



Educational Resources

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE SIMULATION

Simulation Procedures and Order of Business – extended version

Note: The written procedure below is for a meeting with seven sections. Your teacher may direct you to complete some or all of the sections.

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. The chair is 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 and then leads the committee through seven steps.

1. Introduction and discussion of witness list

- Committee members will look at the list of witnesses who will be addressing the committee today. Discussion: Do these witnesses represent the diversity of Canadian viewpoints on this issue?

2. Lead Minister presentation

- The cabinet minister whose department is responsible for this bill will speak first and introduce and explain the bill.
- Question and Answer: Committee members may ask the Minister questions and make general comments about the bill.



3. Witness presentations

- There will be four presentations by individual Canadians who represent groups interested in this bill.
- When it is their turn, the chair will call witnesses to the table to speak. A question and answer period will follow each presentation. Committee members are free to make general comments about the bill.

4. Meeting recess

- Members of Parliament review what they have heard from witnesses and consider whether they should make any further changes to their positions. Members may meet with other members of their caucus.

5. 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). The examination begins with the substantive clauses of the bill, and concludes with the bill title and definitions.
- For each clause, the chair will ask if there are any proposed amendments. At that point you may speak in favour of or against the wording of that clause or may make general comments about the bill.
- At the end of any discussion on a clause, the chair asks for a vote on that clause. The clerk records if the clause was approved or defeated.

6. Proposed 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 for one of the other clauses. A clause can be amended by adding, changing or deleting certain words. Use the amendment form to explain and record your proposed modification.
- Your amendment cannot significantly expand the scope of the bill because the bill has already been passed in principle during second reading. For example, if a bill proposes to lower the age of voting to 16, you could not add a clause lowering the age of driving to 14. That change would have to be the subject of its own separate bill.
- To propose an amendment, 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 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 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 the clause 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.

7. 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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