



ASKING EFFECTIVE QUESTIONS

EFFECTIVE QUESTIONS:

- Get actions and commitments from the audited organization
- Focus on the implementation of policy
- Avoid discussion on the merits of policy

BEFORE A HEARING

Committee should set an objective for the hearing:

- Why are you calling this organization?
- What do you want to learn from the witnesses?

Call the appropriate witness:

- Senior public servant, usually the deputy minister. Why? They hold responsibility for policy administration.

Prepare:

- Get an action plan from audited organizations.
- Review audit report and briefing notes.
- Discuss potential questions.
- Meet with audit office in advance.

DURING A HEARING

Use time wisely.

Keep questions focused on the hearing topic.

Make sure witnesses answer your questions.

Typical challenges:

- Ramblers – ask them to be succinct.
- Dodgers – ask them to focus on question.
- Uninformed – ask for specifics/clarification in writing by a certain date (be sure to review when submitted).

Seek commitment and timelines.

AFTER A HEARING

Follow up!

Analyze the action plan to determine any follow-up steps.

Get a status update from audited organizations.

Write a committee report that contains observations and recommendations.

Hold a follow-up hearing.





ASKING EFFECTIVE QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS FOR THE AUDITOR GENERAL

Can you clarify the significance of [insert finding] in the AG report?

What are the main causes of [insert finding] that you have identified?

Are you satisfied with the government organization's response to your recommendations?

With regard to the AG's recommendation [insert], would it be reasonable for the organization to do A, B, and C by [insert date]?

QUESTIONS FOR THE AUDITED ORGANIZATION

By what date do you expect the recommendations to be implemented?

What, if any, challenges are you having implementing the AG's recommendations?

How will you measure progress in correcting problems and improving public services?

Do you have adequate resources and authority to address the AG's recommendations?

AVOID: Asking "softball" questions.
Looking to score political points (in the PAC meeting).
Interrupting each other.

