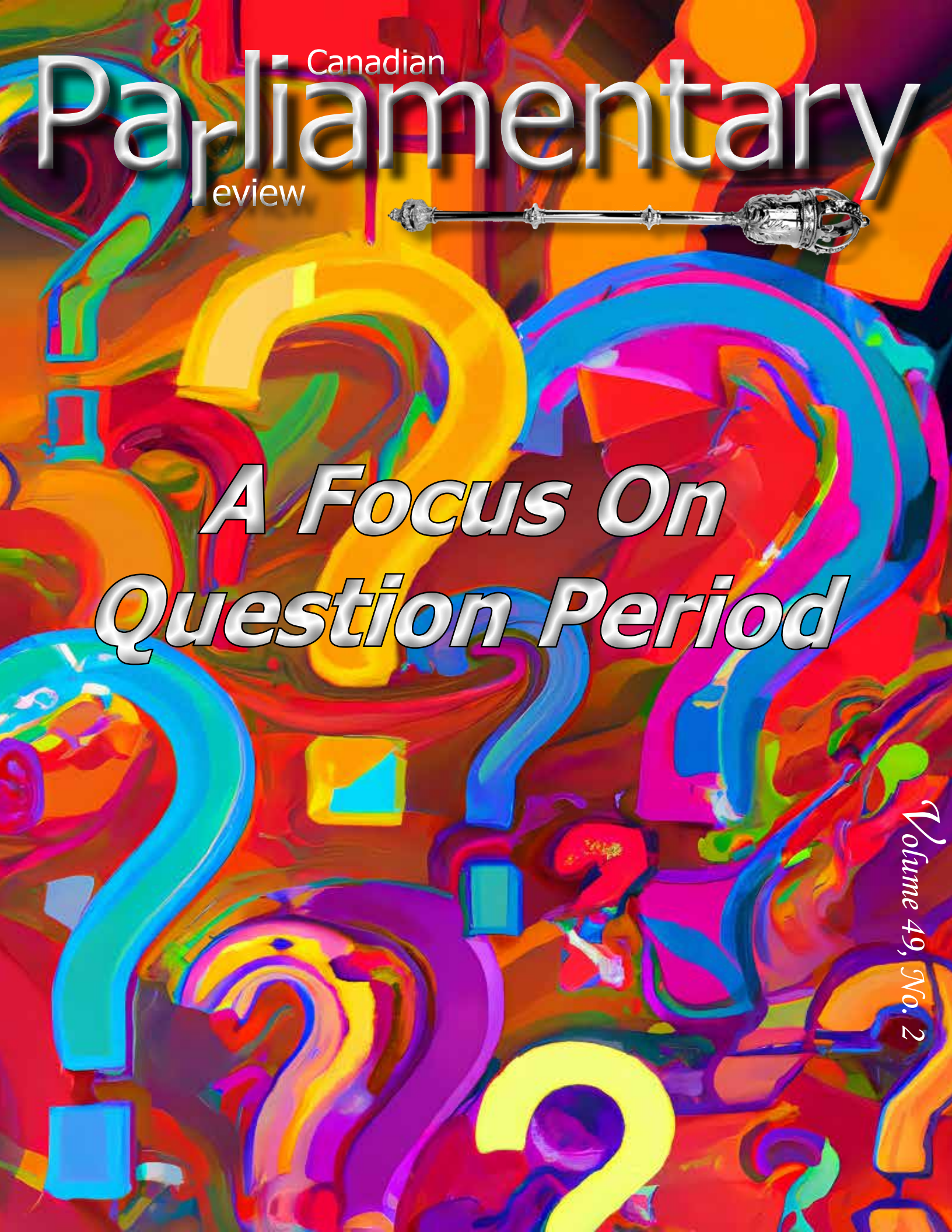




Canadian
Parliamentary
Review

***A Focus On
Question Period***

Volume 49, No. 2



From The Editor's Desk

A Focus on Question Period

Question Period has been described as “a daily snapshot of national political life.” But while some commentators celebrate it as “a free-wheeling affair, with tremendous spontaneity and vitality,” others deride it as “scrutiny by screech.”

Inspired by a House of Commons Standing Orders debate which discussed potential reforms to its Question Period, the *Canadian Parliamentary Review* presents a theme issue exploring this part of proceedings in greater depth.

First, **Stephanie Feldman** updates and expands a Library of Parliament research publication on how assemblies across the country and several Westminster parliaments abroad handle this element of proceedings.

Next, we examine Question Period in greater depth in two chambers: the Senate and the Assemblée nationale du Québec.

Maxime Fortin outlines how Question Period has changed in the federal parliament's upper chamber since the influx of many Independent/non-aligned senators a decade ago.

François Arsenault and **Anne Bélanger** dispel some of the myths about Oral Questions and Answers in the Assemblée nationale du Québec propagated by extensive media coverage that perpetuates and reinforces certain preconceived notions among the public.

We then turn to the concept of “call lists” – a pre-determined speaking order for parliamentarians in debate. Canada's House of Commons implemented these lists for Question Period in 1977 following the introduction of televised proceedings. Recently the United Kingdom's House of Commons reaffirmed its existing policy against using them. UK MP **Cat Smith**, Chair of the UK House of Commons Procedure Committee, explains why concerns that certainty about speaking order will “debating chambers” into “speaking chambers,” prevented her committee from recommending their adoption.

Finally, we present two articles which *question* whether Question Periods are really, as some critics of current practices have said, “broken.” **Aaron Roth** with **Philip Massolin** trace the developments in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and suggest that the often-raucous conduct of Members and their decision to “play to the cameras,” has not necessarily degraded Question Period's accountability function; rather, it's shifted to parallel path.

Chris Greenaway and **Michael Cowan** contend that critiques labelling Question Period as uncivil, theatrical, and increasingly unproductive do not assess it on its own institutional terms, as an intentionally structured site of political contestation. Instead, the authors propose employing the concept of “mindful adversarialism” as the standard by which to measure the supposed decline and decay of this part of proceedings.

To conclude on a lighter note, **Charlie Feldman** highlights some notable House of Commons Question Period moments from the past with stories involving fish, fuddle duddles, and a famous star of stage and screen.

The *Canadian Parliamentary Review* was founded in 1978 to inform Canadian legislators about activities of the federal, provincial and territorial branches of the Canadian Region of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and to promote the study of and interest in Canadian parliamentary institutions. Contributions from legislators, former members, staff and all other persons interested in the objectives of the Review are welcome.

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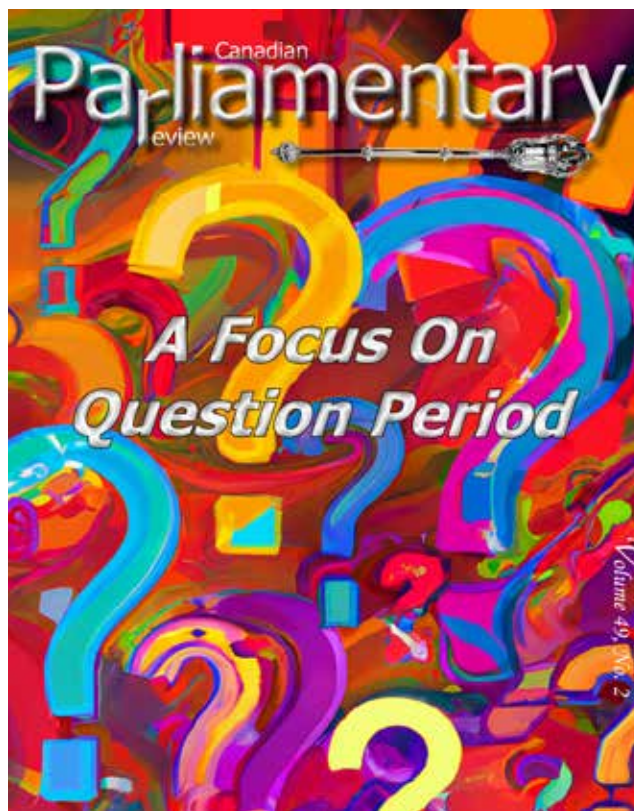
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Question Period in the Parliament of Canada and Other Legislatures

Question Period is the parliamentary proceeding that tends to attract the most attention. On each day that the Senate and House of Commons are in session, Question Period gives parliamentarians an opportunity to seek information from the government and to hold it accountable on its policies and the administration of public affairs. Historically, the rules, conventions and practices surrounding Question Period in the Parliament of Canada were unwritten. However, in the 1960s, both houses adopted written rules governing the conduct of Question Period. Although the general format of Question Period has remained relatively stable since then, some changes to Question Period have been made since the adoption of these written rules, and over the years, its proceedings have been shaped by Speakers' rulings and the initiative of parliamentarians. In this article, the author explores common and unique features of Question Period in Canadian parliaments and several other Commonwealth parliaments. **The Canadian Parliamentary Review, which requested a newly revised and expanded version of a Library of Parliament research publication first published in 2011 and first revised in 2014, sincerely thanks the Library of Parliament for devoting resources to this project.*

Stephanie Feldman

Introduction

Question Period (known officially as “Oral Questions” in the Parliament of Canada) is a time set aside in Westminster-style parliamentary systems during which parliamentarians, principally from the opposition, can pose questions regarding government policies and decisions. It is a public forum in which legislators can hold the government of the day to account.

This publication examines the rules, conventions and practices surrounding Question Period in the Parliament of Canada, in Canadian provinces and territories and in several other Commonwealth countries – namely, the United Kingdom (U.K.), Australia and New Zealand. As these jurisdictions share similar parliamentary and governance systems, their legislatures' procedures are often alike. This article focuses on the general framework that governs Question Period, not the specifics of individual rules. Since Question Period and written questions are interconnected in some jurisdictions, this paper also briefly reviews the rules governing the submission of written questions.

Stephanie Feldman is an analyst of constitutional and parliamentary affairs at the Library of Parliament. This publication is based on a previous Library of Parliament publication by Michel Bédard.

Canada

*Senate of Canada*¹

For much of the Senate's history, Question Period took place without the guidance of any written rules until it amended its rules in 1968 to formally recognize the practice.²

Each sitting day during its 30-minute Question Period, senators may ask oral questions of the leader or representative of the government in the Senate, ministers who are senators, and committee chairs. In 2015, the Senate agreed to invite ministers who are not senators to respond to oral questions.³ Since 2016, such ministers have regularly answered questions during Question Period, although this practice was suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴

The leader or representative of the government in the Senate may be asked oral questions relating to public affairs. Questions directed to ministers must relate to their ministerial responsibilities. In 2006, the Speaker of the Senate ruled that this included departmental responsibilities and excluded functions that are regional, political or unrelated to ministerial functions.⁵ Questions asked of committee chairs must relate to their committee activities, which include “the specific things that are done by the committee, such as the holding of meetings, the election of a chairman, the calling of witnesses, the hiring of staff, advertising, and any other matter relating to the manner in which

the committee conducts its proceedings.”⁶ General issues about planning and upcoming work are also considered as part of committee activities.⁷

Oral questions are asked without notice and may be followed by supplementary questions. Debate is out of order during Question Period, but the senator asking or answering a question may make brief explanatory remarks. *Senate Procedure in Practice* states that “[a]lthough the Opposition leadership may provide the Speaker with a list of senators who wish to ask questions, the Speaker is not bound to follow this list.”⁸

The recipient of an oral question may defer answering if the question cannot be answered immediately. While there is no obligation to provide a response, any reply that is provided later can be provided in writing under “Delayed Answers” or deposited with the Clerk and subsequently published in the *Debates of the Senate*. Delayed answers appear immediately following the record of proceedings for Question Period on the day the response is provided. The answers, however, are not read aloud during the Senate’s proceedings.

A senator whose question seeks statistical or other information that is not readily available, or who desires an answer in writing, may submit a written question to the Clerk of the Senate. The question is then placed on the *Order Paper* until a reply is tabled or until the end of the session. A copy of the answer is also provided to the senator who asked the question. Written questions may be asked of the leader or representative of the government in the Senate and ministers, but not of committee chairs.

*House of Commons*⁹

Early in its history, the House of Commons Question Period, like its Senate counterpart, was based on convention and custom. In 1964, the first-ever written rules governing Question Period were included in the *Standing Orders of the House of Commons* (the rules of procedure governing the House of Commons), and the proceeding has continued to be shaped by precedent and Speakers’ rulings and statements.

The Speaker of the House of Commons is empowered to rule questions out of order if they contravene the rules and practices of the House of Commons. The Speaker can also suggest that a question be rephrased to render it acceptable or recognize a different member to pose another question. Although the Speaker may order that a non-urgent question be placed on the *Order Paper* instead, this power is rarely used.

The recognition pattern – the order in which members are permitted to ask questions – and the distribution of questions among political parties and independent members are usually negotiated by the parties based on each party’s level of representation in the House of Commons. It is an established practice for political parties to provide the Speaker with a list of members who will be asking questions ahead of that day’s Question Period, although the Speaker is not bound by this list.

House of Commons Procedure and Practice provides a complete description of the rules, practices and precedents governing the questions that may be asked during Question Period. Members are expected to “ask a question, be brief, seek information and ask a question that is within the administrative responsibility of the government or of the individual minister addressed.”¹⁰ Questions need not be preceded by any notice. Based on past practice, members have approximately 35 seconds each to ask and answer a question.

Oral questions may be asked of ministers and members who are designated members of the Board of Internal Economy (the administrative body of the House of Commons). Questions to the Speaker are out of order, however. House of Commons practice allows members to pose questions to committee chairs regarding their committees’ schedules and agendas.

While oral questions tend to be addressed to a specific minister, they are considered to be directed to the government as a whole and may be answered by any minister, reflecting Canada’s “collegial system of Cabinet responsibility.”¹¹ In 2017, then prime minister Justin Trudeau adopted the practice of answering all questions on Wednesdays when he was in attendance, but this practice appears to have ended after he left office in 2025.

According to parliamentary practice, ministers to whom a question is addressed may answer the question, defer it (referred to as “taking it on notice”), explain why an answer cannot be provided at the time or decline to respond. Parliamentary secretaries may also answer questions addressed to their ministers.

A member who is dissatisfied with the response to a question may give notice of their intention to raise the subject matter of the question upon the House of Commons’ adjournment. The “adjournment proceedings” (or “late show,” as it is often called) take place every sitting day at 6:30 p.m. except Friday

and last for 30 minutes. The Speaker selects up to three topics that are to be debated each day on the basis of several criteria: the order of the notice, the urgency of the matter and the apportioning of opportunities to members of various parties. Each question is debated for up to 10 minutes. The member who raised the matter may speak for up to four minutes, and the minister (or parliamentary secretary) responding is also given four minutes to reply. A second round of two minutes may follow (one minute for the member and one minute for the minister or parliamentary secretary).

In addition to oral questions, members seeking information from ministers relating to public affairs may place up to four written questions at a time on the *Order Paper*. No more than three of the four questions (distinguished in the *Order Paper* by an asterisk) may be designated for an oral reply. A member may request that their question be answered within 45 calendar days. If no answer is provided within this timeframe, the government's failure to respond to the question is deemed referred to a standing committee chosen by the member. The member may choose to accept this referral or choose instead to have the question transferred to adjournment proceedings for debate.

Provincial Legislatures

*Newfoundland and Labrador*¹²

In the Newfoundland and Labrador House of Assembly, oral questions on matters of urgency or public importance may be posed to ministers during the daily 30-minute Question Period. Ministers may respond or decline to answer a question. If a minister believes that the question would require a lengthy reply, the question may be placed on the *Order Paper* or the minister may take the question on notice and respond orally during a subsequent sitting. When such responses are lengthy, ministers are asked to provide them during "Statements by Ministers" rather than during Question Period; these statements are published in the Assembly's daily proceedings. At the Speaker's discretion, a member may pose a "reasonable" number of supplementary questions following a response by a minister to a question.

As well, members may seek information about public affairs from ministers by placing written questions on the *Order Paper*. Through the same process, information may be sought of any other member relating to bills, motions or any public matter connected to the member.

Written answers to such questions are reproduced verbatim in *Hansard*, the official record of the House of Assembly's daily proceedings. Although questions to the Speaker are out of order, members can write to the Speaker regarding matters within the Speaker's jurisdiction, and a response must be provided.

*Nova Scotia*¹³

The time allotted to oral questions varies in the Nova Scotia House of Assembly, with Question Period lasting up to 50 minutes on any day of the week except Monday. As described in *The Nova Scotia Legislature: An Overview of Its Procedures and Practices*, members may pose questions to the premier "about the manner in which the government is conducting the affairs of the province,"¹⁴ and to ministers on matters for which they are officially responsible. Members may also ask written questions of ministers, which are filed with the Clerk. Any written responses are also filed with the Clerk.

*New Brunswick*¹⁵

Question Period in the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick takes place each day the Assembly is sitting and lasts 30 minutes. Oral questions must pertain to urgent matters and must reasonably be assumed to relate to information within the minister's present knowledge. The member's question and the minister's reply must not exceed 60 seconds each. A minister may answer a question, take it on notice, state that it should be submitted in writing or decline to answer it. A member may ask up to two supplementary questions on the same subject as the initial question. Oral questions taken on notice and answered orally on a subsequent day may be followed by one supplementary question from the member who originally asked the question.

Members may direct written questions to ministers by placing them on the *Order Paper*. Answers to written questions are printed in the *Journal of Debates* (Hansard), the Legislative Assembly's official daily transcript of proceedings.

*Prince Edward Island*¹⁶

Question Period in the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island takes place every day the Assembly is in session and lasts 40 minutes. Question Period allows members of the Legislative Assembly to pose oral questions to ministers about public affairs, bills, motions or any other public

matter related to the Assembly's business. Questions must be clear and concise and refer to matters that are reasonably within the present knowledge of the minister. A minister may answer the question, take it on notice or state that the question should be put in writing. Upon such a request, the Speaker may direct that the question be put in writing or stand as notice on the *Order Paper*. At the Speaker's discretion, an oral question may be followed by no more than two supplementary questions on the same subject.

Responses to questions taken on notice are given orally on a subsequent day at the beginning of Question Period. The time taken by ministers to answer questions taken as notice has no impact on the duration of Question Period.

Written questions may be placed on the *Order Paper*, and the minister to whom a question is directed must provide an answer to the Clerk within 45 calendar days. The Clerk then transmits a copy of the answer to the member who asked the question.

*Quebec*¹⁷

Members of the National Assembly of Quebec may ask ministers questions on any matter "of urgent or topical public importance for which a minister or the Government is officially responsible" during the 45-minute daily Question Period. An oral question may be followed by one or more supplementary questions.

A minister may take a question on notice and answer at the end of Question Period or during a subsequent sitting (after Question Period). A minister may also decline to answer a question, particularly when the information sought could only be collected through considerable effort that the usefulness does not warrant, or the information sought would be injurious to the public interest.

Written questions may be placed on the *Order Paper and Notices*, and the written replies are tabled in the National Assembly.

*Ontario*¹⁸

In the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, Question Period takes place every morning when the legislature is in session and provides members with an opportunity to ask questions of ministers. Question Period lasts 60 minutes, including supplementary questions. Members may give notice of a question to a minister.

A minister may decline to answer a question or take a question on notice and answer it at a subsequent sitting. A minister may direct a question to another minister who is responsible for the subject matter. The Speaker may order that a question requiring a lengthy answer be placed on the *Orders and Notices Paper*. At the Speaker's discretion, a question may be followed by "a reasonable number" of supplementary questions. Parliamentary assistants may also ask questions, but not of their own ministers; they may, however, answer questions on behalf of their ministers. One independent member is allowed to ask a question and a supplementary question at each sitting.

A member who is dissatisfied with an answer or whose question was ruled as not being of public importance or urgent may give notice to the Clerk that they intend to raise the question's topic during the adjournment proceedings. Before 4:00 p.m., the Speaker indicates up to three topics that have been selected for debate at the adjournment of the Assembly on that day. Each question is discussed for up to 10 minutes: five minutes for the member raising the matter and five minutes for the minister or parliamentary assistant responding.

Written questions may be placed on the *Orders and Notices Paper*. They must be answered by ministers within 24 sessional days unless the minister declines to answer the question or indicates that more time is needed to prepare a response. Written answers are provided to the member who asked the question and to the Clerk. A member can have up to 10 questions on the *Orders and Notices Paper* at any one time.

*Manitoba*¹⁹

Forty minutes are allocated for Question Period each sitting day in the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. Question Period "is an opportunity for Members to seek information about important matters which fall within the administrative responsibility of the government or of the specific Ministers to whom questions are addressed."²⁰ An oral question may be followed by up to two supplementary questions, at the discretion of the Speaker.²¹

As well, written questions may be submitted to ministers relating to public affairs, and to other members when they are related to bills, motions or other public matters connected to House business. Each member may place up to five questions on the *Order Paper*, which must be replied to within 30 days. Answers to written questions are tabled in the Legislative Assembly.

*Saskatchewan*²²

Question Period in the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan is limited to 25 minutes, and questions must relate to matters within the competence of the government or a minister's responsibility. Members may not ask ministers questions of a private nature, or questions that relate to Saskatchewan's Board of Internal Economy, a caucus, a party or political responsibilities. Ministers' responses must be relevant to the question. A minister may also decline to answer a question or take it on notice, in which case it may be answered at a subsequent Question Period.

Members may also seek information from ministers through written questions. These must be preceded by a notice of five sitting days before being answered. On the fifth day, the government may table the response, seek an Order for Return when more time is necessary or convert the question into a Notice of Motion for Return if it intends to amend the wording of the question or bring the matter forward for debate. Notices of questions and their responses are printed in the Assembly's daily published record, *Votes and Proceedings*.

*Alberta*²³

The *Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta* contain few rules governing Question Period, other than providing for a 50-minute Question Period each sitting day beginning no later than 1:50 p.m. Most rules governing Question Period are based on guidelines, precedents and practices inspired, in part, by the House of Commons.

At the outset of each legislature, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly typically outlines the relevant rules before the first Question Period takes place.²⁴ Questions and answers are limited to 35 seconds, and supplementary questions are permitted. In the current legislature, there are 16 questions per day, based on a recognition pattern agreed upon by the House leaders.²⁵

In addition to posing oral questions during Question Period, members of the Legislative Assembly may also submit written questions to ministers relating to public affairs by placing them on the *Order Paper*. Such questions must be answered within 30 sitting days of being accepted.

*British Columbia*²⁶

The Legislative Assembly of British Columbia has its daily 30-minute Question Period at the opening of the afternoon sitting on Mondays and Wednesdays and at the opening of the morning sitting on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Oral questions followed by supplementary questions are allowed, at the discretion of the Speaker, except for those taken on notice.

Members may also place written questions on the *Order Paper* to ministers and to members in relation to bills, motions or other public matters connected with the member and the business of the Assembly. Answers to such questions are provided by written replies to the Clerk, who enters them in the Legislative Assembly's official record of daily proceedings, the *Journals*.

Territorial Legislatures

*Nunavut*²⁷

Question Period in the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut lasts up to 75 minutes but can be extended by unanimous consent for an additional 30 minutes.

Questions "relating to public affairs" must be directed towards ministers, and up to two supplementary questions on the same subject are allowed. According to the *Oral Question Period Guidelines* appended to the Assembly's written rules, its proceedings "are generally conducted in accordance with a combination of Nunavut practices [and] precedents," as well as citations from sources about House of Commons parliamentary procedure.

Written questions may also be asked to ministers for questions "which would likely to require a detailed or complex answer, or which would not reasonably be assumed to be within the present knowledge of the Minister."

*Northwest Territories*²⁸

The Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories allocates up to 60 minutes for its daily Question Period. According to the Assembly's *Guidelines for Oral Questions*, which are appended to its rules, the four objectives of Question Period are to provide a forum to raise constituency concerns, probe the actions of the Executive, bring attention to "the differences of opinion on the policies of the Executive on major issues and judging the parliamentary skills of individual Members," and obtain information from the government.

Questions must be addressed to a minister, and up to two supplementary questions are permitted. Where a situation arises that is not covered by the Assembly's guidelines, the Assembly will address it by drawing from "a combination of practices and precedents of the Northwest Territories, the House of Commons of Canada, provincial and territorial legislatures, and parliaments in the Commonwealth."

Written questions are also permitted for questions "which would be likely to require a detailed or complex answer, or which would not reasonably be assumed to be within the present knowledge of the Minister." There is a limit of up to five written questions on the *Order Paper* per member at any one time.

*Yukon*²⁹

The Yukon Legislative Assembly's Question Period lasts up to 30 minutes and provides members with the opportunity to pose questions "seeking information about a matter which falls under the administrative responsibility of the Government of Yukon."

In general, questions of up to one minute in length and responses of up to one minute and 30 seconds are permitted. Questions may be followed by up to two supplementary questions and replies "should be as brief as possible."

Questions cannot be posed to the Speaker, but the Standing Orders provide that a cabinet commissioner may answer questions during Question Period. A cabinet commissioner is a "government private member appointed to lead a cabinet commission."³⁰

The Guidelines for Oral Question Period provide that "[i]n all cases not provided for within these guidelines, the usages and customs of the House of Commons of Canada, as in force at the time, shall be followed."

Written questions may be placed on the *Order Paper* seeking information of the Executive Council "relating to public affairs" or from "private members, including Committee Chairs, relating to any bill, motion or other public matter connected with the business of the Assembly in which such members may be concerned."³¹ There is a limit of up to five written questions on the *Order Paper* at a time, and replies are tabled in the Assembly.³²

United Kingdom

*House of Lords*³³

Oral questions take place from Monday to Thursday at the beginning of parliamentary business and last up to 40 minutes. Questions in the House of Lords must relate to matters of government responsibility and are usually addressed to "His Majesty's Government" as a whole – not to a particular minister. They must be preceded by 24 hours' notice, and each member may only give notice of up to seven oral questions per year.

Four oral questions are answered each day. Questions should be concise enough so that an answer can be given in 75 words or fewer. Supplementary questions are allowed and should be limited to one or two points. The proceedings on each question, including supplementary questions and answers, are limited to 10 minutes. With some exceptions, no member can have more than one oral question in the *House of Lords Business* at any one time.

On Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, the fourth space during the oral questions period is reserved for a "topical question" chosen by ballot, which is more timely in nature. Balloted questions are randomly chosen, similar to a "shuffle" (which is described in the next section of this paper). Any member may submit one topical question for the ballot even if they already have an oral question on the *Order Paper*. A ballot is also used to designate three questions asked of secretaries of state sitting in the House of Lords once per sitting month. These questions are addressed to a particular secretary of state and not to the government as a whole.

In addition to ordinary oral questions, members may ask "private notice questions" on urgent matters, provided they have given written notice to the Lord Speaker. Such notice must be given before noon when the sitting of the House of Lords begins after 1:00 p.m., and by 9:30 a.m. should the sitting begin before 1:00 p.m. The decision as to whether the question is sufficiently urgent rests with the Lord Speaker.

Members are also permitted to table six written questions on any one day and up to 12 per sitting week. These are expected to be answered within 10 working days, and their answers are sent electronically to the member asking the question and then published online.

Questions for short debate may also be submitted by members, and they are selected on the basis of a ballot conducted every five sitting weeks. Questions for short debate are taken during the lunch or dinner break, or as the last item of business. They last between one and one-and-a-half hours. The questioner is permitted between 8 and 10 minutes and the responding minister between 10 and 12 minutes. The remaining time is divided equally between speakers on the list.

*House of Commons*³⁴

There are various types of oral and written parliamentary questions that members may ask of the government in the U.K. House of Commons. Oral questions include Prime Minister's Questions, Ministerial Question Time (which includes substantive and topical questions) and urgent questions. Written questions include "ordinary" questions, "named day" questions and oral questions that did not get asked during Question Time.

Prime Minister's Questions takes place every sitting Wednesday and lasts for around 30 minutes. Members who wish to ask a substantive question of the prime minister must submit it in writing by the preceding sitting Thursday. A random digital draw, known as the "shuffle," selects the names of 15 members who have tabled a question and the order in which the questions will be asked. The questions are then placed on the *Order Paper*. The selected members or any other member may pose a supplementary question, which need not pertain to the same subject as the original question. At the end of the half hour, questions on the *Order Paper* that have not yet been asked will stand for a written answer.

Ministers are allocated a specific day to answer oral questions. From Monday to Thursday, 40 minutes are devoted to substantive questions, which require notice of three to five sitting days, followed by 15 to 20 minutes of topical questions, which may be asked without notice on any aspect of that minister's responsibilities. The questions are selected through the "shuffle."

Urgent questions, which, as the name suggests, are urgent and of public importance, may also be asked of ministers after Question Time or at 11:00 a.m. on Fridays, when there is no scheduled Question Time. Urgent questions must be submitted to the Speaker by the morning deadline (which varies depending on the day of the week) if they are to be answered that day.

Members may also table written questions to ministers. Ordinary written questions do not need to be answered within a fixed timeline after being tabled, but they are usually answered within seven days. "Named day" questions are questions whose answers are tabled on the day specified by the members asking them, provided that they are preceded by a minimum of two days' notice. Oral questions that could not be answered during Question Time due to time constraints are treated as named day questions.

Australia

*Senate*³⁵

Each sitting day, at 2:00 p.m., Question Time begins in the Senate of Australia. This period allows senators to put questions to ministers on any matter relating to public affairs. Oral questions may also be asked of the President (the Australian Senate's term for its Speaker) in relation to any matter under that office's responsibility. While questions are supposed to be posed without notice, ministers often receive informal notice of the subject of an upcoming question.

The Standing Orders establish strict time limits on questions and answers. A question should be asked within one minute, while its answer must not exceed two minutes. Up to two supplementary questions and answers may be asked within 30 seconds and answered within one minute each. A supplementary question must be put to the same minister who answered the initial question and must arise from the original answer or question. In recognizing senators, the President seeks to allocate questions proportionally among political parties and independent senators. In practice, however, the President follows a list agreed to by senators in allocating questions.

Question Time usually lasts one hour and ends when the leader of the government in the Senate asks senators to put any other questions on the *Notice Paper*. This practice reflects the fact that ministers are not obliged to answer questions without notice. At the end of Question Time, a senator who is not satisfied with an answer may move a motion to take notice of answers given to questions that day. While more than one such motion may be moved on the same day, the time devoted to debate a motion is limited to 30 minutes, and a senator may not speak for more than five minutes on each motion.

A senator may also seek information from the government by putting a question on notice, which involves giving a written copy of the question to the Clerk, who then reproduces it in the *Notice Paper*. The answer is also provided to the Clerk in writing. Upon being answered, the question and answer are reproduced in the Senate's online database for questions on notice. A senator whose question remains unanswered after 30 days may ask for an explanation at the end of Question Time.

*House of Representatives*³⁶

Question Time takes place at 2:00 p.m. on most sitting days, when ministers answer questions from members of the House of Representatives for a duration of time not specified in the rules. The government determines when Question Time ends, and this is typically signalled about 45 minutes in, when the prime minister or a senior minister – who has no obligation to answer questions – asks that further questions be put on notice. This brings Question Time to an end, and the next item of business is called. If the government does not want Question Time to take place on a given day, it uses the same method, asking that questions be placed on notice as soon as the Speaker calls for questions.

The Speaker has discretion over the allocation of questions. In practice, the leader of the opposition is given priority to ask the first question, and questioners thereafter alternate between government and non-government members. The Speaker seeks to allocate questions fairly between all members.

Thirty-second-long questions are asked of ministers but not of parliamentary secretaries, who cannot be asked questions. Questions may also be put to private members and to the Speaker on any parliamentary business connected to them. Ministers may refuse to answer a question or reply to a question in writing. Ministers have three minutes to answer a question. At the conclusion of Question Time, members may ask questions of the Speaker about any matter under that office's jurisdiction.

Oral questions asked during Question Time are put to ministers without notice. Members may also ask a question of ministers in writing for written reply. The question is placed on the *Notice Paper* by the Clerk, and once it is answered, the question and its reply are reproduced in the House's official daily transcript, *Hansard*.

New Zealand³⁷

Members of the House of Representatives, the sole chamber of the Parliament of New Zealand, may use Question Time to pose oral questions (ordinary or urgent) to ministers. Question Time takes place at 2:00 p.m. on each sitting day.

Ordinary oral questions can be asked of a minister regarding any public affairs, House proceeding or administrative matter for which the minister is responsible or with which the minister is connected. Questions can also be posed to private members in relation to any parliamentary business connected with the member.

Notice of oral questions must be given by 10:30 a.m. on the day the question is to be asked either electronically or by hand to the Clerk. After their vetting by the Clerk for compliance with the Standing Orders, all questions are published on the parliamentary website at about 11:30 a.m. There are 12 such questions each day. Shortly after 2:00 p.m., each sitting day, all questions will be asked and answered. One supplementary question per answer, directly related to the answer given, may be allowed by the Speaker. Following ordinary oral questions, members may ask urgent questions if they have given a copy of the question to the Clerk and the responsible minister. Urgent questions are limited to matters that have arisen since 10:30 a.m., that is, after the deadline for notice of ordinary questions.

Ordinary oral questions are allocated to parties proportionally. Excluded from the calculation, however, are members from the government caucus who are ministers and parliamentary undersecretaries. The Business Committee, a standing committee of the House of Representatives, makes the appropriate calculation to ensure proportionality among parties and decides on the rotation to be fair to all political parties and independent members.

Written questions may be put to ministers and other members, as well as to the Speaker, concerning any administrative matter for which they are responsible. Written questions must be submitted and answered electronically. After they are accepted, questions are sent electronically and published on the parliamentary website. Answers to written questions must also be provided electronically no later than six working days after the publication of the question.

Conclusion

The basic structure of Question Period is broadly the same across the jurisdictions examined in this publication: a half-hour to one-hour period devoted to oral questions posed to the government by parliamentarians, who may also submit written questions. In general, rules, conventions and practices relating to Question Period in Canadian provincial legislatures are often inspired by those of the House of Commons. There are differences in Question Period practices among the jurisdictions reviewed, however. For example, while oral questions are asked without notice in Canada, they are preceded by notice in the United Kingdom and New Zealand.

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Question Period in the Senate of Canada: Continuity, Transformation, and Ministerial Participation

Question Period in the Senate of Canada is an accountability mechanism whose form and objectives are linked to the institutional role of a chamber that does not hold the confidence of the government and that has few or no ministers of the Crown among its members. Since 2015, sessional orders have authorized the regular invitation of ministers who are not members of the Senate to participate in Question Period. This practice has modified the modalities of exchanges between senators and the government and has raised various issues relating to ministerial responsibility, institutional symbolism, and procedural rules and practices. Recent developments, particularly with respect to time limits, the minister's location in the chamber, and interaction with other questioning mechanisms, illustrate how the Senate has been able to adapt its practices within the scope of its procedural autonomy.

Maxime Fortin

Question Period occupies a distinctive role in the daily sittings of the Senate. Although it does not attract the same level of public or media attention as Question Period in the House of Commons, and operates within a distinct procedural framework, it nonetheless remains an important accountability exercise and allows senators to obtain information, seek clarification regarding government operations, and raise issues connected to their parliamentary functions. Through its approach, Question Period reflects the Senate's constitutional role and its function as a chamber of sober second thought.

In recent years, several features of Question Period in the Senate have evolved, in response to the changing composition of its members and a desire to modernize its practices. The introduction in 2015 of appearances by ministers of the Crown who sit in the House of Commons constitutes one of the most significant changes. Implemented through successive sessional orders¹, this practice altered the organization of Question Period and the interaction between the Senate and the government, while giving rise to debates regarding ministerial accountability, Senate autonomy, and applicable procedural mechanisms.

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This article examines the evolution of Question Period in the Senate, with particular attention to the modalities governing the participation of ministers who are not normally members of the Senate. After a review of the historical and institutional foundations of Question Period, the analysis will focus on the emergence and continuation of this practice, as well as its effects on Senate rules, procedures, and practices.

Origins and Institutional Logic of Question Period in the Senate

For much of its history, Question Period in the Senate has operated without detailed procedural rules. Senators could ask oral questions of government members, whether the Leader of the Government or ministers of the Crown sitting as senators, present in the chamber, or of senators holding certain responsibilities, in accordance with parliamentary practices. This practice developed in an institutional context where the government does not depend on the confidence of the Senate, as the Senate is not a confidence chamber.

In 1968, Question Period was incorporated into the *Rules of the Senate* (the Rules). This codification recognized an existing practice and confirmed its place in the Order of Business without establishing detailed parameters for the conduct of exchanges or the length of individual interventions.²

Since 1977, Question Period has been governed by what are now rules 4-7 and 4-8, the substance of which has remained consistent. They provide that on each sitting day it begins no later than 30 minutes after the start of Routine Proceedings and lasts no more than 30 minutes. Questions may be addressed to the Leader or Representative of the Government in the Senate on matters of public affairs, to a senator who is a minister on matters relating to their ministerial responsibilities, and to committee chairs regarding the activities of their committees.³

Not a Confidence Chamber

The fact that the Senate is not a confidence chamber, unlike the House of Commons, influences the nature of Question Period in the Senate. Consequently, Question Period in the Senate primarily serves to provide access to information, clarify government policy, and allow for the exercise of administrative scrutiny.

This distinction is reflected in both the structure and tone of the exchanges and has historically justified a more flexible procedural approach, while nevertheless constituting a meaningful accountability exercise.

The Previous Model: The Role of the Leader of the Government in the Senate

Prior to 2015, Question Period relied primarily on the presence of the Leader of the Government in the Senate, or another senator, member of Cabinet, designated by the Prime Minister. This arrangement enabled senators to address their questions to a government representative within the Upper House.

In practice, the Leader of the Government was not necessarily responsible for the portfolios addressed by senators' questions and when there were other senators who were members of Cabinet, not all portfolios were represented in the Senate. Responses therefore often involved general information or undertakings to provide answers at a later time. While consistent with the Senate's institutional role, this model also imposed limits on the substance of exchanges. As a member of Cabinet, the Leader of the Government had access to Cabinet deliberations and policy direction, allowing for informed responses notwithstanding these constraints.

Changes in the composition of the Senate in 2015 and the creation of recognized parliamentary groups⁴ have helped to challenge this model and pave the way for other forms of government representation.

Institutional Changes in 2015 and Procedural Consequences

In January 2014, Justin Trudeau, Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada (which formed the third party in the House of Commons), removed Liberal senators from their national parliamentary caucus. At the time, he "proposed the Senate should be made non-partisan, to better serve Canadians." He suggested an "open, transparent, non-partisan process" that would see all senators named to the Red Chamber sit as Independents.⁵ Following the October 2015 federal election and the formation of a Liberal government, Prime Minister Trudeau did not name any sitting senators to Cabinet or to occupy the traditional role of Leader of the Government in the Senate.

QUESTION PERIOD	PÉRIODE DES QUESTIONS
Pursuant to the order adopted on February 2, 2016, the Senate proceeded to Question Period.	Conformément à l'ordre adopté le 2 février 2016, le Sénat procède à la période des questions.
Pursuant to the order adopted on December 10, 2015, the Honourable Hunter Tootoo, P.C., M.P., Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coastguard, entered the Senate and took part in Question Period.	Conformément à l'ordre adopté le 10 décembre 2015, l'honorable Hunter Tootoo, C.P., député, ministre des Pêches, des Océans et de la Garde côtière canadienne, entre au Sénat et prend part à la période des questions.

On February 3, 2016, the Senate held its first Question Period with a minister. The Honourable Hunter Tootoo, then Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coastguard answered questions in the Senate Chamber that was not televised at the time. "It's indeed an honour to be here [...] This is really a historic day and I thank you for inviting me." – said Minister Tootoo when he became the first minister who is not a senator to answer questions during Question Period in the Senate.



On March 19, 2019, the first televised Question Period with a minister was held in the Senate Chamber. Pablo Rodriguez, then Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, took part in the exercise.

An immediate consequence was the absence of a senator as a member of Cabinet, and thus no senator who attended Cabinet meetings (or even National Liberal caucus meetings) who could answer senators' questions about government policies or programs directly. The absence of a government representative, either leader or minister, raised practical challenges for the conduct of Question Period, which, though called each sitting day, initially did not take place for the first two sitting weeks, other than a few questions asked to committee chairs.

Adoption of a Procedural Solution

In response, the Senate adopted a sessional order in December 2015 authorizing the invitation of ministers from the House of Commons to participate in Question Period. The objective was to maintain a mechanism for direct exchanges between senators and Cabinet members responsible for government policy, as an accountability exercise for the government in the Senate.

Initially, the selection of ministers to be invited followed informal consultations between the Leader of the Opposition and the office of the Leader of the Senate Liberals (a group of senators composed primarily of those who had been expelled from the Liberal caucus in 2014), after which a list of ministers was communicated to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

In March 2016, after a few months without any representation in the Upper Chamber, the Prime Minister appointed a Government Representative in

the Senate, albeit not a minister, nor a member of Cabinet. Once appointed, the Government Representative in the Senate, in practice, assumed many of the functions formerly exercised by the Leader of the Government, including responding to questions on government policy during daily Question Period. Despite this change, the Senate chose to continue inviting ministers from the House of Commons to participate in Question Period in the Senate on a periodic basis.

The operation of Question Period with a minister was subsequently refined following the creation of the Government Representative's Office in 2016 and the formal recognition of parliamentary groups in the Rules in 2017. The Government Representative consulted the Official Opposition, leaders and facilitators of recognized parliamentary groups, and non-affiliated senators to determine which ministers to invite.

Sessional orders adopted on December 7, 2021, and June 4, 2025, confirmed this practice. Ministerial appearances occurred biweekly during the 42nd Parliament and continued during the 44th and 45th Parliaments, following a pause during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Question Period with a Minister: Institutional Scope

The participation of ministers from the House of Commons allows senators to question Cabinet members directly regarding their ministerial responsibilities. Ministers are invited to appear, but their presence does not alter the Senate's constitutional status or existing accountability mechanisms. Responses are provided within a framework of information and dialogue distinct from that of the House of Commons.

To date, the Senate has regulated this practice through sessional orders rather than amendments to the *Rules of the Senate*. The Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament was mandated at the beginning of the first session of the 45th Parliament to study whether the practice should be incorporated into the Rules.

Although the committee's report had not yet been adopted at the time of writing, it concluded that ministerial appearances had become a well-established

Comparison of time limits for regular Question Period and with a minister

(Current Parliamentary Session, 45-1)

Feature	Regular Question Period	Question Period with a Minister
Total duration	30 minutes	64 minutes
Maximum duration of a primary question	one minute	one minute
Maximum duration of a primary response	one minute	one minute and 30 seconds
Supplementary questions	maximum of one	maximum of one
Maximum duration of a supplementary question	30 seconds	45 seconds
Maximum duration of a supplementary response	30 seconds	45 seconds

practice and recommended that they be formally recognized in the Rules. The main purpose of this recommendation is to formally acknowledge the existence of Question Period with a minister who is a member of the House of Commons, without recommending a detailed codification of its terms and conditions.

However, the committee also stressed the importance of preserving some procedural and logistical flexibility, stating that it “agrees that the procedural details and logistics of Question Period with a minister should not be codified in the Rules but determined by sessional order.”⁶ According to the report, this approach takes into account changing parliamentary practices, the composition of the Senate and organizational realities related to the availability of ministers.

Some committee members also expressed that “maintaining the current approach – where the practice is authorized and implemented through a sessional order – is preferable to embedding it in the Rules, as it allows for greater flexibility.”⁷ The use of sessional orders is therefore presented as a tool for the Senate to frame a recognized practice, while avoiding freezing some of the parameters that may need to be adjusted over time.

Frequency and Organization

Question Period with a minister requires coordination with the House of Commons and the government, particularly given ministerial responsibilities and scheduling constraints. They are intended to take place periodically and replace the daily 30-minute Question Period on the days they are scheduled.

Sessional orders adopted by the Senate have generally provided for a regular frequency, while allowing some flexibility in their actual implementation. The most recent sessional order specifically provides that “the Senate invite any minister of the Crown who is not a member of the Senate to attend the Senate, at least once every second week that the Senate sits.”⁸ This provision establishes a minimum threshold for appearances, without precluding the possibility of additional appearances or imposing a rigid schedule.

Regulation of Speaking Time

The *Rules of the Senate* impose no strict limits on daily Question Period beyond the overall 30-minute duration. This procedural flexibility distinguishes the practice in the Senate from that of several legislatures, where exchanges are subject to specific time limits.



Left: During the 42nd Parliament, ministers participating in Question Period in the Senate were seated in a senator's seat. Participants were also required to stand to ask or answer questions. Below: For the 44th and 45th Parliaments, the order of the Senate establishing Question Period with a minister states that neither senators nor ministers were required to stand during Question Period. This change to the usual rule coincides with the change of seats occupied by ministers who now sit at the desk of the Usher of the Black Rod.



However, sessional orders adopted in the last two parliamentary sessions have introduced time parameters for both daily Question Period and Question Period with a minister. These sessional orders specify the maximum length for each question and each answer.

In its report on Question Period with a minister, the Rules Committee notes that these parameters are intended to facilitate the orderly flow of exchanges and allow for greater participation by more senators. Limiting speaking time by way of a sessional order is thus consistent with the general logic chosen for Question Period with a minister.

The Minister's Location in the Chamber

The location of the invited minister during Question Period has been the subject of discussion. The report of the Rules Committee indicates that "the committee is divided on where the minister should sit during Question Period"⁹ highlighting the institutional and symbolic considerations associated with this issue.

During the early years of the practice, invited ministers sat in the seat of or beside the Government Representative in the Senate, occupying a seat among those reserved for senators at the centre of the chamber. This arrangement emphasized the functional dimension of ministerial accountability.

Procedural Gymnastics

Question Period with a minister features a noteworthy peculiarity: the sessional order allows senators and ministers to ask questions and respond while remaining seated, a rare departure from the Senate tradition, where members ordinarily rise to speak.

In the same spirit of simplicity, however, the Senate has determined that, in the practical application of this exercise, the Reading Clerk will stand to signal when ten seconds remain in an intervention. The result is a rather distinctive procedural equilibrium: while exchanges unfold with parliamentarians comfortably in a seated position, the Reading Clerk stands out through sustained physical activity, rising repeatedly over the course of the questions and answers, turning time management in the chamber into one of the few moments during a sitting of the Senate that is truly “standing.”



Since the 44th Parliament, the Senate has opted to use the desk of the Usher of the Black Rod, located in the middle of the chamber between the two rows of senators' desks, near the bar. This change reflects considerations related to the distinction between members of the Senate and individuals invited to appear before the chamber (for example, witnesses invited to appear before a Committee of the Whole). As the report notes, “the bar of the Senate at the entrance of the chamber symbolizes the independence of the Senate from the House of Commons,”¹⁰ and the choice of this location is intended to respect the convention whereby nonsenators do not occupy seats in the Senate that are reserved for its members.

Although the desk of the Usher of the Black Rod is located inside the bar, its use allows the Senate to reconcile the minister's access to the chamber with the maintenance of an institutional distinction between senators and individuals who are invited to appear before the Senate, while also ensuring a degree of comfort for the invited minister, who is thus not required to remain standing behind the bar for the 64 minute duration of Question Period.

Sustainability of the Practice

Question Period with a minister thus operates within a procedural framework that continues to evolve, shaped both by formal decisions and by practices that have developed over the course of a parliamentary session. At the time this article was written, the report of the Rules Committee had not yet been adopted. Nevertheless, the elements described in this section reflect the state of deliberations and the practices currently in force and remain relevant for understanding how this order of business during a sitting of the Senate presently functions.

Questions to Committee Chairs

Among the other distinctive features of Question Period in the Senate is the fact that the *Rules of the Senate* explicitly provide for senators to address questions to committee chairs. This provision, in the rules since 1977, allows senators to obtain information relating to the internal functioning of committees, the progress of their work, or certain procedural aspects connected to their mandates. It is grounded in the principle that

committees are extensions of the chamber and remain collectively accountable to the Senate as a whole.

Unlike questions addressed to the government, whether to the Government Representative in the Senate, a senator who is a minister, or an invited minister, questions put to committee chairs do not concern the development or implementation of public policy within the government's purview. Rather, they are intended to inform senators about a committee's activities, such as meeting schedules, the progress of a study, or decisions taken by a committee in the exercise of its mandate. In this respect, these exchanges contribute to the circulation of parliamentary information without creating a link to ministerial responsibility.

This feature of the Rules reflects the central role committees play in the functioning of the Senate. Committees are entrusted with significant responsibilities in legislative review, thematic studies, and the monitoring of public policies. However, their work takes place outside the chamber. The ability to question committee chairs thus provides a mechanism through which certain aspects of this work can be reported to the full Senate.

From a procedural standpoint, committee chairs respond to such questions in their capacity as senators exercising an internal function within the Senate. They do not speak on behalf of the government, nor as holders of executive authority. The responses they provide relate to the decisions or practices of the committee within the scope of the mandate conferred upon it by the Senate, rather than to political or administrative directions attributable to the government.

This distinction is essential to understanding the nature of the practice. Whereas Question Period, including Question Period with a minister, is designed as a mechanism for questioning government action, questions addressed to committee chairs fall within the realm of internal accountability and the orderly conduct of parliamentary business. They thus contribute to the transparency of Senate activities while respecting the separation between legislative and executive functions.

The existence of this procedure, although infrequently used, also illustrates another characteristic of the Senate: the importance attached to the autonomy of its internal bodies and to the collective accountability of committees to the chamber. By enabling senators to obtain information directly from committee chairs, the Rules acknowledge the central role committees play in the exercise of sober second thought, while also ensuring

a formal link between their work and deliberations in the chamber.

Written Questions and the 2024 Amendments

Written questions have constituted an established mechanism of parliamentary oversight in the Senate since 1977.¹¹ They enable senators to obtain detailed or technical information that does not always lend itself to an immediate response in the chamber and have historically been regulated in a relatively flexible manner, both in the Rules and in practice.

Prior to 2024, the Rules required the government to respond to written questions, without a specific deadline, nor did they provide any mechanism for followup in cases where no response was provided. The amendments adopted in 2024 introduced greater clarity in this regard. Rule 4-9(6) now provides that the Leader or Government Representative in the Senate has 60 days to table a response to a written question or "a written explanation why an answer has not been provided."¹² The Rules also establish an explicit followup mechanism when this deadline is not met, namely the referral of the failure to respond to the Rules Committee.¹³

The Rules further impose a quantitative limit on the use of written questions: a senator may not have more than four written questions on the Order Paper at any one time. Pursuant to rule 4-9(2), written questions must relate to public affairs and are submitted to the Clerk of the Senate when a written response is requested or when the question seeks statistical information or information that does not lend itself to an immediate reply. The four question limit is intended to structure the use of this mechanism, while ensuring its fair and orderly access to all senators.

Overall, the 2024 amendments have contributed to clarifying the procedural framework applicable to written questions, particularly with respect to deadlines for a response and followup mechanisms, while maintaining the distinction between this tool and the time-bound nature of oral questions posed in the chamber. They illustrate a recurring trend in the Senate toward more explicitly codifying in the Rules, practices that have developed gradually.

Conclusion

Since 2015, accountability mechanisms in the Senate of Canada, most notably Question Period and written questions, have been subject to several procedural innovations. The introduction of appearances by

ministers who are not senators during Question Period in the Senate represents one of the most visible changes in this area. This development was subsequently complemented by further clarifications concerning the regulation of question and answer times, the organization of proceedings, and the followup mechanism for written questions. These adjustments have been implemented primarily through sessional orders and, where appropriate, examined within the work of the Senate and its committees, particularly the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament.

The evolution observed highlights the Senate's distinctive approach to procedural governance, grounded in the principle of parliamentary autonomy and in a collective capacity for selfregulation exercised by senators. Rather than systematically resorting to permanent amendments to the *Rules of the Senate*, the Senate has thus far favoured using more flexible instruments, such as sessional orders, which make it possible to structure new practices in a non-binding way, adjust them in light of experience, and assess their effects before considering their possible formal incorporation into the Rules.

This approach is consistent with a broader tradition whereby Senate procedure evolves gradually through practice, interpretation, and responsiveness to changing institutional realities. The adjustments introduced since 2015 therefore illustrate how the Senate is able to adapt its accountability mechanisms while respecting its constitutional role, and the procedural framework it has established for itself.

Notes

- 1 According to the *Rules of the Senate* a sessional order is "an order governing the conduct of the business of the Senate or of its committees that has effect only for the remainder of the session in which it is adopted." It allows for the establishment of specific rules, authorities or operating procedures without permanently changing the Rules or its practices.
- 2 Senate of Canada. *Companion to the Rules of the Senate*, Third Edition, 2024, p. 91
- 3 *Rules of the Senate*, rules 4-7 and 4-8.
- 4 The *Rules of the Senate* define "recognized parliamentary groups" as follows: "A recognized parliamentary group in the Senate is one to which at least nine senators belong and which is formed for parliamentary purposes."
- 5 Cudmore, J. "Justin Trudeau removes senators from Liberal caucus", *CBC News*. January 29, 2014. URL: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/justin-trudeau-removes-senators-from-liberal-caucus-1.2515273>
- 6 Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament, First Report, November 25, 2025.
- 7 Idem.
- 8 *Journals of the Senate*, June 4, 2025.
- 9 Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament, First Report, November 25, 2025.
- 10 Idem.
- 11 Senate of Canada. *Companion to the Rules of the Senate*, Third Edition, 2024, p. 97
- 12 *Rules of the Senate*, rule 4-9(6).
- 13 Idem., rule 4-9(8).

Understanding Question Period at *Assemblée nationale du Québec*: Beyond the Myths

Oral Questions and Answers (“Question Period”) is an important part of our parliamentary proceedings, a part that receives significant media attention and undoubtedly the one that is most closely followed by the general public. However, this extensive media coverage comes with its fair share of perceptions, which can perpetuate and reinforce certain preconceived notions about Question Period among the population. The rules regarding this period vary from one parliament to another. As a result, even members of other parliaments may have a skewed understanding of the proceedings of Question Period at the *Assemblée nationale du Québec* (“the *Assemblée*”) based on how their own system functions. The purpose of this article is to identify and deconstruct certain misconceptions that may exist regarding Question Period at the *Assemblée*.

François Arsenault and Anne Bélanger

Has Question Period always been a central part of parliamentary proceedings?

Contrary to common perception, Question Period has not always been such an integral part of the *Assemblée*’s parliamentary proceedings. In fact, it was introduced in Québec only in the 1960s.¹ Before then, parliamentarians could only submit written questions to ministers.²

Like many aspects of Québec parliamentarism, the origins of Question Period can be traced back to the United Kingdom. Although it is difficult to determine the exact date of its introduction, Question Period was firmly established in the British Parliament during the 19th and 20th centuries.³

When it was first introduced in Québec, Question Period had no maximum duration. Rather, it was up to the presiding officer “to decide each case on its merits and to determine whether the question was of immediate urgency and in the public interest.”⁴ As such, Question Period could at times last more than two hours.⁵

It was only many years later that parliamentarians set out a 30-minute limit for Question Period in the

Standing Orders and Other Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly (“the *Standing Orders*”).⁶ This was eventually increased to the current 45-minute limit.⁷

Question Period has continued to evolve over time at both the technical and procedural levels. For example, timers were introduced in the House so that parliamentarians could monitor the total duration of Question Period and their own speaking time when asking or answering a question. Also, Question Period was first broadcast on television in 1978, and online starting in 2001.⁸ In order to make Question Period even more accessible, the *Assemblée* has provided simultaneous interpretation in Québec Sign Language since 2021. Lastly, Question Period has been broadcast on YouTube since 2025.

Given the relatively recent introduction of Question Period and its evolution over the years, it is not entirely accurate to say that it has always been a central component of parliamentary proceedings. It is, rather, one that has gained importance over time.

Is Question Period the most important part of parliamentary proceedings?

Although Question Period is an essential part of parliamentary proceedings, it should not be assumed that it constitutes the most important one. As previously noted, highlights from Question Period are often used by the media, and the Members themselves often include Question Period clips in their social media

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Allocation of speaking times

Members must adhere to strict speaking times during Question Period.

Main questions

Leaders of parliamentary groups:

1 minute 30 seconds

Other Members: 1 minute

Answers to main questions

Premier: 1 minute 45 seconds

Ministers: 1 minute 15 seconds

Supplementary questions

All: 30 seconds

Answers to supplementary questions

All: 45 seconds

content. This means that the public is more familiar with Question Period than with other matters discussed by the Assemblée or by parliamentary committees. This fuels the popular belief that Question Period is the most important part of parliamentary proceedings.

The content and format of Question Period explain this phenomenon. The Standing Orders provide that questions must relate to matters of urgent or topical public importance.⁹ Because of this requirement, the topics discussed during Question Period have the potential to provoke strong public reactions. The Standing Orders also state that questions and answers must be concise.¹⁰ This criterion promotes dynamic exchanges between Members, a format that is inherently more attractive to the media.

In comparison, in other contexts, such as a debate in the House or during the passage of a bill, Members are allowed to speak for a continuous period ranging from 10 to 60 minutes.¹¹

As previously mentioned, the maximum duration of Question Period is 45 minutes.¹² To put this into perspective, this means that, out of 1,700 hours of parliamentary proceedings per year,¹³ approximately 60 hours are devoted to Question Period. Although the time allocated to this period does not, alone, define

its importance, the numbers speak for themselves. A large portion of parliamentarians' work happens outside Question Period. For example, Members spend a significant portion of their time examining and debating bills.

Question Period certainly constitutes an important mechanism for parliamentary oversight. It allows Members to directly question ministers on the Government's actions and expenditures. However, there are several other mechanisms in place to help parliamentarians exercise their role as overseers of government action, including:

- business standing in the name of members in opposition
- want of confidence motions and motions stating a grievance
- the examination of the budget estimates
- interpellations
- debates upon adjournment
- parliamentary committees' orders of initiative (self-initiated orders) and statutory orders
- the hearing of certain entities by the Committee on Public Administration

It should also be noted that some questions are simply not suitable for Question Period. For example, they may require at least a certain level of research that is impossible to do in the heat of the moment.¹⁴ In such cases, parliamentarians can instead submit written questions for publication on the Order Paper.

So, as we have seen, Question Period is far from being the only mechanism for overseeing government action.

In short, although Question Period should be given a certain degree of importance, it does not represent the entirety of parliamentary proceedings, nor does it constitute their most essential part.

Are ministers obliged to answer the questions addressed to them?

It is unusual for a minister to refuse to answer a question during Question Period. This does not, however, mean they are not allowed to refuse. In fact, there are several scenarios that could lead to such an outcome.

First, certain circumstances require a minister to decline to answer a question. Standing Order 82 provides that ministers may not refer to *in camera*

proceedings of a committee whose report has not yet been tabled in the Assemblée.¹⁵ Similarly, ministers must not refer to a matter that is before the courts or a quasi-judicial body, or that is the subject of an inquiry, if such a reference could be prejudicial to the interests of any person or party (the *sub judice* rule).¹⁶

Standing Order 82 also sets out the situations in which a minister is allowed but not required to decline to answer a question. This is the case, in particular, if the minister is of the opinion that it would be injurious to the public interest to provide the information sought or if such information could be collected only through a considerable expenditure of effort that its usefulness does not warrant.¹⁷ The use of the term “in particular” in the Standing Order implies that other reasons may be grounds for such a refusal.¹⁸

Furthermore, a minister’s refusal to answer a question may be implicit or explicit.¹⁹ Parliamentary jurisprudence provides that a minister may explicitly refuse to answer, with or without giving a reason, or implicitly refuse by saying nothing.²⁰

If a minister chooses to answer a question, no point of order may be raised based on the opinion that such an answer is unsatisfactory.²¹ In the same vein, a minister’s refusal to answer a question may not be discussed.²²

The Standing Orders also provide the possibility for ministers to take a question as notice and answer it at the end of Question Period or on a future sitting day.²³ In the latter case, the minister must notify the President in writing not less than one hour before Routine Proceedings on that day.²⁴ The President then sets aside, after that period, the time needed for the minister’s answer.²⁵ Of course, the Member or minister must not take more time than would have been granted during Question Period to answer a question taken as notice.²⁶

In some cases, Members may prefer that a specific minister answer their question. However, even if a question is addressed to a particular minister, it is perfectly acceptable for another minister to answer it. The principle of cabinet solidarity, codified in Standing Order 189, provides that a minister may act on behalf of another minister.²⁷ Parliamentary assistants to a minister may also answer questions on the minister’s behalf.²⁸

These examples show that, contrary to what one might think, Members are under no obligation to

answer questions during Question Period. They have a great deal of flexibility regarding the answers they choose to provide or not to provide. With that said, in practice, ministers rarely decline to answer questions. Some could claim, for example, that refusing to answer shows a lack of mastery of one’s files, or a lack of transparency, or that the minister is preventing parliamentarians from carrying out their parliamentary oversight role.

Do ministers know the questions in advance and can they prepare their answers?

In some parliaments, ministers know in advance what questions will be asked during Question Period. This is the case in the British Parliament, where a notice must be sent before questions are submitted to ministers in the Commons Chamber.²⁹ Members of the Assemblée nationale are not required to inform other parliamentarians of the questions they intend to ask during Question Period. This means that ministers cannot plan the answers they will give.

Of course, this does not mean ministers arrive completely unprepared. Since questions concern topical subjects, it is generally possible to predict what main themes will be addressed during a given sitting. Even though ministers do not know what specific questions will be asked, staying up to date on current events can help them anticipate the answers they will have to provide.

The questions themselves can be drafted in advance, and Members are free to practise beforehand. This can serve them well, allowing them to make sure that they comply with their allotted time to ask a question and thus avoid being interrupted by the Chair. They can also consult their colleagues for feedback on the phrasing of their question, or to predict what answer the minister might provide and adjust their question accordingly. Their preparation is thus quite different from that of ministers.

However, this does not mean they never have to improvise or adapt on the fly. The Standing Orders provide that supplementary questions must arise out of the Government’s answers.³⁰ As such, although Members can try to guess what answers the ministers will provide, they may have to make changes to their supplementary questions based on the answers actually given.

Several other factors can make it necessary for a parliamentarian to modify a question prepared in

advance. For example, a Member may need to change their question because of questions asked by Members from other political parties before their own.

Question Period is far from a simple scripted exercise. Both the ministers and the Members asking them questions must demonstrate a high degree of adaptability.

Is Question Period reserved for the parliamentary opposition groups?

Even though most of the questions are allocated to the parliamentary opposition groups, they are not exclusively reserved for them. Indeed, any Member, including independent Members and government Members, can ask questions.³¹ It is not entirely accurate to say that Question Period is reserved solely for questions from parliamentary opposition groups.

In the two-party context of the past, the allocation of questions was much simpler. One parliamentary group formed the Government, and the other formed the Official Opposition. As a result, almost all questions were allocated to the Official Opposition during Question Period, with some of them going to government Members. But with the arrival of new parliamentary groups in the Assemblée during later legislatures, the process became more complex.

Several principles regarding the allocation of questions have developed over time. One such principle is that question allocation must reflect the representation of each parliamentary opposition group in the composition of the Assemblée.³² The more Members a parliamentary group has, the more questions it will be allocated.

Another such principle concerns the status of the parliamentary group forming the Official Opposition. The important role played by this group in the oversight of government action can affect the number and ranking of the questions allocated to it.³³ For example, during the 43rd Legislature, the first three main questions of a sitting have always gone to the Official Opposition.

As previously mentioned, although the independent Members do not belong to any parliamentary group, they too can play a role during Question Period. During the 43rd Legislature, each of them is allowed to ask three questions per 12-sitting cycle (approximately three questions every two months of proceedings).

Independent Members' questions are usually granted near the end of Question Period. Since Question Period has a 45-minute maximum duration, and not a predetermined number of questions, it could be assumed that the questions of independent Members are sometimes at risk.³⁴ To avoid such a situation, and given the few questions allocated to independent Members, the Chair has adopted the practice of protecting their rights by allowing them to ask their questions even if the time for Question Period has elapsed.³⁵ This initiative is possible because Question Period ends when the Chair announces it does, and not solely because of the expiry of a time limit.³⁶

As previously mentioned, government Members are also considered in the allocation of questions. It should be noted that, although they are allowed to intervene and question their peers during Question Period, opposition Members are the main participants in this daily give and take.³⁷ In practice, government Members rarely exercise their right to ask questions, and the last time such a Member did so was in 2014.³⁸

In conclusion, while parliamentary opposition groups, particularly the Official Opposition, do play a major role in Question Period, it is not accurate to say that Question Period is solely reserved for them.

Is preserving order and decorum not important during Question Period?

Question Period is conducive to impassioned exchanges between parliamentarians. This can sometimes lead to excesses that can give the false impression that the Assemblée's rules on order and decorum are not observed during this period. Numerous rules apply to parliamentary proceedings to ensure their proper conduct. For instance, the Standing Orders provide that Members must remain silent unless given permission to speak. Furthermore, certain words are inadmissible, and terms deemed unparliamentary are prohibited. Standing Order 35 provides in particular that Members may not refer to the President or to any other Member otherwise than by their title of office, impute improper motives to another Member or refuse to take them at their word, use language that is violent, abusive or insulting, use language that is unbecoming or disrespectful of the Assemblée, or utter seditious words.³⁹

Although lively exchanges occur during Question Period, the Chair is there to ensure compliance with the above rules. The Chair may intervene directly, on becoming aware of any violation of the Standing

The list of unparliamentary words

The terms or expressions that the Chair has requested be withdrawn are compiled in the list of unparliamentary words. This list is also the subject of preconceived ideas.

Contrary to what some might believe, the words listed are not automatically banned from parliamentary debates. They can still be used in contexts that comply with the Standing Orders.

For example, the word “clown” is on the list of unparliamentary words, but that does not mean that Members are forbidden from ever using it. The word could be used in the context of clowns at a carnival. However, it cannot be used to insult another Member.

Orders, or on the initiative of a Member, usually a House leader, calling attention to such a violation.⁴⁰

The particular context of Question Period may seem to result in more infringements of the Standing Orders than what occurs during other debates. This does not mean that the rules on order and decorum are set aside during Question Period, but simply that the Chair must intervene more frequently to enforce them. The Chair has several tools to choose from, such as asking a Member to withdraw any word uttered that is deemed unparliamentary.

The Standing Orders also provide that a Member called to order twice in a row may lose their right to speak for the remainder of the sitting,⁴¹ but the last time the Chair exercised this measure was more than 25 years ago.⁴² In more serious cases, the Chair may even order the Member’s withdrawal from the

Chamber.⁴³ However, it is even rarer for the Chair to resort to this measure.

The Chair can also suspend the sitting at any time.⁴⁴ This measure can help prevent disruptions from unduly hindering parliamentary proceedings. When this has been used in the past, the sitting resumed after a few minutes once calm had been restored.⁴⁵

In addition, a few years ago, considering the sometimes-heated context of Question Period, Members chose to prohibit applause during the period.⁴⁶ Some parliamentarians had complained that they felt intimidated when a large group of parliamentarians loudly applauded a Member of another party who had just answered or asked a question. Others thought that their own parliamentary group applauding their question or answer sent a mixed message. Lastly, some felt that there was sometimes competition between the parliamentary group forming the Government and the opposition groups as to which group would applaud the loudest. This prohibition on applause improved the atmosphere in the House.

In short, not only do the usual rules on order and decorum apply to Question Period, but specific rules have been put in place as well to ensure its proper conduct.

Conclusion

This article has sought to demystify Question Period and to deconstruct certain preconceived ideas that may be held about it.

Question Period has certainly changed over time, and the arrival of the 44th Legislature in fall 2026 will most likely bring about its own set of changes. In the last 20 years or so, the beginning of each legislature has generally led to a one-off revision of the rules that govern parliamentary proceedings, including Question Period, due to the multi-party composition of the Assemblée.

For example, at the beginning of the 43rd Legislature, Standing Order 13⁴⁷ was temporarily amended to allow any political party represented in the Assemblée following the general election of October 3, 2022, to be given parliamentary group status.⁴⁸ This change made it possible for certain political parties that would normally not have been eligible for this status to obtain it and benefit from its advantages, for instance by playing a more significant role during Question Period.

Notes

- 1 Journal des débats, February 19, 1963, p. 263 (Richard Hyde).
- 2 Geoffrion, Louis-Philippe. *Règlement annoté de l'Assemblée législative*. Québec: Legislative Assembly of Québec, 1941, S.O. 114 and 681; Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Québec, 25th Legislature, 3rd Session, December 3, 1958, p. 82; Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Québec, 25th Legislature, 3rd Session, December 9, 1958, p. 124; Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Québec, 25th Legislature, 4th Session, January 27, 1960, p. 356.
- 3 House of Commons Information Office. "Parliamentary Questions", August 2010, p. 2. <https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/commons-information-office/p01.pdf>.
- 4 Journal des débats, supra, note 2.
- 5 Peters, Siegfried, ed. *La procédure parlementaire du Québec*, 4th ed. Québec: Assemblée nationale du Québec, 2021, p. 549.
- 6 Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Québec, 28th Legislature, 4th Session, March 5, 1969, pp. 76-80.
- 7 Journal des débats, June 21, 1977, p. 1530.
- 8 Peters, Siegfried, ed., supra, note 6, p. 1.
- 9 *Standing Orders of the National Assembly*, September 2024, S.O. 75.
- 10 *Ibid.*, S.O. 76, 78 and 79.
- 11 *Ibid.*, S.O. 256.
- 12 *Ibid.*, S.O. 74.
- 13 In 2023–2024, there were 1,769 hours of parliamentary proceedings, including 348 hours in the House and 1,421 hours in parliamentary committee. In 2024–2025, there were 1,605 hours of parliamentary proceedings, including 317 hours in the House and 1,288 hours in parliamentary committee.
- 14 *Standing Orders of the National Assembly*, supra, note 10, S.O. 313.
- 15 *Ibid.*, S.O. 35 and 82.
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 *Ibid.*, S.O. 82.
- 18 *Standing Orders of the National Assembly*, supra, note 10, S.O. 82; Journal des débats, April 16, 2002, pp. 5577-5582 (Louise Harel) / *Recueil de décisions concernant la procédure parlementaire*, no. 82/3.
- 19 Journal des débats, March 18, 1992, pp. 12097-12098 (Jean-Pierre Saintonge) / *RDPP*, no. 82/2.
- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 *Standing Orders of the National Assembly*, supra, note 10, S.O. 81.
- 22 *Ibid.*, S.O. 82.
- 23 *Ibid.*, S.O. 80.
- 24 *Ibid.*
- 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 Journal des débats, May 4, 1999, pp. 1255-1256 (Jean-Pierre Charbonneau) / *RDPP*, no. 80/5.
- 27 *Standing Orders of the National Assembly*, supra, note 10, S.O. 189.
- 28 *Act respecting the National Assembly*, CQLR, c. A-23.1, section 25.
- 29 Hutton, Mark, David Natzler, Matthew Hamlyn, Colin Lee, Chloe Mawson, Crispin Poyser, Eve Samson and Kate Lawrence. *Erskine May's Treatise on the Law, Privileges, Proceedings, and Usage of Parliament*, 25th ed. London: LexisNexis Butterworths, 2019, at para 22.3.
- 30 *Standing Orders of the National Assembly*, supra, note 10, S.O. 78.
- 31 *Ibid.*, S.O. 74.
- 32 Peters, Siegfried, ed., supra, note 6, p. 556.
- 33 *Ibid.*
- 34 Points of order are allowed during Question Period and are included in the time allocated to that period. As such, repeated points of order can reduce the number of questions asked during a sitting. Since the questions of independent Members are asked at the end of Question Period, they are likely to be affected.
- 35 Journal des débats, April 20, 2023, p. 1693 (Nathalie Roy) / *RDPP*, no. 74/37.
- 36 *Ibid.*
- 37 Peters, Siegfried, ed., supra, note 6, p. 555.
- 38 Journal des débats, February 19, 2014, p. 6661.
- 39 *Standing Orders of the National Assembly*, supra, note 10, S.O. 35.
- 40 *Standing Orders of the National Assembly*, supra, note 10, S.O. 38 and 39.
- 41 *Ibid.*, S.O. 42.
- 42 Journal des débats, May 24, 2000, p. 6141.
- 43 *Standing Orders of the National Assembly*, supra, note 10, S.O. 42.
- 44 *Ibid.*, S.O. 44.
- 45 Journal des débats, February 25, 2015, p. 3837; Journal des débats, February 25, 2016, pp. 8754-8755; Journal des débats, October 5, 2023, p. 3154; Journal des débats, April 3, 2025, p. 9188.
- 46 *Standing Orders of the National Assembly*, supra, note 10, S.O. 32.
- 47 *Standing Orders of the National Assembly*, supra, note 10, S.O. 13.
- 48 Normally, a parliamentary group is defined as any group composed of at least 12 elected Members or any group of Members from a political party that obtained at least 20% of the popular vote in the most recent general election.

Call Lists: Does Certainty Transform “Debating Chambers” Into “Speaking Chambers”?

Following the 2024 general election, the UK House of Commons welcomed a large cohort of new MPs who brought many new ideas with them. One of these ideas – the introduction of “call lists” or speakers lists to bring a greater degree of certainty to MPs about when they would be called by the Speaker in debates – was the subject of an extensive inquiry by the House of Commons Procedure Committee. In this article, the chair of this committee outlines the impetus for this investigation, some of the experiences shared by members of other legislatures which have varying practices, and the reasoning behind the committee’s decision against implementing these call lists. Although the culture of the UK House of Commons is distinct from the other legislatures surveyed, and Canadian parliaments, the committee’s discussion and debate between proponents of flexibility or certainty, and whether the Commons should be a “Speaking Chamber” or a “Debating Chamber” mirrors the on-going dialogue since call lists were established here for Question Period and beyond.

Cat Smith

I have the privilege of chairing the UK House of Commons’s Procedure Committee.¹ Our remit is to consider the practice and procedures of the House in the conduct of its public business. In simple terms, this covers when MPs meet, the way we vote, and the flow and conduct of our parliamentary debates and committees, to name but a few areas. The inquiries we oversee go to the heart of discussions about how MPs legislate and scrutinise. Since the start of this Parliament, my committee has had a very busy programme of work, and we have looked at internal House of Commons elections, the status of independent MPs in House procedures, proxy voting, written parliamentary questions, and electronic voting. Arguably, however, our most notable inquiry of this Parliament related to the potential introduction of call lists,² which is what I wish to focus on in this article.

Context

The 2024 general election brought not only 335 new MPs but also many new ideas along with them. Following the election, the incoming Labour Government revived the Modernisation Committee,³

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Cat Smith



The UK House of Commons during Prime Minister's Question Time.

which considers reforms to House of Commons procedures, standards, working culture and practices. The Modernisation Committee launched a call for views⁴ on what topics it should prioritise for action, with many submissions calling for the implementation of call lists – or speakers lists as they are known in some legislatures – to give certainty to MPs over when they might be called to speak in a debate. Given this would have been a major shift in House procedures, it fell to my committee to undertake an extensive inquiry into its how call lists might work in practice.

Call lists are not completely new to the UK House of Commons. During the Covid-19 pandemic, they were used out of necessity due to the hybrid nature of proceedings and prevailing public health guidance related to social distancing. They often necessitated timed speaking slots to fit into the time allocated to the business in question, which is not desirable in all circumstances. This temporary measure was abandoned as social distancing guidelines eased.

Those who advocated for call lists when we launched our inquiry argued that they would improve accessibility, assist MPs managing health conditions, increase the ability of MPs from smaller parties to contribute to debates, and allow MPs to better manage their professional and private lives by injecting certainty into the parliamentary day.

Conversely, opponents feared the Chamber could cease to be a forum for genuine debate if call lists were adopted, becoming a “speaking chamber” rather than a true “debating chamber,” trading spontaneous exchanges and interventions for a succession of short speeches intended for social media clips. One respondent to our call for evidence was particularly concerned that a pre-published speaking list could lead to party Whips working to influence the order and content of speeches, an issue that mirrors similar debates in the Canadian Parliament.

Other legislatures

It was important for our inquiry to look at how call lists could work on a permanent basis in practice. We therefore examined how call lists work in other legislative chambers, both in the UK and internationally.

In some legislatures, members who wish to speak in a debate are often required to apply by a certain deadline, after which a list is compiled and published a set period ahead of the debate. Other legislatures have technical facilities built into the design of their chambers that allow members to press a button at their allocated seat to indicate that they wish to speak and rely on digital screens in the chamber to display who is added to the list of the speakers still waiting to speak in the debate.

Some legislatures also rely on political input from a wider set of political groups to a larger extent, particularly in a proportionally elected legislature, and employ methods designed to ensure proportionality such as the D'Hondt method, a mathematical formula used in many places across the world in various proportionality-based electoral systems, to fairly allocate speaking slots in a debate.

House of Lords

The most obvious place for us to look at first was to our counterparts in the House of Lords, where call lists are compiled and published for certain items of business, like general debates, second readings of bills,⁵ and questions for short debate,⁶ but specifically not for other types of business like oral questions and urgent business.

A Peer (a member of the House of Lords) who wishes to notify their intention to speak in a debate for which there is a speakers list signs up by notifying the Chief Whip. The speakers list closes two working days before the debate is due to take place, with the deadline set at 5pm Monday to Thursday and 4pm on Fridays. The final list is then published online on the Chief Whip's website an hour before the debate is due to start, following discussions and agreement between the party Whips. Peers who withdraw from the debate once they have signed up to it are called "scratchers," as their name is "scratched" off the list.

The House of Lords is a self-regulating chamber over which the Lord Speaker, or the Deputy Lord Speakers, have no authority to call Peers to speak, and the debate

proceeds by agreement in the order specified on the speakers list. Evidence we received from Peers stated that the system worked well and was in line with the overall procedures of self-regulation in the House of Lords.

Devolved UK legislatures

We also wrote to the Presiding Officers of the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Parliament/Senedd Cymru to learn about the arrangements in each of the devolved legislatures in the United Kingdom.

The Northern Ireland Assembly's arrangements involve a mixture of party-led speaking lists managed by the Speaker of the Assembly and the Assembly's Business Office. In his letter to us, the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly stated that in practice each party sends a party speaking list to the Assembly Business Office, which is then used by officials to populate a speaking list template. This list is then used by the Speaker in the Chamber but remains subject to change. Members of the Assembly can add their name to the speaking list by rising in their place or otherwise notifying the Speaker or the Business Office, and can remove their name from the list by notifying the Speaker. Only the party Whips can adjust the order of the speakers. A Speaker can also utilise a 'grace period' of up to 15 minutes to extend a debate to accommodate remaining Members who wish to speak, in particular where there were parties or independent Members who have not had an adequate or proportionate opportunity to speak.

The Scottish Parliament also operates a similar arrangement, with the Presiding Officer having the power to decide who should be called in a debate and the party Whips nominating speakers for debates. Following opening speeches, the Presiding Officer or Deputy Presiding Officer in the chair invites all Members who wish to speak to press their 'request to speak' buttons on their desks. Their names then appear on the screen in the chamber, allowing the Presiding Officer to confirm the list and take account of any additional requests subsequently received. Depending on the time available, the Presiding Officer or the Deputy Presiding Officer may use their discretion to allow additional speakers to be called beyond the list.

In the Welsh Parliament/Senedd Cymru, Members can choose to participate virtually or in person. The power to call Members to speak lies with the Presiding Officer/the Llywydd. As set out in the 'Guidance on

the proper conduct of Senedd business’,⁷ there are conventions relating to the order of speakers depending on the business in question, and the Llywydd has the power to impose speaking limits for oversubscribed debates. Members wishing to speak in a debate notify the Llywydd, either via their political group leaders or directly. According to the then Llywydd, such requests are “generally accommodated.” There is no published version of these lists and there is no final definitive order of who is to be called, but instead the list acts as a “live document” for the use of the Llywydd, clerks, and a limited number of other staff supporting the proceedings. The Llywydd also told us that there had not been any calls to reform the speaker list system, which she suggested might be due to the fact that at the time of her writing to us, there were only 60 Members and that they are usually able to be accommodated in the debates they want to speak in. However, she did note that with the Senedd’s membership rising from 60 to 96 members following the May 2026 election, this might be something the Senedd wishes to consider as part of other procedural changes to accommodate this increase in the size of the legislature

European legislatures

We also looked at both the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), where members sit in allocated seats with their political groups rather than with parliamentarians from their own country, and vote using an electronic voting system.

In the European Parliament, speaking time is divided across two parts of the debate: the first part is divided equally between each political group; and the second part is divided proportionally between the political groups in proportion to each of the groups’ total number of Members of European Parliament (MEPs). The political groups decide internally who from their group will speak and for how long, and the



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UK House of Commons Speaker Lindsay Hoyle addresses MPs.

order of speakers is published in a speakers list. There are also certain MEPs who will be expected to speak on specific items, such as committee spokespersons (*‘Rapporteurs’*). In debates where there is sufficient time, there is also a portion dedicated to ‘catching the eye’ of the President of the European Parliament, giving the opportunity for those MEPs who have not put their name down for the official list to be called to speak. Ellie Chowns, MP, who has previously served as an MEP, told us about what she considered to be a positive experience of speakers lists in the European Parliament from her time as an MEP, arguing that there was “a good balance between pre-programmed clarity about timings and allowing for more of a flow of debate.”

Members of PACE are called to speak by the President of the Assembly and do so from their allocated seat in the chamber. Unless making a point of order or moving a procedural motion, Members wishing to speak in a debate must enter their names in the speaker’s register. The list of speakers for a debate is closed one hour before the end of the previous sitting and is published as soon as possible thereafter.

Comparisons between the Commons and other legislatures

Ultimately, while it was useful to look at the practice in other legislatures and in the House of Lords, our inquiry found that there is no single way in which call lists are utilised as each legislature has its own procedural norms and constraints. As we considered the practice in other legislatures, it became clear to us that the specific context of the UK House of Commons system, where flexibility in the sitting day is a key feature, makes it challenging to directly compare it to others.

In the European Parliament, PACE, the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Scottish Parliament, speaking slots are pre-agreed and allocated to parties or political groupings proportionally based on the size of the parties in the respective assembly. It therefore places more of the decision making on who gets to speak in any given debate to political parties, rather than to individual members themselves.

The House of Commons is predicated on a fundamentally different basis from many of these examples, with our procedures starting from the position of recognising only two sides of the House—the Government and the Opposition—both of which can be composed of more than one party. Allocating speaking slots according to a mathematical formula based on the proportional size of each party in the Commons would be a significant departure from the current way in which the Speakers and Deputy Speakers use their unfettered discretion to call speakers alternately from both sides of the House. We considered that our system in fact gives greater speaking opportunities to independent MPs and MPs from opposition parties of all sizes than would a proportional system, whereby their size is taken into account in allocating speaking opportunities, and more accurately reflects the way in which the House of Commons Chamber is, in part, a forum for scrutinising the Government. It would also require advance notice from parties of who was interested to speak in a debate, and changes to our procedures regarding the powers of the Speaker to choose speakers.

If notice was to be given by party Whips, rather than individual Members themselves, it would increase the influence of whips over the business still further than is arguably the case today, and disadvantage those smaller parties who cannot hope

to mirror the whipping operation of larger parties. Taken together, this, in turn, could have a particular impact on the ability of smaller parties to participate in debates, potentially leading to fewer rather than more opportunities for participation than is currently the case.

Additionally, some of the legislatures we considered have fixed timings for business, or for contributions from members, which means that there is more certainty over how many people can be called to speak and when a subsequent business item will start. House of Commons procedure balances certainty with flexibility to change business at short notice to meet the needs of Members and of the wider House, while maintaining the start and end times of the day. This structure is, we believe, an important feature of our system and allows Members to scrutinise the Government in a responsive manner as and when situations develop.

In our view, call lists were not a quick fix to the issues raised with us, and, in isolation, would not have had the desired impact that has been envisaged. Our committee believes they could have a knock-on effect on dynamic debate on emerging topics of national importance, and on the powers of the Speaker in managing the flow of debates. Not everyone will agree that more certainty is required; many will consider that the flexibility of House of Commons business is a necessary feature of our parliamentary system. However, for those who desire an increased level of certainty on a day-to-day basis, we conclude that published call lists would be a flawed and blunt tool to respond to a challenge which requires a wider solution.

Conclusions

Whilst we kept considerations about accessibility in the forefront of our minds, we concluded the Speaker's discretion is a suitable flexibility by which MPs can be reassured that they have access to the information and adjustments they require to fully participate in debates in the House of Commons. Speakers remain in contact with the party whips, and individual MPs can approach them during a debate to seek guidance on when they might be called. The Speaker can offer assurances if a MP needs to leave the Chamber at any point for a break, and MPs are encouraged to continue to rely on these informal arrangements in the first instance.



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Vikki Slade, MP for Mid Dorset and North Poole, rises to speak during debate.

We wanted to ensure we gave this matter its due consideration and as such our inquiry took over a year before we landed on our conclusions, which was that call lists should not be adopted in the House of Commons. However, we did make clear that, in our view, our report was not the end of the conversation about how our procedures should evolve so that they work in the best interests of all MPs, but rather the start of that conversation. I have no doubt that the issue of call lists will arise at some point again, and when it does, the Procedure Committee will stand ready to provide the informed guidance and direction needed to safeguard and improve the procedures of the House of Commons.

Notes

1 UK Parliament. *Procedure Committee: Commons Select Committee*. URL: <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/126/Procedure-Committee/>

- 2 UK Parliament. "Call lists Inquiry." *Procedure Committee*. URL: <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/8732/call-lists/>
- 3 UK Parliament. *Modernisation Committee: Commons Select Committee*. URL: <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/736/modernisation-committee/>
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- 5 UK Parliament. "Second Reading (Lords)." URL: <https://www.parliament.uk/about/how/laws/passage-bill/lords/lrds-lords-second-reading/>
- 6 UK Parliament. "Questions for Short Debate." URL: <https://www.parliament.uk/site-information/glossary/questions-for-short-debate/>
- 7 Welsh Parliament. "Guidance on the proper conduct of Senedd Business." Issued by the Llywydd under Standing Order 6.17, April 2026. URL: https://senedd.wales/media/ncvphjui/collation_of_guidance_eng.pdf

Emphasizing Issues of Wider Public Concern In A Digestible Way: Question Period's Parallel Path Toward Fulfilling Its Accountability Shift

Question Period has long been considered a part of parliamentary proceedings that serves as a potent mechanism for holding the government accountable for its actions. However, in recent decades, the often-raucous conduct of Members and their decision to “play to the cameras,” has prompted some observers to conclude Question Period’s accountability function has been degraded.

Aaron Roth with Philip Massolin¹

Question Period – formally called Oral Questions – is an important method of ensuring that the government answers to the people, represented by the opposition parties, and is held accountable for its action.

In recent years observers and researchers have questioned whether the effectiveness of Question Period as an accountability mechanism has been diminished due to the sensationalism and raucous conduct of Members participating in it. Policy analyst Frances Ryan argues that “although many Canadians, and scholars alike feel that Question Period is an essential accountability tool, they feel that the lack of decorum, cooperation, and discussions of substance detracts from its effectiveness in holding the government to account for its decisions.”² To that point, many have questioned whether it is the robust media attention and increasing “clip-ability” of the questions and answers being used first on television but now on social media that has led to a perceived degradation in the accountability function of Question Period.

This article contends that the evolution of Question Period has been on a parallel path with changing dominant media forms and that the accountability function of this item of parliamentary business is no longer to be found in assessing whether the questions and answers result in substantive policy discussions. Rather, the functioning of Question Period as an accountability mechanism is by and large evolving away from the prior objectives of highlighting prosaic constituency and other policy matters to instead emphasize issues of wider public concern to the electorate in a digestible and attention-grabbing way. This trend started with the advent of televised broadcast but has been greatly enhanced more recently with the emergence of social media. It is argued here that social media have impacted Question Period in such a way as to result in an “accountability shift” in which accountability is no longer necessarily sorted out on the Chamber floor but instead can be achieved through public interaction with the Member and the issues in the form of “likes,” “comments,” and “sharing,” that characterizes social media.

This article briefly discusses the impact of television broadcasting and other advances in communications technologies on the operation of Question Period in Alberta and at the House of Commons over time. The purpose of doing so is to examine how such technological change influenced not only Members’

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approaches to Question Period but also how such changes have affected the accountability function of Oral Questions. This article will endeavour to show how changing communications media contributed to an altered approach to asking and answering questions, including emphasizing political and ideological differences, sometimes employing a mocking or dismissive tone, while still attempting to achieve the same basic goal of accountability by bringing important issues to the public's attention.

Oral Question Period: From Nebulous Accountability Mechanism to Media-Centred Accountability Tool

Prior to 1975 in the House of Commons and 1969 in Alberta, the practice of asking oral questions was relatively common but had not been codified in the Standing Orders. Nor was it considered a central feature of the proceedings. Very little coverage of the procedure made it into public consciousness prior to the 1970s, in fact. (Alberta's "Scrapbook Hansard"³ had few references to the proceeding.)

The 1964 Standing Orders of the House of Commons were the first to reference Oral Question Period as an official part of the proceedings. However, it was not until 1975 that the House of Commons formalized Question Period as a daily activity, occurring before Routine Proceedings. In Alberta, amendments to the Standing Orders made in 1968 opened the door to Question Period taking place each day as a 45-minute event at the end of the Daily Routine. When originally conceived, Question Period, certainly in the House of Commons, was framed in the light of asking "urgent questions" of ministers of the Crown. In the case of Alberta, the perceived benefit of asking oral questions without notice allowed Members to seek answers immediately rather than waiting weeks for a response. This made Question Period much more appealing to Members as a mechanism of accountability.⁴

The procedures for Question Period remained relatively unchanged from the mid-1970s until the 1990s, when, through consultation with House Leaders, the Speaker of the House of Commons established a 35-second time limit for both the questions and the answers during Question Period. Alberta faced a similar situation when the Speaker, in consultation with Members, established a 45-second time-limit on questions and answers in 2005⁵, and then a 35-second time limit in 2008, mirroring the House of Commons practice.⁶

From the late 1960s onward, Question Period started to make its way into the public consciousness through increasing media coverage. In Alberta, for instance, threats to abolish Question Period by the Premier before the proceeding even became codified in the Standing Orders became the subject of media interest: "Premier Manning threatened if the period 'degenerates into debate it will lead to its abolition,'" read the headline. "He said he does not wish this to happen. 'We have looked at this as an informal little session where members of the opposition ask questions of the minister and the crown.' He urged this session not be destroyed."⁷ Far from being destroyed, a year later it became codified as a daily practice in the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

In 1977 in Ottawa, and 1972 in Alberta, Question Period began to be televised on a regular basis and served its "traditional" accountability function at that time. By the late 1970s, and into the 1980s, the perceived efficacy of Question Period as an accountability tool began to be questioned largely in parallel with increasing media coverage of the proceeding. As television coverage of the proceeding expanded, there was a worry that the substance and conduct of Question Period by Members would begin to degrade in lockstep with Members' desire to receive attention from the cameras. In the Ninth Report of the Standing Committee on Elections, Privileges, Procedure and Private Members' Business, it was noted that:

It has also been argued that television has contributed to some less than positive developments. Perhaps the most common complaint is that television has led to the over-emphasis on Question Period. It is also felt that individual Members tend to play to the cameras—that they grandstand—in the hopes of getting a 15-second clip on the evening news.⁸

Without a doubt, Question Period has become a central feature of daily proceedings of parliaments, and the vast majority of media coverage arises from it. Yet, while Members did take advantage of the new opportunity for visibility and notoriety, the fears about the effect of increasing television coverage as a cause for the deterioration of behaviour of individual Members have largely been without foundation. As the televising of Question Period became commonplace, those involved in the proceedings and commentators alike realized that televised broadcasts did not produce the degree of poor conduct that had been anticipated.

As James R. Robertson notes in his 2005 background paper *Television and the House of Commons*, many of the difficulties anticipated by the former Clerk of the House of Commons Alistair Fraser did not arise or turned out not to be as formidable as had been feared. Robertson quotes Fraser as saying:

The concern over the possible rush of prima donnas anxious to usurp the floor has not occurred. Speeches remain much as they were – neither brighter nor duller. Attendance in the House has not increased or decreased. In general, things remain much the same as they were.⁹

In his work, Robertson was dubious that televising Question Period had any impact at all on Member behaviour. He notes that “Question Period tends to receive considerable attention whether it is televised or not: it deals with topical issues, consists of a dialogue of sorts rather than long speeches, and is good political theatre.”¹⁰

The reason that television broadcasting had a relatively muted impact was that the broadcast production of Question Period was overseen by the Speaker and therefore subject to the overall direction and supervision of the House of Commons. This control has been described by some as the “electronic Hansard” approach to televising the proceedings – Robertson calls it “... a faithful record of the proceedings and debates of the House in the same sense as is the Official Report of *Debates* (Hansard).” The net result was that, although television did have some impact on proceedings, the process remained a highly controlled one.

Robertson’s observations reveal the true nature of televised proceedings, including Question Period, as being a one-way communication device, just like radio broadcasts or newspaper reporting had been prior to the advent of television. The electronic *Hansard* approach contributed to this by establishing limits on the way Question Period could be communicated to citizens. In brief, Members’ attempts to communicate their views to constituents outside of the chamber had to rely on the television broadcast to mediate their message.

The 1990s saw one of the biggest shifts in media occur in generations with the advent of the internet. In the parliamentary world, the new technology led to transcripts of House of Commons proceedings being made available online for the first time in

1994 and House of Commons broadcasting “gavel-to-gavel” proceedings of the House online in 2003. The Legislative Assembly of Alberta also started broadcasting Question Period on the internet in 2003, and full proceedings in 2007.

Stemming from the internet, social media have a much larger impact on Members and the parliamentary proceedings -- and especially on Oral Questions -- than did previous media. While parliamentary institutions in Canada “entered” the social media realm by the second decade of the 2000s, establishing Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts, Members themselves had already been using social media platforms for years to advance their own agendas. In a 2009 incident, a Member of Parliament had to apologize in the House for inadvertently “tweeting” proceedings of an in-camera committee.¹¹ Meanwhile, in a November 29, 2010 ruling, Alberta Speaker Kowalski found a point of order against a Member who was tweeting about the absence of a Member during a debate.

Unlike the previous broadcasting eras dominated by one-way communications platforms, the social media era has been characterized by much more interactivity and is much more likely to elicit a response from viewers and listeners. Indeed, this is what social media is designed to do. These developments have had a profound effect on parliamentary proceedings such as Question Period and created challenges never previously encountered or anticipated.

In some ways, social media has put parliamentary institutions back on their heels. Traditionally, it was the parliament – and not the individual Member -- that established the rules of how the message would be broadcast in the media by limiting and governing television, radio, and, later, live-streaming. When social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok came onto the scene, a situation emerged in which the mediators of the message (e.g., news editors or journalists) that stood between the Member and the public became much less important in determining what was “newsworthy” or not. Further, media had traditionally been limited by time constraints in a broadcasting schedule or column inches in a newspaper. With social media, the user defines scheduling and frequency of content generation.

As things stand, television or internet broadcast feeds are still needed as a source of raw material for use in social media. However, the content created by Members no longer has an external curator, and the limits of what they can put out to the public is constrained only

by the limits of the technology being used. Effectively, then, Members have far more flexibility and can use creative options to get the message they want out to the public. They can pick and choose what material is being communicated and how they would like to brand and package it without having to appeal to or rely on “third party” to broadcast it. Smartphones, laptops, and tablets are now a Member’s own broadcast studio, where they can take the raw feed and get their message out in a way no other medium of communication has permitted them to do.

Beyond the ease of broadcasting, social media platforms themselves foster interaction between Members and those who “follow” them. The algorithms used in social media permit posts by Members to potentially “go viral” without their even having to take additional steps to make it happen. Indeed, when an algorithm senses another social media user might be interested in the topic of a Member’s post, it provides it to them, creating a media sphere where people who do not even follow a Member’s social media account can see, interact, and broaden the broadcast of the content by sharing it with others. This is a gamechanger in media not only because it provides inexpensive and broad reaching coverage of their message to their existing followers, but also because it allows Members to connect with people to whom their message may appeal beyond that identified group.

Social Media Usage by Members

The advent of social media has had great impact on how certain Members use Question Period in packaging their message. Members are bringing to life the concerns about “playing to the camera” that had been raised by the Standing Committee on Elections, Privileges, Procedure and Private Members’ Business.¹² During Question Period, a good number of Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta orient their bodies and gaze not to the Speaker, not to a Minister they are posing a question to, but to the cameras. This shift demonstrates the changing reality that the proceedings are not being addressed to Members of the House but to the scrolling public. By changing their physical posture to address the cameras, we see an unmistakable sign of how Members are consciously curating the content of their message to the public.

The curation of their message does not stop with the Members’ “physically” packaging their image. The content of the questions, and even the answers in many cases, is being crafted for maximum impact in the world of quick scrolling users of social media.

While questions asked by opposition Members during Question Period have always been pointed, they have increasingly become accusatory, shaming, and embarrassment-inducing in a way rarely before seen. Private Members of the Government caucus in Alberta, by contrast, design their questions to praise the Government and simultaneously diminish the Opposition in any way they can (e.g., when X party was in power, they poorly implemented a particular policy). The answers from Ministers often then attempt to belittle the opposition, while promoting their own policies and explaining why citizens would be worse off if the other side got into power.

Again, while this approach is not necessarily new, the tone of the answer is more often meant to sour the perception of the opposition Member’s intelligence for even asking the question, or alternatively, to heap shovel-loads of praise on the hard work of the government Member asking the question for the valiant and indispensable work they do for their constituents. The 35-minute time limit adopted in Alberta and the House of Commons only helps the framing of the content of the message for short clips on social media.

As one might expect, the decorum of an Assembly suffers in this type of environment. When questions become accusations and answers are designed to embarrass the questioner, good policy and calm deliberation are not likely to be the result. Recently, we looked at a “retro Question Period” from January 25, 1993, in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Questions and answers were pointed but not razor like. Heckling was largely absent. Members did not have to shout their questions nor the answers out. One point of order arose from Question Period.

Today we find a significantly different landscape. Ambient microphones can frequently discern shouted heckles from across the chamber. Speaker interventions are needed to enable the Assembly to hear questions and answers. On April 16, 2026, in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, a record 20 points of order arose out of that day’s Question Period, many of which pertained to the issue of a motion being put on notice concerning the province’s electoral boundaries. No fewer than four of the Opposition-initiated exchanges during Question Period on the topic that day were posted on social media. This is a social media sphere’s bread and butter, which is evidenced by the tens of thousands of interactions on these posts. Hard hitting, impactful statements, delivered in a short clip are uniquely suited for Instagram, TikTok, YouTube shorts, and other social media platforms.

A full and comprehensive review of how Members use their social media accounts is not possible to include in this article. However, we did look at some Members' Instagram accounts to get a sense of how Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta have used Question Period material on their Instagram accounts during the 2nd Session of the 31st Legislature (Fall 2025-Present).

These posts are typically branded with the Member's caucus' colours and utilize closed captioning of the question being asked. While the questions being asked fit within the rules of Question Period, it is obvious that the real target audience, as noted, is the viewing public, not the Members. Questions are framed as mini speeches, often ending with a question for which a legitimate response is not expected.

When assessing feedback on two Members' Instagram accounts, the value of curating and broadcasting questions from Question Period is abundantly evident. One of the Member's posts from April 16, 2026, demonstrates how far the message can spread. Thousands of people "liked" the video and hundreds more commented on it and shared it with others. On another Member's Question Period post, dozens of people liked, commented, and shared it. While their questions may not have a comparable uptake in likes, comments, and shares, there is still a significant interaction with their post that may not have been picked up by other forms of media.

Social media algorithms also facilitate getting a Member's message out by "self-sharing" them to other users based on their topical interests. Therefore, their reach is likely far more widespread than the base interaction statistics would suggest. And when one considers the level of potential exposure of broadcasted proceedings through a medium that is effectively a free and a DIY (do-it-yourself) production, accessible on a smartphone, one can see how Members, especially those asking questions in Question Period, might flock to social media to score their political points. The outstanding question is: What impact has this had on the long-standing accountability function of Oral Question Period.

With Social Media, Has Question Period Accountability Disappeared?

In a February 10, 2026, CBC article, "If question period is 'broken,' is anyone going to fix it?" Aaron

Wherry quotes one Member of Parliament as saying, "Question period is broken ... the current format of question period falls short of its goal of providing true accountability."¹³ This perspective may lead one to believe that achieving accountability through Question Period is no longer feasible. However, to argue that Question Period is only valuable as a mechanism of accountability based solely on the quality of the questions asked and the responses given misses how social media provides the opportunity to bring important policy and other issues to light, and to question and even debate them in the public sphere. Looking at Question Period in light of its potential to highlight perceived issues of concern for constituents and the public at large, we find that its accountability function has not died; rather, its focus has simply changed. Currently, many Parliamentarians utilize the proceedings of Question Period to highlight matters that they deem important and communicate them directly to the public through social media.

To conclude, much has been said about the impact of social media and technology on the decline of Question Period as an honest and fulsome exchange of information on government policy. But social media has not been responsible for bringing change to Question Period itself. Nor did social media create the political polarization that is evident in Question Period and experienced by many Assemblies today. Rather these issues were and continue to be the responsibility of the actors involved – primarily elected officials. Social media provides tools to accentuate and amplify these existing trends by allowing the actors themselves – as opposed to a third party (as with television broadcasting) – to control the message.

Lastly, despite what many perceive to be a deterioration of the original purpose of Oral Question Period, precipitated by social media, social media has unexpectedly contributed to accountability in the parliamentary realm. Indeed, while enhancing the vitriol and nastiness of modern politics, social media still performs the useful function of bringing public policy issues to light. Constituents and citizens alike are now made aware of these important matters of public policy via their phones and computers rather than through television or the other "traditional" media. The message, in other words, is as diffuse as it ever has been, and perhaps more so. As such, social media has helped to preserve the core accountability function of Question Period, just in a different way.

Notes

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- 2 Frances H. Ryan, "Can Question Period be Reformed?" *Canadian Parliamentary Review* 32, no. 3 (Autumn, 2009): 18. <https://ezproxy.assembly.ab.ca/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/trade-journals/can-question-period-be-reformed/docview/912385801/se-2>. Accessed 31 March 2026.
- 3 A historical collection of newspaper clippings that reference the proceedings of legislative debates before official, verbatim transcripts (known as *Hansard*) were officially recorded.
- 4 "February 25, 1947 (Page 10 of 16)." *Edmonton Journal* (1911-), Feb 25, 1947. 10, <https://ezproxy.assembly.ab.ca/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/february-25-1947-page-10-16/docview/3183075105/se-2>.
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- 9 James R. Robertson, *Television and the House of Commons*. Television and the House of Commons (BP-242E) [accessed 25 May 2026] p. 5.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- 11 Aaron Wherry, "Twitter's time in Canadian politics began with an apology-and then it got worse." CBC News, November 27, 2022. Twitter's time in Canadian politics began with an apology — and then it got worse | CBC News [accessed 26 May 2026].
- 12 Ninth Report of the Standing Committee on Elections, Privileges, Procedure, p. 7.
- 13 Aaron Wherry, "If question period is 'broken,' is anyone going to fix it?" CBC News, February 10, 2026. If question period is 'broken,' is anyone going to fix it? | CBC News [accessed 26 May 2026].

Institutionalized Adversarialism: Questioning Question Period through Mindful Adversarialism

Question Period is routinely criticized as uncivil, theatrical, and increasingly unproductive. These critiques often rest on an implicit comparison to deliberative ideals – consensus-seeking, calm exchange, and mutual persuasion. But Question Period was never designed to achieve those ends. It is a structured site of political contestation. This article argues that to evaluate Question Period meaningfully, we must assess it on its own institutional terms. Rather than asking whether it fosters consensus or civility, we should ask whether it clarifies political alternatives, exposes executive action to public scrutiny, and makes responsibility visible. Reframing the standards of evaluation in light of its intentionally adversarial design allows for a more accurate judgement of whether Question Period is failing, how it has developed or decayed over time, or if it is simply performing the role it was always built to play. This paper introduces the idea of “mindful adversarialism” as the best approximation of that standard.

Chris Greenaway and Michael Cowan

Introduction: Questioning Question Period

Former Prime Minister Paul Martin once described Parliament as “mindless adversarialism.”¹ The adjective is the indictment. The noun, however, is the institution. Adversarialism was never the problem – the mindlessness is. If Question Period suffers from democratic dysfunction, the diagnosis depends on the yardstick. The standard critiques measure it against deliberative ideals – consensus-seeking, civility, mutual persuasion² – detached from embedded partisanship. To measure it accurately, we should evaluate Question Period against the institutional purposes that a Westminster system assigns to it. From that vantage, adversarialism is not the pathology but the prerequisite. The danger of democratic decay lies not in partisan conflict but in conflict emptied of purpose. This article makes two arguments. The first is normative: adversarialism is a democratic virtue in Westminster systems, not a defect to be apologized for. The second is evaluative: to question Question Period accurately, we need to surface the institutional logic it

actually services. “Mindful adversarialism” is offered here as the best approximation of that standard.

During the ArriveCAN controversy of early 2024, Question Period frequently descended into what looked like partisan spectacle: repeated accusations of corruption, rehearsed ministerial responses, interruptions, and escalating rhetorical attacks.³ Media coverage often treated these exchanges as evidence of dysfunction and hyper-partisanship in Parliament.⁴ Yet beneath the disorder, the exchanges also performed several core democratic functions. Opposition MPs publicly challenged executive decisions, ministers were compelled to defend government conduct before Parliament, and political responsibility was attached to identifiable actors in full public view.⁵ The result was sustained scrutiny: committee investigations, Auditor General findings,⁶ and continuing political pressure on the government.

What do we make of this? Was the ArriveCAN exchange mindless partisan spectacle, or Westminster democratic accountability doing its work, or somewhere in-between? Should the House of Commons aspire to be more deliberative? Would Canadians be better served by a consensus style Question Period than by the adversarial system they currently have? These questions are not rhetorical. They are the questions any serious evaluation of Question Period must answer. To

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answer them, we have to begin where the standard critiques begin: with the deliberative ideals and consensus-based alternatives against which Question Period is often – and so unfavourably – compared.

Deliberation, Consensus, and the Westminster Question

The standard critiques of Question Period borrow their evaluative vocabulary from two intellectual traditions: deliberative democracy and consensus institutional design. Both have produced compelling work on what democratic discourse can look like at its best. Neither offers a sound basis for evaluating a Westminster parliament.

Deliberative democracy, developed most influentially by Jurgen Habermas and operationalized for empirical study through the Discourse Quality Index of Steenbergen⁷ and colleagues, holds that the legitimacy of democratic decisions rests on reasoned public exchange. Participants are expected to justify positions in terms intelligible to others, engage opposing arguments on their merits, and revise their views in light of better reasons. Civility, mutual respect, and a willingness to seek common ground are not optional graces in this account; they are constitutive of democratic legitimacy itself. By these standards, Question Period in Canada fails almost by definition. Ministers do not revise positions in response to opposition argument and normally remain embedded in scripted party rhetoric. Opposition members do not concede points. The exchange is performative, repetitive, and structured around partisan advantage. The deliberative ideal is not the sport being played.

Consensus parliamentary systems offer a second source of comparison. Scandinavian legislatures, the Swiss Federal Assembly, and similar bodies in proportional, coalition-based political systems operate with norms that look closer to the deliberative ideal: coalition partners must cooperate to govern at all, party discipline is comparatively weaker, and contestation tends to be channelled into committee work rather than televised confrontation. As Lijphart documented in his comparative study of democratic models,⁸ these “consensus democracies” produce different patterns of legislative behaviour because they rest on distinct institutional foundations: proportional representation, multi-party governance, and a culture of cross-party bargaining.

And yet, consensus legislatures are not foreign curiosities. Canada has one. The Legislative Assembly of Nunavut elects members without party affiliation,

selects its premier and cabinet through consensus among MLAs, and grounds its operation in Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit* – a tradition of collective decision-making rooted in Inuit knowledge.⁹ The Northwest Territories operates a similar model. But the conditions that make these institutions work are precisely the conditions absent in the federal House. Nunavut has roughly 40,000 residents in a single region with a shared cultural foundation.¹⁰ The federal House represents over 40 million people across multiple regions, several major linguistic and cultural communities, and a contested distribution of constitutional authority. Consensus institutions presuppose a degree of underlying agreement about the political community itself.¹¹ Where that agreement exists, consensus governance is viable. Where it does not, the absence of consensus is the thing the institution exists to manage – not the failure it should be measured against.

The error in importing deliberative or consensus standards into a Westminster parliament is therefore not a matter of taste. It is a category mistake. These standards were developed for institutional contexts that already exhibit the conditions they purport to evaluate. Westminster systems were designed for a different problem: how to hold concentrated executive power accountable in the absence of formal separation of powers. The features of Question Period that look like failures from a deliberative perspective – its adversarial structure, its partisan framing, its theatrical edge – are not defects to be apologized for. They are the institutional response to the problem the system was built to solve.

What Question Period is For

The normative logic of Parliament predates deliberative democracy by roughly seven centuries. The earliest deliberative-democratic theorists were writing in the 1980s, while the institution whose central daily ritual they propose to evaluate had already existed for centuries.¹² Question Period was not built around a vision of reasoned consensus¹³ that it has subsequently failed to achieve. It was built around an entirely different problem.

That problem was, and is, executive power. In a Westminster system the executive does not stand outside the legislature, as it does in presidential systems.¹⁴ It sits inside. The Prime Minister is a Member of Parliament. Cabinet ministers are Members of Parliament. The very people empowered to make and execute policy occupy seats in the chamber where they are required to defend it – and Question Period is the

daily ritual by which they are made to do so. Walter Bagehot called the fusion of executive and legislature the “efficient secret” of the English Constitution.¹⁵ He distinguished the *dignified* parts of the system – the monarchy, the ceremonies, the symbols by which authority is generated – from the *efficient* parts – the Cabinet and Commons, where governance actually occurs. The Cabinet, he wrote, is “a hyphen which joins, a buckle which fastens, the legislative part of the state to the executive part.” It is precisely this fusion that makes parliamentary government work, and it is precisely this fusion that makes a daily Question Period necessary at all.

The functions that Question Period performs extend beyond the Cabinet’s direct accountability. Bagehot identified what he called the *informing* function of Parliament – what we might today call the process of airing grievances. A constituent who has never won an election, who holds no formal authority, who has no seat in Cabinet, or who does not see their preferences reflected in the governing party, nevertheless has a representative whose institutional role is to bring that constituent’s grievance into the public record. Question Period is the most visible venue in which such a grievance lands in front of a minister who must answer for it on the public record. In a country the size of Canada, with regional, linguistic, and constitutional diversity that no consensus mechanism could plausibly resolve, this matters.¹⁶ An opposition member’s challenge to a minister about fisheries policy is also a representation of Atlantic Canada. A Bloc question about a federal programme is also a constitutional position on Quebec’s relationship to Ottawa. A Conservative member’s question about Alberta’s relationship to the Canada Pension Plan is also a constitutional position on Confederation. The substance of the partisan exchange in Question Period carries regional and representative weight whether or not the exchange is polite. And often, it should not be polite.

One of the greatest securities of democratic freedom is the ability to openly challenge and embarrass the government in a formal setting.

This is why David Docherty’s observation – that when Parliament works best, it looks “worst”¹⁷ – captures something that standard critiques of Question Period miss. Question Period is meant to look adversarial. The visible conflict is the institution functioning, not failing. The pressure on ministers, the partisan framing, the refusal to concede, the willingness to embarrass – these are not flaws of Question Period.

They are the mechanisms by which executive power is rendered answerable inside the legislature, and through the legislature, to the public. The Cabinet sits in the House because Parliament insists on having it where Parliament can see it. Question Period exists because seeing it once is not enough.

To evaluate Question Period properly, then, we must evaluate it as part of this design – not as a failed experiment in reasoned consensus, but as the institutional mechanism by which executive power is kept in view, contestable, and answerable. The standards by which we judge it should reflect the work it is asked to do.

Mindful Adversarialism

Mindful adversarialism is adversarial conduct in the service of democratic accountability. It is the contestation Question Period was designed for: pointed, partisan, public, and answerable to a function. The contrast with Paul Martin’s “mindless adversarialism” is not a contrast of temperature. It is a contrast of intent. A loud, theatrical, uncivil exchange can be mindful. A calm, courteous, elaborate exchange can nevertheless be mindless. Temperature is incidental; purpose is substantive.

The evaluation proposed works within adversarialism rather than against it. It distinguishes adversarialism that serves accountability from adversarialism that serves nothing of democratic value. Three questions operationalize it. None ask whether an exchange was civil beyond the procedural requirements of parliamentary language. Two frameworks. Same exchange. Different evaluation questions. Each cluster below previews a criterion that this section will unpack.

Clarifying Political Alternatives

Did the exchange clarify the choice? Westminster voters do not pick policies. They pick MPs who then pick governments. That makes the opposition’s job specific and demanding: to build, over an entire parliamentary session, a coherent case for a different government and to force the government of the day to defend its own.¹⁸ Question Period is the most visible venue in which both sides do this work in real time.

The criterion turns on what the exchange leaves behind in the public mind. A successful exchange surfaces a real political alternative, both the grievance the opposition represents and the governance vision

Table 1

Asking the Right Questions of Question Period	The deliberative ideal asks...	Mindful adversarialism asks...
<i>Clarifying political alternatives</i>	Did participants reason toward agreement? Was the goal persuasion? Did speakers refine each other's positions?	Did the exchange clarify the political choice? Was the goal a sharper choice for voters? Did the opposition build a coherent alternative?
<i>Exposing executive action to public scrutiny</i>	Did the minister engage the question on its merits? Was the answer reasoned and complete? Were all affected interests weighed?	Did the minister address what was asked, or evade it? Did the answer commit the minister to a position? Did the response engage the constituency raising the grievance?
<i>Making responsibility visible</i>	Was the decision treated as a collective product? Did the exchange seek shared ownership of the outcome? Did the exchange enable mutual understanding?	Did the minister own a specific decision? Was the chain of responsibility traceable? Could voters use the exchange to assign accountability?

Note. Table 1 contrasts two evaluative registers used to assess Question Period exchanges. The deliberative ideal column reflects criteria associated with reasoned consensus-seeking discourse, while the mindful adversarialism column operationalizes adversarial conduct in the service of democratic accountability. The three rows correspond to the functions Question Period was designed to perform. Civility beyond the procedural requirements of parliamentary language is not among the evaluation questions.

the grievance points toward. Voters who watch the exchange come away with a sharper sense of which is on offer from each side, what the choice between them costs, and what is at stake in deciding. The clarity arrives through partisan framing – daily, repeated, mutually contesting – that deliberative critics treat as noise. The framing is the mechanism.

Question Period fails this criterion when opposition questions name no alternative: when they demand resignations without proposing governance, or accumulate grievances, voters cannot assemble into a choice. The criterion is not whether the alternative offered is good. It is whether the exchange surfaces one at all.

Exposing Executive Action to Public Scrutiny

Did the question land? Ministers know what the government has done. The public does not, at least until someone with standing forces ministers to speak on the record about it.

Question Period is the institutional mechanism that does this forcing.¹⁹ Its function is met when the words a minister speaks engage what was asked, commit to something specific, and answer the constituency whose grievance brought the question.

The criterion is institutional, not aesthetic. A reasoned, civil exchange between government and opposition that produces no actionable record fails

it. An adversarial, theatrical, frequently uncivil exchange that pins a minister to a specific defensible claim succeeds. The point of the questioning is to make executive conduct legible, citable, and testable against subsequent events. The questions arrive from somewhere – from constituent complaints, from journalistic reporting, from whistleblowers, from members who translate concerns that arrive in their offices into demands the government cannot silently ignore.²⁰

Question Period fails this criterion when ministerial responses dodge what was asked, commit to nothing, and treat the underlying constituency as a target rather than an interlocutor.

Making Responsibility Visible

Whose name and which party is on the decision? Power in a Cabinet system flows through many hands. Decisions are made collectively, executed across departments, implemented through agencies, and defended by communications staff. Without an institution that pins responsibility to a named person at a specific time for a specific decision, accountability dissolves into the corporate structure of government.²¹ Question Period pins.

The criterion is about whether the exchange identifies, in real time and on the public record, an actor who can be held responsible for a specific choice. In a system where the executive is fused with the legislature, this work has no other venue. Committees produce reports months later. Inquiries produce reports years later. Elections happen periodically. Only Question Period operates daily, in public, under conditions that compel a named minister to speak to a specific decision while the decision is still politically alive.²² Every constituency with a grievance about a government action needs to know which decision-maker owns the choice; without that knowledge, the grievance has nowhere to land.

Question Period fails this criterion when responsibility evaporates when no minister owns a specific decision, when the chain of responsibility is broken or obscured, and when the public cannot trace credit or blame back to an identifiable actor.

The Democratic Filter: Restriction by Design

The contrast established in this section can be concluded by considering who gets to ask the questions. Deliberative democracy aspires to include every voice

affected by a decision.²³ Question Period does not. The chamber admits only elected members. Speaking time is allocated by party standing, that is, electoral success. The Speaker recognizes by rotation among parties, not by depth of personal interest in the question.

This is not a defect but a democratic filter aimed towards managing pluralism across aggregated fault lines of political disagreement.²⁴ The voices that reach the floor of Question Period have demonstrated, through democratic election, that they speak for a constituency that holds them accountable (Pitkin, 1967). To question a minister, one must first persuade tens of thousands of voters that one is fit to represent them. To command more questioning time, one must build a caucus large enough to earn it. Whatever one thinks of how Canadians distribute their votes, the people who get to ask the questions have earned the right by the only mechanism democratic politics provides. Question Period imposes a higher bar than the all-affected principle. Its restrictiveness is not the cost paid for accountability; it is part of the accountability itself.

Question Period: Failing, Decaying, or Performing as Designed?

To assess whether Question Period is failing, decaying, or performing as designed, evaluation criteria fit for the institution's purpose are required. The framework set out in the preceding sections provides them. Question Period exchanges vary by sitting day, issue, minister, and opposition strategy. Some clear the criteria. Some fail them. Most fall somewhere along a continuum between mindful and mindless adversarialism, excelling in one criterion while underperforming in another. The natural extension of this work is the computational assessment of Question Period exchanges across longer time periods, applying these criteria to substantial bodies of parliamentary transcripts to test what they reveal in aggregate.²⁵ It requires a Parliamentary Discourse Quality Index, comparable to the Discourse Quality Index,²⁶ but with domain-specific quality indicators operationalized for computational handling of large transcript analyses. For the purposes of this article, what follows is illustrative: an application of the framework to two contrasting situations, intended to show what the criteria reveal once brought to bear.

Consider what a mindful exchange looks like in operation. Opposition questions arrive from constituent grievances and translate them into demands that name what the government has done, what an alternative

Table 2

Continuum of Adversarialism	Mindful	Mindless
<i>Clarifying political alternatives</i>	Opposition building a coherent counter-position Voters seeing what each side proposes The clash sharpening the public choice	Demands for resignation without an alternative Accumulated grievances that do not add up to a vision Questions designed to only embarrass, not to construct
<i>Exposing executive action to public scrutiny</i>	Ministers addressing what was asked Answers committing the speaker to a position Responses engaging the constituency at stake	Ministers dodging what was asked Talking points committing to nothing Questions designed for clip-farming, not scrutiny
<i>Making responsibility visible</i>	Ministers owning specific decisions The chain of responsibility being traceable Voters able to assign credit or blame	Responsibility diffusing across Cabinet, caucus, “the department” No named actor emerging as accountable Accountability with nowhere to land

Note. Table 2 presents the three normative criteria for assessing whether an exchange performs the institutional work Question Period exists to do. Cells give characteristic features at each pole, illustrative rather than exhaustive; the criteria are evaluated independently. Most exchanges clear some while failing others, falling along the continuum rather than at either pole.

might look like, and which minister is accountable. The questions persist across successive interventions, refusing to let evasive answers stand. Ministerial responses engage what was asked, commit to specific positions that can later be tested against the record, and acknowledge — even when defending — the responsibility of named actors for specific decisions. The exchange may be loud, theatrical, and uncivil. None of that diminishes the work being performed; the volume and framing engage, enrage, and excite the public to attend to the matter.

Consider next what a mindless exchange looks like. Opposition questions are drafted as clip material optimized for short-form circulation rather than for ministerial response. They name no alternative; they accumulate grievances without building toward a vision; they are designed to embarrass rather than to construct. Ministerial responses are pre-loaded talking points that engage nothing the question raised, commit to nothing specific, and treat the affected constituency

only as a target for messaging.²⁷ Responsibility is deliberately or incidentally diffused across the Cabinet, the caucus, and “the department.” The exchange may be calm, courteous, and restrained. The performance of restraint does not save it; the substance is absent.

The contrast reveals what the standard critiques of Question Period miss. Many features critics single out for reform turn out, on examination, to be deployable in either direction.

Volume and theatrics serve either end of the continuum; so do party discipline and scripted messaging, repetition, and the thirty-five-second time limit on questions and responses.²⁸ Each can break ministerial evasion or fill airtime; each can engage the public or distract from substance; each can clarify alternatives or substitute slogans for them. The temperature of an exchange and its institutional function are independent.²⁹ Tools serve the institution only when wielded with purpose.

What follows from this is that real decay tends to be quieter than apparent decay. The features that look like failure to a casual observer — jeering, raised voices, refusal to concede, the visible refusal of either side to grant the other's good faith — are often the institution at work. The features that constitute actual failure — questions that commit to nothing, answers that engage nothing, responsibility deliberately diffused — tend to produce less visible noise. The standard critique mistakes the audible for the diagnostic. The framework offered here corrects that mistake.

The implication for reform is direct. An institutional reform that softens the temperature of Question Period — through procedural changes encouraging civility, deliberation, or cross-party consensus — risks weakening precisely the mechanisms by which mindful adversarialism does its work.³⁰ A reform that targets the institutional content of exchanges — through procedural changes that encourage direct responses to questions, specific commitments on the record, and identifiable ownership of decisions — addresses real decay. The two reform programmes look superficially similar from the outside. The continuum shows they are opposed.

Conclusion: Deliberation with the Devil and the Value of Adversarialism

The exchange over ArriveCAN in early 2024 looked, to many observers, like a Parliament in decline. Judged against the institutional logic the chamber was built to serve, they were closer to the opposite: opposition pressure, ministerial defence, and a public record on which responsibility could be assigned. The criticism was not that Question Period failed, but that it succeeded in a form its critics did not recognize as success.

There is a long tradition in discourse practice — the *advocatus diaboli*, or Devil's Advocate — of assigning one party the role of pressing the strongest case against a proposition.³¹ First institutionalized in canonization procedures to test the case for sainthood, the practice has been invoked by discourse theorists ever since to stress-test reasoning. Question Period is not a polite version of the Devil's Advocate. It is the Devil's Advocate, on behalf of those without a voice in governance, built into the constitution.

What Paul Martin called mindless adversarialism named a failure mode, not the institution. Adversarialism is what Question Period is. Mindful Adversarialism — the discipline of using contestation

in service of accountability — is what distinguishes the institution working from the institution decaying.

Question Period does not exonerate the devil through deliberation; it puts him on the stand and demands he make his case.

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New and Notable Titles

A selection of articles relating to parliamentary studies (April 2026 – June 2026)

Bergia, Agostina, Weinberg, Ashley. "Political Violence: When Parliamentarians Become the Target of Public Hostility." Inter-Parliamentary Union. 2026

- The report, Political Violence: When Parliamentarians Become the Target of Public Hostility, highlights a worrying increase in acts of intimidation and harassment perpetrated by the public against parliamentarians. The report draws on a large-scale survey of 519 parliamentarians worldwide, as well as case studies in five countries: Argentina, Benin, Italy, Malaysia, and the Netherlands, to account for diverse political and regional contexts.

Cochrane, Christopher, and Michael Cowan. "Electoral District Boundary Effects in Canada." *Canadian Journal of Political Science*: 1-25, May 2025.

- This article introduces the Markov Riding Position Sampler (MaRiPoSa) for simulating Canadian elections under alternative configurations of electoral district boundaries. Despite Canada's strictly non-partisan system of boundary design, MaRiPoSa demonstrates that, for a single Canadian election, there are alternative, allowable and more equitable configurations of boundaries to return either Liberal or Conservative governments without changing the vote or location of a single voter. If the same votes in the same places produce different governments depending on which valid configuration of boundaries happens to be used, to what extent can we say that it is voters and their territorial distributions that determine the outcome of Canadian elections? Canada will need to adjust principles and institutions to prepare for the new technological environment brought about by advances in computing and artificial intelligence.

Franceschet, Susan, and Erica Rayment. "Parliamentarians' perspectives on parenthood and politics in Canada's House of Commons." *Parliamentary Affairs* 79(2): 440-460, April 2026.

- Canada's members of parliament (MPs) work long hours, travel frequently, and spend weeks

away from home each year. Research on gender and politics finds that parliamentary work is not designed to accommodate those with caring obligations, usually women. In this article, the authors leverage a survey of sitting Canadian MPs conducted in 2022 to assess whether women MPs report greater difficulty combining a political career with family life and to identify patterns of MP support for parenthood accommodations in parliament. Drawing on responses to closed- and open-ended questions, we argue that women MPs experience the challenge of reconciling work and family more acutely than do men MPs. When it comes to support for family-friendly policies in parliament, however, we find that party is more strongly correlated with MPs' attitudes than gender. Most respondents are supportive of accommodating parenthood, but resistance appears among Conservative MPs, particularly for accommodations affecting core parliamentary operations.

Galinanes, Manuel, and Leo Klinkers. "From Gatekeepers to Gravediggers: The Role of Political Party Leaders and Candidates in Democratic Decline - and the Case for Principled Leadership." *Journal of Politics and Law* 19 (1): 1-22, 2026

- Political parties remain indispensable to representative democracy, yet their evolving role has become a central driver of democratic decline. Once the guardians of accountability, many parties now function as instruments of personalization, elite entrenchment, and institutional decay. This article examines how the internal dynamics of party leadership—manifested through clientelism, opportunistic candidate selection, and the erosion of programmatic commitments—accelerate the normalization of illiberal practices. Drawing on comparative evidence and democratic theory, it argues that reversing this trend requires a culture of principled leadership grounded in ethical recruitment and transparent accountability. To that end, the article introduces two complementary frameworks: the Political Party Leadership Code (PPLC), which articulates 10 normative principles for ethical leadership selection, and the Leadership

Scoring Metric (LSM), which operationalizes these standards into measurable criteria. Together, these instruments offer a pathway for institutional and cultural reform, enabling parties to reclaim their gatekeeping function and restore public trust in democratic governance.

Leslie, Pat. "Parliamentary Debate and Job Market Signaling in Westminster Systems." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 51(2): 2026.

- This article examines parliamentary speech as a job-market signal in Westminster systems, where ministers are selected from the legislature under conditions of informational asymmetry. Building on signaling theory, it argues that party leaders use visible, effortful parliamentary activities—such as frequent speechmaking—as proxies for latent qualities like political aptitude and commitment. Using data from Australia, Canada, Ireland, and the UK, it finds that a one standard deviation increase in first-term speech rate is associated with a 27% [95% CI: 19, 36] increase in the risk of ministerial promotion. The relationship is role-specific (predicting ministerial but not whip appointments) and robust to confounds such as elite education, gender, and prior experience. These findings contribute to the literatures on ministerial selection and parliamentary debate by reframing parliamentary speech as a strategic investment. They also challenge critical conceptions of the Westminster model by showing how fused executive–legislative dynamics shape ministers' career incentives and understanding of institutional design.

Manion, Anita, David C. Kimball, Paul Manson, Paul Gronke, and Joseph, Anthony. "Ballots and Beliefs: Diverging Views on Election Integrity From the Public and Officials" *Politics and Governance* 14, Article 11818, 2026.

- Public opinion about election integrity and election administration is frequently cited in policy debates in the United States. Due to their role in administering elections, local election officials (LEOs) provide an authoritative voice on election-related matters. Yet it remains unclear whether differences between LEO and public opinion reflect compositional differences between these groups or fundamentally distinct ways of evaluating election integrity and reform. We compare the main predictors of opinions about

election administration for LEOs and the public in the United States on election integrity, voting values, and election reforms using national surveys from 2020 and 2024. We find that LEOs report higher confidence in election integrity and lower belief in fraud than the public, even after accounting for partisanship and demographics. We find similarities between public and LEO opinions on election security and reform proposals, including significant partisan differences. Partisan differences in confidence and reform preferences are larger among the public than among LEOs, indicating that professional expertise moderates, but does not eliminate, partisan polarization. In a polarized democracy, professional expertise can maintain election integrity but does not ensure public trust, highlighting the limits of technocratic authority in restoring confidence in democratic institutions when partisan narratives dominate.

McDonald, Ainsley, Peter Ferguson, Zim Nwokora, Amy Nethery, and Andrew Young. "Overcoming the barriers to parliamentary workplace regulation: Parliamentary privilege, political parties, and procedural fairness." *Parliamentary Affairs*, 2026.

- Parliaments, as the preeminent democratic institution and source of workplace standards, should uphold the highest regulatory behaviour. However, recent instances demonstrate that parliaments frequently fail to ensure all people in the parliamentary workplace are afforded procedural fairness when handling complaints. This is unjust, inconsistent with employment and administrative law, and undermines efforts to reduce poor behaviour within these institutions. This article uses case studies from the UK, Australia, and Canada to show that this denial of procedural fairness stems from two peculiar practices. First, parliamentary privilege undermines members' rights, such as recourse if defamed or the ability to appeal detrimental action taken by the House. Second, political parties take detrimental action against members without due process while having few obligations to investigate misconduct complaints. Despite these enduring norms, the article argues that parliaments must not be absolved of the responsibility to ensure procedural fairness in regulating member behaviour and proposes that parliamentary privilege and party conduct can be regulated in ways that ensure procedural fairness without compromising parliamentary independence.

Poguntke, Thomas, Susan Scarrow, and Paul D. Webb. "Party leadership selection and party leaders' powers: Empowered grassroots or leader-centric parties?" *Parliamentary Affairs* 79(2): 243-262, April 2026.

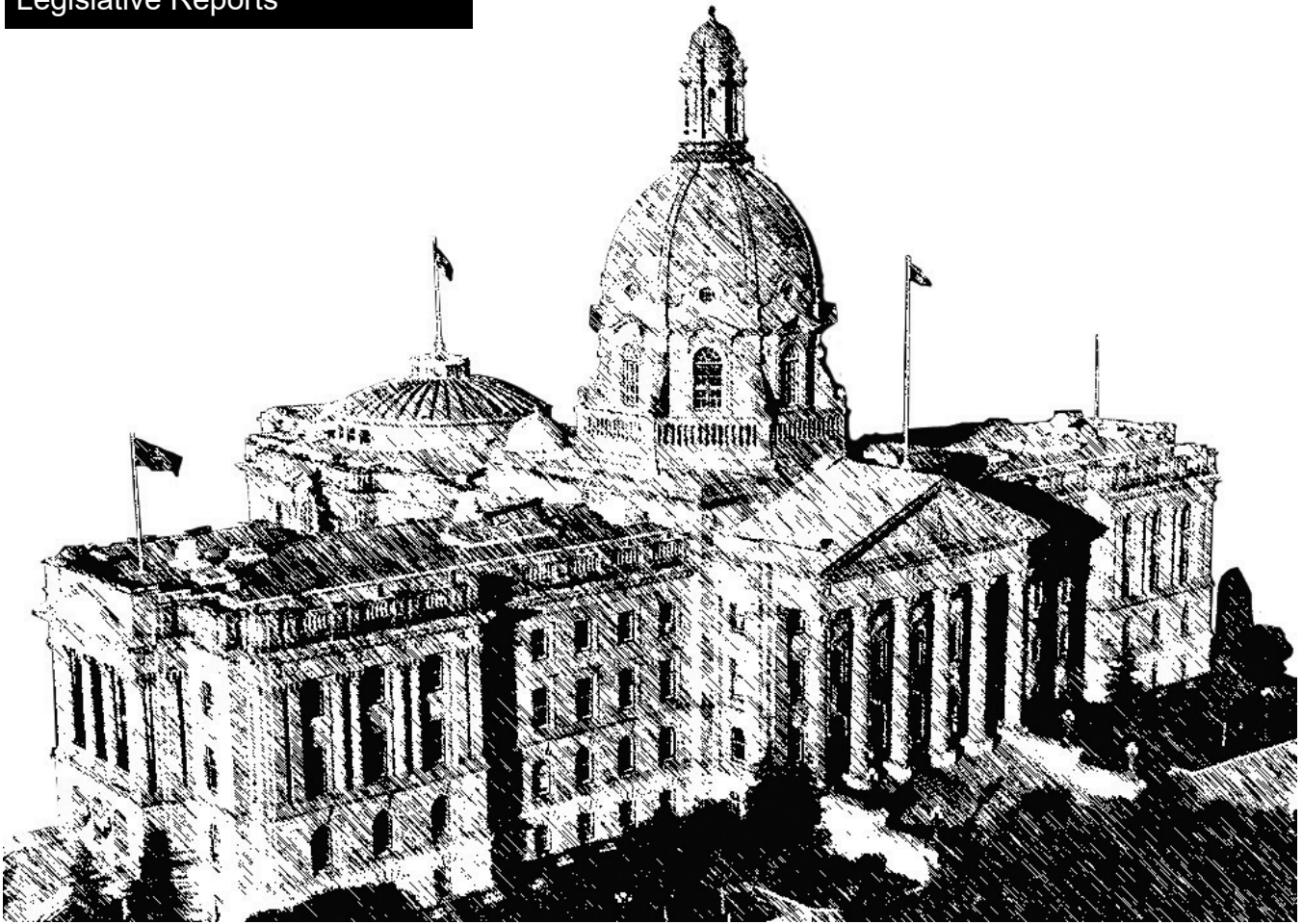
- This article explores whether parties' leadership selection procedures carry broader implications for intraparty power. Prior scholarship has documented an ongoing shift in the ways that parties select their leaders, with a growing tendency to include grassroots supporters in such decisions, sometimes described as 'plebiscitary intraparty democracy'. Some have portrayed moves towards more inclusive leadership selection as part of a more general shift towards the empowerment of individual party members and supporters; others have dismissed it as mere window dressing, and part of a trend towards more leader-centric parties. This study investigates these relationships, asking whether the extent of grassroots involvement in party leadership selection procedures in contemporary democracies relates in any way to the broader distribution of formal powers within parties. Contrary to some sceptics, we find no support for the argument that parties with bottom-up forms of leadership selection generally grant greater formal powers to leaders. Rather, the opposite, in fact: moreover, parties that use inclusive leadership selection procedures also tend to use plebiscitary methods across a wider array of intraparty decision-making procedures. Thus, the highly publicized spread of inclusive leadership contests can be seen as a symptom of wider shifts in the norms and practices of intraparty governance.

Zariski, Archie. "'It's Complicated': the development of plain language legislative drafting in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand." *Statute Law Review* 47(1): 1-41, March 2026

- This article describes how legislative drafters in three countries have tried to write clearer laws. It identifies three key influences on this development: public and political interest, government support, and drafting office cultures. This article also describes three phases in this trend: from simplifying wording to clarifying text and structure and now edifying readers by providing context and guidance. These emerging goals reflect growing awareness and understanding of statute users' needs.

"Women in Parliament: A Global Portrait"
Bibliothèque de l'Assemblée nationale du Québec.
May 2026

- The full participation of women in political and public life is a crucial goal to achieve worldwide. This is evidenced by the numerous international commitments in this regard, such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the Sustainable Development Goals (2015). Despite significant progress in recent years, the path to equality remains long and advances are still fragile. This paper provides an overview of women's political representation in Quebec and around the world, as well as the common obstacles that persist and potential solutions to encourage more women to pursue this path.



Alberta

Second Session of the 31st Legislature

The spring sitting of the Second Session began on February 24, 2026, and is scheduled to continue until May 14, 2026.

Budget 2026

On February 26, 2026, the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, **Nate Horner**, MLA, tabled Budget 2026. The budget forecasts a \$9.4 billion deficit while maintaining existing corporate and personal income tax rates. New revenue measures include a six per cent tourism levy and increased education property tax rates. Expenditures focus on health care and education, with \$1.9 billion in new funding allocated to reducing wait times for emergency services, surgeries, and other care. In addition, \$722 million has been allocated to education funding and capital investments, including new schools and modular classrooms.

Government Bills

In addition to two appropriation bills, the Government Bills introduced during the spring session to date include the following:

- Bill 15, *Public Safety and Emergency Services Statutes Amendment Act, 2026* – proposes amendments to Alberta's *Police Act* to give the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services the authority to transfer provincial government employees, including Alberta Sheriffs, by ministerial order into the Alberta Sheriffs Police Service, the new provincial police service.
- Bill 16, *Traveller Protection and Destination Development Act* – aims to protect travellers from hidden or misleading accommodation fees while ensuring that destination marketing fees are transparently collected and used to support

local tourism. It would require accommodation providers to disclose the full price of a stay upfront and prevent businesses from charging destination marketing fees unless a designated tourism organization exists and receives 100 per cent of the funds. The Bill received Royal Assent on March 26, 2026.

- Bill 18, *Safeguards for Last Resort Termination of Life Act* – proposes to limit access to medical assistance in dying (MAID) to cases where a patient's natural death is reasonably foreseeable (generally within 12 months) and prohibits Track 2 MAID, where death is not foreseeable, while also barring access for minors, individuals whose sole underlying condition is mental illness, patients without decision-making capacity, and advance requests from individuals who anticipate that they may lose capacity to consent in the future. It restricts how and when MAID information may be shared, prevents healthcare providers from referring patients for MAID assessments outside of Alberta, and establishes training requirements and disciplinary sanctions for practitioners. The Bill further enshrines the right of physicians, nurse practitioners, and certain healthcare facilities to refuse participation in MAID.
- Bill 21, *Interprovincial Trade Mutual Recognition Act*, is intended to help reduce internal trade barriers by accepting other provinces' regulatory approvals for most consumer and capital goods while permitting Ministers to issue exemption orders should the province wish to maintain stricter rules to support health, safety or consumer protection.
- Bill 24, *Alberta Whisky Act*, which establishes a definition and protected designation for "Alberta whisky." To qualify, whisky must be mashed, fermented, distilled, aged, proofed, and bottled entirely in Alberta, made with 100 per cent Alberta water and at least two-thirds Alberta-grown grain.
- Bill 25, *An Act to Remove Politics and Ideology from Classrooms and Amend the Education Act, 2026*, amends the *Education Act* to require that classroom instruction and instructional materials be neutral, balanced, and free from political or ideological bias. It prohibits school boards and trustees from taking positions on matters outside their educational mandate, strengthens provincial oversight of school governance and trustee conduct, and introduces province-wide rules mandating that only the Canadian and Alberta flags may be displayed and the weekly playing of the National Anthem. It will also permit the Minister of Education and Childcare to direct the transfer of school board property to the province.

Caucus Composition

On December 9, 2025, **Peter Guthrie** sat in the Assembly for the first time as a member of the Alberta Party. On December 18 the party officially changed its name with Elections Alberta to the Progressive Tory Party of Alberta, with Mr. Guthrie serving as its leader.

Mr. Guthrie was first elected in April 2019 as a United Conservative Party Member and served as the Minister of Energy and later the Minister of Infrastructure until he resigned from Cabinet in February 2025. In April 2025 he was expelled from the United Conservative caucus and became an Independent Member.

Rebecca Schulz, who resigned as Minister of Environment and Protected Areas effective January 2, 2026, has submitted her resignation as the Member for Calgary-Shaw effective May 15, 2026.

Standing Order Amendments

On February 24, 2026, the Assembly approved Government Motion 28, which introduced a range of amendments to the Standing Orders. Highlights of the amendments are as follows:

- MLAs are now limited to having three written questions on the Order Paper at a time and no longer have motions for returns to use to request information from the Government. The Government has 15 sitting days to decide whether it will respond to a written question and then up to 30 additional sitting days to provide the response. If the Government House Leader indicates that no response will be provided, then the written question is removed from the Order Paper. If the Government House Leader indicates that no response will be provided at this time, the written question remains on the Order Paper and shall become due again 20 days after the day on which the statement is made. The disposition of written questions is no longer debatable.
- Programming motions have replaced the time allocation process for Government Bills and Government Motions. Under the new rules a programming motion may be moved with respect to Government Bills once the Bill has received at least two hours of debate at Second Reading. The motion may apply to all remaining stages of consideration and to more than one Bill and designates a specific number of hours for debate. The amount of time for debate allotted for each stage of debate on a Bill may not be less than one hour. Once the time allocated

for consideration under a programming motion has been exhausted, the Chair shall immediately put every question necessary to dispose of that item of business without further debate or amendment. A programming motion on a Government motion may only be moved if the motion has already been debated in the Assembly, and the amount of time allotted for debate by a programming motion may not be less than one hour. Programming motions may not be amended and are subject to a maximum of one hour of debate.

- Under Standing Order 30, Members may still request leave to move to adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly to discuss a matter of urgent public importance. However, there are now limits on the number of such requests that can be made. Each sitting day, requests for emergency debate may be made by a member of the Government caucus, a member of the Official Opposition caucus, another caucus in opposition, and each Independent Member.
- The sitting times on Thursdays have been modified to begin earlier in the day. Previously the Assembly sat from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Thursdays. Effective March 19, the Assembly is now in session on Thursdays from 10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., beginning with the daily routine and proceeding to Oral Question Period at 10:20 a.m.

Committee Business

On January 28, 2026, the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services met to review the 2026-2027 budget estimates for the Legislative Assembly Office. The Committee previously approved budget parameters for the Office in November 2025. The final budget request of \$91,813,000 was approved by the Committee as submitted.

The Members' Services Committee also reviewed a draft *Members' Allowances and Expenses Reimbursement Order*, which would enable the Legislative Assembly Office to recover public funds from Members when unauthorized or ineligible expenses remain unpaid. Intended as a last resort, the Order would also address post-dissolution situations where a former Member no longer has budget allocations to resolve a fiscal shortfall.

The Members' Services Committee further directed the Legislative Assembly Office to assess the feasibility of allowing claims for scooter and ebike rentals, including whether such claims are permitted in other

Canadian jurisdictions, and any related insurance, regulatory, or liability considerations.

Finally, the Members' Services Committee struck a five-person subcommittee to review the policies and guidelines applicable to Member, caucus, and constituency expenditures; the duties of expenditure offices; the application of the policies and guidelines to Members, caucuses and constituency staff; and the draft *Members' Allowances and Expenses Reimbursement Order (Set Off)*.

The Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship completed its review of the *Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act* and tabled its report on March 11, 2026. The Committee made 13 recommendations, including the expansion of the *Act* to apply to municipalities, post-secondary institutions and students, prescribed service providers and subsidiary health corporations, contractors, temporary staff, interns, and volunteers. The Committee also recommended that the *Act* be amended to extend protection against reprisals, strengthen confidentiality provisions, and shield whistleblowers from civil liability.

The Select Special Citizen Initiative Proposal Review Committee was appointed on March 10, 2026, to review the Alberta Forever Canada citizen initiative policy proposal, which was tabled in the Assembly by the Speaker of the Assembly on December 2, 2025. The Alberta Forever Canada citizen initiative asked the question: "Do you agree that Alberta should remain in Canada?" and was verified by Elections Alberta as having over 400,000 signatures, which exceeded the 293,976 signatures required for a successful petition. The Committee has 90 days to complete its consideration and report to the Assembly if the Assembly is then sitting, or, if the Assembly is not sitting, the Committee must report 15 days after the start of the next sitting.

The Auditor General Search Subcommittee completed its mandate and reported to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices. On March 25, 2026, the Legislative Offices Committee recommended that **Phillip Peters** be appointed to the position of Auditor General for an eight-year term beginning on April 29, 2026.

On March 23, 2026, Bill 205, *Non-Disclosure Agreements Act*, was referred to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities for review.

Jody Rempel
Committee Clerk



Ontario

The House stood adjourned from December 11, 2025, until the beginning of the Spring Meeting Period on March 23, 2026. During the winter adjournment, two standing committees met for studies and report writing. In its first week back, the House primarily devoted itself to the consideration of financial business such the adoption of the orders for concurrence in supply and the passage of the supply bill, as well as the presentation of the budget.

Composition of the House

The Member for Scarborough Southwest, **Doly Begum**, tendered her resignation on February 3, 2026. She had been a Member since July 11, 2018, and was serving as Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition prior to stepping down. A by-election has not yet been called.

Concurrence in Supply and the Supply Bill

At the opening of the Spring Meeting Period, the *Orders and Notices Paper* listed 30 orders for concurrence in supply for the various ministries' and offices' estimates, as reported to the House by the standing committees in November 2025. On March 23, 2026, the House adopted a motion to allow the orders for concurrence in supply to be called at the same time and considered together in a single debate. The orders for concurrence in supply were debated that afternoon before the questions were put on each order; they all carried on division.

The adoption of the orders for concurrence in supply represents an order for the introduction of a supply bill. Accordingly, the day following the adoption of the orders for concurrence, the President of the Treasury Board, **Caroline Mulroney**, introduced Bill 95, *An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal*

year ending March 31, 2026. The bill received second and Third Reading on March 25, 2026.

Budget Day

The Minister of Finance, **Peter Bethlenfalvy**, presented the 2026 Budget on March 26, 2026, and moved, seconded by Premier **Doug Ford**, that the House approve in general the Budgetary Policy of the Government. The House then reverted to *Introduction of Government Bills* for the Minister to introduce Bill 97, *An Act to implement Budget measures, to enact, amend or repeal various statutes and to revoke various regulations*.

Chief Medical Officer of Health

On March 24, 2026, the House adopted a motion moved by Government House Leader **Steve Clark** requesting that the Lieutenant Governor in Council reappoint Dr. **Kieran Moore** as Chief Medical Officer of Health for another five-year term beginning on June 1, 2026.

Committees

The winter adjournment was a particularly busy time for the **Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs** which continued to meet for Pre-Budget Consultations 2026. The Committee travelled across the province, conducting public hearings in 9 different cities (Brockville, Ottawa, Pembroke, Kitchener, London, Niagara Falls, Kapuskasing, Thunder Bay and Sudbury). Over the course of its study, the Committee heard from 189 witnesses and received over 270 written submissions.

After concluding its public consultations, the Committee returned to Queen's Park for report writing on February 17 and 18, 2026. The Committee presented its report to the House on March 23, 2026.

The **Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs** met on January 21, 2026, to consider regulations filed under Ontario statutes in 2023. The Chair presented the Committee's First Report on Regulations 2026 to the House on March 23, 2026.

The **Standing Committee on Public Accounts** presented the following reports to the House on March 23, 2026:

- Audit of Changes to the Greenbelt (2023 Special Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario)

- Value-For-Money Audit: Metropolitan Toronto Convention Centre and Ottawa Convention Centre (2023 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario)

Stefan Uguen-Csenge
Committee Clerk



British Columbia

Tumbler Ridge Tragedy and Opening of 2nd Session of the 43rd Parliament

On February 10, 2026, a mass shooting occurred in Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia that claimed nine lives and left dozens injured. In recognition of this tragic event, Members, Legislative Assembly Administration staff, and community members gathered at the front of the Parliament Buildings to hold a candlelight vigil for the victims on February 11, 2026, and the following day was declared a day of mourning in BC. A book of condolences was made available in the Hall of Honour in the Parliament Buildings, along with an online version, for people to express their sympathies and share messages of support. In the days following the tragedy, Lieutenant Governor **Wendy Cocchia**; **David Eby**, Premier; **Trevor Halford**, Leader of the Official Opposition; **Jeremy Valeriote**, Leader of the Third Party, along with Cabinet Ministers and other Members, and several senior federal officials, including **Mary Simon**, Governor General of Canada; **Mark Carney**, Prime Minister; and **Pierre Poilievre**, Leader of the Official Opposition, travelled to Tumbler Ridge to attend a community vigil honouring the victims, their families, and the community.

The impact of the tragedy shaped the proceedings surrounding Opening Day at the Legislative Assembly. On the morning of February 12, 2026, the Lieutenant Governor prorogued the 1st Session of the

43rd Parliament following a moment of silence. The 2nd Session of the 43rd Parliament was opened later that day with many customary Opening Day practices and ceremonies either cancelled or significantly reduced. The Speech from the Throne was modified to express condolences rather than outline government's legislative agenda.

On February 17, 2026, the motion on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne was moved by **Larry Neufeld**, MLA for Peace River South, the constituency in which Tumbler Ridge is located, who expressed grief over the tragedy while honouring the resilience and solidarity shown by the community. The motion was seconded by **Jeremy Valeriote**, Leader of the Third Party, who also spoke about the tragedy, expressing his appreciation for first responders and highlighting the compassion shown by residents and leaders across party lines. This was a departure from the usual practice in which Members affiliated with the Government Caucus move and second the motion.

Appointment of Presiding Officers

Following the Speech from the Throne, the Legislative Assembly appointed **Mable Elmore**, a Member of the Government Caucus, as Deputy Speaker, **Lorne Doerkson**, a Member of the Official Opposition Caucus, as Assistant Deputy Speaker, and **George Anderson**, a Member of the Government Caucus, as Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

Budget 2026-27

On February 17, 2026, the Minister of Finance, **Brenda Bailey**, presented the 2026-27 provincial budget and tabled the 2026-27 Estimates. The budget forecasts a deficit of \$13.3 billion for 2026-27, declining to \$11.4 billion in 2028-29. Total revenues are projected to increase from \$85.5 billion in 2026-27 to \$91.8 billion in 2028-29, driven largely by tax revenues, natural resource revenues, and net income from commercial Crown corporations. Expenses are projected at \$98.8 billion for 2026-27, rising to \$103.2 billion by 2028-29.

The budget proposed several new tax measures, including an increase to the lowest personal income tax bracket from 5.06 percent to 5.6 percent and expanding the provincial sales tax to various professional and commercial services, such as accounting, engineering, commercial real estate fees, and private investigation services.

In presenting the budget, Minister Bailey highlighted government's focus on safeguarding core public services, maintaining low taxes for middle- and working-class families, and reducing the deficit over time. She also outlined measures to enhance efficiency in public service delivery, including more careful management of infrastructure projects, strengthened oversight of major capital initiatives, and public-sector hiring constraints.

The Official Opposition Critic for Finance, **Peter Milobar**, MLA, expressed concern with respect to the budget's implications for seniors, families, and small businesses, and noted that it did not sufficiently address ongoing challenges in the healthcare sector, forestry industry, and public safety. The Third Party House Leader, **Rob Botterell**, MLA, stated that the budget did not adequately address initiatives for primary care, mental health, reconciliation, climate change, and other urgent social and environmental priorities.

On February 26, 2026, the vote on the main budget motion resulted in a tie, requiring the Speaker, **Raj Chouhan**, to make a tie-breaking vote. The Speaker cast his vote in favour of the motion, noting that it was a confidence matter, and that confidence of the House should not be decided by the sole vote of the Chair.

Standing Orders Amendments

Private Members' Business

As noted in the Autumn 2024 issue of the *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, on May 9, 2024, the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia adopted amendments to its Standing Orders that significantly changed the way Private Members' business is considered with the aim of improving the use of Private Members' Time and the ability of Private Members to advance legislative business. As part of the changes, a draw is held at the beginning of a new Parliament to establish the order in which Private Members can move their items of business and bills are committed to a new Select Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Bills after passing Second Reading.

On February 19, 2026, the Legislative Assembly agreed to further amend the Standing Orders concerning Private Members' business. The amendments are intended to bring greater predictability to Private Members' business and to clarify processes, including by requiring a Member to

ensure their item of business is on the Order Paper by the time they reach third place on the placement list and by clarifying the effect of prorogation to Private Members' business appearing on the Order Paper that did not progress prior to prorogation. In addition, the Select Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Bills now has 45 sitting days to report to the House, an increase from the previous 30 sitting days.

Participation of First Nations

On February 24, 2026, the Legislative Assembly adopted a new Standing Order 25C, which formalizes a process for the participation of First Nations in proceedings involving treaty legislation. Under the Standing Order, a representative of the First Nation that is signatory to a treaty will be invited to address the Assembly following the conclusion of proceedings at Introduction and First Reading of the related bill with an address by recognized party leaders to follow. The Standing Order empowers the Speaker to facilitate appropriate ceremonial and cultural arrangements for such occasions, in consultation with House Leaders. These changes align with a commitment in the Legislative Assembly's *Reconciliation Action Plan 2024–2028* to develop and implement consistent practices to provide for the participation of Indigenous representatives in Legislative Assembly ceremonies and proceedings.

Party Standings

On December 3, 2025, several Members of the Official Opposition Caucus advised the Conservative Party of British Columbia's legal counsel that they no longer had confidence in the Leader of the Conservative Party of British Columbia and Leader of the Official Opposition, **John Rustad**, MLA. The next day, Mr. Rustad resigned as Leader of the Conservative Party of British Columbia and the Caucus selected **Trevor Halford**, MLA, as the new Leader of the Official Opposition. The Board of Directors of the Conservative Party of British Columbia subsequently appointed Mr. Halford as Interim Party Leader. The party later announced the rules for a leadership race, which is anticipated to conclude on May 30, 2026.

As noted in previous issues of the *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, **Tara Armstrong**, MLA, and **Dallas Brodie**, MLA, formed the OneBC Caucus and were subsequently recognized as the Fourth Party (in BC, a party needs two Members to be an officially recognized caucus). On December 16, 2025,

Ms. Armstrong left the caucus, and as such, the Fourth Party ceased being a recognized caucus. Both Members now sit as Independent Members.

As of February 28, 2026, party standings in the Legislative Assembly are: 47 BC NDP, 39 Conservative Party of British Columbia, two BC Green Party, and five Independents.

Cooperation and Responsible Government Accord

On February 9, 2026, the BC Green Party announced it would not renew the Cooperation and Responsible Government Accord (CARGA) with the BC NDP, citing insufficient progress on commitments for 2025. In March 2025, the BC NDP and the BC Green Party agreed to the CARGA, which provided a four-year framework for working together on shared policy initiatives and deliverables. The CARGA established the basis for which the BC Green Party Caucus would support government in confidence matters before the House and included a provision that the accord is subject to annual renewal.

Parliamentary Committee Activities

On December 17, 2025, the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services released its report titled *Annual Review of the Budgets of Statutory Offices: 2026–27 to 2028–29*. The report made recommendations regarding the budgets of the province's nine statutory officers and provided an overview of its work to appoint an independent auditor to audit the Office of the Auditor General for the fiscal years of the 43rd Parliament.

On February 5, 2026, the Special Committee to Review the Public Interest Disclosure Act released its report. The *Public Interest Disclosure Act* (the *Act*) is British Columbia's whistleblower protection legislation, which provides a framework for current and former public sector employees to report serious or systemic wrongdoing, mechanisms to investigate allegations of wrongdoing and, where wrongdoing is found, measures to address it. The Committee made 30 recommendations intended to improve clarity of the *Act*, improve transparency, strengthen privacy and confidentiality provisions, and improve trust in the public interest disclosure process.

Hanna Kim
Committee Researcher



Manitoba

3rd Session of the 43rd Legislature – Spring Sitting

Speaker Statement – Indigenous Cultural Items in the Chamber

The Third Session of the 43rd Legislature resumed on March 4, 2026, with Speaker **Tom Lindsey** beginning the day by making two significant statements. In his first statement, Speaker Lindsey advised that, in the Assembly's ongoing journey towards reconciliation with Indigenous communities in Manitoba, several Indigenous cultural items previously gifted to the Assembly will now be on permanent display within the Legislative Chamber, instead of just making an appearance on special occasions such as Manitoba Day.

The beaded Mace Runner now hangs above the Speaker's Throne, while the Star Blanket cushion is on display in the case to the Speaker's left. The Mace Runner is a symbol marking the relationship between First Nations and the Crown, and the sacred promises made during Treaty-making. The Speaker noted that "*we all still share and have the responsibility to honour as long as the sun shines, the grass grows, and the water flows*". In the spirit of Reconciliation, the Star Blanket cushion is a symbol of honour, respect, and connection, and is presented to mark significant life events and spiritual protection to the recipient. In addition, the display case contains a polar bear carving and a Métis Sash which were separately presented to the Assembly in 2023 by the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut and the Manitoba Métis Federation, respectively. The Métis Sash has become a fundamental symbol of the Métis people representing their unique identity and preserving their history in each inter-woven thread. Many of the artists, members of the Manitoba Métis Federation and the Treaty Relations Commission were present in the Gallery to mark this occasion.

Speaker Statement – ASL Recognition

Speaker Lindsey also noted that the Session had commenced with live, picture in picture, ASL interpretation of House proceedings on the Assembly Broadcast, and the screens behind him. He reminded the House that this step was successfully tested on December 3, 2025, and he proudly announced that the Legislative Assembly is now able to provide this service for all House proceedings moving forward. He proclaimed that *“I have said many times that the work we do in this Chamber truly matters, and I remain committed to ensuring that our proceedings are open and accessible to every Manitoban.”* The Assembly will also be able to arrange ASL interpretation in Committee for meetings, if proper notice is provided.

Languages Spoken in the Assembly

Furthering our goal of making the Assembly more accessible, on March 26, 2026, the House agreed by leave to allow the Assembly to provide live interpretation of Indigenous languages, and non-Indigenous languages other than English and French, spoken by Members during House or Committee proceedings. The agreement stipulated that adequate notice would be required. It also noted that, in the event no interpreters are available, the text of the Member’s speech in the Indigenous or other language, followed by the English translation, will be included in the Hansard transcript.

The next day, to mark the upcoming Indigenous Languages Day, Premier **Wab Kinew** delivered a Ministerial Statement in Anishininewin with the English translation being:

“I am filled with joy again today that we continue to look after our Indigenous languages. If we come from places like Winnipeg, Lake Minnewasta, the Assiniboine River, Odanah Colony, Manitoba or Canada, to name but a few, we are people who use Indigenous languages. And so it is that our youth will be healthy if they continue to speak the languages of the Anishinaabemowin, Anishininew, Dakota, Cree, Métis, Inuit and Dene peoples. Let’s speak Indigenous languages to one another!”

Government Legislative Agenda

The Government introduced a total of 45 Bills in time to meet the initial criteria for “Specified Bill” status, and are therefore guaranteed to have all questions put before the House rises in June (subject

to the Government meeting further deadline steps and the right of the Opposition to designate up to five of those Bills to be delayed until the Fall).

The Legislative agenda introduced this Spring includes:

- *Bill 6 – The Sign Languages Recognition Act* recognizes sign languages as the primary languages of communication for the Deaf and Deaf-Blind communities in Manitoba;
- *Bill 9 – The Street Weapons Control Act* prohibits the possession of street weapons in public spaces in populated areas with some exceptions. Street weapons include machetes, swords, axes and pepper spray;
- *Bill 30 – The Intimate Partner Violence Death Review Committee Act* sets up a multidisciplinary committee to review the circumstances of selected intimate partner violence deaths and make recommendations to prevent deaths in similar circumstances in the future.
- *Bill 32 – The Improving Access to Breast Cancer Screening Act* requires the cancer authority to establish a screening plan to ensure that individuals who have an increased risk of developing breast cancer are eligible to access breast cancer screening services. The cancer authority must also establish a plan to increase access to breast cancer screening throughout Manitoba. The plan must set out annual targets respecting the rate of participation in screening programs.

Budget Debate

On March 24, 2026, Finance Minister **Adrien Sala** delivered his third budget entitled “Good Jobs, Lower Costs, Better Health Care.” The budget projects a deficit of \$498 million for 2026-27, with a target to reach a balanced budget by 2027-28. Some of the highlights included:

- Effective July 1, 2026, the Retail Sales Tax (RST) will be removed on additional food and beverages (prepared foods, platters, carbonated drinks) and prenatal vitamins;
- Elimination of \$2-a-day fees for the lowest-income families, impacting roughly 5,000 children
- \$10 million to work with municipalities to provide free transit for school-aged children;
- Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care will receive a 10.3% funding increase in 2026/27;

- A \$3.8-billion commitment to capital projects, including schools and highway upgrades; and
- Port of Churchill: \$262.5 million in federal/provincial funding over five years for the Arctic Gateway Group, plus a new \$10 million “Churchill Catalyst Fund.”

The Progressive Conservative Leader of the Official Opposition **Obby Khan** moved a motion expressing non-confidence in the Government on March 26, 2026. The motion stated that the budget failed to adequately address the current cost-of-living crisis by various means including:

- failing to take action to mitigate the escalating cost pressures on Manitobans, while simultaneously generating hundreds of millions of dollars in new tax revenues from families already facing financial hardship;
- cancelling the indexation of the Basic Personal Amount and personal income tax brackets, thereby denying the ability of Manitobans to keep more money from their paycheques and earn more before paying income tax;
- failing to uphold its commitment not to raise taxes, as evidenced by increases to school taxes, education property taxes, and the termination of income tax indexation;
- refusing to take decisive action in response to grave safety concerns raised by staff and patients at health-care facilities, including multiple sexual assaults, resulting in three hospitals being grey-listed by nurses for the first time in the province’s history;
- failing to take meaningful action to resolve the growing diagnostic and surgical caseloads, thereby forcing Manitoba families to endure unprecedented delays in accessing essential care; and
- failing to take meaningful action to address inflation and the escalating costs of groceries, fuel, and housing.

Memorial Statement for the late Amanda Lathlin

On March 23, 2026, Speaker Lindsey had the sad duty of tabling a letter announcing a vacancy in the The Pas-Kameesak riding as **Amanda Lathlin** tragically died two days earlier at the age of 49. The House had a special sitting that day as the Deputy Premier obtained leave in honour of their former colleague to allow memorial items to be placed on her desk, and for Premier Kinew to make a memorial statement and perform an Honour Song in an

Indigenous language. In a solemn ceremony, various Ministers placed flowers, a beaded medallion, and a photograph on her desk. The Premier also draped a flag over her desk and made a memorial statement after which the House adjourned for the day. Sadly, Ms. Lathlin was the third NDP MLA to die while in office in recent years. **Nello Altomare** (MLA for Transcona and Education Minister), passed away in January 2025 and **Danielle Adams** (MLA for Thompson), died in December 2021. Ms. Lathlin’s father, **Oscar Lathlin**, former MLA for The Pas, also passed away while in office, in 2008.

Interim Supply

The House passed all stages of Interim Supply legislation resulting in Bill 52 – *The Interim Appropriation Act, 2026* receiving Royal Assent on March 25, 2026.

Additional Independent Member

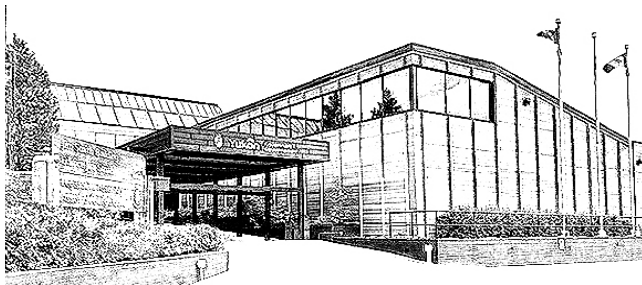
On March 10, 2026, MLA for Dawson Trail, **Bob Lagassé** rose on a point of order to table a press release announcing that he will serve as an Independent Member, thereby leaving the Progressive Conservative Caucus. He became the second MLA since the 2023 election to become an Independent. **Mark Wasyliv** (Fort Garry) was removed from the Government NDP caucus in 2024 and has served as an Independent since that date. With this change the Assembly now has three Independent Members, including **Cindy Lamoureux** who was the only Member elected from the Liberal party in the last election.

The House Leaders and the Speaker made numerous changes as a result to the seating of the horseshoe-shaped Assembly as well to various speaking rotations as the Progressive Conservatives now had 20 seats as opposed to 34 for the Governing NDP. Mr. Lagassé announced that he intends to run as an Independent in his riding for the next election.

Several other Members have recently announced their intentions not to seek re-election including: Selkirk MLA **Richard Perchotte**, Turtle Mountain MLA **Doyle Piwniuk**, Steinbach MLA **Kelvin Goertzen** and Springfield-Ritchot MLA **Ron Schuler**.

Greg Recksiedler

Clerk Assistant/Research Clerk



Yukon

Yukon Public Accounts 2024-25

On February 17, 2026, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts held a public hearing on the *Yukon Public Accounts 2024-25*. Officials from the Office of the Auditor General of Canada and the Department of Finance appeared as witnesses at the hearing.

Kate White, Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, presented the committee's report on the Public Accounts to the Legislative Assembly on March 30, 2026.

2026 Spring Sitting

The 2026 Spring Sitting commenced on March 19, 2026. The Assembly adopted a Sessional Order on December 15, 2025, to delay the start of the Spring Sitting until after Yukon hosted the Arctic Winter Games from March 8 to 15, 2026.

Change to Length of Oral Question Period

Adam Gerle, Chair of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges, presented the committee's first report to the Legislative Assembly on the first day of the Spring Sitting. The report recommended that the length of the Oral Question Period be extended from 30 to 35 minutes. The report also recommended a roster for questions from the Official Opposition, Third Party, and Government private members.

A Sessional Order increasing the length of Oral Question Period for the 2026 Spring Sitting was adopted with a motion for concurrence in the committee's report carried on March 23.

Allison Lloyd
Deputy Clerk



Northwest Territories

The first session of the 20th Legislative Assembly reconvened from February 4 to March 6, 2026. During this sitting the Assembly reviewed the 2026-2027 Main Estimates as well as two supplementary estimates for the 2025-2026 fiscal year, among other business.

Budget

On February 5, 2026, Minister of Finance **Caroline Wawzonek** delivered the budget address and tabled the 2026-2027 Main Estimates and the 2026-2027 Business Plan Update. The 2026-2027 Main Estimates were deemed referred to Committee of the Whole immediately, where they were reviewed at length before a corresponding appropriation bill was brought forward and received all readings on March 5, 2026. The 2026-2027 budget includes approximately \$2.4 billion in spending, an increase of less than one percent from the previous fiscal year; total borrowing authorization increased from nearly \$1.8 billion in 2025-2026 to \$2.3 billion in 2026-2027.

Two supplementary estimates documents were tabled in the Assembly on February 9, 2026, and were deemed referred to Committee of the Whole immediately, where they were considered and approved. On February 17, 2026, Bill 43: *Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures)*, No. 3, 2025-2026 and Bill 44: *Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures and Borrowing Authorization)*, No. 3, 2025-2026 received all readings in the House.

Legislation

During the sitting, the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment reported that it had concluded consideration of Bill 33, *Technical Safety Standards Act* without amendment, the Standing Committee on Social Development reported that it

had concluded consideration of Bill 34, *Trespass to Property Act* with nine amendments, and the Standing Committee on Government Operations reported that it had concluded consideration of Bill 35, *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2026* without amendment and Bill 29, *First Responders Workers' Compensation Amendment Act* with 4 amendments.

Five new bills were introduced during the sitting. Four were read a first and second time and referred to Standing Committees for review:

- Bill 40: *An Act to Amend the Vital Statistics Act* would update the Act and the *Change of Name Act* to reflect common understandings of gender and family structure since the Act was last amended. It received second reading on February 10, 2026.
- Bill 41: *An Act to Amend the Real Estate Agents' Licensing Act* would expand the purview of the Act to encompass other real estate professions not currently regulated in legislation, such as home inspectors and property managers. It received second reading on February 11, 2026.
- Bill 45: *Civil Forfeiture Act* would authorize the territorial government to pursue civil forfeiture of property obtained by unlawful activity, similar to measures enacted in many other Canadian jurisdictions. It received second reading on March 5, 2026.
- Bill 46: *Prevention of Proceedings that Hamper Expression on Matters of Public Interest Act*, a Private Member's bill introduced by **George Nerysoo**, Member for the Mackenzie Delta would introduce "anti-SLAPP" protections similar to those enacted in other jurisdictions to discourage litigation as a means of unduly limiting expression on matters of public interest. It received second reading on March 6, 2026.
- Bill 42: *Tłegóhli Got'ine Final Self-Government Agreement Act* was introduced and read a first time on February 17, read a second time on February 24 and, with unanimous consent, was deemed ready for third reading. It was read a third time and adopted without amendment on February 25, 2026. The Act formally approves at the territorial level the Tłegóhli Got'ine Final Self-Government Agreement (FSGA), signed on September 18, 2025, and supports the Tłegóhli Got'ine inherent right to make their own laws; preserve and protect their language and culture; run programs and services, including education and healthcare; and elect their own leadership. The Act will enter into force when the Agreement becomes legally binding following its implementation in federal law.

Motions

During the February–March sitting, 10 formal motions were moved in the House, all of which were carried. Topics ranged from the establishment of an Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, to the protection of transboundary waters, to strengthening the medical travel policy. Several motions focused on housing and the cost of living, with motions adopted calling for government action on energy security and affordability, the waiving of rent for elders in public housing, and the transfer of rented public housing to tenants.

Assent

On March 6, 2026, the final day of the sitting, the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, **Gerald Kisoun**, provided Assent to the following legislation:

- Bill 33: *Technical Safety Standards Amendment Act*;
- Bill 34: *Trespass to Property Act*;
- Bill 35: *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2026*;
- Bill 42: *Tłegóhli Got'ine Final Self-Government Agreement Act*;
- Bill 43: *Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures)*, No. 3, 2025-2026;
- Bill 44: *Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures and Borrowing Authorization)*, No. 3, 2025-2026; and
- Bill 47: *Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures)*, 2026-2027.

The House is adjourned until Wednesday, May 27, 2026, at 1:30 p.m.

Angus Wilson
Committee Clerk



The Senate

Legislation

During the period covered by this article, the Senate adopted several Commons government bills without amendment:

- Bill C-19, *An Act to amend the Income Tax Act*, on February 12;
- Bill C-15, *An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025*, on March 26;
- Bill C-23, *An Act for granting to His Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026*, on March 26; and
- Bill C-24, *An Act for granting to His Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2027*, on March 26.

In all cases, messages were sent to the House of Commons to acquaint it accordingly, and the bills received Royal Assent by written declaration on the day of their adoption.

Other Commons government bills also received Royal Assent by written declaration following exchanges between the two houses. On February 26, the Senate adopted Bill C-4, *An Act respecting certain affordability measures for Canadians and another measure*, with an amendment, and a message was sent to inform the House of Commons. On March 12, the Senate received a message from the Commons informing it that it had disagreed with the Senate's amendment. The Senate subsequently adopted a motion not to insist on its amendment, and a message was returned to the House of Commons to acquaint it of that decision. The bill received Royal Assent by written declaration that same day.

Also on March 12, Bill C-12, *An Act respecting certain measures relating to the security of Canada's borders and the integrity of the Canadian immigration system and respecting other related security measures*, was adopted, with amendments, and a message was sent to the House of Commons to acquaint it accordingly. On March 26, the Senate received a message from the Commons informing it that it had amended one of the Senate's amendments, agreed to one and disagreed with another. The Senate adopted a motion to agree to the House of Commons' amendment and to not insist on the remaining one. A message was returned to the Commons to acquaint it of that decision, and the bill received Royal Assent by written declaration that same day.

During the same period, the Senate also adopted several Senate bills, including one government bill:

- Bill S-226, *An Act respecting Jury Duty Appreciation Week*, without amendment, on February 10;
- Bill S-242, *An Act respecting national action for the prevention of intimate partner violence*, without amendment, on February 24;
- Bill S-212, *An Act respecting a national strategy for children and youth in Canada*, as amended, on March 10;
- Bill S-3, *An Act to amend the Weights and Measures Act, the Electricity and Gas Inspection Act, the Weights and Measures Regulations and the Electricity and Gas Inspection Regulations*, without amendment, on March 11;
- Bill S-217, *An Act to amend the Canada Revenue Agency Act (reporting on unpaid income tax)*, without amendment, on March 12; and
- Bill S-230, *An Act respecting the development of a national strategy for soil health protection, conservation and enhancement*, as amended, on March 26.

In each case, a message was sent to the House of Commons seeking its concurrence.

Chamber, Procedure and Speaker's Rulings

On February 11, following Senators' Statements, the Senate observed a minute of silence in honour of the victims, the survivors, their loved ones, and the communities affected by the tragedy in Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia, and the tragic events in Kitigan Zibi, Quebec. With leave, the Senate then adopted a motion to adjourn the sitting and cancel all committee meetings scheduled for later that day.

On February 12, during a Committee of the Whole with Minister **François-Philippe Champagne** on the

subject matter of Bill C-19, *An Act to amend the Income Tax Act*, Senator **Percy E. Downe** raised a point of order concerning the scope of questions. The Chair of the Committee of the Whole ruled on the matter and the exchange was allowed to continue. Following the report of the chair of the committee to the Senate, Senator Downe raised another point of order regarding the scope of certain questions asked during the Committee of the Whole. Speaker **Raymonde Gagné** ruled that, like any other committee, a Committee of the Whole is master of its own proceedings and noted that the chair of the committee had already ruled on the matter. She further indicated that senators could establish parameters for future Committees of the Whole by way of motion.

On February 24, the Speaker read a message from the House of Commons concerning the appointment of a special joint committee pursuant to subsection 2(1) of *An Act to amend An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)*, No. 2. The message was placed on the Orders of the Day for consideration at the next sitting and, on February 26, the Senate adopted a motion respecting the creation of the committee. A message was sent to the House of Commons to acquaint it accordingly. The committee met for the first time on March 10, with the mandate to undertake a comprehensive review relating to the eligibility of persons whose sole underlying medical condition is a mental illness to receive medical assistance in dying.

On March 12, during the debate on the motion in response to the message from the House of Commons concerning Bill C-4, Senator **Leo Housakos** raised a point of order concerning the relevance of debate. Speaker pro tempore **René Cormier** delivered a ruling, reminding the chamber that the debate was on the motion in reply, and asking senators to focus their remarks on the matter before them.

On March 24, during the debate on the second reading of Bill C-23, Senator **Clément Gignac** raised a point of order concerning the availability of copies of the bill. Following agreement to allow questions to the senator participating in debate, debate on the bill was adjourned until the next sitting day.

Committees of the Whole

The Senate resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole on two occasions to hear from nominees to officer of parliament positions: **Kelly Burke** on February 10, respecting her nomination to the position of Commissioner of Official Languages, and **Annette**

Ryan on March 24, respecting her nomination to the position of Parliamentary Budget Officer. **Anton Boegman** was also heard on February 26, respecting his nomination to the position of Foreign Influence Transparency Commissioner. In all cases, the Senate subsequently adopted motions to approve the appointments.

As indicated earlier in this article, the Senate also resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole on February 12 in order to receive **François-Philippe Champagne**, Minister of Finance and National Revenue, respecting the subject matter of Bill C-19.

Committees

During this period, the Senate adopted several motions providing for the referral of bills to committee, while simultaneously authorizing another committee to study the subject matter of the bill in whole or in part. On February 5, Bill C-4 was referred to the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance while the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs was authorized to examine and report on the subject matter of Part 4 of the bill. On the same day, Bill C-12 was referred to the Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs, while the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology was authorized to examine and report on the subject matter of Parts 5, 6, 7, and 8 of the bill. On February 10, Bill S-216, *An Act to declare the Chignecto Isthmus Dykeland System and related works to be for the general advantage of Canada*, was referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications, while the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs was authorized to examine and report on the subject matter of the bill. Finally, on March 12, Bill S-241, *An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Indian Act*, was referred to the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, while the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples was authorized to examine and report on the subject matter of the bill.

Four committee reports were adopted and a government response requested:

- the first report of the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, entitled *Nothing to Celebrate: The Crisis of Youth Aging Out of Care*, on February 5;
- the first report of the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, entitled *Canada-Africa: Seizing a Strategic Opportunity*, on February 10;

- the eighth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights from the previous session, entitled *Ripped From Home: The Global Crisis of Forced Displacement*, on February 10; and
- the first report of the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages, entitled *Breaking Down Language Barriers in Health Care: For Equitable, Safe and Quality Health Care and Health Services*, on February 24.

In addition, the Senate received government responses to three reports from the previous session, adopted during the current session:

- on March 19, the response to the twentieth report (interim) of the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples, entitled *Missing Records, Missing Children*, deposited with the Clerk of the Senate on July 25, 2024;
- on March 20, the response to the twenty-first report (interim) of the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples, entitled *Respected and Protected: Towards the establishment of an Indigenous human rights framework*, deposited with the Clerk of the Senate on December 12, 2024; and
- on March 26, the response to the eighth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, entitled *Sealing the Future: A Call to Action*, deposited with the Clerk of the Senate on May 23, 2024.

The reports and the responses were deemed referred to their respective committees.

Several committee reports recommending amendments to bills were presented during the period covered by this article. On February 12, the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology presented its fifth report on Bill S-212. The report was adopted on February 24. On March 12, the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry presented its third report on Bill S-230. The report was adopted on March 24. Also on March 24, the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs presented two reports: its fifth report on Bill S-209, *An Act to restrict young persons' online access to pornographic material*, and its sixth report on Bill S-205, *An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act*. The fifth report was adopted on March 26, while the sixth report was still under consideration at the time of writing.

Senators

Senator **Elizabeth Marshall** resigned from the Senate on March 24. She was appointed to the Senate on January 29, 2010, on the advice of Prime Minister **Stephen Harper**, to represent the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Prior to joining the Senate, Senator Marshall spent many years working in provincial public service, including serving as Auditor General of Newfoundland and Labrador from 1992 to 2002, and holding several senior deputy minister positions. From 2003 to 2010, she served as Member of the House of Assembly for Topsail, during which time she also served as Minister of Health and Community Services from 2003 to 2004. During her tenure in the Senate, she served as Government Whip from 2011 to 2015 and was an active member of several committees, including the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance and the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy.

Chantal Lalonde
Procedural Clerk



House of Commons

Introduction

This report outlines the principal procedural developments that occurred between late January and late March 2026.

Committees

Establishment of the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID)

On February 13, 2026, the House agreed, by unanimous consent, to Government Business No. 5 establishing a Special Joint Committee of the Senate and

the House of Commons, pursuant to subsection 2(1) of *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)*, No. 2. The Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) is mandated to examine issues relating to the eligibility for medical assistance in dying of persons whose sole underlying medical condition is a mental illness.

The motion sets out provisions respecting the Committee's membership, powers, quorum, and the conduct of meetings in hybrid format.

On February 26, 2026, the list of the 10 members of the House of Commons appointed to the Committee was filed with the Clerk of the House.

On February 27, 2026, the House received a message from the Senate indicating that a similar motion had been adopted. The names of the five senators appointed to the Committee were filed with the Clerk of the Senate later that day.

The Committee is required to present its final report no later than October 2, 2026, and will cease to exist once the report has been presented to both Houses.

Legislation

- **Bill C-222, *An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code (death of a child)***

On October 20, 2025, the Speaker made a statement concerning the scheduling of Private Members' Business. He indicated that Bill C-222, standing in the name of **Terry Beech** (Burnaby North—Seymour), appeared *prima facie* to infringe on the financial prerogative of the Crown and therefore required a royal recommendation. Members were invited to make submissions.

On October 24, 2025, during debate at second reading, Mr. Beech acknowledged that the bill would require a royal recommendation. He reiterated this position on January 29, 2026.

On February 2, 2026, the Speaker delivered his ruling, finding that Bill C-222, by expanding eligibility for parental benefits, could result in new charges on the Consolidated Revenue Fund. Accordingly, the bill would require a royal recommendation before a question could be put at third reading, unless amended beforehand to remove that requirement.

- **Special Order Concerning Bill C-19, *An Act to amend the Income Tax Act***

On February 2, 2026, the House adopted, by unanimous consent, a special order concerning Bill C-19, *An Act to amend the Income Tax Act*. Pursuant to the order, at the conclusion of Government Orders later that day, the bill was deemed read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Finance, with dissent noted.

The order further provided that the Committee meet on February 3, 2026, to study the bill and hear from the Minister of Finance, **François-Philippe Champagne** (Saint-Maurice—Champlain), as well as any other witnesses it deemed appropriate. On February 4, 2026, at 2:00 p.m., the bill was deemed reported without amendment and deemed concurred in at report stage, with dissent. In accordance with the same order, the House proceeded to third reading later that day, and, at the conclusion of Government Orders, the bill was deemed read a third time and passed.

- **Similarities Between Bill C-2, *An Act respecting certain measures relating to the security of the border between Canada and the United States and respecting other related security measures*, and Bill C-12, *An Act respecting certain measures relating to the security of Canada's borders and the integrity of the Canadian immigration system and respecting other related security measures***

On February 10, 2026, **Elizabeth May** (Saanich—Gulf Islands) raised a point of order contending that Bill C-2, *An Act respecting certain measures relating to the security of the border between Canada and the United States and respecting other related security measures*, could not be proceeded with as a significant number of its provisions were already contained in Bill C-12, *An Act respecting certain measures relating to the security of Canada's borders and the integrity of the Canadian immigration system and respecting other related security measures*, which had been read a third time and adopted in December 2025. She submitted that consideration of Bill C-2 therefore contravened the principle that the same question may not be decided twice in the same session, and she requested that the bill be withdrawn from the *Order Paper* unless reintroduced without the impugned provisions. She further indicated her opposition to any attempt to adopt the bill by unanimous consent.

On February 13, 2026, **Michael Barrett** (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes) supported the point of order, affirming that the two

bills were substantially the same and that consideration of Bill C-2 should be suspended.

On February 23, 2026, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, **Kevin Lamoureux** (Winnipeg North), argued that the bills are not substantially identical. He stated that, while Bill C-2 incorporates certain elements of Bill C-12, it differs from it materially in structure and scope, and that the two bills pursue distinct objectives.

On February 24, 2026, the Speaker delivered his ruling. While acknowledging that the two bills shared certain similarities, he found that Bill C-2 had a broader scope and included provisions not found in Bill C-12. He concluded that the bills were not substantially the same and that the principle against deciding the same question twice did not apply. Accordingly, the House may proceed with consideration of Bill C-2 at second reading.

- **Orders Governing Proceedings on Bill C-15, *An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025***

On February 13, 2026, the House adopted, by unanimous consent, an order to govern and expedite proceedings on Bill C-15, *An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025*. The order instructed the Standing Committee on Finance on the conduct of its study, including timelines for clause-by-clause consideration and for reporting the bill to the House. It further provided that the bill could be taken up at report stage during the sitting following the presentation of the Committee's report, notwithstanding the Standing Orders, and that the motion for third reading could be moved during the same sitting at which the bill is adopted at report stage.

On February 25, 2026, the House adopted, by unanimous consent, a further special order extending Government Orders by six hours. The order also provided that recorded divisions at report stage could not be deferred, except in accordance with Standing Order 76.1(8).

- **Order Governing Proceedings on Bill C-14, *An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Youth Criminal Justice Act and the National Defence Act (bail and sentencing)***

On February 13, 2026, pursuant to Standing Order 56.1(1), the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, **Steven MacKinnon** (Gatineau),

moved a motion during Routine Proceedings to permit the third reading motion of Bill C-14, *An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Youth Criminal Justice Act and the National Defence Act (bail and sentencing)*, to be moved during the same sitting in which the bill was adopted at report stage, and to extend Government Orders during third reading on a Friday. Pursuant to Standing Order 56.1, the motion was put to a vote forthwith, without debate or amendment, and, as fewer than 25 members rose to oppose the motion, it was deemed adopted without debate or amendment.

Later that day, when the House proceeded to the putting of questions on report stage amendments to Bill C-14, Ms. May was not present to move Motion No. 2 standing in her name, and no member requested its adoption or a recorded division. In the absence of specific direction in the Standing Orders, the Assistant Deputy Speaker, **John Nater**, relied on a United Kingdom House of Commons precedent cited in *Erskine May*, 25th ed., para. 20.60. That precedent provides that if no member answers “yea” or “nay” when the question is put, the motion is deemed to be negatived. The Assistant Deputy Speaker therefore declared Motion No. 2 defeated and ruled that the same conclusion applied to Motions Nos. 3 to 9, which were also deemed defeated.

On March 12, 2026, the Speaker made a statement clarifying the application of Standing Order 45(1). He stated that where the House expresses no intention—by neither seeking adoption nor requesting a recorded division—the Speaker must declare the motion negatived. Similarly, a simple expression of rejection, without a call for adoption, will result in the motion being negatived. Conversely, where contradictory responses are heard without a request for a recorded division, the Speaker must declare the motion carried, pursuant to the Standing Orders. He further reiterated that only members of recognized parties may request a recorded division, which takes precedence over all other requests.

Take-note Debate

Hostilities in Iran and the Middle East and Their Impact on Canadians Abroad

On March 9, 2026, by unanimous consent, the House adopted a motion to hold a take-note debate on hostilities in Iran and the Middle East and their impact on Canadians abroad, pursuant to Standing Order 53.1. The motion also set out the terms of the debate. Notwithstanding the 48-hour notice normally required

under the Standing Orders, the debate was held the same day.

Resignations

Chrystia Freeland

On January 26, 2026, the Speaker informed the House that a seat had become vacant following the resignation of **Chrystia Freeland** (University—Rosedale), after she accepted an unpaid position as economic development adviser to the President of Ukraine.

Bill Blair

On February 2, 2026, the Speaker informed the House that a seat had become vacant following the resignation of **Bill Blair** (Scarborough Southwest), who was appointed High Commissioner of Canada to the United Kingdom.

Contested Election

Nullification of the Election in Terrebonne

On February 13, 2026, the Supreme Court of Canada nullified the election result in the riding of Terrebonne. The judgment followed a challenge brought by the defeated Bloc Québécois candidate, **Nathalie Sinclair Desgagné**, who argued that at least one mail-in ballot cast in her favour had not been counted due to an administrative error by Elections Canada. The election had been won by the Liberal Party candidate, **Tatiana Auguste**, by a margin of one vote.

On February 23, 2026, the Speaker informed the House of the Supreme Court's decision and tabled the related judgment, which had the effect of ending Ms. Auguste's mandate and rendering the seat vacant.

Appointments

Commissioner of Official Languages

On February 23, 2026, the House ratified the appointment of **Kelly Burke** as Commissioner of Official Languages.

Parliamentary Budget Officer

On March 9, 2026, the government tabled the certificate of nomination of **Annette Ryan**, candidate for the position of Parliamentary Budget Officer. The nomination was referred to the Standing Committee on

Finance pursuant to Standing Order 111.1. However, on March 12, 2026, the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates presented its fifth report recommending instead that **Jason Jacques** be appointed Parliamentary Budget Officer.

Commissioner for Foreign Influence Transparency

On March 13, 2026, the House approved the appointment of **Anton Boegman** as Foreign Influence Transparency Commissioner.

Moments of Silence, Tributes, and Ministerial Statements

Death of Former Minister Kirsty Duncan

On January 26, 2026, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Mr. Lamoureux, informed the House of the death of former minister **Kirsty Duncan**. The House then observed a moment of silence in her memory. On February 6, 2026, pursuant to a special order adopted the previous day, the House observed a second moment of silence. This was followed by tributes from a representative of each recognized party, the New Democratic Party (NDP), and Ms. May.

National Day of Remembrance of the Quebec City Mosque Attack

On January 29, 2026, following Question Period, the House observed a moment of silence to mark the National Day of Remembrance of the Quebec City Mosque Attack and Action Against Islamophobia.

Tragic Accident in Alberta

On February 3, 2026, following Question Period, the House observed a moment of silence in memory of the three young hockey players from the Southern Alberta Mustangs who lost their lives in a collision in Alberta the previous day.

Tumbler Ridge Shooting

At the opening of the sitting on February 11, 2026, by unanimous consent, the House adopted a special order to observe a moment of silence in memory of the victims of the shooting that occurred the previous day in Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia. The moment of silence was followed by statements from the Prime Minister, **Mark Carney** (Nepean), the Leader of the Opposition, **Pierre Poilievre** (Battle River—Crowfoot), **Yves-**

François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly), **Don Davies** (Vancouver Kingsway), and Ms. May. The Speaker also made a statement, which had not been provided for in the order, before adjourning the House.

Ukraine and Victims of Russian Aggression

On February 24, 2026, the House observed a moment of silence for Ukraine and the victims of Russian aggression, pursuant to a special order adopted the previous day. Following the moment of silence, the House adopted, by unanimous consent, a resolution concerning the situation in Ukraine. Statements were then made by a representative of each recognized party, the NDP, and Ms. May, pursuant to the order adopted on February 23, 2026. The Speaker also made a statement, which had not been provided for in the order.

Malachie Azémar

Table Research Branch, House of Commons



Quebec

Proceedings of the Assemblée nationale

Composition

Since January 9, 2026, **François Tremblay**, Member for Dubuc, has been sitting as an independent Member. He was formerly a member of the parliamentary group forming the Government.

On January 14, 2026, Premier **François Legault**, Member for L'Assomption, announced that he would resign as Premier upon the nomination of a new Leader of the Coalition avenir Québec. In the wake of this announcement, two ministers, **Christine Fréchette**, Member for Sanguinet, and **Bernard Drainville**, Member for Lévis, entered the party's leadership race. Their ministerial duties were assigned to other ministers, in particular,

- Ms. Fréchette's duties as Minister of Economy, Innovation and Energy and Mr. Drainville's duties as Minister Responsible for Maritime Strategy were assigned to **Jean Boulet**, Member for Trois-Rivières, Minister of Labour and Minister Responsible for the Mauricie Region; and
- Mr. Drainville's duties as Minister of the Environment, the Fight Against Climate Change, Wildlife and Parks were assigned to **Benoit Charrette**, Member for Deux-Montagnes and Minister Responsible for Infrastructure.

On February 13, 2026, **Charles Milliard** was acclaimed as the new Leader of the Quebec Liberal Party, the parliamentary group forming the Official Opposition in the Assemblée nationale. As Mr. Milliard is not an MNA, **André Fortin**, Member for Pontiac, was appointed as Leader of the Official Opposition. Meanwhile, **Marc Tanguay**, Member for LaFontaine, was appointed as Official Opposition House Leader.

On February 23, 2026, the Parti québécois candidate, **Marie-Karlynn Laflamme**, won the by-election in the electoral division of Chicoutimi. The new Member officially entered the Assemblée nationale on March 17, 2026.

Since March 24, 2026, **Maïté Blanchette Vézina**, Member for Rimouski, has been sitting under the banner of the Conservative Party of Québec. Despite her new affiliation, she is considered an independent Member for the purposes of parliamentary proceedings.

In consequence, the Assemblée nationale is now composed of 125 MNAs: 79 from the Coalition avenir Québec, 18 from the Quebec Liberal Party, 11 from Québec solidaire, seven from the Parti québécois, and 10 independent Members.

Budget speech

On March 18, 2026, **Éric Girard**, Member for Groulx and Minister of Finance, delivered the budget speech, and **France-Élaine Duranceau**, Member for Bertrand and Chair of the Conseil du trésor, tabled the estimates of expenditure for 2026–2027.

The following day, within the framework of the consideration of interim supply, the Assemblée nationale met as a Committee of the Whole for five hours of discussion with the ministers responsible for the following sectors: Health; Housing; Education; Economy, Innovation and Energy; and Immigration,

Francization and Integration. Interim supply and Bill 26, *Appropriation Act No. 1, 2026–2027*, were then passed.

On March 24, 2026, the Assemblée began the 25-hour debate on the budget speech, which includes 10 hours of proceedings in the Committee on Public Finance. On April 2, 2026, after rejecting 24 motions stating a grievance that were moved by Members in opposition over the course of the debate, the Assemblée carried the Minister of Finance's motion that the Assemblée approve the Government's budgetary policy.

Legislative agenda

From January to March 2026, 14 bills were introduced in the Assemblée nationale: nine government bills, four private Members' bills and one private bill. During that period, three government bills were passed:

- Bill 111, *An Act to modernize the Cooperatives Act and to amend other provisions*;
- Bill 19, *An Act to, in particular, improve access to medical services and provide for the medical taking in charge of the population*; and
- Bill 26, *Appropriation Act No. 1, 2026–2027*.

Ruling from the Chair

Ruling on the absence of ministers during Question Period

On March 31, 2026, Mr. Tanguay, Official Opposition House Leader, requested a directive regarding the absence of many ministers during Question Period. **Nathalie Roy**, President of the Assemblée nationale and Member for Montarville, made it clear from the outset that Standing Order 189 provides that any minister may act on behalf of another minister, and that it is common for ministers to be replaced by other ministers during parliamentary proceedings, including during Question Period. She recalled that no Standing Order requires the presence of a minister during a debate regarding a stage in the consideration of a bill, and that the same holds true for Question Period. The choice is left to the Cabinet. However, as the Chair had already affirmed in other contexts, it is desirable for ministers to be present to ensure the smooth running of parliamentary proceedings. Indeed, one of the Members' fundamental roles is parliamentary oversight, the efficiency of which relies in part on the participation of Cabinet members. Lastly, the Chair concluded that it was not its place to intervene in this matter at that time.

Committee Proceedings

Changes to committee composition

The composition of the parliamentary committees changed multiple times in the last few weeks. On the side of the Official Opposition, **Monsef Derraji**, Member for Nelligan, was appointed as Chair of the Committee on Public Administration. After being briefly replaced, **Filomena Rotiroti**, Member for Jeanne-Mance–Viger, is once again Chair of the Committee on Culture and Education. **Michelle Setlakwe**, Member for Mont-Royal–Outremont, was appointed as Vice-Chair of the Committee on Labour and the Economy.

Marie-Karlynn Laflamme, Member for Chicoutimi, is now a member of the Committee on Institutions, which has gone from 10 to 12 members. **Stéphane Sainte-Croix**, Member for Gaspé, from the parliamentary group forming the Government, also joined the Committee. Other changes to committee composition were also ratified by the Committee on the National Assembly.

Bills

Between January and March 2026, the committees held special consultations on nine government bills and carried out clause-by-clause consideration of nine government bills. One private bill was also considered by the Committee on Labour and the Economy.

The general consultation on Bill 1, *Québec Constitution Act, 2025*, which began in December 2025, was concluded on February 18, 2026. Over the course of 14 meetings, parliamentarians heard 168 individuals and organizations and received 309 briefs.

Among the bills examined by the committees was Bill 7, *An Act to reduce bureaucracy, increase state efficiency and reinforce the accountability of senior public servants*, which was considered by the Committee on Public Finance. The purpose of the bill is to reorganize the State's structure, ease processes and amend certain accountability obligations. As a result, many organizations are merged or abolished, in particular to reduce administrative costs. Fourteen meetings over the course of eight weeks were devoted to the clause-by-clause consideration of this bill, which had 384 sections. The Committee on Public Finance simultaneously carried out special consultations and began clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 5, *An Act to accelerate the granting of the authorizations required*

to carry out priority national-scale projects. Much like Bill C-5 adopted by the federal Parliament, this bill establishes distinct mechanisms for priority projects in order to facilitate their completion through an accelerated process.

Lastly, there was the ongoing consideration of Bill 11, *An Act to amend various provisions for the main purpose of reducing regulatory and administrative burden*, by the Committee on Labour and the Economy. The bill proposes amendments to 61 laws and 13 regulations for the purpose of making organizations more agile. The Committee on Labour and the Economy also carried out the clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 3, *An Act to improve the transparency, governance and democratic process of various associations in the workplace*. This union reform project will require that, from now on, union associations present their audited financial statements and report on the use of their financial resources to their members. The bill also amends various rules relating to the democratic processes of union associations.

Olivier Champagne

Direction de la séance et de la procédure parlementaire

Marie-Claude Paquette

Direction des commissions parlementaires



Saskatchewan

Spring sitting of the second session of the thirtieth legislature

The second session of the thirtieth legislature resumed for the spring sitting period on March 2, 2026. The Assembly will sit for 40 days before adjourning on the Thursday before Victoria Day, in accordance with the parliamentary calendar. At the time of writing, the Assembly has passed three bills in the spring sitting

and an additional three are awaiting royal assent. There are 19 government bills currently before the Assembly for consideration, six of which were specified in the 2026–27 budget. Three bills specified in the budget have not yet been introduced. There are also currently 13 private members' public bills before the Assembly for consideration and one which has been removed from the order paper. During the fall sitting, a point of order was raised over Bill No. 605 on the grounds that it was a substantial duplication of government Bill No. 24. The Speaker ruled that the opportunity to apply the "same question rule" would occur once the Assembly had made a decision on a second reading motion. When Bill No. 24 received second reading on March 30, 2026, the Speaker ordered that Bill No. 605 be removed from the order paper to prevent the Assembly from reaching contradictory decisions on questions of the same subject.

Budget

On Wednesday, March 18, 2026, Finance Minister **Jim Reiter** presented the province's 2026–27 budget titled *Protecting Saskatchewan*. The budget's main focus was on affordability and access to health care — the "top two concerns" of Saskatchewan people, according to the minister. During his budget presentation, Minister Reiter emphasized that every province faced challenges as a result of tariffs and that the expansion and diversification of trade markets were critically important. The minister acknowledged that there would be a short-term deficit but stated that the government had chosen not to raise taxes or cut services, citing a vacancy management strategy within the public service as one approach to help cut costs. Some of the spending highlighted in this year's budget includes the continuation of past affordability tax exemptions and credits, investments to address access to primary care providers and to lower diagnostics and surgery wait times, funding for health care infrastructure and mental health and addictions services, and a multi-year funding agreement for post-secondary institutions.

In response, Opposition Finance critic **Trent Wotherspoon** disputed the idea that the budget offered any cost-of-living relief and instead stated that it made life more expensive. MLA Wotherspoon argued that the budget did not build or repair the "broken health care system," keep pace with inflation, provide enough supports for students and classrooms, or address illegal foreign farm landownership. He emphasized the "ballooning debt" and asserted that it had more than doubled in the last eight years. On March 19, 2026, the Finance critic moved an amendment disapproving

of the budgetary policy of the government, citing its failure to provide cost-of-living relief, lack of investment in health care and public safety, and increases to the provincial debt.

After five days of debate on the budget motion and the proposed amendment, the amendment was defeated and the budget motion was passed on March 26, 2026, both on recorded division. In accordance with the rules, the estimates were then committed to their respective committees for consideration.

Points of order and Speaker's rulings

On March 4, 2026, Government House Leader **Tim McLeod** rose on a point of order during the introduction and first reading of private members' Bill No. 612, *The Lower Power Bills and Car Insurance Act*. The Government House Leader stated that pursuant to rule 67(1), a bill which authorizes expenditure that impacts the government's summary financial statements requires a royal recommendation before it can be considered. He argued that since the bill would impact the summary financial statements of the government, it would need a royal recommendation. He requested the Speaker rule the bill out of order and not permit it to proceed, since it did not have a royal recommendation.

On March 5, 2026, the Speaker ruled that — as noted in a similar ruling on November 3, 2025 — until the bill had been introduced and read a first time, he was not able to rule on the contents of the bill and found the point of order not well taken. The sponsoring member was able to introduce the bill. On several subsequent days, the same member rose before orders of the day and requested leave to move that the Assembly immediately consider second reading of Bill No. 612, but leave was never granted.

Privilege case

On March 17, 2026, Deputy Opposition House Leader **Kim Breckner** rose on a point of order alleging that, during question period, the Premier had misattributed a quote by a Saskatchewan health care worker to the Member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre. The Speaker committed to preparing a ruling for March 19. On March 18, the Deputy Opposition House Leader submitted a question of privilege case on the same topic, alleging that the Premier had deliberately misattributed the quote in order to intentionally mislead the Assembly.

The Speaker delivered both rulings on March 19. In his ruling on the question of privilege, the Speaker

noted the severity of the allegations and reminded the Assembly of the extremely high threshold to prove intent. He determined that there was not a *prima facie* case of privilege, as there was no evidence that the Premier had intentionally misled the Assembly. The Speaker ruled on the point of order that the onus falls on members to correct misquotes during debate. It is not up to the Speaker to verify the accuracy of what is said. He found the point of order not well taken.

Board of Internal Economy membership

On March 2, 2026, the Speaker announced a change to the membership of the Board of Internal Economy. As of December 11, 2025, MLA **Brad Crassweller** has replaced MLA **Sean Wilson** as a government caucus nominee on the board.

Member position changes

On March 2, 2026, MLA **Travis Keisig** was appointed to preside as Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole Assembly, replacing MLA **Chris Beaudry** in the role. MLA **Terri Bromm** was elected on March 17, 2026, as the new Deputy Chair of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP), Saskatchewan branch, replacing MLA **Darlene Rowden**.

Commonwealth Day

On Monday, March 9, 2026, the Speaker acknowledged Commonwealth Day by reading a message to the Assembly on behalf of His Majesty the King. In further celebration of the day, the Saskatchewan branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association held a high tea event in the afternoon to recognize associate and honorary CPA members. The Lieutenant Governor was in attendance, as well as many former members of the Assembly.

Interparliamentary visit

From February 7 to 14, 2026, Speaker **Todd Goudy**, opposition MLA **Sally Housser**, government MLA **Kevin Weedmark**, and Clerk **Iris Lang** participated in an interparliamentary visit to the United Kingdom. The delegation travelled to both London and Edinburgh, participating in parliamentary exchanges with officials from many different levels of government and strengthening the relationship between the United Kingdom Parliament, the Scottish Parliament, and the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly.

Jessica Start
Procedural Clerk



Newfoundland and Labrador

Spring 2026 Sitting

In accordance with the parliamentary calendar, the 2026 Spring sitting commenced on March 2. Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador **Joan Marie J. Aylward** delivered the Speech from the Throne beginning the First Session of the 51st General Assembly. During proceedings, the Government introduced Bill 1, *An Act Respecting the Disability Advocate*, which was read a first time. The House then appointed a Select Committee to draft the Address in Reply in response to the Speech from the Throne.

The House sat during March, with a constituency week break from March 23 to March 27. On April 2 the House adjourned for a two-week Easter recess and is scheduled to resume on April 21 for the remainder of the Spring sitting.

Highlights of the Spring 2026 sitting to the Easter recess (April 2) include:

- On March 3, the report of the Select Committee struck to draft an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne was presented to the House.
- On March 9, the House passed a motion appointing the Striking Committee for the 51st General Assembly pursuant to Standing Order 65. In accordance with the Standing Orders, the Committee must report within the first 20 sitting days of appointment a list of Members to compose the Standing Committees.
- On March 9, the Speaker ruled there was no *prima facie* breach of privilege on a point of privilege raised by the Leader of the Third Party respecting lack of decorum and its impact on freedom of speech in the House and the Members' right to be heard. Following the ruling, the Speaker did,

however, caution Members about the importance of decorum in the House and respect in debate.

- The *Interim Supply Act, 2026* was passed by the House on March 9 and received Royal Assent on March 17.
- On March 11, the Speaker ruled there was no *prima facie* breach of privilege on a point of privilege raised by the Leader of the Official Opposition respecting the right of opposition Members to be informed and included in discussions about the business of the House.
- On March 19 during debate in Committee of the Whole on Bill 5, *An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 2*, the Government House Leader gave notice of a motion of closure. The motion was moved and passed on March 30, and debate proceeded under the rules of closure. The Bill was passed by the House and received Royal Assent the same day.
- In addition to *Interim Supply Act, 2026* and *An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 2*, the House passed four other bills to date in the Spring sitting, including Bill 1, *An Act Respecting the Disability Advocate*.

Appointment of Deputy Speaker and Deputy Chair of Committees

On March 4, the House appointed **Jeff Dwyer**, Member for Placentia West - Bellevue as the Deputy Speaker, and **Joseph Power**, Member for Labrador West as the Deputy Chair of Committees for the 51st General Assembly.

MHA Dwyer was first elected to the House on May 16, 2021, and was re-elected on February 13, 2021, and October 14, 2025.

MHA Power was first elected to the House on October 14, 2025.

Retirement of Sergeant-at-Arms

On December 31, 2025, Sergeant-at-Arms, **Robert Escott**, retired following a four-year tenure in the position.

Prior to his role as Sergeant-at-Arms, Mr. Escott served as Director of Security with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure. During his career, he devoted over 45 years to uniformed service, beginning with the Royal Canadian Navy in 1977, followed by a long career in the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary.

The House of Assembly of Newfoundland and Labrador extends its sincere appreciation and gratitude to Mr. Escott for his tireless work and professionalism, and for dedicating his career to serving the public interest.

Acting Appointment of Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel

Effective December 15, 2025, **Ian Tucker** was appointed acting Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel in accordance with the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*. Mr. Tucker replaced **Gerrie Smith** who was appointed Deputy Minister of Justice and Public Safety and Deputy Attorney General in November 2025.

Mr. Tucker joined the House of Assembly from the Department of Justice and Public Safety where he served as the Director of the Civil Division. Prior to that role, he served as the Manager of the Central Agencies Unit and as Legislative Counsel in the Office of the Legislative Counsel. He has over 20 years' experience in both public law and private bar.

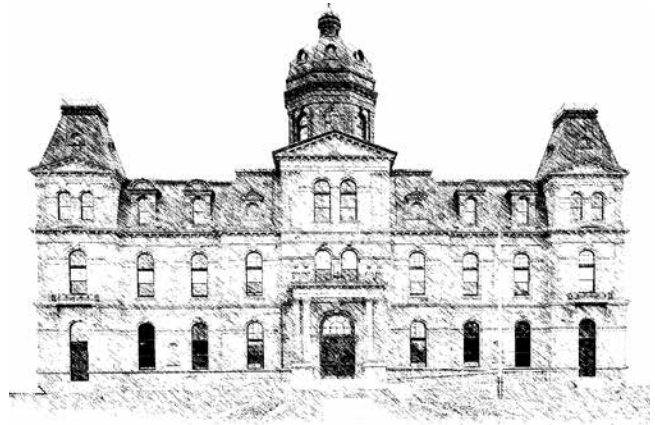
Appointment of Sergeant-at-Arms

On March 4, the House appointed **Alex Brennan** as Sergeant-at-Arms in accordance with the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*.

Mr. Brennan joined the House of Assembly from the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary where he served as the Inspector of Street Patrol. Mr. Brennan has thirty years of experience as a Commissioned Officer in both the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary and the Canadian Forces, including service in The First Battalion, Royal Newfoundland Regiment, in positions from Recruit Private to Commanding Officer.

Bobbi Russell

Principal Clerk of Committees



New Brunswick

Budget

The Second Session of the 61st Legislature adjourned on December 12, 2025, and resumed on March 17, when Finance and Treasury Board Minister **René Legacy** tabled the 2026-2027 Main Estimates. This is the second budget delivered by the Liberal government led by Premier **Susan Holt**.

The 2026-2027 budget calculates projected spending of \$15.63 billion and projected revenues of \$14.24 billion, resulting in a deficit of \$1.39 billion. The Department of Finance and Treasury Board estimates New Brunswick's Gross Domestic Product to grow by one per cent for 2026, which reflects global economic uncertainty and ongoing trade pressures. The net debt-to-GDP ratio is projected at 30.8 per cent by March 31, 2027.

Timely access to health care was the central focus of the 2026-27 budget, with the government investing \$710 million more than last year in the health-care system. This includes \$30 million to expand the collaborative care clinic model, \$50 million to modernize and digitize the health-care system, and \$170.4 million for physician remuneration. Other highlights included measures to ease cost-of-living pressures for New Brunswick families, which include \$98.1 million to continue the residential electricity rebate and \$17 million for a new community housing retention and expansion project. The government will also invest in students and teachers, with \$19.3 million designated to hire new educational assistants, and an additional \$7 million to deliver a school lunch program across the province.

On March 19, Finance Critic **Don Monahan** delivered the Official Opposition's Reply to the Budget. Monahan criticized the government for lacking a clear economic vision, arguing that running the province at a deficit is irresponsible and has left many New Brunswickers concerned about the province's future. The Official Opposition also opposed government cuts to provincial veterinarian staffing levels, tourist attractions and rural schools.

Legislation

As of March 27, 10 bills were introduced during the spring session. Certain bills of note include:

- Bill 24, *Pay Transparency Act*, introduced by **Lyne Chantal Boudreau**, Minister responsible for Women and Gender Equity, aims to improve equity and fairness in workplaces across the province and aligns with New Brunswick's broader efforts to combat wage disparities and establish a more inclusive and equitable economy for all.
- Bill 26, *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act*, introduced by Post-secondary Education, Training and Labour Minister **Jean-Claude D'Amours**, would allow for up to 27 weeks of unpaid leave for illness and injury recovery, aligning New Brunswick with other provinces and federally regulated workplaces.
- Bill 27, *An Act to Amend the Limitation of Actions Act*, introduced by Justice Minister and Attorney General **Robert McKee**, would improve access to the civil justice system for people who have experienced intimate partner violence or similar misconduct in a relationship of dependence.
- Bill 33, *An Act Respecting the Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Act*, introduced by Mr. D'Amours, establishes requirements – such as fees, wages and certification – for employers, apprentices and journeymen in designated occupations in the province. If passed, the legislation would make it easier for people to come to New Brunswick to work.

Committee Activity

Committees were active throughout the months of February and March. The Standing Committee on Public Accounts, chaired by **Tammy Scott-Wallace**, reviewed a volume of the Auditor General's report and the annual reports of various government departments, Crown corporations, and other provincial entities. The Auditor General reported on such issues as

emergency health services; highway safety; and the implementation of *Weaving Our Voices Together*, which was New Brunswick's plan in response to *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*.

The Standing Committee on Official Languages, chaired by **Benoît Bourque**, met on February 26 to hear from Official Languages Commissioner **Shirley MacLean** and the Secretariat of Official Languages. The Committee considered the information outlined in the Commissioner's 2024-2025 annual report and the Secretariat's 2024-2025 evaluation report as it prepares for its mandated review of the *Official Languages Act*.

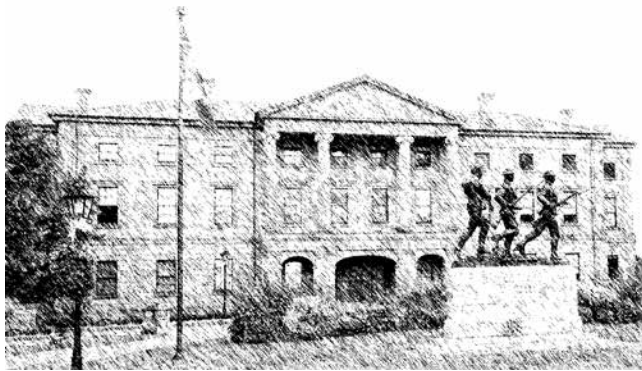
The Standing Committee on Climate Change and Environmental Stewardship, chaired by **Jacques LeBlanc**, concluded its examination of the *Clean Air Act* and tabled its first report of the Second Session on March 18. The Committee identified 31 key findings and proposed measures from stakeholders, which it recommended for consideration by the Department of Environment and Local Government.

The Standing Committee on Estimates and Fiscal Policy, chaired by **Luc Robichaud**, is scheduled to meet throughout April to consider the 2026-2027 Main Estimates.

Adjournment and Standings

The House adjourned on March 27 and will resume on May 5. The standings in the House are 31 Liberals, 16 Progressive Conservatives, and 2 Greens.

Shannon Armstrong
Research Officer



Prince Edward Island

Change of Premiers

On February 7, **Rob Lantz** (District 13, Charlottetown-Brighton) won the leadership of the Progressive Conservative Party, defeating lawyer **Mark Ledwell**. Two days later he was sworn in as Premier, returning to the role he had vacated on December 11, 2025, in order to seek the party leadership. He originally became Premier following the resignation of **Dennis King** in February 2025. During the two months Mr. Lantz was out of the Premier's office, **Bloyce Thompson** (District 8, Stanhope-Marshfield) served as Premier.

Passing of Hon. Mark McLane

On March 17, **Mark McLane** (District 16, Cornwall-Meadowbank) passed away at age 56, after a serious illness. First elected in a November 2021 by-election, Mr. McLane first served as Minister of Finance, then following his re-election in 2023 was appointed Minister of Health and Wellness and served in that role until he had to step away from it due to illness in January 2026. Prior to being elected, he served as the Executive Director of Golf PEI, and before that he was president of an information technology company. Mr. McLane was fondly remembered at his funeral and a public celebration of life event. In the legislature, members passed *pro forma* Bill 1, *An Act to Honour the Memory and Public Service of the Honourable Mark McLane* on March 25, and shared their thoughts in speaking to a Resolution of Sympathy on March 26. Mr. McLane is survived by his wife, three daughters, his father and his sister.

A by-election for District 16 has not been announced yet.

Changes to Cabinet and Government Departments

After returning to the role of Premier, Mr. Lantz named a new Cabinet and announced a reorganization of several departments on February 12. **Sidney MacEwen** (District 7, Morell-Donagh) was appointed to Cabinet for the first time, as Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy and Minister of Housing and Communities. The other members were reappointed, albeit to new or reorganized departments in some cases:

- **Gilles Arsenault** (District 24, Évangéline-Miscouche) was appointed Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Artificial Intelligence, while continuing as Minister Responsible for Acadian and Francophone Affairs;
- **Zack Bell** (District 10, Charlottetown-Winsloe) was appointed Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning;
- **Jill Burrridge** (District 6, Stratford-Keppoch) was appointed Minister of Finance and Affordability;
- **Darlene Compton** (District 4, Belfast-Murray River) was appointed Minister of Land and Environment;
- **Robin Croucher** (District 1, Souris-Elmira) was appointed Minister of Education and Early Years;
- **Cory Deagle** (District 3, Montague-Kilmuir) was appointed Minister Without Portfolio and Acting Minister of Health and Wellness;
- **Ernie Hudson** (District 26, Alberton-Bloomfield) was appointed Minister of Fisheries, Rural Development and Tourism;
- Mr. McLane was appointed as Minister of Health and Wellness, though absent due to illness;
- **Barb Ramsay** (District 22, Summerside-South Drive) was appointed Minister of Social Development and Seniors and Minister Responsible for the Status of Women; and
- Mr. Thompson (District 8, Stanhope-Marshfield) was appointed Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Justice and Public Safety and Attorney General.

Mr. Deagle was appointed Minister of Health of Wellness on March 26, subsequent to the passing of Mr. McLane. On March 28, Premier Lantz announced that he had removed Mr. Arsenault from Cabinet due to a review of the handling of a permitting matter during his time as Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Action. Two days later, **Jenn Redmond** replaced Mr. Arsenault as Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Artificial Intelligence; she

had previously served in Cabinet until the February 12 changes. At the same time, Mr. Bell became Minister Responsible for Acadian and Francophone Affairs, and **Kent Dollar** (District 15, Brackley-Hunter River) was appointed Minister of Housing and Communities. This is his first time serving in Cabinet.

Referral to Conflict of Interest Commissioner

On March 30, Premier Lantz provided further details on the issue that led him to remove Mr. Arsenault from Cabinet. In 2025, Mr. Arsenault had given approval to a golf course developer to undertake work on a wetland located outside of the area covered by a work permit issued by his department. The developer made a \$100,000 donation to a community group located in Mr. Arsenault's district. It is disputed whether this donation was in exchange for the wetland work approval. The Premier referred the matter to Conflict of Interest Commissioner **Judy Burke**, and suspended Mr. Arsenault from the Progressive Conservative Party caucus pending her investigation.

Third Session, Sixty-seventh General Assembly

On February 20, the Second Session of the Sixty-seventh General Assembly was prorogued. The commencement of the Third Session was postponed from February 24 to March 24. On March 20, the commencement was further postponed to March 25, to avoid a scheduling conflict with the celebration of life event for the late Mr. McLane.

New Speaker and Deputy Speaker

As the previous Speaker, Mr. MacEwen, had been appointed to Cabinet, the first order of business for the Legislative Assembly when the Third Session began on March 25 was the election of a new Speaker. Two

members put their names forward for consideration: **Robert Henderson** (District 25, O'Leary – Inverness), of the Official Opposition caucus and **Brad Trivers** (District 18, Rustico-Emerald), of the Government caucus. Mr. Trivers received the majority of votes and was duly elected Speaker. He has been an MLA since 2015 and was the previous Deputy Speaker. **Susie Dillon** (District 11, Charlottetown-Belvedere) was appointed Deputy Speaker upon resolution of the House on March 26.

Speech from the Throne

Following the election of Speaker, Lieutenant Governor **Wassim Salamoun** delivered a Speech from the Throne. Its main themes were access to healthcare and support for healthcare professionals; energy system reliability; affordability for Islanders; and land protection. Specific actions to be taken in health included expansion of publicly funded, privately operated healthcare and more regional cooperation in healthcare delivery. The government had previously issued an expression of interest for a battery system to add to the energy grid, and the Speech promised new undersea cables linking the Island to the regional grid. A review of the mandate, structure and processes of the Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission, which has regulatory responsibility over energy, land and landlord/tenant matters, was announced. To help the next generation of farmers, the government will establish a provincial agricultural land trust and a Next Generation Tax Holiday for young farmers. The Premier's Youth Council will be re-established, and the PEI Child Benefit will be enhanced. Debate on the Draft Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne began on March 26 and had not concluded at the time of writing.

Ryan Reddin

Director of Parliamentary Research

Some Question Period Stand-Outs

The House of Commons' Question Period (QP) is likely the parliamentary proceeding most recognized by Canadians, in part because its scenes are the most likely to make television's evening news. While the to-and-fro of QP runs the gamut from substantive to silly, occasionally there is a QP that truly stands out from the rest. In this article, the author looks back at some unique moments from the QP archives over the last 50 years.

Charlie Feldman

March 4, 1966

One of the biggest political scandals in Canadian history started in QP in 1966. Though, from the exchange itself, it's not necessarily obvious what was being referenced:

Mr. Cardin: ... Well, I can tell the right hon. gentleman that of all the members of the House of Commons he— I repeat, he— is the very last person in the house who can afford to give advice on the handling of security cases in Canada.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Cardin: And I am not kidding.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Diefenbaker: And again applause from the Prime Minister. I want that on the record.

Mr. Cardin: I understand the right hon gentleman said he wants that on the record. Would he want me to go on and give more?

Some hon. members: Go on. He wants it.

Mr. Cardin: Very well.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Cardin: I want the right hon. Gentleman to tell the house about his participation in the Monseignor case when he was prime of minister of this country.

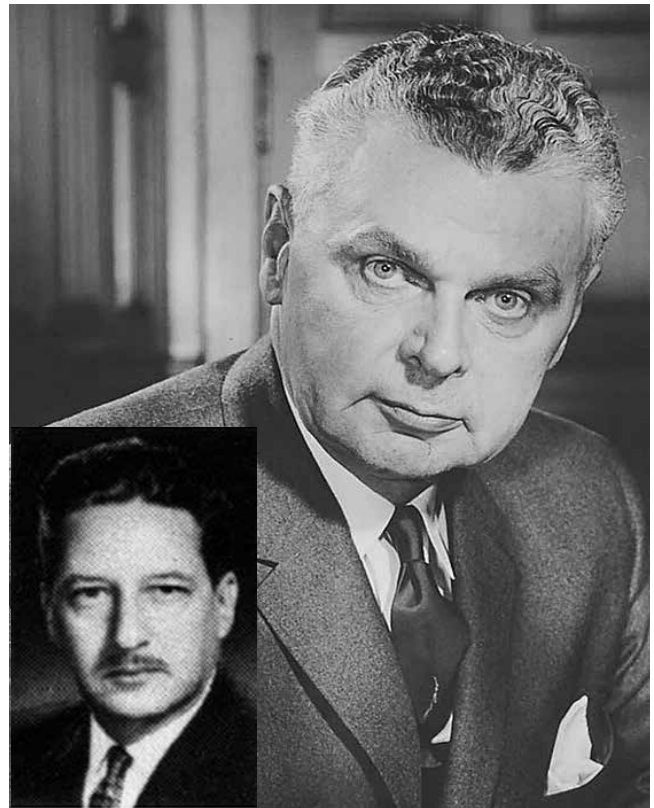
Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I am not worried. Have your commission look into it. Put it on the agenda.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Chairman: Order, please.¹

The reference to "Monseignor" raised many eyebrows. Mr. Cardin, the Minister of Justice, meant Munsinger as in Ms. Gerda Munsinger – believed to be a foreign spy who had intimate relations with members of the previous cabinet.



Gar Lunney / Library and Archives Canada / C-006779; Inset: House of Commons

A quick mention of the "Monseignor case" by Louis-Joseph-Lucien Cardin (inset) in QP invited a dismissive tort by former Prime Minister John Diefenbaker. But it also lit the match that ignited a national spy scandal.

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As you can imagine, this was *THE* story in every paper. Some reported Gerda was dead but *The Star* tracked her down, alive and well, in Germany. The political repercussions were many, the opposition threatened a vote of no confidence, and there was a commission of inquiry into what became known as "The Munsinger Affair."² The story isn't nearly as cut-and-dry as the sex-and-spy headlines made out at the start. But, it was a national scandal that came to light only because of one exchange in Question Period.

May 18, 1966

Shortly after inquiries of the ministry began, one sees the following in Hansard: "Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might rise on a question of privilege to indicate that a page boy has just come in with a request that all the doctors in the house now go outside as their services are needed immediately."³ Hansard does not capture what was happening beyond the House, but one sees the Speaker "ask the co-operations of hon. Members to concentrate on the question period."⁴

It becomes quickly apparent with the next column in Hansard – "Death of Man in Bomb Explosion" that something highly unusual occurred. Indeed, on that day a man exploded himself in a Centre Block washroom. The House suspended from 3:05 to 4pm.⁵

Paul Joseph Chartier intended to bomb the Commons chamber but a mis-timed fuse resulted in only his death. His charred remains were removed from Centre Block and the washroom was eventually repaired, including to remove shrapnel from the walls. An inquiry into his motivations revealed mental health and other concerns. More can be found in a book on the episode entitled *The Mad Bomber of Parliament Hill*.⁶

January 30, 1970

The House is open to visitors and Centre Block has seen its share of famous faces – mainly those of the political and dignitary variety.

In Hansard for January 30, 1970, one question began: "Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask a question of the Prime Minister, if he can take his eyes and his mind off visitors' gallery long enough to answer it."⁷ The visitor in the gallery was not recognized by the Speaker but was one of the most recognizable stars in the world: actress and singer Barbra Streisand.

According to press reports, the mention made Trudeau blush and in the gallery Streisand "laughed and tapped the rail in appreciation."⁸

While other celebrities have attended QP, undoubtedly, at the time, Barbra Streisand was the most famous. The press enjoyed every second. She admitted to reporters she had never seen a Parliament before – "not even my own." MPs, it seems, were also a bit star-struck in looking at the gallery. After all, wouldn't you too be a little distracted if a celebrity showed up to watch you work?

May 11, 1970

Interruptions from the gallery occur from time to time during QP, but nothing prepared anyone for May 11, 1970. On that day, women in the gallery began to shout on the issue of abortion. While that alone wouldn't be much in the grand scheme of things and security would normally remove disruptive visitors, the women had gone unnoticed as they chained themselves to the gallery chairs! Security had to bring in wire-cutters and the Speaker had no choice but to suspend proceedings. According to Hansard, the suspension went from 2:45pm to 3:20pm.⁹

The women were part of what was known as the Abortion Caravan. They were well prepared, having secured various gallery passes (some MPs insisted they were forged), and they even staged a decoy protest outside by the flame to take eyes away from their grand gallery plans.

Security procedures were subsequently changed but the tale of the moment lives on – most recently in a book about the full abortion caravan.¹⁰

February 16, 1971

"First, I hope that the remark of the Prime Minister has been recorded. Second, he does not have the guts to say to the people of Canada what he has just said across the floor of the House."¹¹

Contrary to popular belief, Hansard does not record Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau saying "fuddle-duddle" or some other euphemism. It does record him saying – in the ensuing debate – "Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member has accused me of uttering a four-letter word in this House. That is an absolute untruth."¹²

To the press, Trudeau offered "What is the nature of your thoughts gentleman? When you say fuddle-duddle or something like that?"¹³ It is widely believed a more profane expression was used. It is clear from the record that some members certainly heard something unexpected. But, as far as the official record is concerned, there is nothing to report.

October 16, 1985

House custom forbids the use of props and would certainly forbid the use of a meter-long fish! Yet, on this day one appears in Hansard:

[Editor's Note: Where upon Mr. Fulton crossed the floor and placed a salmon on the Prime Minister's desk.]¹⁴

MP Jim Fulton was upset about government policy that resulted in BC fishers losing potential income. During his supplementary question to the government he showcased a giant dead salmon before crossing over to the PM's desk (the PM was away that day).

It's been said he snuck the dead fish into the Commons in a plastic bag in his pants leg,¹⁵ though this part isn't clear from the available video. There was much reaction in the House, and the Speaker was not amused at the procedural breach. The episode remains one of the most memorable moments in QP history.

January 31, 1986

Discontent with the answers provided in QP is nothing new, but January 31, 1986, brings a unique approach indicated in Hansard as: "[Editor's Note: Whereupon all members of the Opposition withdrew.]"¹⁶

The political story of the day was that Progressive Conservative Deputy Prime Minister Erik Nielsen had, many years before, eavesdropped on the Liberal Caucus meetings in the 1960s through crossed wires in the parliament buildings.¹⁷ Understanding the PM would be present (exceptionally) for the Friday QP given the mounting scandal, one opposition party leader flew back to Ottawa. However, when the PM didn't show and satisfactory answers were not forthcoming, members of the opposition parties left the House shortly after Question Period began.

After the withdrawal, one sees the following:

Mr. Speaker: Question Period. Oral Questions.
The Hon. Member for Calgary West?

Mr. Hawkes: No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Oral Question Period. The Hon.
Member for Kootenay-no?

Order, please. Question Period: Oral Questions.

The Speaker then moved on to petitions but the sitting would not last much longer. A vote was called that a member be now heard, the bells were rung, and members did not appear for the vote to begin. The proceedings accordingly collapsed some time later and the House adjourned pursuant to Standing Order.¹⁸

October 17, 1990

On National Students' Day, MP Howard McCurdy asked a question to the ministry on a new surcharge on student loans. Students from the University of Ottawa seated in the gallery began throwing uncooked macaroni and protest cards onto the floor of the Chamber.¹⁹

When the Speaker suggested that Mr. McCurdy might have had some link to the protests – a belief common to some other MPs²⁰ – it drew a strong rebuke from McCurdy, who insisted he did not know of the students' plans; the Speaker apologized.²¹

The matter was discussed as a question of privilege and eventually referred to committee. The Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections reported to the House on March 6, 1991, and concluded in part that "The Committee does not recommend that any specific action be taken with respect to the participants in the infamous "macaroni" caper of October 17, 1990".

March 8, 1994

During QP on March 8, 1994, the first question (and a supplementary question) were asked by a woman. So were the second, third, fourth, fifth, and so on. While it is now somewhat of a tradition for women to ask all the questions during QP on International Women's Day, 1994 was the turning point. Wrote the *Toronto Star*: "For what is believed to be the first time in Canadian history, every Opposition question was posed by a woman, the acting prime minister was a woman, and a woman was in the Speaker's chair."²²

There was no announcement, no warning – and arguably the governing party was caught flat-footed as its first question to itself was asked by a male member, albeit it on a topic relating to the protection of vulnerable women and noting it was International Women's Day.²³

While it may not pop out from reading the Hansard pages, anyone watching QP could tell something was different about that day as woman after woman got up to ask questions, though not every woman MP was a fan of the idea. MP Jan Brown said she was "embarrassed

to be part of it ... The choice to set women apart in such an orchestrated exercises illustrates we never really play in the game... It was in some respects a male indulgence to placate 'The little woman'."²⁴

Notably, the 1993 election brought a then record number of women to the House and much needed to change in consequence, including the expansion of washrooms for women legislators.²⁵

February 26, 1998

The Speaker: The member for Rimouski—Métis.

[Editor's Note: members sang the national anthem].²⁶

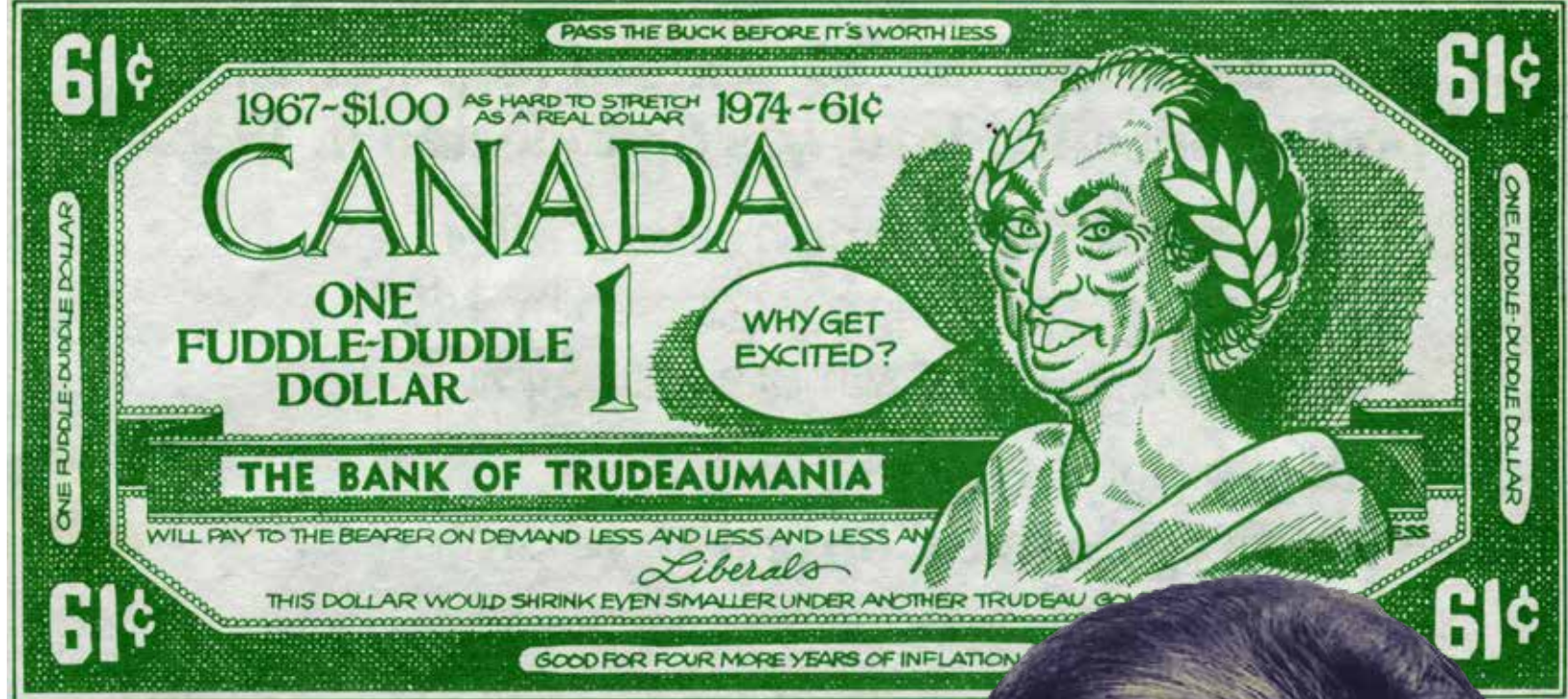
When a Bloc Québécois MP, who had attracted criticism for comments on the Canadian flag at the Olympic village in Nagano, rose in Question Period, she was drowned out by a chorus of MPs singing the National Anthem and waving Canadian flags. As her party leader said in the subsequent point of order debate: "Never will we tolerate again people using the national anthem in this House, during Oral Question Period, to ridicule the proceedings of this place, or one of our colleagues, or the national anthem itself."²⁷

The Speaker would subsequently rule that the singing was disorderly and that displays of flags would continue to be impermissible until the House otherwise decided.²⁸

In speaking to the press about the incident, the MP raised another concern: "And today, as they did in Nagano, the national anthem was sung in English."²⁹

Notes

- 1 Hansard, March 4, 1966, p 221.
- 2 *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Matters Relating to One Gerda Munsinger*. Mr. Justice Wishart Flett Spence, Commissioner. September 1966.
- 3 Hansard, May 18, 1966, p. 5267.
- 4 Ibid, p. 5268.
- 5 Ibid, p. 5269.
- 6 See James A. Fontana, *The Mad Bomber of Parliament Hill*. Borealis Press: Ottawa, 2005.
- 7 Hansard, January 29, 1970, p 2971.
- 8 "Pierre blushes in house at taunts about Barbra." *Niagara Falls Review*, January 30, 1970, p. 1.
- 9 Hansard, May 11, 1970, p. 6796.
- 10 Karin Wells, *The Abortion Caravan: When Women Shut Down Government in the Battle for the Right to Choose*, Second Story Press, 2020.
- 11 Hansard, February 16, 1971, p. 3423.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Victor Mackie, "Pierre gives mouthful in Commons." *The Vancouver Sun*, February 17, 1971, p 1.
- 14 Hansard, October 16, 1985, p 7678.
- 15 Hansard, May 21, 2023, p 23470.
- 16 Hansard, January 31, 1986, p 10347.
- 17 Terrance Wills, "The Nielsen Affairs: PM's a no-show in House." *The Gazette*, February 1, 1986, p. A9.
- 18 Hansard, January 31, 1986, p. 100350.
- 19 "Hungry for funds, student pelt MPs with macaroni." *The Gazette*, October 18, 1990, p. B4.
- 20 Hansard, October 17, 1990, p. 14277.
- 21 Ibid. 14279.
- 22 Edison Stewart, "Female MPs take charge in Commons," *Toronto Star* March 9, 1994, p A4.
- 23 Hansard, March 8, 1994, p. 1997 (Nick Discepola).
- 24 Charlotte Gray, "House Breaking", *Saturday Night* magazine (*Globe and Mail* insert), p. 28.
- 25 Ibid p 27.
- 26 Hansard, February 26, 1998, p. 4503.
- 27 Hansard, February 26, 1998, p 4510.
- 28 Hansard, March 16, 1998, pp. 4902-3.
- 29 Sheldon Alberts, "Federalist parties greet Bloc members with flag and song." *Telegraph-Journal*, February 27, 1998, p. A10.



Better remembered for his quick wit than his potty mouth, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's nonetheless inspired a "fuddle duddle" craze following an off-colour utterance during a 1971 Question Period. In addition to fuddle duddle dollars printed by the opposition Progressive Conservatives that drew attention to growing inflation (top), multiple musicians released 45s inspired by the term (above and below).

A year earlier, Trudeau was in better spirits when superstar singer and actress Barbra Streisand (right) was spotted in the visitor's gallery watching. Trudeau and Streisand briefly dated around this time.

In 1985, MP Jim Fulton (bottom left) held up a salmon during Question Period and proceeded to place it on Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's desk.



FUDDLE-DUDDLE
(G. Hambleton)
ANTIQUE FAIR
Prod. by Greg Hambleton
Manufactured in Canada by Quality Records



