

Public Hearings

Under the Natural Resources Conservation Board Act

What is the purpose of the public hearing?

The public hearing allows individuals, coalitions with a common position on a proposed development project, interest groups and federal, provincial, and municipal representatives to make submissions and examine the evidence presented by other parties to assist the Board in determining if the project is in the public interest.

What is the role of the NRCB in the hearing process?

The NRCB sits reviews as a quasi-judicial tribunal and has a mandate to determine whether a proposed project is in the public interest. Established in 1991, the Board provides an impartial process for the review of development projects that will or may affect the natural resources of Alberta.

Why is your participation in the process important?

Public participation helps ensure that the Board has access to relevant and reliable information from different perspectives when determining whether a project is in the public interest. In making its decisions, the NRCB must consider the social, economic and environmental effects of proposed projects.

Who should make a submission to the NRCB at the hearing?

You should make the submission if you believe you have information that will assist the NRCB in reaching a decision. The Board encourages all Albertans, particularly those “directly affected” by a proposed process. For an explanation of direct effect, see the *Intervener Funding Process Guide* or the *Intervener Funding Fact Sheet*.

What may my submission include?

Your submission may include expert or lay evidence, a response to or a critique of the application, or opinions on what decision the Board should reach. Presentations should be focused and concise. Contact the NRCB regarding specific participant registration and submission deadlines.

What format can I expect the hearing to follow?

Typically, the hearing begins with opening remarks from the Panel Chair. Beginning with the applicant, each participant presents evidence to the NRCB and responds to questions or cross-examination. Following submissions by interveners, the applicant may present rebuttal evidence. All parties then present final arguments to the Board, summarizing the main issues and evidence and outlining the reasons why they believe the Board should reach a particular decision regarding the application. Finally, the Panel Chair closes the hearing and usually defers the Board’s decision until the release of the decision report. The report is later distributed to registered participants and made available to the public.

Can the NRCB’s decision be appealed?

The decision can only be appealed to the Alberta Court of Appeal on questions of jurisdiction or law.

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Tips for participating in the hearing:

- An oral presentation may not be necessary if the intervener's position and evidence are clearly stated in the written submission.
- Keep oral submission brief (normally less than 20 minutes).
- Focus on a few key points.
- Ensure the issues are relevant to the project under review.
- If your issues were addressed by other interveners, simply note agreement rather than repeating information.
- Participants should also read the *Board Review Under the NRCBA Process Guide* to learn more about the review process.

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