



## PARLIAMENTARY CYCLE

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## INTRODUCTION

A Parliament is summoned following a general election and continues to exist until it is dissolved (ended) by a proclamation of the Governor General at the request of the Prime Minister. This is followed by another general election. The Constitution sets the maximum lifespan of a Parliament at five years; however, recent changes to the *Canada Elections Act* provide for fixed date elections every four years.

Each Parliament is made up of one or more sessions, each consisting of a number of separate sittings (meetings), separated by periods of adjournment. Each session, except the final one, ends when Parliament is prorogued by the Governor General. The final session ends with the dissolution of Parliament and the calling of a general election.

## DETAILED ARTICLE

### Terminology at a Glance

## OPENING OF A PARLIAMENT AND A SESSION

After a general election, Parliament is summoned in the Queen's name by the Governor General. On the day appointed by proclamation for the meeting of the new Parliament, the newly-elected Members, who have already taken an oath of allegiance, elect a Speaker by secret ballot.

At the time appointed for the formal opening of the new Parliament, the new Speaker, accompanied by the Members, formally announces his/her election at the bar of the Senate Chamber. The Speaker of the Senate replies on behalf of the Governor General. He/she acknowledges the election and confirms the traditional rights and privileges of the House.

This is followed immediately by the Speech from the Throne in the Senate Chamber. Subsequent sessions of the same Parliament will open with a summons to the Senate Chamber followed immediately by the Speech from the Throne.

The Speech from the Throne is customarily read by the Governor General. It announces the newly-elected Government's general program for the parliamentary session that will follow.

When the Members return to the Commons Chamber, several procedural formalities are followed immediately by the commencement of the debate on the Address to the Governor General in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

## DETAILED ARTICLES

### Summoning a Parliament

### Opening of a Parliament or a Session

### Election of the Speaker of the House [Speaker and Other Presiding Officers]

### Speech from the Throne

## PROROGATION OF PARLIAMENT

Each session of a Parliament ends with the prorogation of Parliament by the Governor General, on the advice of the Prime Minister. Most unfinished business dies and committees cease to function. Parliament then stands prorogued until the opening of the next session on a specified date. This date may be changed by a further proclamation.

Government bills that have not received Royal Assent prior to prorogation can be reinstated in the next session only if the House takes a decision to this effect. Private Members' bills are automatically reinstated. Tabling of documents before the House must await the beginning of the new session. Requests for responses to petitions and for the production of papers remain in effect, as do requests made for government responses to committee reports.

### DETAILED ARTICLE

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#### Prorogation of Parliament

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## DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT

Dissolution ends the life of a Parliament; the last session of a Parliament is therefore the one that ends with dissolution. The proclamation (issued by the Governor General on the advice of the Prime Minister) dissolving a Parliament is usually followed by others, fixing the date of a general election and summoning the new Parliament to meet on a specific date.

Dissolution brings to an end all Chamber activity and all business before both Houses. All committees cease to exist and requests for Government responses to committee reports lapse. The Speaker and several of the other elected officers of Parliament continue to perform certain administrative functions until they are replaced or re-elected in a new Parliament following a general election.

### DETAILED ARTICLE

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#### Dissolution of Parliament

#### Recall of the House of Commons

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## PARLIAMENTARY CALENDAR

The *Standing Orders of the House of Commons* set out the parliamentary calendar. This establishes a schedule of sitting periods, separated by adjournments, including a Christmas break and a summer recess. Statutory holidays and certain other days are designated as non-sitting days.

The calendar comes into effect once a session starts and remains in effect for its duration. However, the House may be recalled or Parliament summoned for the opening of a new session during what is normally a period of adjournment. The House may also decide to sit on days it is not scheduled to sit or to adjourn on days on which it is scheduled to sit.

The Standing Orders also set forth weekly and daily schedules for the work of the House. The House commences sitting at 11:00 a.m. on Mondays. On Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays sittings begin at 10:00 a.m. As Wednesday mornings are reserved for caucus meetings, sittings on that day begin at 2:00 p.m. Daily sittings end between 6:30 and 7:00 p.m., except on Fridays, when they end at 2:30 p.m. Sittings may be extended for a number of reasons.

The House stands adjourned when it is not meeting as well as when it is neither prorogued nor dissolved. During an adjournment, the House may be recalled by the Speaker, on the advice of the Government, prior to the date originally specified.

Committees meet throughout the week and may also meet during adjournment periods.

### DETAILED ARTICLES

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#### Adjournment of the House of Commons

#### Weekly Schedule of the House of Commons

#### Exceptions to the Calendar of the House of Commons

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## MORE INFORMATION – PARLIAMENTARY CYCLE

### Calendar of the House of Commons

*House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, Robert Marleau & Camille Montpetit, (2000)

Chapter 8, The Parliamentary Cycle

[\*Standing Orders of the House of Commons\*](#)

Chapter III, Sittings of the House

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Find this and other articles on House of Commons procedure by visiting the *Compendium of Procedure* Web site at <http://www.parl.gc.ca/compendium-e>.

For further information about the procedures of the House of Commons, please contact the Table Research Branch at (613) 996-3611 or by e-mail at [trbdrb@parl.gc.ca](mailto:trbdrb@parl.gc.ca).

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