



National Citizens' Inquiry

Witness Guidelines

<https://nationalcitizensinquiry.ca/>
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1. Introduction

Thank you for your interest in sharing your story about what happened to you during the Covid-19 pandemic because of governments' health-protection measures. This document explains how to give your testimony at the National Citizens' Inquiry. **Testimony** is the formal word used to describe a written or spoken statement that someone provides. 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 actions and decisions during Covid-19 affected you. The goal is to better understand what happened to people, why decisions were made, what happened as a result, 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.

Eight Inquiry **hearings** are being held in eight locations across the country: Moncton, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Red Deer, Victoria and Ottawa. You can tell your story in person at one of those hearings, or you can tell it virtually (online) at a hearing through a live videoconference.

You will be telling your story to Commissioners. **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 afterwards. 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 form will let you choose which hearing you would like to speak at, and what you would like to talk about. Some of the hearings may focus on certain topics. Your story could be about:

- How the pandemic health measures affected you financially
- How your business was affected
- How your job was affected
- How your education, or that of your children, was affected
- The effects on your family or friends
- The effects on your health
- Your experience with the medical system
- Your experience with the vaccine
- The impact on your ability to do your usual activities, such as travel or see loved ones
- Something else that happened

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, or government staff, who provide their professional opinion of something

You will also have the choice of:

- Sharing your story **in person** at a hearing event
- Sharing your story **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 at the Hearing

You will be called by a Commissioner or Inquiry staff member when it is your turn to speak. Before you share your story, you will be asked to swear an oath that you will only tell the truth. You must agree to only tell the truth. After that, you can speak. When you are finished, the Commissioners or other Inquiry staff will ask you questions about your testimony. The questions may take as little as five minutes or they may take longer. 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. You may have lost a loved one to Covid or been unable to see someone in hospital before they died. You may have missed celebrating an important milestone in your life or someone else's life, such as a graduation, wedding or anniversary. Your health, or the health of someone you love, may have been affected. If you feel upset when telling your story, it is okay to stop, take a break, and start again when you can. The Commissioners will understand.

a. Speaking Time

You will be told before the hearing how much time you will have to speak. For personal stories, it may be as little as 10 minutes plus about the same time for questions, but it may be more depending on the hearing location and what you want to say. Expert witnesses will likely have longer to speak. If you are chosen as a witness, you will be told how much time you have to speak before the hearing, so you can prepare.

b. Providing Testimony in Person

- Be sure to arrive at least 60 minutes before you're scheduled to speak. You may be asked to speak before the time you were told.
- Someone will greet you when you arrive and show you where you can wait.
- You will be called to speak when it is your turn.
- Bring any speaking notes you made. It is okay to use them to remember what you want to say.
- 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 had to travel to the hearing to testify in person, you may be eligible to have reasonable travel costs (up to \$300) reimbursed by the Inquiry. Please check the website for more information: www.nationalcitizensinquiry.ca.

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.
- 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 speak 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 speak.
- When telling your story, you may refer to any speaking notes you made.
- Stay online after you speak 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 at which you will speak with the Inquiry organizers for your hearing location.
- Think about what you want to say, and practice saying it before the hearing.
- When you practice, keep track of the time—10 or 15 minutes can go very quickly.
- If you have any questions, reach out to your contact from the committee organizing the hearing in your region for assistance.

5. My Speaking Notes



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