



Kin Canada
Kinsmen • Kinettes • Kin

May 2013

In Camera Meetings & Committee of the Whole

As members of Kin Canada, and being publically registered non-profit corporations, generally meetings of clubs are not confidential, and are open to anyone who may be interested in joining the club, or to invited guests. Additionally, it is generally accepted that while they are not able to vote, members-at-large are allowed to attend executive meetings, and minutes are available to all members.

In Camera Meetings

In some cases, there may be a necessity to hold “in camera” meetings, which are closed to everyone except those who are members, in the case of club meetings, or members of the executive, in the case of executive meetings. The term “in camera” may seem counter intuitive as it could appear to suggest that it is being recorded (i.e. “on camera”); however the term in camera comes from the Latin word for “Chamber,” and thus it means “in chambers,” behind closed doors or in private.

In many cases, a club may be holding in camera meetings and not realize it. In camera meetings are used when the meeting is closed to visitors such as when the club is discussing finances, for example the budget meeting, or where the executive is discussing items such as member discipline. It is important for the president/chair to announce that the meeting is in camera and therefore discussions are confidential. The meeting is conducted like any other meeting with motions, but because discussion is confidential, only the approved motions can be made public by any member present, and the minutes will include only the approved motions, and no information pertaining to the discussion.

If an in camera meeting is held to discuss membership matters, such as member discipline where there are allegations of conduct unbecoming, the member in question must be allowed to address the meeting. This follows the legal standard of an accused being able to face their accuser. If they are not, at the very least, invited to address the meeting, the club could itself be faced with accusations of bullying a member, and potentially face the undesirable position of being put on the defensive by having to address issues in public which could have been addressed in private.



Kin Canada

Kinsmen • Kinettes • Kin

An in camera meeting may also be used where there could be a perceived conflict of interest, such as the awarding of a club contract where a member has submitted a bid. In such a situation, the member should be excluded from the meeting, which will allow an open discussion by members without the worry of any individual being singled out for what they may have said.

In Camera Committee of the Whole

In camera meetings may also be conducted as committee of the whole, with the committee rising and reporting at the end of the meeting, providing a committee report of the outcome of the meeting to the executive or club for approval. The purpose of the meeting being conducted as a committee of the whole is that the final report is attributed to the entire committee, and not to any individual member of the committee. This allows for an open and frank discussion without fear of retribution. In this way, the committee of the whole may be designated as in-camera, and then only that part of the meeting is conducted in confidence, but the result of the meeting becomes part of the public record through minutes.

Confidentiality

One of the most important, foundational rules of in camera meetings is that what is said is strictly confidential, and is not to be repeated outside of the meeting. As the saying goes, what happens in camera stays in camera. It should be made clear by the chair of the meeting that this is the case, and that any meeting attendee who does not comply with the rule of confidentiality may face disciplinary action.

In general, in camera meetings should be the exception, and not the rule. As non-profit corporations, Kinsmen, Kinette and Kin Club meetings should be open and should not be seen as secretive, but in certain situations, the need for confidentiality will require in camera meetings.

The National Risk Management Committee
Ryan Malley, Diane Therien, Scott Syrie, Mélanie Nieson