

Let the sun shine in: Best practices for closed meetings

Municipal meetings should be open, with rare exceptions, as provided for in the *Municipal Act, 2001*, s. 239. In addition, here are best practices to follow when closing a meeting:



Give adequate advance notice

Clearly identify closed sessions on meeting agendas, and include the reason for closing them. Make the agenda available to the public in advance.



Pick the right exception

Make sure the exception used to justify closing the meeting is identified, and appropriate. Interpret the exceptions to the open meeting requirements narrowly. Consider: Would the community be better served by dealing with this publicly?



Add items to the agenda sparingly

Items should only be added to closed session agendas if they are urgent – and even then, as much public notice should be given as possible.



Make a clear resolution to go into closed session

Authorize the closed session by making a resolution during open session, and make sure it includes meaningful information about the issue to be discussed behind closed doors.



Record all meetings – open or closed

Records should include where the meeting took place, when it started and ended, who was in attendance, a description of all matters discussed, and any motions or votes. Making audio or video recordings of all sessions is a best practice because it ensures an incontrovertible meeting record and inspires community trust.



Report back publicly

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

If you have a concern about a closed meeting, contact us at **1-800-263-1830** or **info@ombudsman.on.ca**.

We can provide general information on the open meeting requirements.

To make a complaint, complete a complaint form at www.ombudsman.on.ca or call **1-800-263-1830**.

Copies of this card can be obtained by phone or email as above, or at the **Office of the Ontario Ombudsman, 483 Bay Street, 10th Floor, South Tower, Toronto, Ontario, M5G 2C9**