

OmbudsPEI releases guide to support municipal governments in properly holding closed meetings

CHARLOTTETOWN, P.E.I. – OmbudsPEI is releasing its first public resource, a guide to help lead municipal governments through the process of holding closed meetings to ensure that the province’s open meeting laws are consistently applied.

OmbudsPEI is aware of concerns that some municipalities may be discussing issues in closed meetings that should be discussed in their public meetings. This, together with related concerns highlighted by the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, led OmbudsPEI to create a guide for municipal councils to use when deciding whether to close a meeting.

“Our aim is to promote compliance with the law and enhance transparency by helping municipal councils and committees to be more informed about the law”, says Ombudsperson Sandy Hermiston.

Best Practices: A Guide to Closed Council and Committee Meetings, details the requirements that must be met to hold a closed meeting - which are found in the Municipal Government Act. The choice to close a meeting is discretionary and is not required by the Act. Under the Act, council and committee meetings must be open to the public, with certain narrow exceptions.

The guide explains the legal framework and requirements for closed meetings. It also explains how to properly close a meeting, the reasons why a meeting can be closed, and provides checklists for councils and committees to follow when closing a meeting.

OmbudsPEI promotes fairness by supporting public authorities with resources such as the closed meetings guide.

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About OmbudsPEI

As an independent office of the Legislature, OmbudsPEI investigates complaints of unfair treatment by government agencies and provides general oversight of government’s administrative processes under the *Ombudsperson Act*. The Ombudsperson has a broad mandate to investigate complaints about unfair treatment, process or decisions by public sector agencies such as government ministries, agencies boards and commissions, municipalities and Health PEI.

OmbudsPEI promotes fairness, transparency and accountability in the public sector to enhance good governance and public confidence in government. Our work improves public services for all Islanders.

If any islander believes they have experienced an unfairness in their interactions with a provincial agency, they can contact OmbudsPEI to explore options for making a complaint. Our services are free and confidential.

For more information about OmbudsPEI, visit www.ombudspei.ca.