

Model Parliament Unit

Background Lesson 2: Organization of the Parliamentary Day

Student Activity Sheet

Descriptions of Typical Events in a Parliamentary Day

Opening of Sitting

At the Opening of the Sitting, the Speaker reads a prayer, after which he or she orders that the doors be opened to allow the public to enter the galleries. The daily business then commences.

Routine Proceedings: Tabling of Documents

At this point, the Government Leader in the Senate, or a Minister in the House of Commons has the opportunity to table a report or document for the Senate or House of Commons to consider. This makes the item a public document.

Routine Proceedings: Introduction of Government Bills

When a bill is introduced, it becomes part of Parliament's agenda for that session. The text of the bill is printed and distributed, and serves as the focus for the detailed discussions that will follow during second reading and later stages in the legislative process.

Senators' and Members' Statements

Senators' Statements or Members' Statements allow Senators or MPs to raise issues important to them and/or their specific regions. This procedure enables them to be heard and to draw the Government's attention to a problem of local, national or international interest.

Routine Proceedings: Presentation of Reports from Committees

Committees are assigned to look into specific issues. They also study bills that are referred to them, normally after second reading, and at this point they present their reports. These reports summarize the opinion of the majority of each committee's members. MPs who are not in agreement may also get the opportunity to voice their opinion.



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Other Business (Senate)/Private Members' Business (House of Commons)

This part of the day is reserved for the consideration of business sponsored by a private Senator or MP, that is, by any parliamentarian who is not part of the Cabinet.

Routine Proceedings: Presentation of Petitions

Petitions are one way Canadians can make themselves heard in Parliament. Petitions are taken seriously when large numbers of people support issues and can result in major changes.

Government Orders: Second Reading, Report Stage or Third Reading of a Government Bill

During second reading, the bill is subjected to a thorough debate for the first time. The Opposition is able to criticize both the underlying policy that the bill expresses, and its specific purpose. The Government defends it. Speeches alternate between those in favour and those opposed.

Question Period

Question Period allows the Opposition and Government backbenchers to ask for information and to question the Government on any matter within federal responsibility that they feel is in the public interest. The importance of Question Period is the fact that any MP, without advance notice, can ask any Minister any question relating to his or her portfolio. It is a means of holding the Government of the day accountable.

Committee Meetings

Committee consideration of a bill allows parliamentarians to consider opinions from experts on the subject of the bill. They may also hear from those groups and individuals who will be affected by its provisions. Parliamentarians of both chambers can then propose amendments to the bill that reflect the viewpoints they hear from witnesses, as well as their own conclusions.

Adjournment Proceedings

After a motion to adjourn the Commons has been moved, an MP who is not satisfied with the answer he or she received during Question Period can raise the matter during the adjournment debate. (*Note: This procedure relates only to the House of Commons.*)

