

Public question period

Excerpt from the internal by-laws of the Board of Directors of the Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux de la Côte-Nord

Duration – The public question period at a board meeting is limited to thirty (30) minutes or less to allow the persons who are present to ask questions. This period is established in the first part of the agenda and cannot be extended without the approval of the chair.

Procedure to submit a question to the Council – All persons present at a meeting of the board of directors may, upon the authorisation of the chair, ask a question respecting the conditions and procedure prescribed in this section.

Any person who wishes to ask a question must present himself to the designated room where the Board of directors meeting is being held before the fixed time for the beginning of the meeting of the Board of Directors. He must give to the chair or the person designated by him, his surname and his first name and, where applicable, the name of the organization being represented, and indicate the purpose of the question. He can register this information himself in a registry for this purpose. This inscription, accompanied by the required information can be done no later than thirty (30) minutes before the meeting begins or by electronic mail at the following address: pascal.paradis.09cisss@sss.gouv.qc.ca.

Questions must bear on the governance of the public institution and persons asking questions must avoid using personal references, crude or abusive insinuations, hurtful words or coarse language.

Silence must be observed by the public during the sitting of the board of directors. The chair shall accord the right to speak to persons by respecting the order of the requests.

No public intervention is allowed before or after the question period.

Form of the question and duration of the intervention – Each person has the right to ask one question per intervention with a maximum of three (3) interventions per meeting. However, persons must step aside after each question to let others participate in the period. The complete intervention, including the question and the answer is limited to ten (10) minutes. However, the chair may extend the intervention or allow no more than two (2) sub-questions to be asked relating to the principal question insofar as these sub-questions do not serve to engage in or continue a discussion or debate.

Out-of-order questions – A question is out of order where:

- a) it bears on a matter pending before a court, an administrative body, a decision-making body or a matter under investigation;
- b) it constitutes a hypothesis, the expression of an opinion, an inference, an allusion, a suggestion or an attribution of motives rather than a question;
- c) it is considered frivolous, vexatious or is asked in bad faith;
- d) the answer would require a professional opinion.

Procedure – The chairman gives the floor to the people, and this, in the order of inscription.

- 1) The chair may answer questions from the floor or assign a person to answer them.
- 2) If the question requires research to be conducted or if no answer can be given immediately, the chair may take it under advisement by indicating the moment when he will be able to provide an answer. The answer can be given at a subsequent meeting or at another moment.
- 3) Every answer, whether in oral or written form, must be clear, brief and limit itself to the question.
- 4) The chair, the person assigned to answer the question or persons from the concerned department may refuse to answer the question:
 - if they consider it against the public interest to provide the information requested;
 - if the requested information is personal information;
 - if much work, disproportionate to its usefulness, is required to collect the information requested;
 - if the question bears on information contained in a report from a board, a committee of the board or a commission of inquiry that has not yet been tabled with the board;
 - if the question has already been asked or if it concerns a matter already on the agenda.
- 5) When the question is out of order, the chair must indicate the grounds on which his decision is based, such decision is final and without appeal. The chair or a member of the board cannot be required to file a document in answer to a question or at the time of the question period, nor required to accept the filing of a document;
- 6) The chair must ensure that the question period does not give rise to any debate between members of the board, between a person present and a member of the board or between persons present;
- 7) No question or intervention may lead to the adoption of a proposal unless all the board members present agree to it;
- 8) The question period must unfold in a calm, orderly and respectful manner. The chair of the board of directors may impose a penalty to anyone who seriously violates the rules, especially those pertaining to the maintenance of order. Penalties may take the form of a warning, a request to withdraw certain comments, a suspension of the right to speak or an order to leave the premises based on the nature of the committed act. The chair may end the question period before the allotted time if the circumstances justify it, for instance, in the event where it is impossible to maintain the order. If the chair orders a person to leave the premises for failing to maintain the order and said person refuses, every reasonable means may be taken to have the chair's decision respected.