



Educational Resources

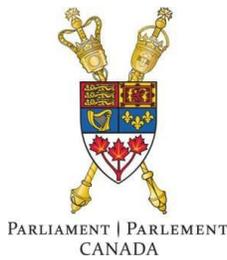
PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE SIMULATION

GENERAL RESOURCES -

FUNDAMENTAL RESOURCES

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Preparing your Role

Student name: _____

Assigned role: _____

Your role card contains clues about your character's views on the bill. Read the bill for a second time, thinking about it from the perspective of your role. Ask yourself three questions:

1. Do you support or oppose the bill as it is written?
2. Which specific clauses in the bill do you most agree with and which do you least agree with?
3. Would your character want to support, defeat or amend (change) the bill?

Start reading each clause with a pen in hand. While reading, jot down notations — such as the ones listed below — for each clause. Remember to look at the ideas from your character's point of view.

- ++ Strongly support
- Strongly oppose
- * Find the idea interesting
- ? Find the idea confusing

After you read the bill again, answer these questions from the point of view of your assigned character:

1. According to my role card, does my party or organization support the bill? Is there any difference between my character's view and that of the organization or party that my character is attached to?

2. Is this issue a problem that needs fixing in Canada?

3. If this bill becomes law, will it be effective and feasible as a solution to the problem?

4. Are the penalties fair and enforceable?

5. Which two clauses would my character prioritize as most important to keep just as they are written?

6. Which clauses would my character think are the most important to change? How should the wording change?

Develop a few goals for the committee meeting and come up with a few strategies that might help your character achieve each goal. A sample answer is provided to help you understand this task.

| Goal | Strategies to help achieve the goal |
|---|--|
| <p>Sample goal: <i>Convince committee members to keep the penalty at the current high level.</i></p> | <p>Sample strategies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Ask the minister an easy question such as, “Why is it important to have this penalty?” to provide the minister with an opportunity to convince committee members.</i> 2. <i>Provide reasons why the penalty needs to be high to deter people from breaking the rules.</i> 3. <i>Think of problems that are likely to occur if the penalty is not kept at the current level.</i> |
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Simulation Procedures and Order of Business

The chair

The chair is a member of the committee who has been elected to run the meetings in an orderly way and to play a moderating role during debate. For the purposes of this simulation, the chair has been granted authority by the committee to be responsible for the following:

1. Limit time for the discussion or debate for any section.
2. Decide who is allowed to speak at any given time.
3. Keep the debate civil and on topic.

Rules for conduct in the meeting

1. Only speak when the chair grants you permission.
2. Be polite and respectful.
3. Do not disrupt the meeting by talking or whispering during the meeting.
4. Witnesses and the minister sit in the gallery until invited by the chair to sit at the committee table.
5. Only committee members are permitted to participate in the debate or to vote.
6. In House of Commons committees, the chair votes only in the event of a tie.
7. Refer to others by Mr. or Ms. and their last name (see name cards on desks).

Schedule

The chair begins the meeting by welcoming everyone. After this, the meeting proceeds in five sections.

1. Lead Minister presentation

- The cabinet minister whose department is responsible for this bill will speak first to introduce and explain the bill.
- This will be followed by a question and answer session. Committee members may ask the minister questions.
- Committee members may also comment on the bill during question and answer time.

2. Witness presentations

- There will be four presentations by Canadians who represent groups that are interested in this bill. The chair calls witnesses to the table to speak when it is their turn.
- After each witness, the chair will allow committee members to ask questions of the witnesses and make comments.

3. Clause-by-clause examination of the bill

- The chair leads the committee through each clause in the main part of the bill, setting aside clause 2 (definitions).
- For each clause, the chair asks if there is any discussion. At that point you may speak in favour of or against the wording of the clause under discussion.
- At the end of each discussion, the chair calls for a vote on that clause
- After a clause-by-clause review of the main parts of the bill, the chair will lead an examination of the titles and definitions in the opening part of the bill.

4. Suggested amendments

- Only a member of the committee can propose an amendment, although an amendment can be drafted by an external group (such as the witnesses) and brought forward by a member of the committee.
- You are invited to write your own amendment to one of the clauses. A clause can be amended by adding, changing or deleting certain words. Use the amendment form to explain and record your proposed modification.
- If it is your job to propose an amendment, wait until the chair begins the discussion of that clause - put up your hand, and when the chair calls on you, say “Mr. / Madam Chair, I would propose an amendment to this clause.”
- Read out your new wording and pass the amendment paper to the clerk. The chair will then ask you to speak in favour of the amendment.
- The chair will then ask for other speakers in favour of or against the amendment. At this time, members may also propose changes to the amendment being discussed.
- The chair then calls for a vote on whether or not to approve the amendment to the clause.
- If the amendment passes the vote, the clerk changes the wording of the amended clause and the chair reads out the new wording.
- After the vote on the amendment, the chair calls for a vote on the clause. If there are other amendments to be proposed, they should be moved at this time. *Note: Only one amendment may be discussed at a time.
- Once a clause — with or without amendment — has been approved, the committee may begin its discussion of the next clause.

5. Vote to report the bill

- The final step for the committee is to vote on whether or not to adopt the bill and to report the bill to the Senate or House of Commons as it is now written. If you approve of the bill as it is now written, after any amendments have been made, vote “Yes.” If you oppose it as written, vote “No.” If you approve that the bill should be reported to the Senate or House of Commons, vote “Yes.” If you oppose that it should be reported, vote “No.”

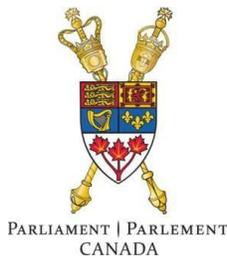
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Clerk Instructions

The committee clerk has an important job in helping the chair run the meeting. You will keep track of a list of speakers who would like to ask questions and make comments. You also have the important job of changing the wording of the bill if committee members pass amendments.

- **Preparation of committee room:** Assist your teacher in setting up the committee room. Distribute copies of blank amendment forms to the government and opposition, and keep extras in case more are needed.
- **Organizing speaking list:** When committee members put up their hands to ask questions or make comments, keep a list of their names in the order they put up their hands. Sit next to the chair, so he/she can call the members in the right order.
- **Counting votes:** When the Committee votes on an issue, keep track of the number of votes in favour of and against each clause. If a clause is approved, write “Approved” next to the clause on the master copy of the bill. Write “Defeated” if it is defeated, and then cross out that clause.
- **Organizing amendments and revising the wording of the bill:** Any committee member who wants to amend a bill will fill out a blank amendment form and pass it to you. The chair may ask you to read out the proposed changes in wording. If the amendment is approved, cross out, add or change the wording of the clause on the master copy. The chair may want you to read out the new wording.



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Presenting to the Committee

Name: _____

Role: _____

You will be making a presentation to the committee. Your goal is to convince committee members to view the bill the same way that you do. You will try to convince them to support the bill as written, to vote against clauses that you don't support, or to change the wording of the clauses to make them more favourable to your group.

Read your role card and answer the questions below. The role card contains the "building blocks" for your presentation. Do not simply read them to the committee. Adapt them using your own words, and adding any details that you think would be helpful.

What is my central goal? What does my character want the committee to do with this bill?

What arguments or reasons might I offer to the committee to encourage them to accept my character's point of view. Place a check mark against those that are likely to be most convincing to members of the committee.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Look at the list of witnesses. Predict the position each of them will take.

| Witness group | Predicted position |
|---------------|--------------------|
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Amendment Proposal Form

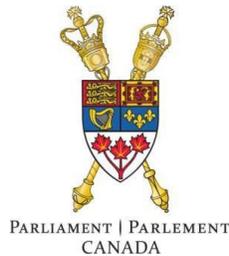
Section: _____

Name: _____

Original wording

Proposed new wording

Reasons for proposing the change in wording



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Preparing a Media Report

As a member of the media or “press gallery,” your role will be to inform Canadians about what transpired in this committee meeting. In doing so, you will decide what is most important and interesting to emphasize in your story.

Preparing for the simulation

Read the bill carefully.

1. What will Canadians find interesting about this bill?

2. Is this a controversial issue? Do you expect that there will be strong opinions expressed in the committee?

3. Which clauses in the bill do you expect to pass easily?

4. Which clauses in the bill will have the most debate? Are there any clauses that you think will be defeated?

Look at the list of witnesses who will be appearing before the committee.

1. Which witnesses are likely to speak in support of the bill? Why?

2. Which witnesses are likely to criticize the bill? Why?

During the meeting

Use the following charts or make your own to take notes on the important occurrences during the meeting.

Witness presentations

| Name of witness and group | Opinion and reasons | Interesting quote |
|---------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Debate on amendments

| Clause | Amended or not / passed | Details (arguments, quotes, etc.) |
|--------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Writing the story

News stories are organized a little differently than other types of stories. The most important information in a news story is always at the very beginning, in a sentence called the “lead.” In the lead, the reporter tries to answer the “5 Ws and the H” of a story: who, what, why, when, where and how. The reporter wants the lead to capture what is important to know, but also to be interesting in order to get the reader to read the rest of the story. If the most important information is at the beginning, the least important information is at the end. That way the reader can stop reading the article at any point and still get a good sense of what happened.

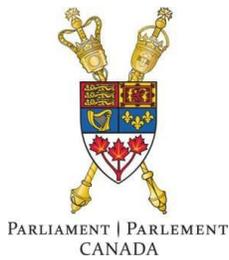
In planning your article, decide first what is most important for citizens to know about what happened at the committee meeting. Did the bill pass the stage easily with little argument? Did the committee dramatically change the details? Was there a fierce debate?

Story planning structure

Headline (several words long — designed to attract attention of reader) :

Lead (No more than 30 words if possible. Remember: who, what, why, when, where and how) :

Details and quotations to use in story (listed most important to least important) :



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Reflecting on the Simulation

Name: _____

Role: _____

1. Assess your own performance in this simulation. Think about your preparation, participation, the quality of your arguments and how you presented yourself.

a. What were the strengths of your performance?

b. What would you do differently next time?

2. What have you learned about the role of parliamentary committees in Canadian democracy? Prioritize the three most important things that you now understand about these committees.

a.

b.

c.

3. How do you think the experience of a real parliamentary committee may be different from how things worked in this simulation?

4. What questions do you have about parliamentary committees after doing this simulation?

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Performance Assessment

Name : _____

Role : _____

| | Exceeds expectations | Fully meets expectations | Minimally meets expectations | Does not meet expectations |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| Preparation for role | Very thorough, accurate and detailed completion of all required preparation tasks including evidence of additional outside research. | Generally accurate and detailed completion of all required preparation tasks. | Required preparation materials are complete, but some of the responses are too brief or contain inaccuracies. | Few of the required preparation tasks are complete and accurate. |
| Evidence/explanation | | | | |
| Understanding of procedures and concepts | Demonstrates in-depth knowledge of committee procedures and concepts throughout the simulation. | Demonstrates an understanding of many committee procedures and concepts. | Demonstrates understanding of some committee procedures and concepts, but has not understood others. | Demonstrates little understanding of committee procedures and concepts throughout the simulation. |
| Evidence/explanation | | | | |
| Authentic portrayal of the role | Highly realistic and convincing portrayal of the role that made a significant contribution to the success of the simulation. | A generally realistic and convincing portrayal of the role that made a positive contribution to the simulation. | Some aspects of the portrayal of the role were realistic and convincing, other parts were not. Contributed in small way to the simulation. | For the most part the portrayal of the role was not realistic or convincing and did not make a positive contribution to the simulation. |
| Evidence/explanation | | | | |