

Court of Appeal for Saskatchewan

Tips for Video Hearings Using Cisco Webex Meetings

Since March 23, 2020, the Court of Appeal for Saskatchewan has heard all appeals and applications electronically. For video hearings, the Court is using Cisco Webex Meetings. The following list of tips has been compiled based on feedback from participants in the Court's Webex hearings.

Familiarize Yourself with Webex

- You must install Webex Meetings on the device you will use for your appearance prior to the hearing.
- Once you have installed Webex, try it out. Find the icons for muting your audio and video and for viewing the participant list.
- Experiment with different Webex views. Each participant will appear in the Webex application in a separate box. If all judges are in the courtroom, there will be one box for all of them. If one or more judges are attending remotely, there will be a separate box for each. View settings can be changed by clicking on the Layout button at the top right of the viewing window. Use the view that you prefer. There are three choices:
 - Active speaker video view – only the active speaker will appear on the screen.
 - Active speaker and thumbnail video view – the active speaker will fill the majority of the screen while all other participants will be minimized and appear in a row at the bottom of the screen. This is the default view.
 - Grid view – all participants appear in equal sized boxes evenly displayed across the screen.

In active speaker video view and active speaker and thumbnail video view, the image will change each time the speaker changes. In grid view, the image never changes.

Prepare Your Equipment/Surroundings

- It is your responsibility to ensure that your equipment is functioning properly and that your internet service can accommodate the bandwidth that video conferencing requires.
- Your internet connection upload speed should be 10 Mbps or higher to have both high-quality video and sound. A wired connection is the most stable.
- If you are appearing from home, consider asking others in your home to refrain from using the internet during the hearing.
- If you are going to use a mobile device for the hearing, ensure that you have a way to keep it stationary and not handheld. Make sure that your device is completely charged and that you have a charging cable and outlet within your reach.
- Set up your laptop or computer camera in a way and in a location that ensures the most effective video appearance. Ideally, you should be in the centre of the visible screen, 2-3 feet

away from your camera. Your head and shoulders should dominate the screen. If your head is cut off at the top or bottom, you are too close. If your entire torso is in view, you are too far away.

- If you are using a laptop, elevate it by 6-8 inches. This moves you into the centre of the shot and moves your microphone closer to you and farther away from any pages that you might be turning.
- Find a quiet room with a door that you can shut and with an appropriate background. Avoid having bright light behind you. If you have sunlight or a lamp facing you (behind your device) this will make it easier to see you.
- For audio, start at 50%. You can adjust up or down as needed.
- You may use headphones if you wish. Headphones with a fixed microphone are preferable. Test your speaker and your headphones to make sure that they are working properly.
- Turn off notifications and close other applications on your computer/device before the hearing.
- If you wish to schedule a test call with Court staff prior to the hearing date, contact the Court's registry office at least one clear day before the hearing at caregistrar@sasklawcourts.ca

Prepare Yourself

- Make sure that all of your documents have been served and filed. In a video hearing, there is no option to physically hand a document to the clerk.
- Organize your documents to minimize shuffling papers during your submission.
- Provide contact information to the clerk so that she can reach you if there are technical difficulties.
- If your client wishes to participate in the hearing, you must provide the registry office with contact information (email address) for your client at least one clear day before the hearing at caregistrar@sasklawcourts.ca The registry office will send your client an invitation and will provide any other necessary sign in assistance. Do not share your invitation link with your client.

Special Considerations for Boardroom Appearances

- Many boardrooms are set up with a camera capturing a long table. Avoid positioning yourself at the far end of the table. Position yourself closer to the camera and adjust its angle.
- Where more than one person will address the Court from a boardroom, keep the camera and microphone fixed on one seat and change seats rather than trying to move the camera and microphone or trying to capture both speakers in one camera view.
- Know how to mute the boardroom microphone.
- There should only be one Webex connection from a single room. If participants are using multiple laptops, they should each be in a separate room.

Hearing Choreography

- If you sign into Webex before the clerk, you will receive a message indicating that the hearing has not yet started. Wait a few minutes and try again.
- The clerk will sign in and will ascertain that each participant (except for the Court) is present with video and audio working. Both audio and video will be muted for parties represented by a lawyer, members of the media and members of the public during the hearing.
- Once all non-judicial participants are present with working video and audio, the Court will enter the hearing. The clerk will check audio and video connections for the Court and will then announce that the Court is in session. The presiding judge will then start the hearing.
- If there is a break during the hearing, mute your video and audio during the break if you are going to remain in the same room. Make sure that you are back in front of the camera and ready to proceed at the time specified for the hearing to recommence.

Hearing Etiquette

- If the hearing is before a panel of the Court, counsel should gown. There is no need to gown for an appearance before one judge in chambers.
- The Court expects that you will remain seated when it enters the meeting and during your submissions. Stand only if that is your preference and only if, in so doing, you can keep a 'head and shoulders' view for your camera and maintain a proper distance from your microphone.
- Consider where you are looking while you are arguing. You will have to look at the participant boxes to see the reaction of the Court to your submissions. When you are not looking at the Court, try to look at your camera.
- Mute your audio when you are not speaking. Don't forget to unmute when it is your turn to speak.
- Avoid talking over a judge or other counsel. Pause frequently during your submissions to allow the Court to ask questions and avoid speaking over the Court or other hearing participants.
- When your audio is not muted, use pen and paper to make notes rather than typing them.
- You may not record or save still images or audio or video of the hearing unless you are an accredited member of the media. Accredited members of the media may use recording devices or save audio recordings for the purpose of ensuring the accuracy of their reporting but not for broadcast or publication.
- As in a courtroom, refrain from eating or drinking during the hearing.