
Open Meetings

January 2010

Changes made to the [Municipal Act, 2001](#), ensure that meetings held by municipal councils and local boards must reflect openness and transparency even if they are closed to the public. All meetings, including closed meetings, are subject to procedural rules. For example, public notice must be given of upcoming meetings and records must be kept of all meetings.

Investigations

A municipality may appoint an investigator to look into whether the municipality has complied with the rules applicable to the holding of closed meetings. If a local investigator is not appointed, the [Ontario Ombudsman](#) can also be asked to fill that role.

Any citizen can request an investigation to determine whether a municipality or local board is following the rules on open and closed meetings.

The Open Meeting Law Enforcement Team

The Open Meeting Law Enforcement Team (OMLET) was created by the Ontario Ombudsman in the summer of 2008. One of OMLET's objectives is to educate municipalities about their obligations and inform citizens about their rights to open meetings.

Closing A Meeting To The Public

The municipal council or local board decides whether a meeting will be closed to the public.

A municipality or local board **can** close a meeting to the public when dealing with the following:

- The security of the property of the municipality or local board.
- Personal matters about an identifiable individual, including municipal or local board employees.
- A proposed or pending acquisition or disposition of land by the municipality or local board.
- Labour relations or employee negotiations.
- Litigation or potential litigation, including matters before administrative tribunals (e.g. Ontario Municipal Board), affecting the municipality or local board.
- Advice that is subject to solicitor-client privilege.
- A matter in respect of which the council, board, committee or other body may hold a closed meeting under another Act.

Two instances where a municipality **must** close a meeting to the public are:

- If the subject matter relates to the consideration of a request under the [Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#), and if the council, board, commission, or other body is the head of an institution for the purposes of that Act.
- If the subject matter relates to a request for council approval to disclose information about hazards or risks to public safety, which the municipality has identified for the purposes of preparing a municipal emergency management program.