



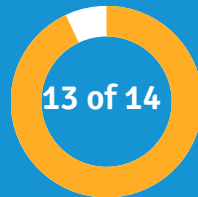
THE RIGHT WITNESS FOR EFFECTIVE HEARINGS

The purpose of having witnesses attend a PAC hearing is to shed light on how a government entity is implementing the programs and services. Witnesses are usually asked to provide greater insight into issues raised in an audit report. For the PAC to effectively fulfill its mandate, it should ensure that it is calling the right witnesses to get to the answers they are seeking.

Power vs. Practice

The PAC's Power: Ideally, the PAC should have the power to call any witness within the public service that can help shed light on the topics under study. Having the power to call experts from outside the public service can also be helpful when navigating complex issues.

PAC in Practice: In practice, the most appropriate witness is typically the deputy minister or head of a public-sector organization. As the most senior “accounting officer” within the organization, they are best positioned to answer the committee’s questions.



CAAF's survey of PACs in Canada showed 13 of 14 jurisdictions regularly called the deputy minister as their primary witness.



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Who Else Should Appear as a Witness?

- The **Auditor General and their staff** can provide additional information context regarding the audit report.
- **Other public servants** within the audited entity can assist the deputy minister in responding to questions that delve deeper into the details of the audit and how the department functions.
- External **experts** such as technical experts, academics and members of non-government organizations can in rare occasions help the committee understand the subject matter of the audit and the programs and services under study.



AVOID CALLING THE MINISTER AS A WITNESS!

Why?

Audit reports focus on the implementation of policies, not the political decision-making around the creation of policy. Public servants are well-positioned to respond to questions surrounding implementation and hearings are less likely to get into partisan issues.