

2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

# The Mock Legislature

A STUDENT DEBATE

STUDENT  
Handbook

# Student Handbook



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Check out the Student Zone!



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# Welcome to the Mock Legislature!

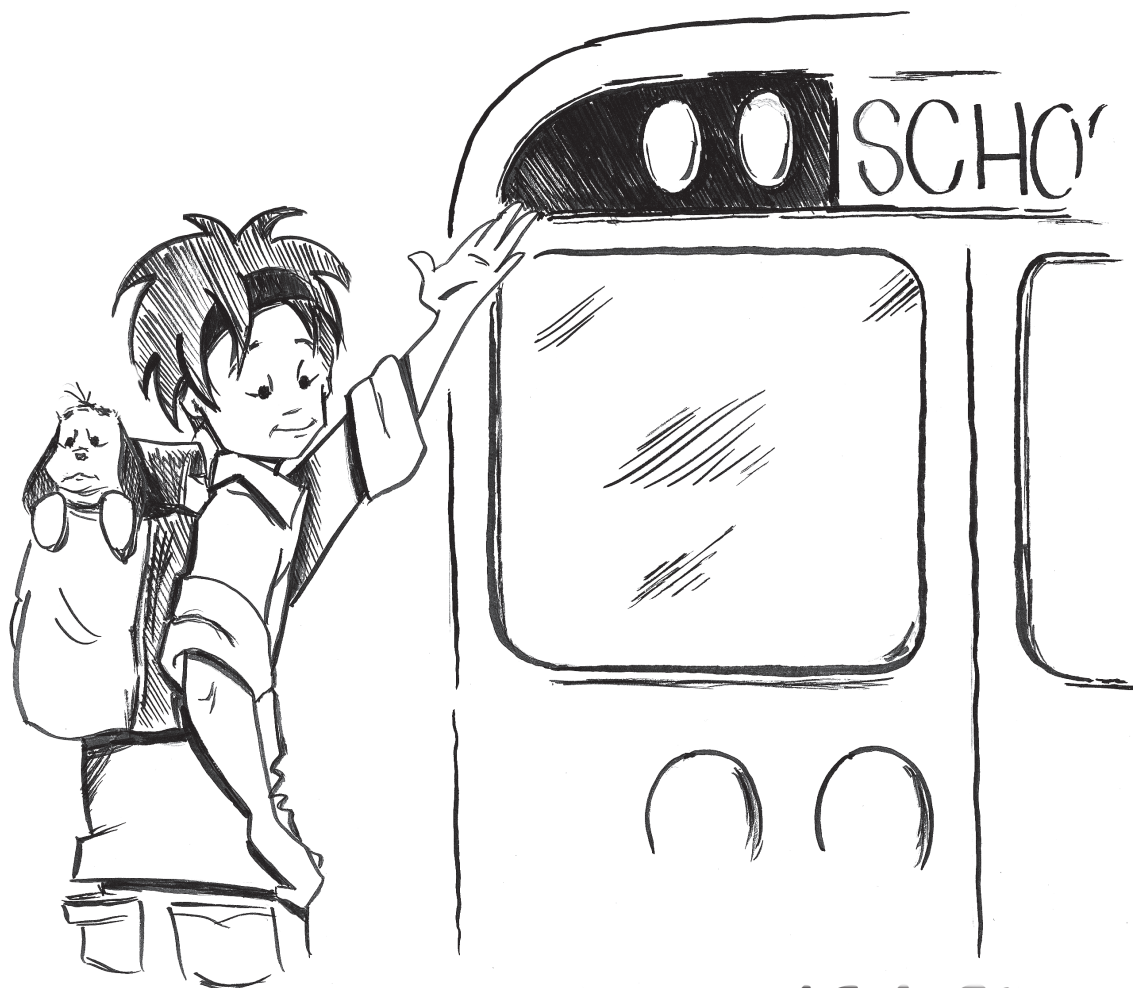
Have you ever wondered what happens at the Alberta Legislature? Have you thought about someday being a Member of the Legislative Assembly? What would it feel like to be the Premier of the province? The Speaker of the Assembly? The Leader of the Official Opposition? The

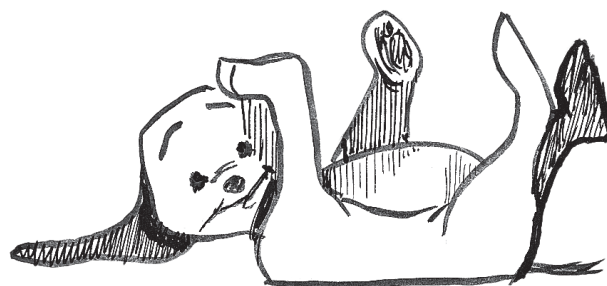
Sergeant-at-Arms? What do these people do, anyway? How do their roles fit into democratic decision-making?

Here's your chance to find out! You are about to take part in a Mock Legislature, where you and your classmates will have an opportunity to propose an idea for a new provincial law, then take part in a legislative debate and see if you can get your Bill passed into law.

But first you have to learn a little about the process of law-making and the roles of the people who are most involved.

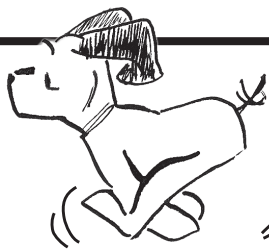
**Have fun!**





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# 1. Making Laws in Alberta

## The Role of the Legislative Assembly

Who gets to decide what rules Albertans must follow? In this chapter you will discover how Alberta's provincial Legislature works to make laws for Albertans. Pay special attention to the information in these sections to help you with the activities your teacher has prepared for you. As you work through this chapter, think about these questions:

- Who makes Alberta's laws?
- Why must a Bill go through so many steps before it becomes a law?
- How is debate an important tool for MLAs to communicate their ideas in the Legislature?

notes



Bolded words in these sections can be found in the glossary.

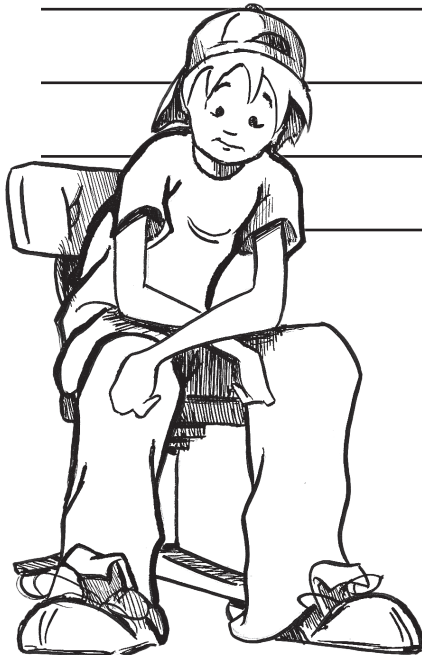
## The Alberta Legislature: What's It All About?

Has your school or classroom ever held an **election**? This could have been a time when you voted for classmates to take positions in school government or to be captain of a team. The people who get the most votes represent their classmates or team members and try to make the best decisions for the whole group.

In Alberta a provincial election is held at least every five years to decide which people will represent Albertans in the Legislature and help make laws. Alberta is divided into 87 constituencies. When a provincial election is held, the person who gets the most votes in each **constituency** becomes a **Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA)**.

You've heard of a party, but do you know what a **political party** is? Most MLAs belong to a political party when they are elected to the Legislature. The party electing the most Members to the Legislative Assembly forms the **Government**, and its leader becomes the **Premier**. This is the party that will determine government policies until the next election.

**If you were Premier,  
what might be  
some of the duties of your job?**



The governing party introduces Bills, which, after they have been debated and approved, become laws of the province.

Each government **ministry** carries out its work according to the policies and laws established in the Legislature. There are ministries that oversee many different things that affect Albertans such as the ministries for education, environment and health care.



# How Does a Bill Become a Law?

Laws in Alberta are voted on by MLAs. When a law is first proposed, it is called a **Bill** and is introduced into the Legislature for debate. There are several steps involved before a Bill finally becomes a **law**. Before a government Bill is introduced, the government **caucus** discusses the idea. MLAs then talk with interested citizens and groups to find out how they would feel about such a Bill.

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Where do you think the MLAs get ideas to propose as Bills?

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Why is it important for MLAs to talk to citizens about future laws?

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## Stages of a Bill:

### First Reading

This is the first stage, when the Member sponsoring the Bill (usually a **cabinet Minister**) states the Bill's title and summarizes the purpose of the Bill.

### Second Reading

At this stage the sponsoring Member outlines why the Bill was introduced. Members of all parties can speak and may suggest alternatives to the Bill.

### Committee of the Whole

If a Bill passes second reading, Members of the Assembly then meet as a Committee of the Whole to discuss it in detail. This is where much of the debate takes place. Sometimes at this stage **amendments** are made to the Bill. When debate is finished, the committee refers the Bill to the Assembly.

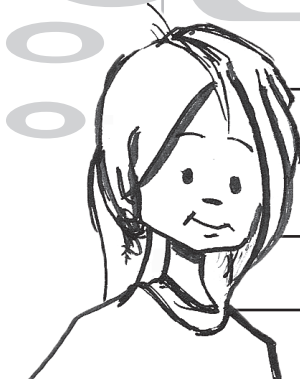
### Third Reading

This is when the sponsor of the Bill summarizes its benefits and the opposition parties state why they agree or disagree with the Bill. A final vote is taken once debate is finished.

### Royal Assent

When a Bill has passed third reading, it must receive **royal assent** before it becomes a law. This is formal approval by the monarch's representative, the **Lieutenant Governor**. Some Bills do not come into effect immediately but do so at a later date.

It will often take weeks or months for a Bill to go through all of these steps before it finally becomes a law. Do you think it is good or bad that it can take so long to make a law? Why?



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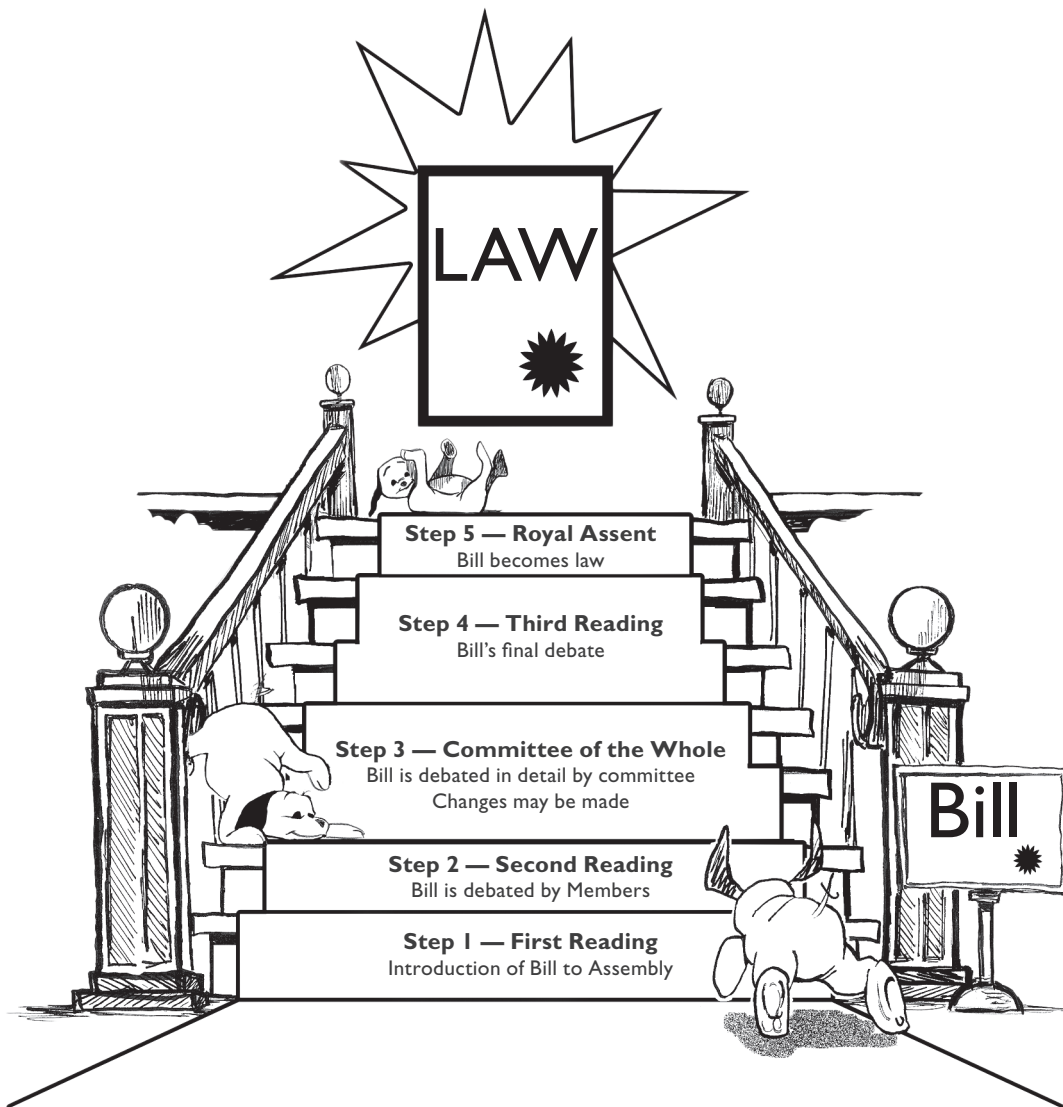
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notes

## What Is a Debate?

Think about a time when your class had to make a decision together, like where to go on a field trip or what to do for a class party. What steps did you take as a class to come to a decision? Do you think it is important to consider other classmates' ideas? Why?



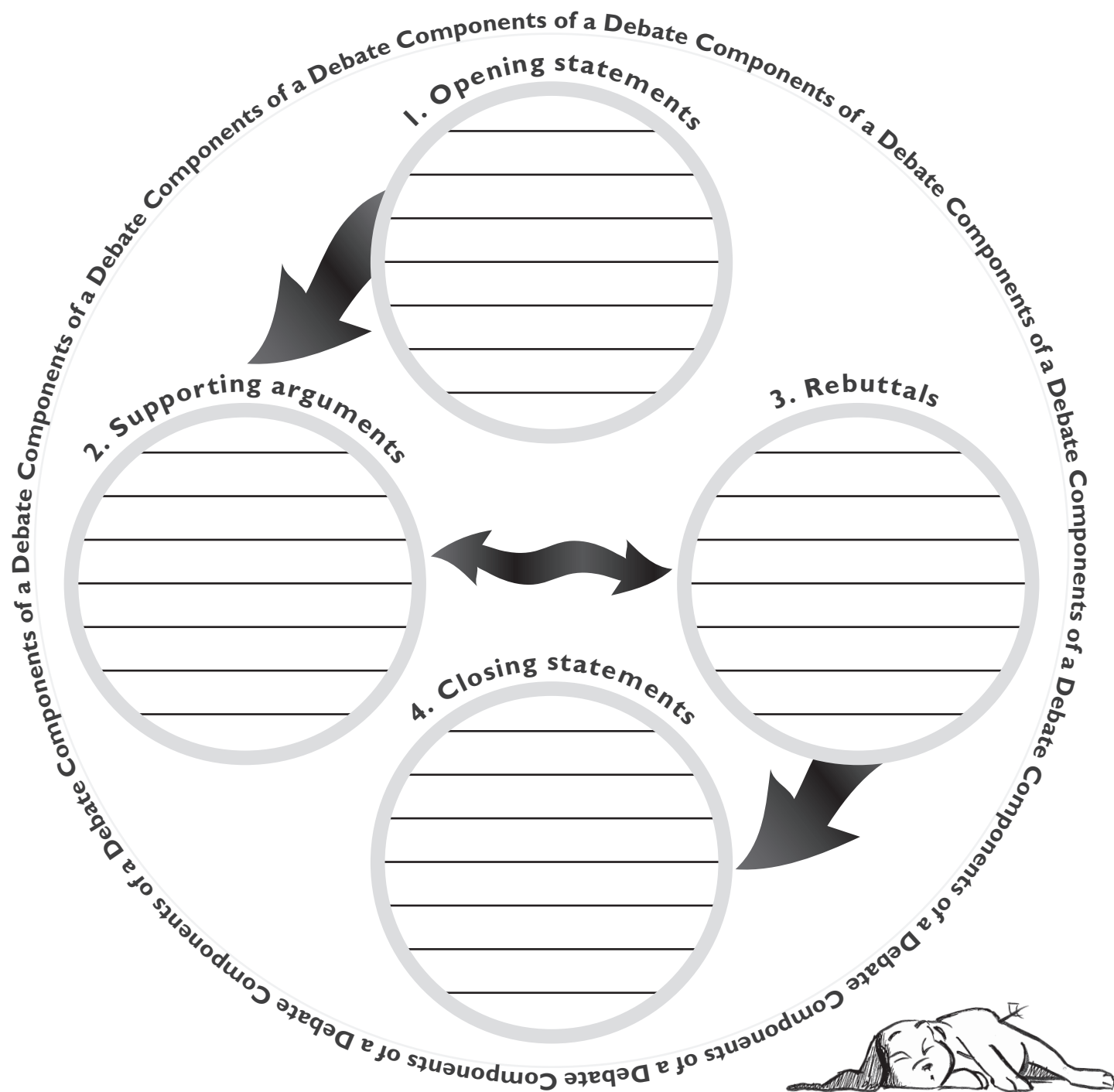
When an idea for a new law is proposed, not every MLA will always agree that the Bill will be good for Albertans. In the Legislature MLAs debate the advantages and disadvantages of a Bill. During a debate many ideas and opinions are expressed. The process of debate brings these different ideas into the open and allows all sides to attempt to show why their position is better. During debate it is very important for each side to listen to the other and to think about what the other side has just said.

A simple debate has one party supporting an issue and one party opposing it. A legislative debate is organized so that each person takes turns speaking and listens to others when they are speaking. One person runs the debate. This person is **nonpartisan**, meaning he or she does not side with any position on the issue. He or she recognizes whose turn it is to speak and tells them when their time to speak is over. In the Legislative Assembly and the Mock Legislature activity this person is the **Speaker**. During Committee of the Whole it is the Chair of Committees.

The following are all parts of a well-organized debate, but they are not listed in the correct order. Rewrite the descriptions below in the correct box in the chart on the next page. Then think of your own definition of debate and write it in the space provided.

notes

<p>The supporting side uses examples from its research as evidence that its position on the issue is the best.</p>	<p>Each side summarizes their major points and restates a major piece of evidence that makes their position very convincing.</p>
<p>Each side has a chance to briefly state one or two major reasons for supporting or opposing the Bill.</p>	<p>The opposing side responds to specific points the other side has made and uses examples to defend its position.</p>



Debate \_\_\_\_\_

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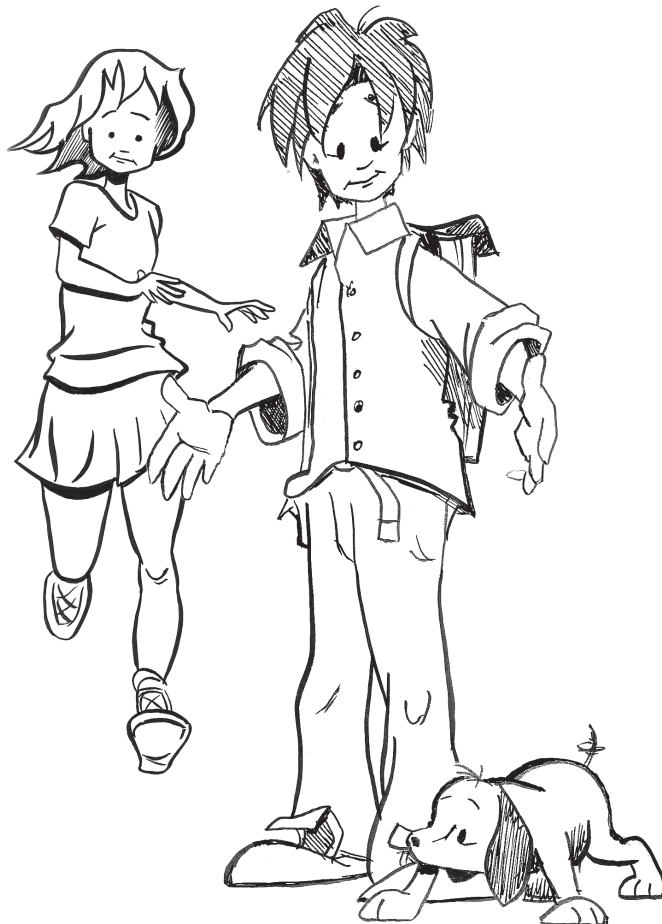
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## 2. The Legislative Assembly Daily Routine, Ceremony and People

Visitors are often fascinated by the **ceremony** and **tradition** in the Alberta Legislature. The Mock Legislature simulation is an opportunity for you to learn about the roots of Canadian parliamentary democracy by participating in traditions and practices that have been carried out for centuries. As you study this chapter, think about the following questions:

- What is a typical day like for the Legislative Assembly?
- Why are some symbols and traditions such an important part of the Legislative Assembly?
- Why are there so many different people involved in the daily routine of the Legislative Assembly, and what do they do?





## The Daily Routine: What Does It Look Like?

A daily **sitting** of the Legislative Assembly follows a routine, much like you follow during a day at school. In school the morning bell rings to let students know it is time to take their seats. There is usually a morning routine of the national anthem, announcements and sometimes a prayer. After this routine students begin their school work. You can probably think of other routines you follow, like when you get ready to go to school in the morning.

MLAs usually meet for several weeks in the spring and fall, Monday through Thursday afternoons. Sometimes they will have meetings in the evenings. When the meeting is about to begin, a bell rings to let the MLAs know they need to be in the **Chamber**. A prayer is read, announcements and introductions are made, Bills are introduced, documents are tabled, and then MLAs get to work discussing and debating Bills.

notes

**Session** refers to the regular sitting of the Legislative Assembly. A session begins with the Speech From the Throne and continues until adjournment.

Why do you think the Legislative Assembly follows a routine?



In the Mock Legislature you will only enact the procession and the procedures noted with an asterisk (\*).

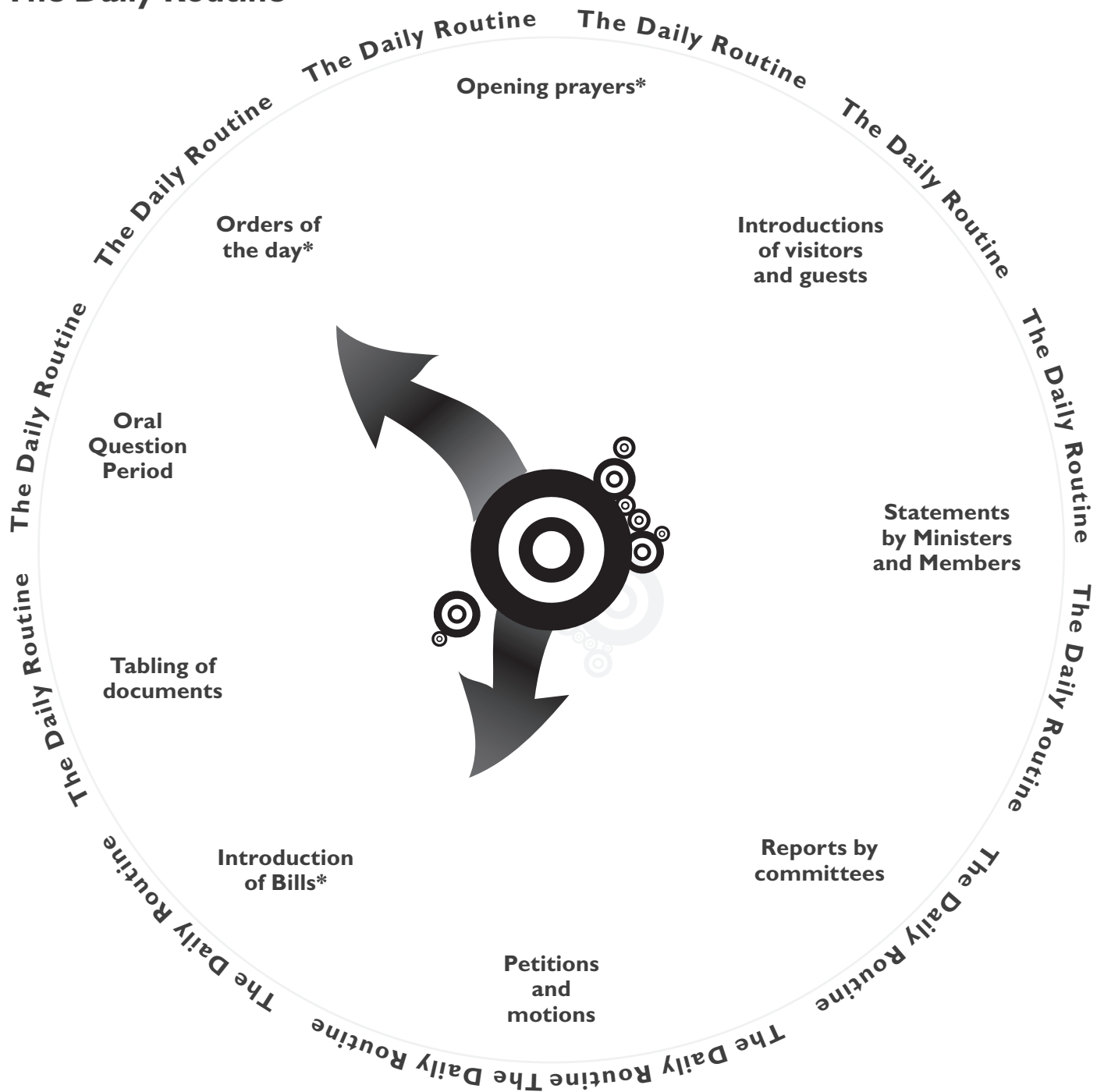
notes

## The Speaker's Procession

The sitting begins with the Chamber doors opening to reveal the **Sergeant-at-Arms** carrying the ceremonial **Mace** into the Chamber and escorting the Speaker of the Assembly. Everyone in the Chamber stands for the Speaker's procession. The Speaker is followed by the **Clerk of the Legislative Assembly** and the other **table officers**. The Sergeant-at-Arms lays the Mace at the end of the Assembly table with the crown of the Mace pointing towards the government Members. Now the Speaker guides the Assembly through the daily Routine.



## The Daily Routine



## Ceremony: Connecting Symbols and Traditions

If you look around your school, you can probably spot a few symbols. For example, there may be a Canadian flag hanging in your classroom or a picture of the school mascot painted on the gym wall. Sometimes you will have traditions that go along with the symbols, like singing the Canadian anthem at the beginning of a school assembly.

**Is there a reason why certain symbols are displayed in your school?**

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**How do you feel when you participate in school traditions and ceremonies?**

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When you perform the Mock Legislature, you will enact some ceremonies which have been part of the Assembly's long history. It is important to understand the meaning behind the symbols and traditions that are involved in the Mock Legislature.

## The Mace

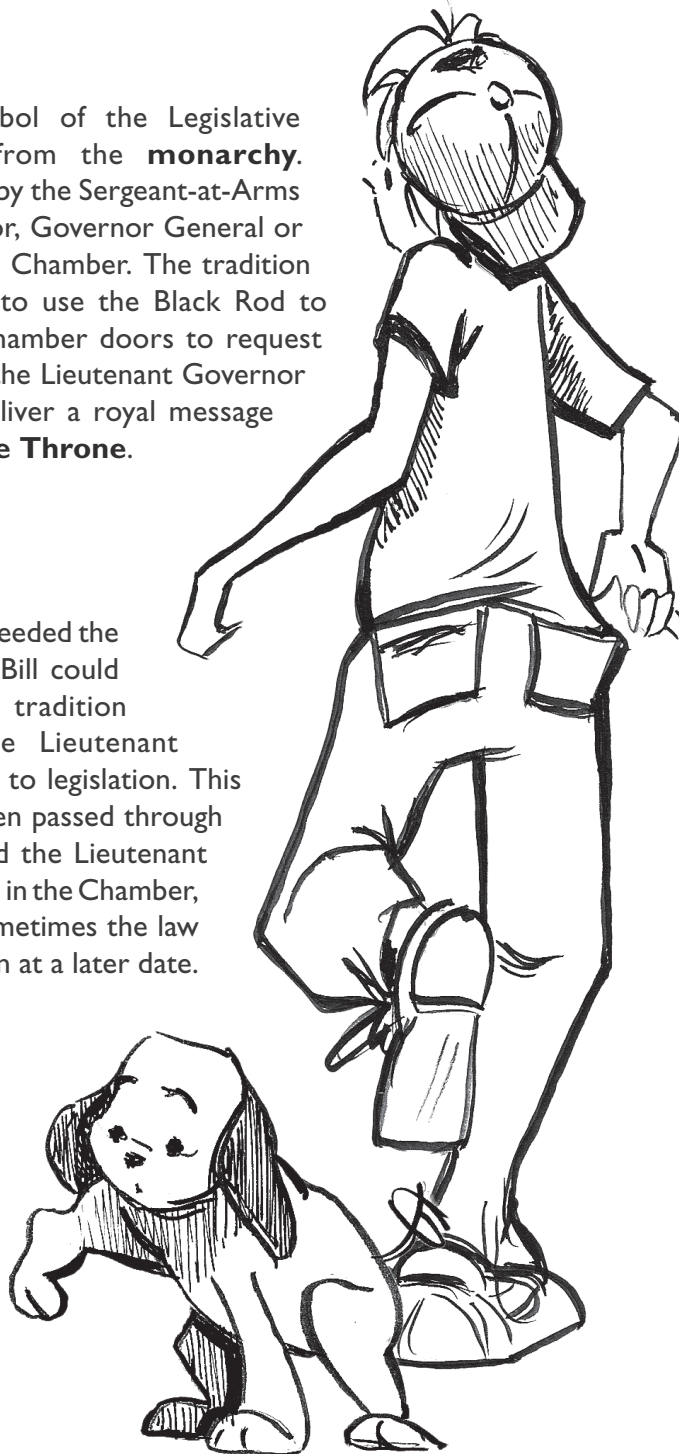
The Mace is a heavy, decorated, gold staff which symbolizes the authority of the Assembly to make laws for the province. During the meeting it rests on the Assembly table. The crown of the Mace points toward the government side of the Chamber, indicating which party has the power to govern.

## The Black Rod

The **Black Rod** is a symbol of the Legislative Assembly's independence from the **monarchy**. Alberta's Black Rod is carried by the Sergeant-at-Arms when the Lieutenant Governor, Governor General or the Queen is escorted to the Chamber. The tradition is for the Sergeant-at-Arms to use the Black Rod to knock three times on the Chamber doors to request the Speaker's permission for the Lieutenant Governor to enter the Chamber to deliver a royal message such as the **Speech from the Throne**.

## Royal Assent

The early British parliaments needed the monarch's approval before a Bill could officially become law. This tradition is still practised when the Lieutenant Governor grants royal assent to legislation. This means that once a Bill has been passed through all the necessary readings and the Lieutenant Governor has approved the Bill in the Chamber, the Bill will become a law. Sometimes the law takes effect upon proclamation at a later date.



## The People of the Assembly: Who Are They, and What Do They Do?

See the floor plan  
on page 25.

The Legislative Assembly **Chamber** is where the Assembly meets. Each person who has a role in the Legislative Assembly has a specific place to be during a sitting.

The Speaker sits at the head of the Chamber. Members of the governing party sit to the Speaker's right. Opposition Members sit across from them. Sometimes a government has such a large **majority** that there aren't enough seats on the government side. Some of the government Members would then have desks placed on the opposition side but separated by an aisle. In some cases, when the government has only a **minority** of seats in the Chamber, some opposition Members may have to sit on the government side.

There are many people involved in the law-making process. Each of these people has certain duties.

### Lieutenant Governor

The Lieutenant Governor is the Queen's representative. The Lieutenant Governor is not a Member of the Assembly and only enters the Chamber upon invitation.

This person grants royal assent to Bills which have passed third reading. The Lieutenant Governor also opens and closes sessions of the Assembly, reads the Speech from the Throne and dissolves the Assembly for an election (this is called **dissolution**).

### Speaker

The Speaker is an MLA who presides over debate in the Chamber.

This person is responsible for enforcing the rules of the Chamber and ensures that all MLAs are treated fairly. The Speaker must serve all MLAs equally no matter which party they belong to. The Speaker does not normally vote on Bills except in the case of a tie. The Speaker is also responsible for the Legislative Assembly Office, whose staff provide support for the MLAs and the Assembly as a whole.

## Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs)



An MLA has two roles—as the representative for a constituency (also called a **riding**) and as a legislator. Each of Alberta’s constituencies elects one representative.

While some have additional duties within their parties or within the Assembly, all are responsible for:

- listening to and speaking on behalf of their constituents
- discussing Bills and motions with other Members and debating them within the Assembly
- helping constituents with government programs and services
- attending caucus meetings to discuss party policies
- attending legislative and policy committee meetings

## Government MLAs

These MLAs belong to the party with the most elected representatives in the Assembly.

- **The Premier** is the head of government and has overall responsibility for everything the government does.
- **Cabinet Ministers** head various government ministries such as health, education and agriculture. The Premier chooses them from the MLAs in his party. They sponsor new Bills that concern their ministries.
- **Private Government Members** are also often referred to as **backbenchers**. These MLAs belong to the party that has the most representatives in the Assembly. These individuals are not cabinet Ministers. They sit behind Ministers and debate and vote in the Assembly.
- **The Chair of Committees** runs the meeting during Committee of the Whole. This person is usually a private government Member. His or her role during committee is similar to that of the Speaker during regular session. The Chair can vote during session but not during Committee of the Whole unless there is a tie vote.

## Opposition MLAs

The opposition includes all elected MLAs from parties other than the governing party as well as those who sit as **independents**.

- The **Leader of the Official Opposition** leads the party that has the second-greatest number of elected MLAs.
- **Members of the opposition** examine, question and suggest alternatives to government policies. They bring questions about government policies and actions to the attention of the public.

Some of the opposition Members are appointed by their party to present the policies of their party and respond to those of the government. They are known as **critics** and ensure that the government stays accountable to the public by continually questioning government activities. The remainder are private opposition Members, and they also debate and vote in the Assembly.



## Table Officers

- **The Clerk of the Assembly** is the adviser to the Speaker. This person calls the **daily order of business**. The Clerk also has overall responsibility for the various administrative services that MLAs need to do their work such as financial administration and library services.
- **The Law Clerk** is a senior procedural adviser and is also responsible for approving amendments and petitions and helping to draft rulings on procedural issues.
- **Parliamentary Counsel** is the group of legal advisers who advise the Speaker and MLAs on Assembly procedure. Throughout the year they help draft new laws for MLAs and provide legal and procedural advice to MLAs, committees and staff who support the Assembly.
- **The Committee Research Co-ordinator** conducts procedural research, keeps Assembly records and helps produce the Assembly's daily agenda (the Order Paper) and the minutes (Votes and Proceedings).

## Sergeant-at-Arms

The Sergeant-at-Arms is responsible for security in the Chamber and the galleries. The Sergeant-at-Arms also carries the Mace into the Chamber each sitting day. The Sergeant-at-Arms leads the Speaker's procession into the Chamber to signal the start of the day's sitting.

## Pages

Pages help Members during sittings of the Assembly by delivering messages and materials to MLAs, table officers and the Speaker in the Chamber. They are normally Alberta high school and university students.

## Hansard

The people who work for *Hansard* produce the official report of the debates of the Legislative Assembly and its committees. Besides typing and editing well over 30,000 words spoken by MLAs every day that the Assembly meets, they ensure all proper names are spelled accurately. They produce final transcripts of House debates within nine hours.

## The Media (Reporters)

The role of the media is very important in a democracy. The media ensures that the public is aware of the decisions made by elected representatives.

The media take notes throughout the debates, interview MLAs afterwards (particularly cabinet Ministers and opposition critics) and report this information through television, radio, newspapers and online.

**Now that you know what each person does in the Legislative Assembly, which role would you choose?  
Why did you choose that role?**

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### WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

Try these websites to help you learn more about the daily routine, traditions and symbols and the people who work in the Legislative Assembly.

- *Citizen's Guide to the Alberta Legislature* 7th edition,  
Part 3: Rules and Traditions  
[www.assembly.ab.ca](http://www.assembly.ab.ca) → Visitor Information → Learning Resources
  - Virtual Visit to the Alberta Legislature  
[www.assembly.ab.ca](http://www.assembly.ab.ca) → Visitor Information → Student Zone
-

# 3. The Mock Legislature

## Getting Ready

In the first two sections you learned the basics about law-making in Alberta. By now your class has selected a topic, developed arguments for debate, and you have been assigned a role to play in the Mock Legislature. There are just a few more things to consider before you are ready for the simulation!

Think about the following questions:

- **What is my role and my most important duty in the Mock Legislature simulation?**
- **How does my character dress and behave during the simulation?**
- **How does my character feel about the Bill that will be debated?**



## How Do I Use the Mock Legislature Script?

Your teacher will divide your class into groups to have a caucus meeting. Read through the script with your group. Pay special attention to blank areas. This is where you will write in your debate arguments or other important information (such as the name of the Bill or the name of the person being addressed).

The script is mainly a guideline for the order of proceedings for a Bill to become law. No matter what the script says, there are some important things to remember as you perform the Mock Legislature activity.

### Remember:

- During debate all statements are addressed to the Speaker. When a Member begins to speak, they always stand and start with “Mr. Speaker” or “Madam Speaker.”
- During Committee of the Whole Members address all statements to the Chair (“Mr. Chair” or “Madam Chair”).
- If there are noisy outbursts, the Speaker calls for order. The Speaker politely reminds everyone that they may only speak one at a time.
- The Speaker stands when he/she addresses the Assembly. No one else speaks or moves while the Speaker is standing.
- The Clerk and Members also stand when they are speaking.
- After an MLA has made a point, the other party members usually show their support by thumping on their desks with one hand.
- Members are referred to by position and not by name; for example, “The **Honourable** Minister of Education” or “The Honourable Opposition Member.”

Once you have filled in the script, you should be ready for the Mock Legislature.

**Good luck, and have fun!**

## Costumes: What Will I Wear?

If you are coming to the Legislature to take part in a Mock Legislature, you don't need to worry about costumes. If you are holding the debate in your classroom, here are some suggestions for what to wear.

- MLAs: suit jackets
- Speaker, Clerk, Law Clerk, Parliamentary Counsel: robes
- Sergeant-at-Arms: white gloves, black suit jacket, black pants or skirt
- Pages: black pants or skirt
- Lieutenant Governor: suit or dress
- Media: no official outfit but should be neatly dressed



## How will your character be dressed?

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### WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

Try these websites to help you learn more about the role you will take during the Mock Legislature.

- *Citizen's Guide to the Alberta Legislature*, 7th edition, Part 3: Rules and Traditions  
[www.assembly.ab.ca](http://www.assembly.ab.ca) → Visitor Information → Learning Resources
  - Virtual Visit to the Alberta Legislature  
[www.assembly.ab.ca](http://www.assembly.ab.ca) → Visitor Information → Student Zone
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# 4. Student Resources

## Chamber Matching Game

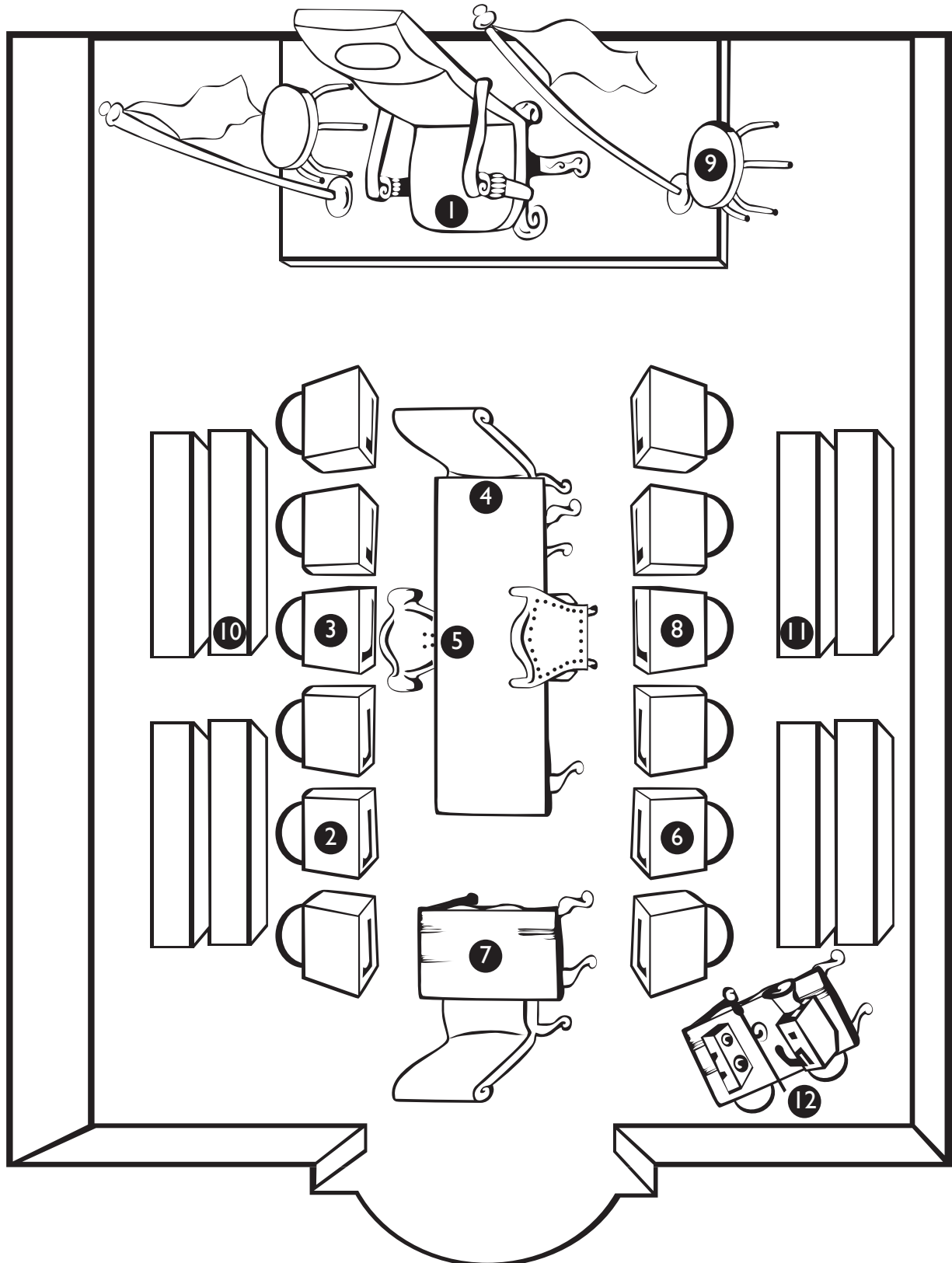
Using the Mock Legislature Chamber floor plan, match the title of each person with the correct seat in the Chamber, and then write down that person's most important duty.

Title of Person	Seat	What is this person's most important duty in the democratic process?
Government Minister		
Media		
Leader of the Official Opposition		
Critics		
Premier		
Private Government Member		
Page		
Law Clerk		
Clerk		
Sergeant-at-Arms		
Speaker		
Private Opposition Member		
Lieutenant Governor	⊙	
Chair of Committees	⊙	

⊙ Where does the Lieutenant Governor sit when delivering royal assent? \_\_\_\_\_

⊙ Where does the Chair of Committees sit when moderating the debate? \_\_\_\_\_

# Mock Legislature Chamber Floor Plan



## How To Make A Mace

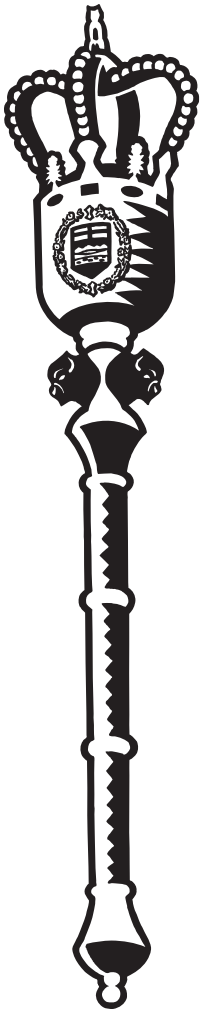
To begin each sitting day, the Sergeant-at-Arms carries the Mace into the Chamber. At one time the Mace was a weapon of war. Today the Mace is the symbol of the Legislature's authority to make laws. In this activity you can make your very own mace to use in your Mock Legislature.

### Materials

- cardboard cylinders (from paper towels)
- construction paper
- plastic containers (from yogourt or ice cream)
- scissors
- glue or tape
- coloured markers
- buttons, sequins, plastic jewels, glitter or other decorations

### Directions

1. On the bottom of the plastic container trace the circumference of the cardboard cylinder. Cut out the traced circle.
2. Draw the crown of your mace on construction paper and cut it out. The crown should be taller than the plastic container. Decorate your crown with markers and decorations. Glue it onto the plastic container.
3. To make the staff of the mace, tape a few cardboard cylinders together end to end.
4. Decorate the staff with markers. You can draw symbols of Alberta, like bighorn sheep, lodgepole pine trees, the great horned owl, bull trout, wild roses, bison, beavers, wheat and others.
5. Insert the staff of the mace into the hole of the container. Use tape to hold it in place.
6. Use your mace as part of your classroom debate!







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## REFERENCE

Try this website to learn more about the Mace.

- *Citizen's Guide to the Alberta Legislature* 7th edition  
[www.assembly.ab.ca](http://www.assembly.ab.ca) → Visitor Information → Learning Resources

# 5. Student Glossary of Legislative Vocabulary

## A

**Amend:** To change or improve.

**Amendment:** A change proposed to a motion, a Bill, a written question or a committee report with the intention of improving it or providing an alternative.

## B

**Backbencher:** An MLA who is not a Minister and does not sit on the front benches reserved for cabinet Ministers or for opposition party officials.

**Bill:** A suggestion for a law that the Legislative Assembly is asked to consider.

**Black Rod:** The ceremonial baton carried by the Sergeant-at-Arms as a symbol of authority, used when accompanying the Lieutenant Governor on occasions such as royal assent or the Speech from the Throne.

**Budget:** The plan of where the government is going to get money this year and how it will spend its money.

## C

**Cabinet:** The group of Ministers who work closely with the Premier. (See **Cabinet Minister**.)

**Cabinet Minister:** A Member of the Legislative Assembly who is usually head of a ministry.

**Caucus:** A group composed of Members of the Legislative Assembly from the same political party. Private caucus meetings are held regularly.

**Ceremony:** A formal action that follows special customs, rules or traditions.

**Chair:** The presiding officer at a meeting of the Legislative Assembly or a committee.

**Chamber:** The meeting room in which all Members of the Legislative Assembly meet to discuss and to vote. (See **Legislative Assembly**.)

**Civil Servant:** Someone who works for the administrative service of a government, called the civil service (or public service). This includes government ministries and various agencies.

**Clerk of the Legislative Assembly:** The principal person in the Chamber who advises the Speaker and MLAs about rules in the Legislative Assembly.

**Committee:** A group of Members of the Legislative Assembly selected to study a specific subject or Bill and to write a report on it.

**Committee of the Whole:** All Members of the Legislative Assembly will meet to consider Bills or other important legislation.

**Constituency:** The area in Alberta that an MLA represents in the Legislative Assembly (also known as a riding or electoral district). During debate the Member is identified by the name of the riding rather than by his or her own name.

**Constituent:** A person living in an area represented by an MLA in the Legislative Assembly.

**Constitution:** The set of fundamental principles and established practices which a country follows outlining the system of government and the civic rights of its citizens.

**Critic:** An MLA in an opposition caucus, especially the Official Opposition, who reviews a government portfolio. Like the Ministers they shadow, opposition critics hear concerns and ideas from various persons and interest groups from anywhere in the province.

### D

**Daily Order of Business:** The daily agenda of business that may be taken up by the Legislative Assembly.

**Debate:** A discussion of any subject by MLAs.

**Democracy:** A country that is governed by people who are elected by its citizens to make decisions on their behalf.

**Dissolution:** The bringing to an end of a Legislature either at the conclusion of its five-year term or by proclamation of the Lieutenant Governor. It is followed by a general election.

### E

**Elect:** To choose one person from a group of several people by voting. The person with the most votes is elected.

**Election:** The selection of a person or government by voting. In Alberta elections for MLAs must be held at least every five years.

**Electoral District:** (See **Constituency**.)

### F

**First Reading:** The first step in a Bill becoming a law; it is the introduction of the Bill to the Assembly. The Bill usually passes unanimously as it has yet to be debated and analyzed.

### G

**Government:** The group with the authority to run the business of the province; this is the Premier and cabinet.

**Government Business:** Period of time set aside each day for dealing with items of business presented by the government in the Assembly.

**Government House Leader:** The MLA responsible for managing the government's business in the Legislative Assembly. This person is also a member of the cabinet.

### H

**Hansard:** The official printed record of what is said in the Legislative Assembly.

**Head of Government:** The Premier is the head of government and looks after the business of the province.

**Head of State:** The monarch (queen or king) is the head of state of Canada. The Lieutenant Governor represents the monarch in Alberta.

**Honourable:** A title given to Lieutenant Governors, Premiers, cabinet Ministers and sitting MLAs. Terms such as "Honourable Member for...", "Honourable colleague," and others are used by Members of the Legislative Assembly as a courtesy as traditionally they are not allowed to address each other by name.

**House Leader:** The member of a party who is responsible for its management in the Assembly. The Government House Leader determines a schedule of House business through consultation with the House leaders of the other recognized parties.

### I

**Independent Member of the Legislative Assembly:** A Member of the Legislative Assembly who does not belong to a political party.

**Interest Groups:** Groups of businesses, associations and people with a common interest who try to persuade the government to promote that interest.

**Issue:** A subject for debate or discussion which involves more than one point of view.

### L

**Law:** A rule for all of Alberta made by the Members of the Legislative Assembly through discussion and voting.

**Law Clerk:** A senior procedural adviser and is also responsible for approving amendments and petitions and helping to draft rulings on procedural issues.

**Leader of the Official Opposition:** The leader of the political party with the second-largest number of MLAs elected.

**Legislative Assembly:** The elected Members of the Legislative Assembly together form the Legislative Assembly. This term also refers to the Chamber, where they meet regularly.

**Legislative Process:** The process by which Bills are approved by the Legislative Assembly and become laws. A Bill goes through three readings and study by a committee. After approval by the Legislative Assembly it receives royal assent and becomes law. The new law comes into effect either on receiving royal assent or upon proclamation at a later date.

**Lieutenant Governor:** The representative of the monarch (queen or king) in Alberta who acts on the monarch's behalf with the advice of the Premier and cabinet. The Lieutenant Governor summons, prorogues and dissolves the Legislative Assembly, reads the Speech from the Throne and gives royal assent to Bills. The Lieutenant Governor receives diplomatic representatives and performs many ceremonial and social duties.

**Local Government:** The council that manages the business of a municipality (village, town or city). The council members are elected by the people living in that area. (Also known as **municipal government**.)

### M

**Mace:** A large, heavy, and richly ornamented staff that represents the power and authority of parliament. When the Speaker enters the Chamber on a working day, the Sergeant-at-Arms places the Mace on the table in front of the Members of the Legislative Assembly in the Chamber.

**Majority:** The governing party has more than half of the total number of MLAs elected to the Legislative Assembly.

**Mayor:** The head of a municipality (village, town or city).

**Media:** The radio, television, Internet, magazines and newspapers and the journalists who work for them.

**Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA):** A person elected to the Legislative Assembly. There are 87 Members of the Legislative Assembly, representing all of the areas of Alberta.

**Members' Statements:** A daily period when MLAs who are not cabinet Ministers can speak for up to two minutes each on matters they consider to be important.

**Ministry:** A section of the civil service devoted to a specific section of government business, usually headed by an appointed Minister (e.g., ministries responsible for education, health or finance).

**Minority:** The governing party has more Members than any other single party but not more members than all the other parties together.

**Monarch:** A queen or king. The head of state of Canada is Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada.

**Municipal Government:** (See **Local Government**.)

## N

**Nonpartisan:** Neutral, not connected to any one political party.

## O

**Official Opposition:** The political party with the second-largest number of MLAs elected.

**Opposition:** MLAs belonging to parties other than the governing party. In the Chamber opposition MLAs sit across from the cabinet. The role of the opposition is to criticize government policies, suggest alternatives and make sure the public is aware of what the government is doing or plans to do.

**Oral Question Period:** The order of business when Members ask the Premier or cabinet Ministers questions of current importance related to their responsibilities. Fifty minutes each day are allotted to this order of business.

## P

**Pages:** Students who work part-time in the Legislative Assembly to assist MLAs during sittings by distributing documents and relaying messages.

**Parliamentary Procedure:** The rules and traditions that determine how the Legislative Assembly carries out its business.

**Partisan:** A member of a political party influenced by the ideas and beliefs of that party.

**Petition:** A letter, often signed by many people, making a specific request to the Legislature.

**Political Party:** A group of people who have the same beliefs about how the province should be run.

**Poll:** A survey that asks questions to find out what people think about a certain topic.

**Portfolio:** The term used to describe the responsibilities of a member of cabinet.

**Premier:** The head of government and leader of the governing party. The Premier is also a Member of the Legislative Assembly and represents a constituency.

**Presiding Officer:** The person in the chair at a meeting of the House (Speaker, Deputy Speaker or Chair of Committees).

**Private Member:** A Member of the Legislative Assembly who is not a cabinet Minister.

## Q

**Queen:** Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II is Queen of Canada. (See **Monarch**.)

## R

**Reading (of a Bill):** A word used for the stages where a Bill is debated in the Legislature before it is passed into law.

**Report:** A written or verbal statement by a committee to the Assembly giving the results of an inquiry, asking for additional powers or returning a Bill after consideration, with or without amendments.

**Riding:** (See **Constituency**.)

**Routine Proceedings:** A time set aside daily in the Legislative Assembly to table documents, present petitions, introduce Bills and consider other routine business.

**Royal Assent:** The Lieutenant Governor approves a Bill passed by the Legislative Assembly to make it law. Royal assent may take place in the Assembly Chamber or in the Lieutenant Governor's office.

## S

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**Second Reading:** The second step in a Bill becoming a law; at this stage the sponsoring Member outlines why the Bill was introduced. Members of the opposition parties can speak and may suggest alternatives to the Bill.

**Sergeant-at-Arms:** The head of security inside the Chamber; also attends to the Speaker when he or she enters or leaves the Assembly Chamber and is responsible for the Mace and the Black Rod.

**Session:** One of the time periods into which a Legislature is divided, usually consisting of a number of separate sittings.

**Sitting:** A meeting of the Legislative Assembly within a session.

**Speaker:** The Member of the Legislative Assembly who is elected by the other Members to run their meetings and to keep order in the Legislative Assembly. The Speaker ensures that rules and traditions are respected. The Speaker has a diplomatic and social role in hosting visits by heads of state and heads of government who come to the Legislative Assembly. The Speaker is elected to the position by other Members by secret ballot at the beginning of a new Assembly or when a vacancy occurs. The Deputy Speaker assumes this role when the Speaker is absent.

**Speaker's Procession:** The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the Sergeant-at-Arms with the Mace, the Clerk of the House and other officials walk formally from the Speaker's Office to the Legislative Assembly before the opening of a sitting.

**Speech from the Throne:** A speech prepared by the government and delivered by the Lieutenant Governor at the start of a session. The speech is delivered in the Assembly Chamber and outlines the government's policies and the legislation it plans to introduce during the session.

## T

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**Table Officers:** The Clerk, Law Clerk, Parliamentary Counsel and Committee Research Co-ordinator.

**Third Reading:** This stage of the passage of a Bill follows Committee of the Whole. The sponsor of the Bill summarizes its benefits, and the opposition parties state why they agree or disagree with the Bill. A final vote is taken once debate is finished.

**Tradition:** Something that is done a certain way because it is the way it has been done for many years. There is often a story behind the tradition.

## V

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**Vote:** 1) The way citizens choose a representative in an election. Eligible Albertans vote for their representatives by secret ballot. 2) The process MLAs use to make a decision. In the Legislative Assembly Members can vote either verbally or by standing in their places.

## W

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**Whip:** The Member who is responsible for keeping other Members of the same party informed about House business and ensuring their attendance in the Assembly, especially for a vote in the Chamber.

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## WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

Try these websites to help you learn more vocabulary related to the Legislative Assembly.

- Glossary of Parliamentary Terms (Legislative Assembly of Alberta)  
[www.assembly.ab.ca](http://www.assembly.ab.ca) → Visitor Information → Learning Resources
  - Glossary of Parliamentary Terms for Younger Students  
[www.parl.gc.ca/education](http://www.parl.gc.ca/education) → Glossaries
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## Vocabulary Notes

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### USEFUL LINKS

- Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
[www.assembly.ab.ca](http://www.assembly.ab.ca) → Visitor Information → Student Zone
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