

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS (PART OF LEGISLATIVE BRANCH)



Photo: Library of Parliament / Roy Grogan

FACTS OF HOUSE OF COMMONS

- Made up of 308 elected Members of Parliament;
 - It is the principal law-making body in Canada;
 - Members devote most of their time to debating and voting on bills.
-
- Tour: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXjldjg-78U>

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Not only do members debate and vote on bills, they also:

- Represent constituents' views;
- Discuss national issues;
- Call on the government to explain its actions.

The House of Commons meets for about 130 days a year

DAILY PROCEEDINGS

Daily events include:

- Members' Statements—a 15-minute period is set aside each day for any Member who is not a Cabinet Minister to make a statement on a subject of national, regional or local importance. Each statement lasts a maximum of one minute.

Question Period:

- A 45 minute session where opposition Members, and sometimes government Members ask questions of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Ministers.
 - *It is an exercise in accountability: Members can ask Ministers any question about their area of responsibility, without giving advance notice.*

DAILY PROCEEDINGS

Routine Proceedings:

- These can cover the tabling of committee reports, announcements about government policy, petitions, introduction of bills for first reading.

Private Members' Business—

- For one hour each day

Members who are not Cabinet Ministers can have their bills and motions debated by the House.

THE SPEAKER

The House of Commons elects a presiding officer, known as the Speaker, at the beginning of each new parliamentary term (4 years), and also whenever a vacancy arises.

- The Speaker (assisted by deputy speakers), presides over the House.
- He or she is almost always present during question period and major debates.



House Speaker Geoff Regan

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Other happenings:

- The government introduces its policy/strategy for the year in the Throne Speech at the opening session of parliament;
- The government's annual budget, introduced by the Minister of Finance:
 - Sets out government monetary and fiscal policies for the year
 - What it plans to spend and what its expected revenue will be