

HANDOUT 7: Canada's Parliamentary System

Vocabulary

Order Paper: The Order Paper is printed daily for both the House of Commons and the Senate. It lists the business of Parliament for that day's sitting. Any bills to be introduced or debated will be listed on the Order paper as part of the business of Parliament for that day.

First Reading: A member of the Cabinet or backbencher proposes a bill and moves for the House's "leave" to introduce the bill. Next comes the motion that the bill be read a first time and printed (the printed bill is on the Order Paper). Both of these steps are done without debate and approval is automatic.



Second Reading: After first reading the motion for second reading will take place. This is the stage at which MPs debate the principle of the bill - its substance rather than its language. If it passes second reading, it goes to a committee of the House, usually a standing committee. It is at this stage that the government and opposition parties will debate the value of the bill to a specific cause, issue, or matter of national importance. Specific procedural rules govern how long a bill may be debated. However, individual speakers may have the "floor" for anywhere from 10 minutes to several hours.

Committee Process: If it passes second reading, the bill goes to a committee of the House, usually a standing committee. At this stage, committees may hear from groups and individuals that are not MPs. The committee considers the bill, clause by clause, before reporting it (with or without amendments) back to the House. The size of these committees varies, but the parties are represented in proportion to their strength in the House itself. Any member of the committee can move amendments. The bill then returns to the House, with or without amendments for Third Reading.

Third Reading: Bills returning for approval for Third Reading have been presented, debated, analyzed, amended, and given due process. If the motion for third reading carries, the bill goes to the Senate, where it goes through much the same process. Bills initiated in the Senate and passed there come to the Commons, and go through the same stages as Commons bills.

Royal Assent: Royal Assent is given by the Queen's representative in our Parliament - the Governor General. No bill can become law (become an Act) unless it has been passed in identical form by both houses and has been assented to by the Governor General.