

minuteTakers

Remote Meetings, Post-Pandemic

By Lisa Pargetter: Published August 2020

We would like to extend our thanks and appreciation to our loyal clients who have bravely embraced new technology and moved their meetings to an online/remote format. Our recording secretaries and office team members appreciate how well the last few months have gone and how we have all adapted to change. Although there have been some hiccups, we have learned and grown from these experiences and are now more comfortable using various remote meeting tools.

As most of Ontario has moved into Phase 3 of re-opening, we are encouraging our clients to continue to meet remotely! We are all anxious to have the social interaction of an in-person meeting, but we also have to be aware of our social responsibility and continue to remain socially distant. This is the information that is coming to us from the Provincial Government as well as the medically trained experts consulting with our government officials.

Over the last few months, we have noticed that the number of Board and Committee meetings each month remains consistent with pre-pandemic volumes, but there are also some important and notable differences. Meetings have been more productive and efficient; this translates to less overtime fees! We have not had to worry about traffic or public transit delays or travelling in poor weather conditions, but most importantly, our team has remained healthy and safe. Virtual meetings eliminate worries about possibly contracting COVID-19 and putting our families at risk of infection and we are not worried about the possibility of transmitting the virus into the buildings of the clients we serve.

We believe that the meetings are more productive and efficient because there is less opportunity for idle conversation. Meeting participants receive the meeting package, relevant quotes and supporting documents in advance and have an opportunity to ask clarifying questions in the meeting. Two of the most important tips seen in our Remote Meeting Tips article is to designate a meeting Chair and that only one person speaks at a time. This has greatly improved the flow of a meeting, while still allowing for discussion, queries and decisions to be made. Fewer meetings have been running into overtime over the last few months so corporations on a whole have saved time and money by not holding meetings that run for more than a few hours in length.

Remote meetings have also allowed for Directors to attend the meeting from wherever they are. That could be their unit, their car, from their office or even at their cottages. We have seen it all! In fact, during a recent AGM, one of the unit-owners called into the meeting from their car!

We have been asked, what if the meeting is held outside on the terrace or in a very large boardroom so all parties can be spread a safe distance away? While meetings outside would be nice, it is not necessarily convenient for the recording secretary to juggle their laptop and any relevant materials, never mind the glare on their screen and weather is always a factor. Meeting outside on a terrace or in the rooftop garden may also mean that the recording secretary has to access the building and travel through the common elements to reach the outdoor meeting space. The same goes for a very large boardroom. Many buildings are limiting admission into a building to those who reside or work in the building (i.e. your residents and property manager) or, in special circumstances, a contractor performing an emergency repair, but the recording secretary is seen as a guest to the site.

We have over 40 recording secretaries on our roster and we attend over 200 meetings each month. Our recording secretaries are a busy group of people with families and other responsibilities, but they also often attend several meetings each week. MinuteTakers Inc. believes it would be irresponsible for us to encourage in-person meetings when one recording secretary could be in close, direct contact with upwards of 15 or more people outside of their family units in a single week! This estimate does not include the number of people that they may encounter if they attend an owners' meeting or if they utilize public transportation to get to and from meetings.

In closing, MinuteTakers Inc. thanks you for your support, your business and your trust through these unusual times. We hope that this article can put some realities into perspective and that you will join us in meeting remotely for the time being until more information becomes available.