



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

FACT SHEET

The first days of the 2nd session of the 43rd Parliament

After a period of prorogation, Parliament is summoned in the Sovereign's name by the Governor General. Parliament will convene on September 23, 2020, marking the end of the period of prorogation and the beginning of the 2nd session of the 43rd Parliament. Given the current situation with the COVID-19 pandemic, this ceremony will follow public health guidelines to ensure the safety of all participants.

Speech from the Throne and Address in Reply

Each time a parliamentary session is opened, the House assembles in the Commons Chamber with the Speaker in the Chair, receives the Usher of the Black Rod and proceeds to the Senate for the reading of the Speech from the Throne. The Speech from the Throne, customarily read by the Governor General, takes place in the Senate Chamber and announces the government's general program for the parliamentary session that will follow.

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.

Leaders' Day

The first day of resumed debate on the Address in Reply is known as [Leaders' Day](#). It is traditional for the Leader of the Official Opposition to speak first and to move an amendment to the main motion. The Prime Minister usually speaks next, and is followed by the leader of the second-largest opposition party, who may propose a subamendment. Other leaders of parties with official status in the House are then recognized in turn.

Recent practice has been that the Leader of the Official Opposition moves an amendment on the first day of resumed debate. A subamendment is then normally proposed by the leader of the second-largest opposition party; however, another Member from that party may also do so. The [rule of relevance is not strictly applied](#) to the proposed amendment, and therefore, it may add some distinct element of its own, whereas a subamendment must be relevant to the amendment and cannot raise a new issue.

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”; 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. The [Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs](#), the membership of which continues from session to session, is charged with acting as a striking committee for all standing committees and standing joint committees.

Meeting in the Chamber

By default, the House of Commons sits in person and is scheduled to do so on September 23. Any change to the [Standing Orders](#) would require a decision by the House, which could only occur when the House is sitting. The House may adopt a motion amending the *Standing Orders* by unanimous consent without debate, or may debate a motion and adopt it on either a voice vote or a recorded vote.

Other Chair occupants

Upon prorogation, the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker continue in office, while the Assistant Deputy Speakers do not. After consultation 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 two [Assistant Deputy Speaker positions](#). Once elected to these positions, the Members in question become, respectively, 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 from 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.

References

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

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

For more information:

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