

Closed meetings: Best practices

Municipal meetings should be open, with rare exceptions, as provided for in the *Municipal Act, 2001*, s. 239. The Ombudsman's investigations of closed meetings consider whether or not the law and best practices were followed. Best practices include the following:

- **Give adequate advance notice**

Meeting agendas should clearly identify any closed sessions and the reasons for them, and should be made available to the public in advance.

- **Pick the right exception**

Make sure the exception under which the meeting is closed is identified, and appropriate.

- **Record the meeting**

Closed session minutes should include place and time, attendees, a description of all matters discussed, and any motions or votes. The Ombudsman also recommends audio or video recording all closed meetings.



- **Make a clear resolution**

Authorize the closed session by making a resolution during open session that includes meaningful information about the issue to be discussed behind closed doors.

- **Stay on topic**

While in closed session, ensure that the discussion does not stray from the matters authorized in the resolution to close the meeting.

- **Vote with caution**

Voting in a closed meeting is only allowed for procedural reasons or to give directions or instructions to staff and others identified under the Act.

- **Report back publicly**

After a closed session, report publicly in open session on what occurred, giving as much detail as possible.

**When in doubt, open the meeting.
Questions? info@ombudsman.on.ca**

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