and organizations present their opinion and answer parliamentarians' questions. The committee concerned then tables a report in the Assembly. The report may contain observations, conclusions or recommendations.

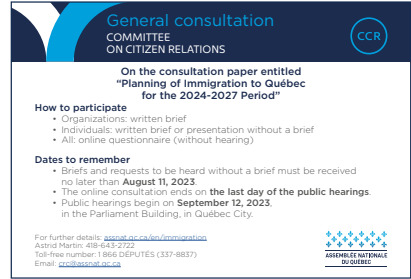
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Do you wish to participate in a general consultation?¹

General consultations are intended for the public as a whole. A consultation notice containing details on the subject of the consultation and how to participate is published

- in the *Gazette officielle du Québec*,
- in Québec's major daily newspapers,
- on the Assemblée nationale website, and
- on social media (Facebook and Twitter).



Individuals are asked to submit, to the secretariat of the committee concerned, either a brief or a request to address the committee without a brief accompanied by a short statement summarizing the nature of the presentation to be made.

Organizations are asked to submit a brief to the secretariat.

You have at least 30 days to express your interest in taking part. The committee then chooses which individuals and organizations will be invited to the public hearings. If you are chosen, the secretariat will notify you at least seven days in advance. A period of up to 45 minutes is set aside for all presentations without a brief.

Have you been invited to take part in special consultations?²

Participation in special consultations is by invitation only. The Assembly or committee chooses which individuals and organizations will be heard on the basis of their experience or their knowledge of the matter being studied.

You are not required to submit a brief, but briefs are much appreciated by and very helpful to committee members. Your brief should be submitted as soon as possible and not later than the day before the hearing so parliamentarians can consult it beforehand.

¹ See diagram on page 8.

² See diagram on page 9.



What should you do after receiving a notice inviting you to a public hearing?

The committee's secretariat notifies the individuals and organizations chosen to be heard by email. The notice states:

- the subject of the consultation;
- the date, time, place and duration of the hearing;
- the time available for your presentation, including for discussion with committee members.

Please contact the secretariat as soon as possible to confirm your presence or to decline the invitation. Please also specify whether you will be participating by videoconference or in person. **Organizations** are asked to give the name and title of their representatives who will be addressing the committee. In the case of **special consultations**, please indicate whether or not you intend to submit a brief. You are responsible for all costs incurred in taking part in a public hearing.

You must also inform the secretariat if you wish to:

- use audiovisual material or make a presentation (PowerPoint);
- use a videoconferencing or simultaneous interpretation service, since discussions are generally conducted in French. Such requests will be forwarded to the committee for a decision.

How are hearings by videoconference conducted?

If you confirm that you will participate by videoconference, you will be sent a link to join the meeting a few days in advance. When you connect, you will first be welcomed by a technical team responsible for making final adjustments before you join the committee meeting. The committee chair will then give you final instructions before the start of your hearing.

You **must** use a computer that has a camera and headphones with a built-in microphone. Make sure you are in a quiet place with no outside noise. Remember to connect your equipment to the power supply and to a wired Internet network, if possible.

How to access the hôtel du Parlement

If you would like to be heard in person, please enter the hôtel du Parlement through the reception pavilion, which is accessible from avenue Honoré-Mercier. You must pass a security check and present photo ID to obtain your access card. Neat, conservative clothing is required to attend or take part in parliamentary proceedings. It is important to arrive well in advance for the hearing, as specified in the notice you received.

What happens during a hearing?

The hearing will be divided in two parts: your presentation and a period of discussion with the committee members. The steps are as follows:



Come forward to the witnesses'.



Wait for the committee Chair's signal before starting.



Introduce yourself, your organization and any individuals accompanying you.



Make your presentation. Express your opinion, emphasizing the most important points – you need not read your brief.



Answer the parliamentarians' questions. Parliamentary groups and independent Members are each allotted a specific amount of time for discussion with you.

If, during the hearing, you commit to providing additional information to the committee members, please forward the information to the committee's secretariat as soon as possible.

Hearings are generally **public** and media representatives could be present.

Public hearings are **live-streamed** and archived in the [Video](#) section of the Assemblée nationale website. Certain hearings are broadcast on the Assemblée nationale channel in real time or later on. Hearings are also recorded verbatim in the Assembly's [Journal des débats](#) (Hansard).

How to submit a brief

Preparing a Brief

A brief is a document in which an individual or an organization expresses a point of view on a matter that is a subject of a public consultation.

Who Receives Briefs?

Briefs and other documents submitted to the committee clerk are sent to the [MNAs who are members of the committee](#) concerned and their associates.

Unless the committee decides otherwise, the brief and all the personal information it contains are made public. Each brief received within the framework of a public consultation is published on the Assemblée nationale's website.

If you wish to include private or personal information in your brief, please contact the clerk of the appropriate committee.

What Should My Brief Contain?

Your brief must convey your point of view on the matter as clearly as possible and be based on facts.

We recommend you split your brief into three sections:

1. Identification and description of the author or the represented organization
2. General presentation of your views
3. Recommendations

Although briefs can take many different forms, we recommend you provide a summary if your brief exceeds 10 pages. For general consultations, your brief **must** include a short summary of its content.

[A template](#) is available to help you write your brief, if necessary.

A brief that includes comments that are defamatory, abusive or obscene or that incite hatred or violence may be refused.

What Formats Are Accepted and How Can I Submit My Brief?

All briefs must meet the following requirements:

1. Submitted on letter-format paper (21.5 cm x 28 cm or 8.5 in x 11 in);
2. Received before the submission deadline for general consultations and before the end of hearings for special consultations; and
3. Sent, including appendices, in a single unlocked PDF-format document.

Please submit your brief by email to the appropriate committee and include the name of the brief's authors as well as their contact information. If you are unable to send your brief by email, you may send it by mail instead.

Useful information

Assemblée nationale du Québec

Hôtel du Parlement
1045, rue des Parlementaires
Québec (Québec) G1A 1A3

See the [Visitors](#) section of the Assemblée nationale website for further details.

Any questions?

See the [Voice Your Opinion!](#) and [Committee Proceedings](#) of the Assemblée nationale website.

OR

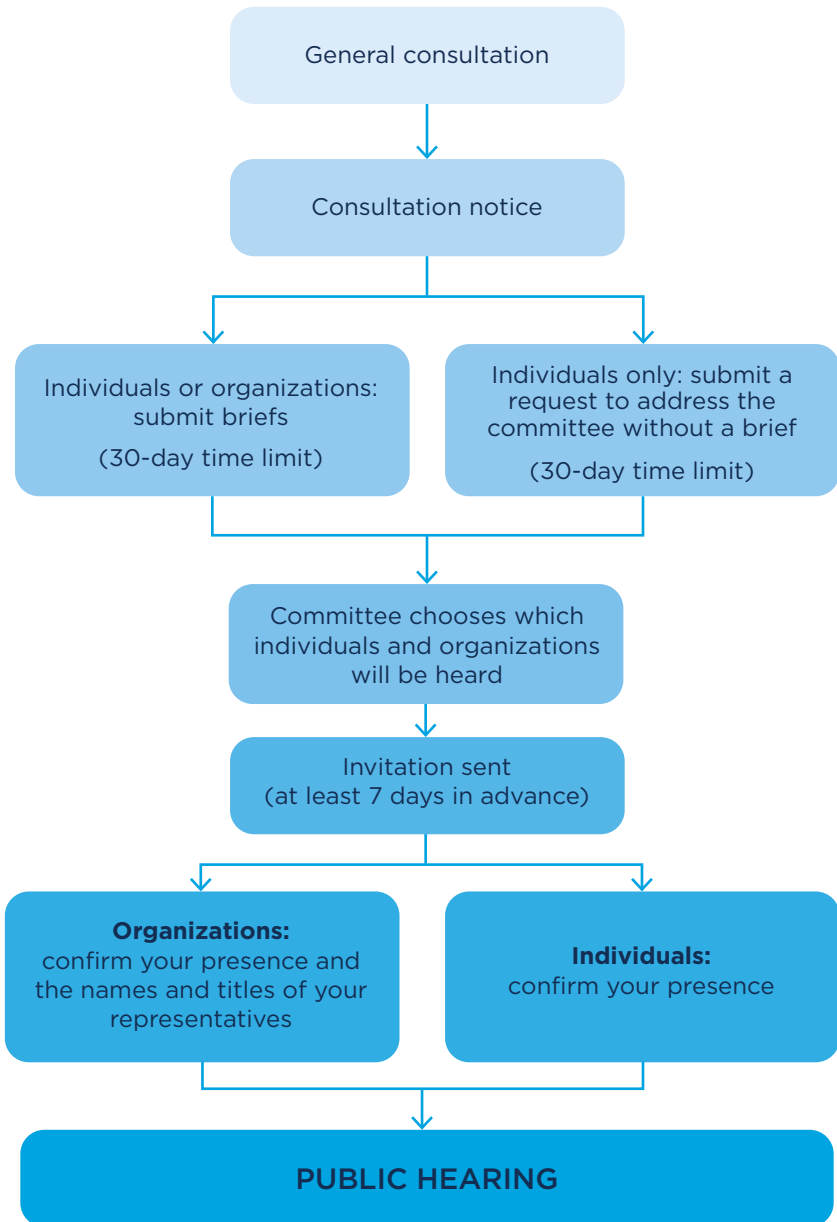
Contact the Assemblée nationale's Direction des commissions parlementaires

Par téléphone :

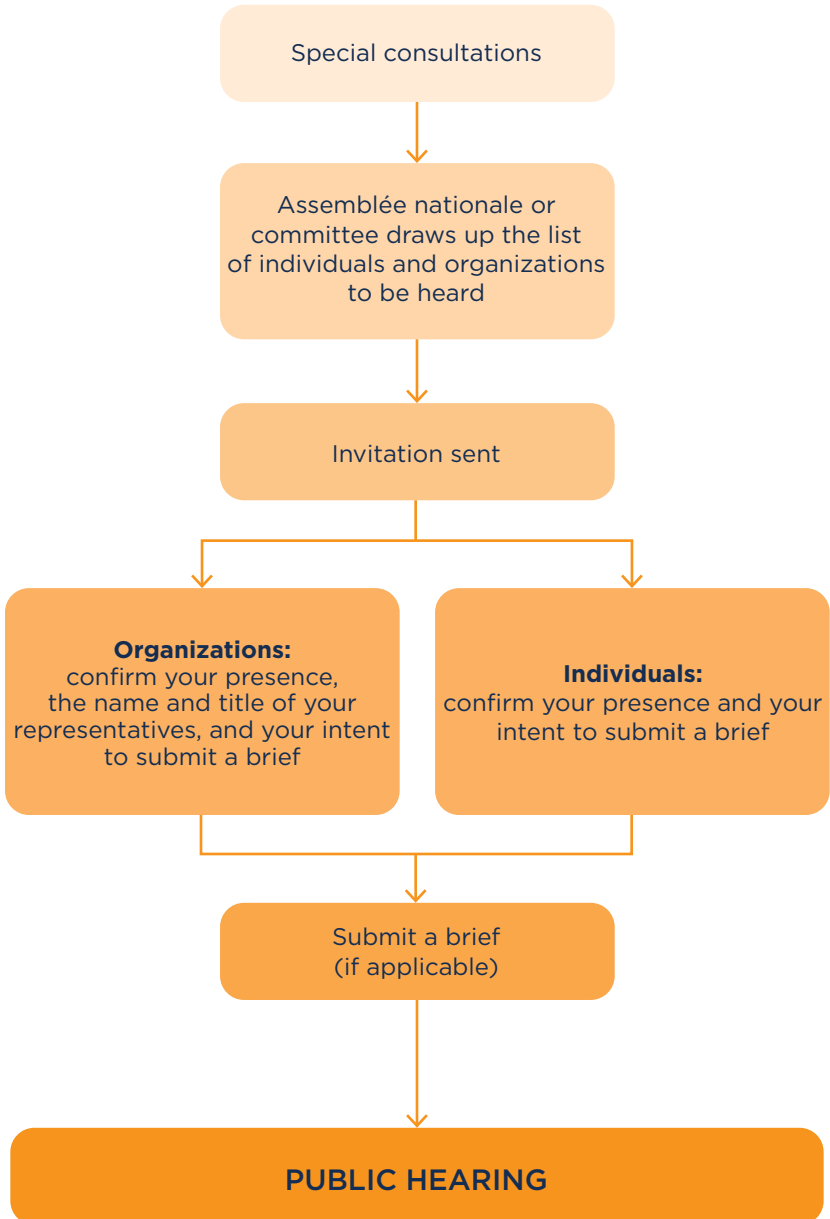
City of Québec area: 418-643-2722
Toll-free: 1-866-337-8837

By email: commissions@assnat.qc.ca

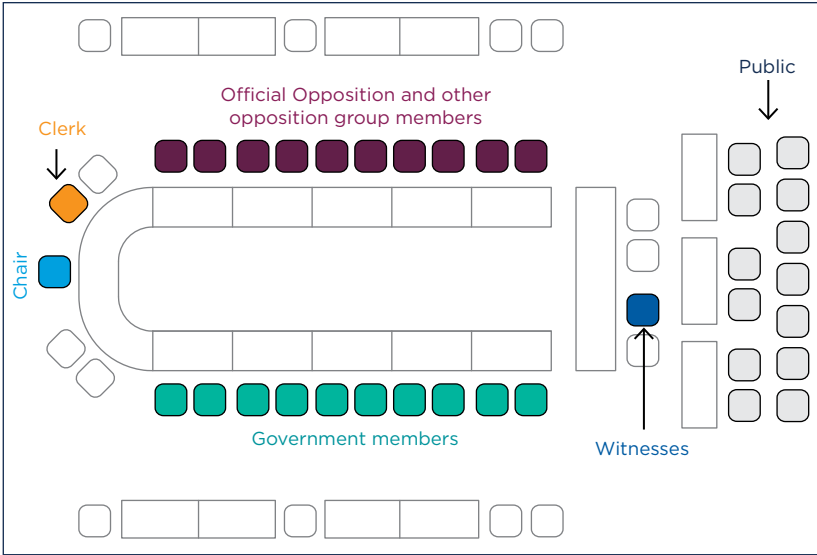
Stages of a general consultation



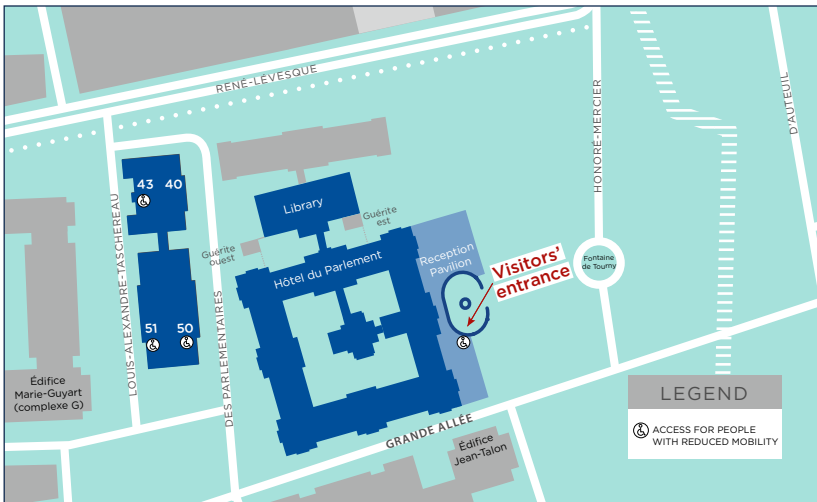
Stages of a general consultation



Layout of a committee room



Entrances to the Assemblée nationale



DIRECTION DES COMMISSIONS PARLEMENTAIRES

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