



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

FACT SHEET

The first days of the 44th Parliament

After a general election, Parliament is summoned in the Sovereign's name by the Governor General. On the day appointed by proclamation for the meeting of the new Parliament, the first scheduled item of business is [the election of a Speaker](#). Before the election begins, however, the Members, accompanied by the Table Officers, are called to the Senate Chamber, where the Speaker of the Senate informs them that the Governor General "does not see fit to declare the causes of his (her) summoning of the present Parliament of Canada, until a Speaker of the House of Commons shall have been chosen, according to law...". Members then return to the House and proceed to elect a Speaker.

Election of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Candidates

All Members of the House, except for Ministers of the Crown and leaders of recognized parties, are automatically considered candidates for the position of Speaker. Any Member who does not wish to have his or her name appear on the list of candidates must inform the Clerk of the House in writing by no later than 6:00 p.m. on the day before the election is to take place.

Member presiding over the election

The election is presided over by the Member with the longest period of uninterrupted service who is neither a Minister of the Crown, nor the holder of any office within the House. This Member is vested with all the powers of the Chair, save that he or she retains the right to vote in the ensuing election, and is unable to cast a deciding vote in the event of an equality of votes being cast for two of the candidates. The Mace (symbol of the authority of the House) rests beneath the Table until a new Speaker is elected.

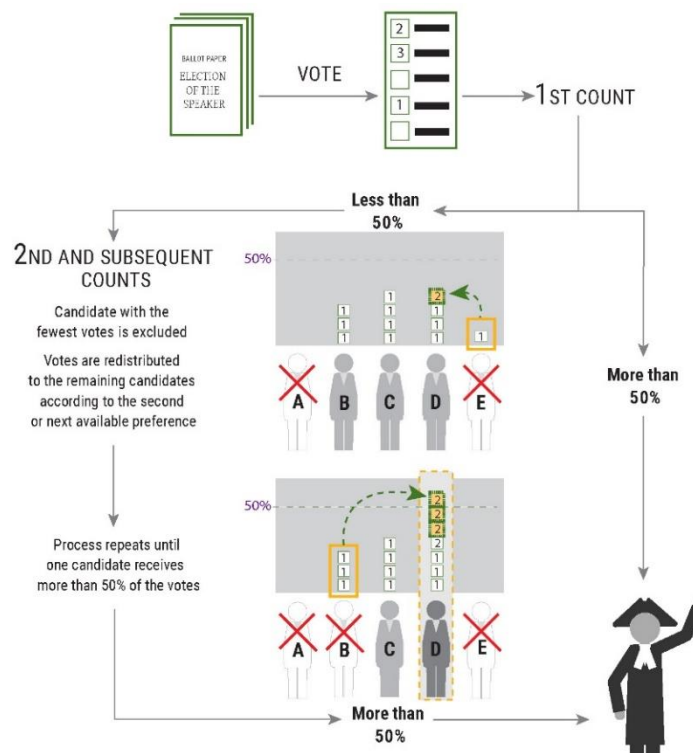
Before proceeding with the election, the Member presiding will call upon any candidate for the office of Speaker to address the House for not more than five minutes. When no further candidate rises to speak, the Member presiding will leave the Chair for 30 minutes and the sitting will be suspended. After this suspension, the sitting resumes and the voting begins.

Voting procedure

The election is conducted by secret ballot using the single preferential ballot system. Members will have their names recorded by a Table Officer and be issued a ballot paper, on which will be listed, in alphabetical order, the names of the eligible candidates for the election of the Speaker.

To vote, they must rank the candidates in order of preference, placing the number “1” in the space adjacent to the name of the candidate who is their first preference, the number “2” in the space adjacent to the name of the candidate who is their second preference, and so on, until they have ranked all the candidates for whom they wish to vote. It is not necessary for Members to rank all candidates.

When the Member presiding is satisfied that all Members wishing to vote have done so, the Clerk and the Table Officers will withdraw from the Chamber with the ballot box and proceed to count the ballots. The Member presiding will then signal that the sitting is temporarily suspended while the counting of the ballots takes place.



Second ballot, in case of a tie vote

If, at the conclusion of the counting of the votes, there is an equality of largest number of first preferences between two or more candidates, the Member presiding will indicate that a second ballot is necessary and will announce the names of the candidates on the second ballot. The Clerk of the House will then provide Members with new ballot papers, on which will be listed, in alphabetical order, the names of the eligible candidates. The voting procedure for the second ballot is the same as for the first.

Ballot results

The votes will initially be counted based on the first preferences indicated on each ballot paper. If one candidate was ranked first by more than half of the Members who cast votes, that candidate will be elected. However, if no candidate received the majority of votes in the first round, then the candidate with the fewest first preferences will be eliminated. If two or more candidates are tied with the fewest number of votes, they are all eliminated. The votes will then be recounted using the second preference, or the next eligible preference, on ballot papers where the first-choice candidate has been eliminated. The process will continue in this manner until one candidate receives more than half of the votes cast. The Member presiding will then order the bells to be rung for five minutes and call the House to order.

The Member presiding will announce from the Chair the name of the successful candidate. After having invited the Speaker-elect to take the Chair, the Member presiding will step down. The Speaker-elect, standing on the upper step of the dais, will then thank the Members and assume the Chair. The Sergeant-at-Arms will place the Mace on the Table, signifying that now, with the Speaker in the Chair, the House is properly constituted.

Once the Speaker has been elected, the Clerk will destroy all ballot papers and related records, in accordance with the Standing Orders. The Standing Orders enjoin the Clerk not to divulge in any way the number of ballots cast for any candidate.

Speech from the Throne and Address in Reply

At the time appointed for the formal opening of the new Parliament, the new Speaker, accompanied by the Members, formally announces his or her election at the Bar of the Senate Chamber.

The Speech from the Throne, customarily read by the Governor General, follows immediately in the Senate Chamber and announces the government's general program for the parliamentary session that will follow.

Pro forma Bill

When the Members return to the Commons Chamber, and before proceeding to the consideration of the Speech from the Throne, the House gives first reading to the *pro forma* Bill C-1, *An Act respecting the administration of oaths of office*. Typically, the Bill is introduced by the Prime Minister; it receives first reading but is not proceeded with any further during the session. Its purpose is to assert the independence of the House of Commons and its right to choose its own business and to deliberate without reference to the causes of summons as expressed in the Speech from the Throne.

Report of Speech from the Throne

The Speaker then reports to the House on the Speech from the Throne, informing the House that "to prevent mistakes" a copy of the Speech has been obtained; its text is published in the *Debates*. A motion is then moved, usually by the Prime Minister, for the Speech from the Throne

to be considered “later this day” or on a future day; it is usually adopted without debate or amendment.

Board of Internal Economy and Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

Several procedural formalities usually take place before considering the Speech from the Throne, including the announcement of appointments to the Board of Internal Economy and the creation of the [Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs](#), which is charged with acting as a striking committee for all standing committees and standing joint committees.

Other Chair Occupants

After consultations with the leaders of each officially recognized party, the Speaker announces to the House the names of the Members he or she considers to be qualified for the positions of [Deputy Speaker](#) and [Assistant Deputy Speaker](#). Once elected to the position, these Members also become, respectively, Deputy Speaker; Assistant Deputy Speaker and Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole; and Assistant Deputy Speaker and Assistant Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole. These announcements may be made on the day of the Speech from the Throne but may also be made on subsequent days. Once the Speaker announces the name of a Member, the question is immediately put to the House for a decision without debate or amendment.

Order for Supply

The *Standing Orders* require that, at the start of each session, the House designate, by means of a motion, a continuing Order of the Day for the consideration of the [business of supply](#). The designation of a continuing order for supply follows on the statement usually found in the Speech from the Throne informing Members that they “will be asked to appropriate the funds required to carry out the services and expenditures authorized by Parliament.” The continuing order for supply also allows the government to designate supply days, also known as “allotted days” or “opposition days,” when the House considers motions sponsored by Members of opposition parties within the broader supply framework.

Debate on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne

These items of business are traditionally followed by the commencement of the debate on the Address in Reply to the [Speech from the Throne](#), which is moved and seconded by government backbenchers.

Once the first two speeches are made, the Leader of the Opposition typically moves the adjournment of the debate on the Address in Reply, and the Government House Leader moves the adjournment of the House.

The *Standing Orders* provide for up to [six days of debate](#) on the Address in Reply. The six days do not have to occur consecutively. If an amendment and a subamendment are proposed in the course of the debate, a vote on the subamendment occurs at the end of the second day and a vote on the amendment occurs at the end of the fourth day. Unless the debate has already concluded, a vote on the main motion is held at the end of the sixth day.

Reference

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

[*House of Commons Procedure and Practice, Third Edition, 2017*](#)

[*Our Procedure*](#)

For more information:

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