



National Citizens Inquiry

Witness Guidelines

<https://nationalcitizensinquiry.ca/>
February 2025 v3

Contents

- 1. Introduction..... 2
- 2. Offering to be a Witness 2
- 3. What to Expect 3
 - a. Testimony Time 4
 - b. Providing Testimony in Person.....4
 - c. Providing Testimony Online..... 4
- 4. Final Tips..... 5
- 5. Notes 5

1. Introduction

Thank you for your interest in sharing your story that pertains to the current question being posed at the National Citizens Inquiry. This document explains how to give your testimony at the National Citizens Inquiry. **Testimony** is the formal word used to describe the information you share at an inquiry. When you tell your story—also called ‘giving testimony’—you are called a **witness**. The National Citizens Inquiry (the **Inquiry**) is being held to give you and other Canadians the opportunity to talk about how government decisions and policies affect you. The goal is to better understand how people are affected by the rules and policies of our government agencies and learn how we can do better in future. You can testify about the actions of any level of government, including federal, First Nations, provincial, territorial or municipal governments.

Inquiry **hearings** are being held in locations across the country to enable as many citizens to have a voice as is possible. You can tell your story in person or you can tell it virtually (online) at a hearing through a live videoconference.

You will be telling your story to Commissioners, and lawyers will help you to do that by asking you questions. **Commissioners** are the people who direct the Inquiry. They will hear testimony from witnesses and then prepare a report with recommendations about what they heard.

Members of the public will be invited to attend the hearings in person. The hearings will also be broadcast live online for anyone who wants to watch them, and then recorded and posted online later. This means your story will be part of a permanent record of the testimony provided at the Inquiry.

2. Offering to be a Witness

The Inquiry website (www.nationalcitizensinquiry.ca) has an online form you can use to offer to be a witness. The hearings may focus on particular topics.

Everyone who testifies will be encouraged to recommend how Canada could do better in future, based on the experience they had.

The Inquiry will hear from two type of witnesses:

- **The public:** who share personal stories of what happened to them
- **Experts:** such as medical professionals, lawyers, researchers, who provide their professional insights

You will also have the choice of:

- Providing your testimony **in person** at a hearing event
- Providing your testimony **online**, during a hearing event, if you can't join in person

Due to the time available at each hearing and the anticipated number of people interested in speaking, there may not be time to hear from everyone who wants to testify. There may still be other ways to share your story; check www.nationalcitizensinquiry.ca for more information.

3. What to Expect

Before the Hearing

You will be contacted by someone from the organizing team about the testimony you have offered to provide. **If you are chosen to testify**, you will speak with a lawyer who is part of the Commission counsel. The lawyer **will help you prepare your testimony**. At the hearing, all you have to do is answer the lawyer's questions.

You may not read your testimony. Testimony must be given verbally and may not be read from a prepared script. The use of documents or a powerpoint presentation is permitted however, you will NOT be selected as a witness if you need to read the testimony.

At the Hearing

You will be called when it is your turn to speak. Before you provide your testimony, you will be asked to affirm that you will only tell the truth and you must agree to do so. After that, the lawyer who helped you prepare your testimony will ask you questions; you just need to answer them. When you are finished, the lawyer will ask the Commissioners if they have questions about your testimony. Answer the questions honestly and to the best of your ability; if you don't know something, it is okay to say so.

Sharing your story might be hard. You may have lost a job, or your business, or friendships. Your health, or the health of someone you love, may have been affected. If you feel upset when answering the lawyer's questions, it is okay to Stop, take a break, and start again when you can. The Commissioners will understand.

a. Testimony Time

Personal witnesses may have as little as 15 minutes to provide their testimony, but it may be more depending on the hearing location and what you want to say. Expert witnesses will likely have longer to testify. If you are chosen as a witness, you and the lawyer who will be asking you questions will be told how much time you'll have to testify.

b. Providing Testimony in Person

- You are expected to attend the hearing **for the day** on the day you are giving your testimony. You may be called to testify before your scheduled time.
- Someone will greet you when you arrive and show you where you can wait.
- You will be called to testify when it is your turn.
- Answer the questions the lawyer asks you. Remember you will **not be allowed to read your testimony or use notes.**
- Come early if you want so you can hear other people speak. You can also join the audience after you testify, to hear what others have to say. Each event will have different procedures for the in- person audience, so check with the organizers for your hearing location.
- If you want, bring someone with you when you testify, so you're not alone. They can sit with the audience when you speak. If you do bring someone, let the local organizing committee know.

c. Providing Testimony Online

- You will get information prior to your hearing date about how to testify online. Please test your computer based on the information you receive, to make sure it works. Each hearing location may differ in how the video links will work. You will get information about the process for your location in advance, so you have time to prepare.
- Find a quiet location with a secure Wi-Fi connection so you will be able to speak without distractions. Use a headset with a microphone if you can, to help ensure good sound quality.
- On the day of the hearing, be sure to log in at least 45 minutes before you're scheduled to speak. This gives time to sort out any connection difficulties before it is your turn. This also helps because you may be asked to testify earlier than the time you were told.
- You will be called when it is your turn; don't forget to unmute your computer before you testify.
- Answer the questions the lawyer asks you. Remember you will **not be allowed to read your testimony or use notes.**
- Stay online after you testify so you can answer any questions.
- After you're finished, you can stay and watch online.

4. Final Tips

- Confirm the location, day and time of the hearing with the organizers.
- Remember, all you have to do is answer the lawyer's questions.
- If you have any questions, reach out to your contact from the organizing team.

5. Notes