

Educational Resources

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE SIMULATION

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.”