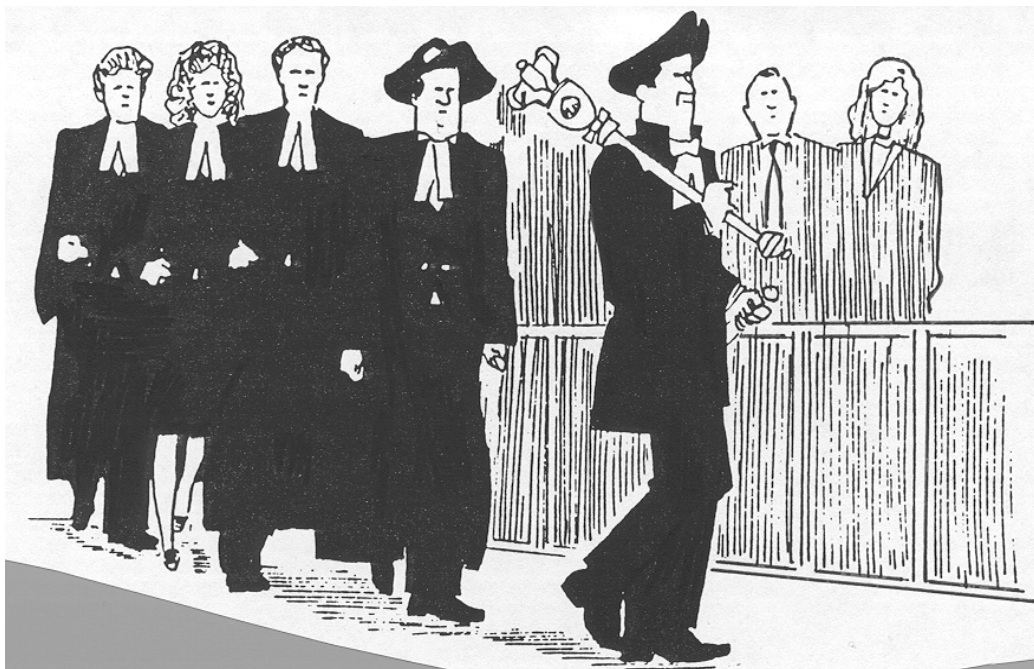




# THE MOCK LEGISLATURE

## A DEBATE ROLE PLAY

This document is for use in schools or as part of a Legislature Tour  
and includes tour information



For further information or to make a booking, please contact:

**Visitor Services**

(780) 427-7362

310-0000 (toll free within Alberta)

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[www.assembly.ab.ca/visitor](http://www.assembly.ab.ca/visitor)

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## Introduction



**T**his kit is designed to help students better understand the legislative process and the role of an MLA by allowing them to participate in a debate. The kit can be used to stage a debate in the classroom or be part of a field trip when you book a tour at the Legislature. Program length for a Legislature tour, including the debate, is 2.5 hours.

Whether the debate occurs in the classroom or at the Legislature, preparation is required. This involves choosing a topic, drafting a proposed law, called a bill, selecting students for the various roles, and going through the legislature role play script. Classes may wish to make their own mace; instructions are included in this kit.

**Encourage students to prepare their own speeches. They will receive the most benefit from presenting their own ideas.**

Before you begin preparing for the debate, you should use the information found in the reference section and in *The Citizen's Guide to the Alberta Legislature* available online at [www.assembly.ab.ca](http://www.assembly.ab.ca). You may wish to view Question Period, broadcast live on the Access channel Monday through Thursday at 1:30 p.m. when the Assembly is in session.

Sample debate comments are included in this kit to help students prepare for the role play. While some classes may need to use this prepared material, most will feel more involved if they prepare their own speeches.

### Booking a Visit to the Legislature

If you visit while the Legislature is in session, students can see how MLAs interact in the Chamber. Your field trip could possibly include a photo taken with the MLA from your school's constituency. Your MLA will also introduce you to the Assembly during Introduction of Guests, where the members will give a traditional welcome by thumping their hands on their desks.

*Phone 780-427-7362 to book your visit. Dates fill up quickly; make your booking as early as possible. Have an alternate date in mind.*

### Special Requirements

French-speaking tour guides may be available if requested in advance.

### Punctuality

Many visitors come to the Legislature Building each year. Please try to arrive on time or call ahead if you know you will be late. Please let your guide know at the beginning of the visit if you have any time constraints; for example, if your bus is going to be 15 minutes early or late to pick you up after the program.

### **Questions, Questions, Questions**

Tour guides welcome questions from students. They will also ask questions to encourage the students' curiosity.

.....

## ***Teacher's Checklist***

- ✓ Have you selected your topic?
- ✓ Have you given a copy of the debate script to all your students?

(This program is available online in both English & French at  
[www.assembly.ab.ca](http://www.assembly.ab.ca))

- ✓ Have you assigned roles for your students?

Trained tour guide staff will be on hand to assist students through the role playing.

# Legislature Role Play

## Preparing for the Debate

### 1. Select a Topic

The purpose of a legislative debate is to consider a proposal for a new law.

A topic must be selected before you come to the debate. The following topics are only suggestions. Students should pick a topic they are interested in. Be sure there are strong arguments both for and against the bill.

*A topic of current local interest might be your best choice. Students will get more involved if the topic relates directly to them.*

### Sample Topics and Bill Titles

- make school uniforms compulsory: *School Uniforms Act*
- ban dangerous or rude material on the Internet: *Internet Control Act*
- make year-round schooling compulsory: *Year-Round Schooling Act*
- require all bicycle riders to take a road test and get a licence: *Bicycle Riders Licensing Act*

### 2. Assigning the Roles

*Students must be selected to play these roles. You may wish to ask for volunteers or even stage a vote for some of the key positions.*

The following roles must be assigned before coming to the Legislature. Students should know their roles and have an idea of what they do during the debate:

- Lieutenant Governor: gives Royal Assent to the bill.
- Speaker: calls on members to speak and maintains order in the House.
- Premier
- Opposition leader
- Chairman (for Committee of the Whole): chairs the committee.
- Cabinet ministers, one of whom introduces the bill that pertains to his or her department (3 or more)
- Opposition (shadow cabinet) members, one of whom leads off the response to the bill. (3 or more)
- Clerk: reads the titles of the bills.
- Clerk Assistant: assists the Clerk.

- Sergeant-at-Arms (SAA): leads the procession and carries the Mace; escorts the Lieutenant Governor into the Chamber
- Pages: carry messages that members may send to others during session. Members raise a hand to signal a page to carry the message. Pages also assist the SAA. (2 or 3)
- Other students are all private members and must be divided into government and opposition. You should have one or two more government members than opposition members.
- Media reporters take notes throughout the debate. After the vote, the TV reporter faces a camera and reports on the debate, possibly interviewing the cabinet minister and/or an opposition member. The newspaper reporter can prepare a short written report to be read in class. (2 max)

***Remember: Government members need to be able to support the bill, and opposition members need to think of reasons not to support it.***

### **3. Holding a Caucus Meeting**

Once the debate topic has been decided, the students should gather into two groups. The government members group needs to decide what to call their bill and how to word it. See sample School Uniform Act. ( page 13)

### **4. Arranging the Room**

If you can't come to the Legislature or if you would like to rehearse the debate ahead of time, this information will help you arrange the room.

***If you come to the Legislature, the room arrangements, props, and uniforms are provided for you. "General setup of Mock Legislature Room" diagram is provided in this kit.***

### **5. Props**

To make the debate more authentic, the following props are provided when you visit the Legislature. However, making your own helps get students more involved in the program.

- A mace - see page 22 for instructions on making your own mace
- Trays - for pages to carry messages
- Bell - to call the Assembly to order
- Notepads and pencils
- Microphone - for the reporter. It can be made from a cardboard tube
- Black Rod

### **6. Costumes**

Costumes will be provided if your debate is part of a Legislature tour. In the classroom, although costumes are optional, they can add to the authenticity and fun.

### **7. Research the Topic**

Look for information on the computer or check newspapers and magazines.

- If it is an issue the government is dealing with, contact the local MLA or the government department concerned for information.
- Speak to people whose work is related to the topic.
- Contact local organizations concerned with the issue.
- In all cases students must take some time to think about the topic for themselves.

### **Important Rules**

- **While the Speaker is in the chair, all comments are addressed to the Speaker. Members say “Madam/Mr. Speaker...”**
- **During Committee of the Whole members address all comments to the Chairman. Members say “Madam/Mr. Chairman”**
- **If there are noisy outbursts, the Speaker calls for order. The Speaker politely reminds members only one can speak at a time. Sometimes the Speaker stands while making these comments. No one is allowed to speak while the Speaker is standing.**
- **Members “applaud” by banging 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.”**
- **The Speaker must try to ensure that everyone wishing to speak gets a chance to speak.**

# Legislature Role Play

## SCRIPT

**The script of procedure. Give a copy of this script to each student.**

*The following provides a detailed account of the formalities required for the debate. Students should each be given a copy of the script and asked to study what their role requires them to do and say. They should use their copies of the script for reference during the debate.*

*The MLAs and media all stand at their places. Participants line up outside the door in this order: the Sergeant-at-Arms, Speaker, Clerk, Clerk Assistant, and pages. The Sergeant-at-Arms puts the mace over his/her right shoulder. The teacher or tour guide rings a bell to signify that the Assembly is about to begin.*

**SERGEANT-AT-ARMS:** "Order. Order. Mr./Madam Speaker."

*The procession enters. The Sergeant-at-Arms walks around the table and places the mace on the cushion with the crown of the mace pointed toward the government (right side of the Speaker's chair). The Speaker walks to the Speaker's chair, then faces the Assembly and remains standing for the opening prayer. The Sergeant-at-Arms stands in front of the mace, facing the Speaker. The Clerk and the Clerk Assistant stand at their places at the table. The pages stand at their places on either side of the Speaker's chair*

### **The Procession**

***Everyone not in the procession must be in their places before it starts.***

### **Opening Prayer**

***The Speaker can write a different prayer but only in consultation with the teacher.***

**SPEAKER:** *(Standing)* This morning we pray for wisdom and compassion as we work to help this province and its people. Amen. Please be seated."

***Everyone sits down.***

**CLERK:** *(Stands)* Introduction of Bills.

**SPEAKER:** *(Stands)* Honourable Minister *(name of student)*

***The minister who is proposing the bill stands.***

## Introduction of Bills

### First Reading

*Bill is introduced*

**MINISTER:** *(Standing)* “Mr. (or Madam) Speaker, I want to introduce Bill number 501, the *(name of bill)* Act. If this bill is passed \_\_\_\_\_.”

***The minister summarizes what the bill would accomplish if passed. For example, with the ‘School Uniform Act’ the minister might say, “If this bill is passed, all students in the Province of Alberta would be easily identified and clothing would not distract from learning.”***

**SPEAKER:** *(Stands)* “All in favour of Bill 501, please say yes.”

***The members who agree with the bill say YES .***

***Traditionally, everyone votes YES so that the debate can continue. This is because the opposition has not yet had an opportunity to read the bill and see what it contains.***

**SPEAKER:** “Those opposed , please say no.”

**SPEAKER:** “Carried.”

***The Speaker sits down.***

**CLERK:** *(Stands)* “Bill 501, the \_\_\_\_\_ Act, has now been read a first time.” (Clerk sits briefly to indicate passage of time.)

-----

## Second Reading

**CLERK:** *(Standing)* “Second Reading, Bill 501, the \_\_\_\_\_ Act, the Honourable Minister *(name of student)*”

***The minister who introduced the bill says a few words about the importance of the bill and why it would benefit Albertans. The debate process begins. We suggest 3 students read for the bill and 3 students oppose the bill, alternately.***

**MINISTER:** *(Standing)* “Mr. (Madam) Speaker, this bill is important because \_\_\_\_\_.”

**SPEAKER:** *(Sitting)* “Honourable Opposition Member.”

**OPPOSITION MEMBER :** (*Stands*) “Mr. (Madam) Speaker, we oppose this bill because \_\_\_\_\_”

**SPEAKER:** (*Sitting*) “Honourable Government Member.”

**GOVERNMENT MEMBER:** (*Stands*) “Mr. (Madam) Speaker, we support this bill because \_\_\_\_\_.”

**SPEAKER:** (*Sitting*) “Honourable Opposition Member.”

**OPPOSITION MEMBER :** (*Stands*) “Mr. (Madam) Speaker, we oppose this bill because \_\_\_\_\_.”

***Following the debate, the Speaker calls the vote as at first reading.***

**SPEAKER:** (*Stands*) “All in favour of Bill 501, please say yes.”

***The members who agree with the bill say “YES.”***

**SPEAKER:** “Those opposed, please say no.”

***The members who do not agree with the bill say “NO”.***

**SPEAKER:** “Carried.”

***The Speaker sits down.***

**CLERK ASSISTANT:** (*Stands*) “Bill 501, the \_\_\_\_\_ Act is now read a second time.”  
(Clerk Assistant remains *standing* for Committee of the Whole.)

.....

**Committee of the Whole**

***At this stage the details of the bill are discussed in full and vigorously debated. Amendments to the bill may also be made at this time. The Speaker leaves the Chamber but cannot participate in the debate. The Sergeant-at-Arms moves the mace below the table and returns to his/her seat. The Clerk moves to the chair on his left to allow the Chairman of Committees, who normally sits on the government side, to preside. The Chairman sits at the table in the Clerk's chair. Members address comments to "Mr. (Madam) Chairman."***

**CLERK ASSISTANT:** *(Stands)* "Committee of the Whole."

**CLERK:** *(Stands)* "Bill 501, the \_\_\_\_\_ Act."

***During committee debate members may make changes to any part of the bill. Members alternate speaking, first the government side, then the opposition, until this debate is finished or the time has run out.***

**CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES:** *(Sitting)* "Honourable Government Member."

**GOVERNMENT MEMBER:** "Mr. (Madam) Chairman, I have several changes to propose to improve this bill. (describe changes) "

**CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES:** *(Sitting)* "Honourable Opposition Member."

**OPPOSITION MEMBER:** "Mr. (Madam) Chairman, I don't like the changes which have been made and I propose the following \_\_\_\_\_"

**CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES:** *(Sitting)* "Honourable Government Member."

**GOVERNMENT MEMBER:** "Mr. (Madam) Chairman, this is a good bill because \_\_\_\_\_"

**CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES:** *(Sitting)* "Honourable Opposition Member."

**OPPOSITION MEMBER:** "This bill is not good for Albertans because \_\_\_\_\_"

***After debating, the Chairman calls the vote.***

**CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES:** *(Sitting)* "All in favor of Bill 501, please say yes"

***The members who agree with the bill say "Yes."***

**CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES:** *(Sitting)* "All against Bill 501, please say no."

*The members who do not agree with the bill say “No.”*

**CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES:** “Carried.”

**CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES:** “The Committee of the Whole will now rise and report.”

*The Speaker returns, the Chairman and the Clerk return to their places and the Sergeant-at-Arms moves the mace back onto the cushion on the table.*

**CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES:** *(Stands)* “Mr. (Madam) Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration Bill 501, the \_\_\_\_\_ Act, and reports it to the Assembly.”

.....

**Third Reading**

**CLERK:** *(Stands)* “Third Reading, Bill 501, the \_\_\_\_\_ Act. The Honourable Minister of \_\_\_\_\_.”

*The minister now stands and sums up the benefits of the bill.*

**GOVERNMENT MINISTER:** “Mr. (Madam) Speaker, I encourage our opposition members to support us on this bill because \_\_\_\_\_”

**SPEAKER:** “Honourable Opposition Member.”

*The Opposition member (shadow critic) now stands and sums up the closing arguments against the bill.*

**OPPOSITION MEMBER:** “Mr. (Madam) Speaker, we continue to oppose this bill because \_\_\_\_\_”

*The Speaker calls for a final vote.*

**SPEAKER:** *(Stands)* “All in favour of Bill 501, please say yes.”

*The members who agree with the bill say “YES.”*

**SPEAKER:** “Those opposed, please say no.”

*The members who do not agree with the bill say “NO.”*

**SPEAKER:** “Carried.”

*The Speaker sits down.*

**CLERK ASSISTANT:** *(Stands)* “Bill 501, the \_\_\_\_\_ Act is now read a third time.”

**PREMIER:** *(Stands)* “Mr. (Madam) Speaker, His/Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor will now attend on the Assembly.”

.....

|                     |
|---------------------|
| <b>Royal Assent</b> |
|---------------------|

**Black Rod:** *The black rod is used by the Sergeant-at-Arms to escort the Lieutenant Governor to the Chamber for Royal Assent. Because the mace represents the monarch, as does the Lieutenant Governor, the mace is covered during Royal Assent.*

*The Sergeant-at-Arms, followed by the Premier, leaves to get the Lieutenant Governor, who is waiting outside the room. One of the pages covers the mace, the other gets the Black Rod and gives it to the Sergeant-at-Arms. When they return, the Sergeant-at-Arms knocks three times on the door of the Chamber (or on the floor) with the Black Rod. The pages let them in.*

**SERGEANT-AT-ARMS:** *(At the door with a strong voice yells out.)* “Mr. Speaker, His/Her Honour, the Lieutenant Governor awaits.”

**SPEAKER:** *(Stands)* “Sergeant-at-Arms, admit His/Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.”

*When they enter the Chamber, everyone stands. The Speaker leaves his seat and stands to the right of his/her chair. The Sergeant-at-Arms, the Lieutenant Governor, and the Premier walk to the Speaker’s seat. The Premier returns to his former place. The Lieutenant Governor sits in the Speaker’s chair. The Sergeant-at-Arms and the Clerk stand to the left of the Lieutenant Governor.*

**LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR:** “Please be seated.”

**Everyone now sits.**

**SPEAKER:** *(Addressing the L.G.)* “Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly has at its present sitting passed certain bills. In the name of the Legislative Assembly, I respectfully request Your Honour’s assent.”

**CLERK:** “Your Honour, following is the title of the bill to which Your Honour’s assent is requested. The \_\_\_\_\_ Act.”

**The Lieutenant Governor approves the bill with a tip of the hat or a nod of the head.**

**CLERK:** “In Her Majesty’s name His/Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor assents to this bill.”

**LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR:** *(sitting)* “I would like to thank all the Members of the Legislative Assembly for their hard work, commitment, and dedication to their elected positions.”

***When the Lieutenant Governor is finished, the Sergeant-at-Arms calls out:***

**SERGEANT-AT-ARMS:** “All rise, please.”

***Everyone stands as the Sergeant-at-Arms, followed by the Lieutenant Governor and the Premier leave the Chamber in procession. Everyone sits once the Lieutenant Governor is gone.***

***The pages uncover the mace.***

***The Premier and the Sergeant-at-Arms return to the Chamber and take their former places.***

***Now that the bill is passed, the Premier will ask for adjournment of the Assembly.***

**PREMIER:** *(Stands)* “Mr./Madam Speaker, I move that we now adjourn this Assembly.”

***The Speaker calls for the vote.***

**SPEAKER:** *(Stands)* “All in favour of adjourning this meeting, please say ‘yes’.”

***The members who agree say “YES”.***

**SPEAKER:** *(Stands)* “Those opposed to adjourning, please say no.”

***The members who do not agree say “NO.”***

**SPEAKER:** “Carried.”

**SPEAKER:** *(Standing)* “This Assembly is hereby adjourned.”

**SERGEANT-AT-ARMS:** *(Picks up the Mace and shouts out)* “Order.”

***The Sergeant-at-Arms leads the Speaker’s procession out of the Chamber. Following the Sergeant-at-Arms in order are the Speaker, Clerk, Clerk Assistant, and Pages.***

-----END-----

# Sample Debate Scripts

## School Uniforms Act

### Comments supporting the bill

#### ***Introduction by the Hon. Minister of Education:***

The province should require school uniforms for all students in Alberta. I think this improves education for children because they would not be distracted by all styles of clothes.

#### ***Comments by other members:***

- I support this idea because it will prevent punks and bullies from picking on students because of what they wear. Also, low-income families won't have to spend as much money on clothing.
- I support this law because some students are too fussy about what they wear. They wouldn't be if everyone wore the same thing. But students should have some say in the style and colours.
- Yes, because you should come to school ready to learn. All the colours and styles of clothing are a big distraction. Wearing uniforms would also help build a good reputation for schools.
- Yes, because the school boards will be able to design nice-looking uniforms. As well, kids are wearing clothes with swears on them and patch clothes with dangerous pins to keep patches on. Uniforms would do away with all that.
- I think schools should have uniforms because people should not be wearing clothes with words and pictures unacceptable to the school.

### Comments opposing the bill

- No, I do not support this idea because if a child wants to wear a uniform, they should go to a school that has them. It also violates a person's freedom to choose. If a child does not want to be in uniform and if you force him to wear it, he might be distracted in school.
- No, because people could start to quit school if they are forced to wear uniforms. Uniforms are ugly. They should be able to wear what they want.
- No, because if kids had to wear uniforms they might skip school.
- If girls had to wear skirts, some might not feel comfortable in skirts. Or some girls might not like wearing pants. School would be boring if everyone wore the same, and the cost might be high.
- No, because kids need their own freedom to wear clothes they like. Uniforms may be uncomfortable or could distract the children from their school work. This law would mean that children wouldn't have freedom.

#### ***Bill 502***

#### **School Uniforms Act**

*All Alberta students from grade 1 through grade 12 must wear uniforms in schools.*

*1. The law will be enforced at the start of the next school year.*

*2. School districts will decide on the colour, style, et cetera, of their school uniforms.*

## **Bicycle Helmets Act**

### **Comments supporting the bill**

#### ***Introduction by the Hon. Minister of Transportation and Utilities:***

Many bicyclists receive head injuries if they fall or collide with something. If they suffer brain injuries, they can be disabled. Therefore, we propose all bicyclists should have to wear an approved helmet. This will be inclusive for all ages, including adults.

#### ***Comments by other members:***

- Injuries cost money. If injuries can be prevented or at least made less serious, we can save money in the health care system. Everyone will benefit.
- If people are disabled because of head injuries, they need a lot of care. That costs money, and it is hard for families to look after them.
- When someone gets hurt or killed, it affects lots of people. Their friends and families are upset, and it makes more stress for doctors and nurses.
- Sometimes people aren't careful unless there is a law to make them take care of themselves and their children. It would make adults set a good example.
- If it is the law, in a few years wearing a helmet will be common, just like wearing a seatbelt in a car. Then we won't need to spend money on ads encouraging people to wear helmets. Parents would have an easier time convincing their children and teenagers to wear them.

### **Comments opposing the bill**

- People should be safe, but they should be allowed to make up their own minds. The government shouldn't always be telling them what to do. People should have the freedom to decide for themselves.
- It will be expensive for families because they will already be paying for their children's helmets. It might be a problem for low-income families, especially those who have to rely on bicycles for transportation.
- It's a person's own business if he or she wants to wear a helmet. In the summer they are hot and uncomfortable - definitely "uncool."
- Sometimes people have religious reasons. People who wear head coverings for religious reasons may not be able to fit a helmet over their religious headdress .
- It will cost money for police to hire more officers if they have to start ticketing bicycle riders who don't wear helmets.

**Bill 501**  
**Bicycle Helmets Act for Adults**  
*All persons riding bicycles must wear a helmet approved by the Canadian Standards Association.*

## Reference

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### Introduction

Canada's federal Parliament and provincial Legislatures are based on traditions which date back hundreds of years in the British parliamentary system. It is a system which is meant to ensure that all people are given a voice in government through their elected representatives. Political parties are formed when people share similar ideas and find electoral candidates to represent those ideas.

Alberta is divided into 83 constituencies. When a provincial election is held, each constituency elects one representative to the Legislature. The party electing the most members to the Legislative Assembly becomes the governing party, and its leader becomes the Premier. This is the party that will determine government policies until the next election.

*There are many roles within the Legislature and a traditional process which must be observed in introducing, debating, and passing bills.*

To implement those policies, the governing party introduces bills which, when they have been debated and approved, become laws of the province. Government departments carry out their work according to the policies and laws established in the Legislature, overseeing such concerns as health care and environmental protection.

### 1. The Key Players

Many people play a role in the Legislature. Elected members are known as Members of the Legislative Assembly, or MLAs. They are the people who can introduce bills, speak on matters before the Assembly, and vote on each bill. Though the Assembly may sit only for a few months of the year, they have duties that continue throughout the year. The Speaker of the Assembly, the Premier, and members of the cabinet are all MLAs. In addition, there are a number of others with specific roles within the Assembly. These include the Clerk, Clerk Assistant, and pages as well as Parliamentary Counsel. The Lieutenant Governor does not sit in the Assembly but is present for traditional ceremonies such as the opening of a new session.

*Although most Lieutenant Governors are former MLAs or MPs, as Lieutenant Governor they must be nonpartisan*

## Reference

**The Lieutenant Governor** - Canada is a constitutional monarchy. While a monarch (currently Queen Elizabeth II) is the head of state, laws are made by representatives of the people in Legislatures and Parliaments. In Canada the Prime Minister selects the Lieutenant Governors to represent the monarch in each province.

**The Speaker** - The Assembly elects one MLA to be Speaker. Members address all comments in the Chamber to the Speaker, who ensures that all MLAs are treated fairly. The Speaker also receives guests of the province, such as ambassadors or consuls general. The Speaker must serve all MLAs equally no matter which party they belong to. The Speaker is responsible for the Legislative Assembly Office, whose staff support the MLAs and the Assembly as a whole.

**The Premier** - The Premier is the head of the government and has overall responsibility for everything the government does. The Premier's role includes:

- deciding how many ministers the cabinet will have
- choosing cabinet ministers
- determining the minister's area of responsibility
- setting the cabinet's agenda
- guiding the cabinet to a final position on issues.

*When the Premier announces changes to the makeup of cabinet, this is known as a cabinet shuffle.*

**Cabinet Ministers** - The term "cabinet" dates back to early parliamentary history when the king's advisers met in a small room that lent itself to secret discussion. The Premier chooses cabinet ministers from his/her own party. They are responsible for the departments of government and ensure Albertans are informed about their department's policies and programs.

**Members of the Legislative Assembly** - Each of Alberta's 83 constituencies elects one representative. While some have additional roles 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 to understand and gain access to government programs and services
- meeting with officials from municipalities, improvement districts, school boards, health authorities, et cetera
- attending caucus meetings to discuss party policies
- attending legislative and policy committee meetings

*All the elected members of a party or their meeting as a group is called a caucus.*

**Private Members of Government Caucus** - These are members of the government party who are not part of the cabinet.

**Members of the Opposition** - The opposition includes all elected MLAs from parties other than the government party. Of these, the one with the most seats in the Assembly is the Official Opposition. Opposition members examine, question, and suggest alternatives to government policies. They bring questions about government policies and actions to the attention of the public.

**Shadow Cabinet** - Some opposition members are appointed by their party to watch or shadow the cabinet members. They ensure that any perceived misdeeds or neglect by ministers or their departments are made public.

**Clerk** - This position dates back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when a Clerk's most important skills were reading and writing. In those days, few members of the Parliament possessed these skills, so the Clerk read petitions, bills, and resolutions to the Assembly. Today the Clerk advises the Speaker on procedure, calls the daily order of business, and reads petitions. The Clerk also has responsibility for the various services MLAs need to do their work, such as financial administration, library services, et cetera.

**Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees** - This officer is responsible for producing the Assembly's daily agenda (the Order Paper) and the minutes (Votes and Proceedings). The Clerk Assistant performs the same procedural functions as the Clerk when necessary.

**Parliamentary Counsel** - These legal advisers sit at the table in the Assembly to advise the Speaker 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.

**Sergeant-at-Arms** - The Sergeant-at-Arms is responsible for MLAs' security in the Chamber and the constituencies. The Sergeant-at-Arms also has custody of the mace and carries it into the Chamber each sitting day.

**Pages** - Pages help members during sittings of the Assembly by delivering messages and materials to MLAs in the Chamber. Usually, they are high school students.

### **The Place**

Alberta's Legislature Building was officially opened in 1912. Prior to 1912 the McKay Avenue school, now an Edmonton museum, served as home to the Assembly until the current building was completed. For information on the architecture and design of the building, see *The Citizen's Guide to the Alberta Legislature* or on our web site at <http://www.assembly.ab.ca/pub/gdbook/Part5/page16.htm> .

***Built on the site of Fort Edmonton, the Legislature Building was designed by the provincial architect, Allan Jeffers. Materials suitable for the building's grand design were shipped to Edmonton from all over the world.***

The Legislative Assembly Chamber is where the Assembly meets. In it, rows of desks face each other. The Speaker sits at the front 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.

### **3. Lawmaking in Alberta**

Laws in Alberta are passed by the MLAs. When a law is first proposed, it is called a bill and is introduced into the Legislature for debate. Several steps are involved between the introduction, or first reading, of the bill and the final stage of royal assent. Once a bill has been approved, the resulting act becomes law.

***If a government bill is defeated, a "motion of nonconfidence" would soon follow. If the government lost that vote, the Legislature would be dissolved and an election called.***

Before a government bill is introduced, the government caucus discusses the idea, consults interested citizens and groups, and works with lawyers who draft the legal text. Once the caucus approves the bill, its members are expected to support the bill in the Legislature. When the government party has a majority of seats, this assures passage of government bills.

***At one time in the British Parliament, an oral question was considered an unwelcome intrusion. However, by 1808 they were called a "most convenient usage" and by 1832 the right of members to ask questions was firmly entrenched.***

Any member can introduce a bill, including opposition members. These are called private members' bills. In principle, members can vote independently on these bills. In recent years many free votes have resulted in private members' bills becoming law.

### **Stages of Debate**

During Introduction of Bills, the sponsoring member (usually a cabinet minister if it is a government bill) makes a motion for **first reading**, stating the bill's title and summarizing the intent of the bill. At this point the Speaker calls for a vote. Members routinely approve bills at first reading.

At **second reading** debate is limited to the principle or the intent of the bill. The sponsoring member outlines why the bill was introduced. Members of the opposition parties can speak and may suggest alternatives to the bill. The Speaker calls for a second vote. If a bill passes second reading, members of the Assembly then meet as a **Committee of the Whole** to discuss it in detail. Sometimes at this stage amendments are made to the bill. When debate is finished, the committee reports the bill to the Assembly along with any amendments. The bill is now ready for final debate at the third reading.

Usually at **third reading** the bill's sponsor sums up the bill's benefits, while the opposition states why they agree or disagree. A final vote is taken once debate is finished.

Before a bill which has passed third reading becomes law, it must receive **Royal Assent**. This is formal approval by the monarch's representative, the Lieutenant Governor. A bill does not come into effect immediately but does so at a later date upon **proclamation**.

## **The Vote**

Members vote "aye" or "no" to bills at the end of each stage. Usually a voice vote decides the outcome, but members who want their vote recorded request a recorded vote. Three members must stand after the Speaker has announced the results of the voice vote. The division bells are then rung, summoning any members who are not in the Chamber. They have eight minutes to arrive, at which time the vote is recorded member by member.

# Glossary

**Act:** a law; an Act is established when the bill introducing it has received final approval from the Legislative Assembly and Royal Assent.

**Bill:** a proposed law. A vote is taken after each of three readings in the Legislature. Between second and third reading, it is studied in detail by committee. After final passage it must receive Royal Assent.

**Cabinet (Executive Council):** the ministers responsible for government departments.

**Cabinet minister:** the head of a government department. The department is also known as a portfolio. The Premier chooses the cabinet ministers.

**Caucus:** all the elected members from one party; a private meeting of this group.

**Chamber:** the room where the Legislative Assembly meets.

**Closure:** a motion by the government to limit debate.

**Committee of the Whole:** a committee which includes all Members of the Legislative Assembly except the Speaker. It meets to discuss bills in detail.

**Constituency:** a voting district. In Alberta there are 83 constituencies. Each elects one Member of the Legislative Assembly.

**Estimates:** proposed expenditures for each government department.

**Filibuster:** a tactic used by opposition members to extend debate and delay passage of a bill when they are strongly opposed to it.

**Government:** in the parliamentary sense, the cabinet or Executive Council, headed by a Premier. To remain in office, the government must have the support of a majority of Members of the Legislative Assembly.

**House:** the Legislative Assembly. The term is also used for the Chamber.

**Leader of the Opposition:** the leader of the political party holding the second largest number of seats in the Assembly.

**Legislative Assembly:** a lawmaking body of elected representatives; sometimes called the House.

**Legislature:** The Legislative Assembly and the Lieutenant Governor acting together.

**Lieutenant Governor:** the provincial representative of the monarch and the ceremonial head of state. The Prime Minister appoints the Lieutenant Governor to a five-year term.

**Mace:** the ceremonial staff that symbolizes the authority of the Legislature to make laws on behalf of the people.

**MLA:** a member of the Assembly, elected to represent a constituency.

**Official Opposition:** the party having the second

largest number of seats in the Assembly. The official designation is "Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition."

**Opposition:** MLAs belonging to parties other than the governing party or sitting as independents. In the Chamber, opposition MLAs sit across from the cabinet. They serve as critics of government policies.

**Order Paper:** an agenda or a daily list of the Assembly's items of business.

**Page:** High school students who are hired to help during sittings of the Assembly. They deliver messages and materials to MLAs in the Chamber.

**Parliament:** a Legislature in a parliamentary system.

**Parliamentary procedure:** the written rules and unwritten traditions which say how business is to be conducted in the Assembly.

**Parliamentary system of government:** a system of government in which the cabinet is appointed from among elected members of the Assembly. The cabinet holds power, but for it to retain it, its major decisions must be supported by a majority in the Assembly.

**Political party:** a group of people holding similar political opinions who have organized to contest elections.

**Premier:** in the case of a majority government, the leader of the political party with the most elected Members of the Legislative Assembly. If no party has a majority, it is the leader of the party that can gain the support of a majority in the Assembly.

**Private member:** any MLA who is not a cabinet minister.

**Reading:** a stage of a bill that is being considered in the Legislative Assembly. The bill is introduced at first reading and debated at second and third readings.

**Royal Assent:** a ceremony in which the monarch's representative, the Lieutenant Governor, gives final approval to a bill.

**Royal proclamation:** an official notice issued by the Lieutenant Governor, i.e: the Legislature is called into session by royal proclamation.

**Sergeant-at-Arms:** Legislative Assembly officer in charge of ceremony and security for the Assembly.

**Session:** a series of meetings of the Legislative Assembly opened by royal proclamation and closed by a cabinet order. When the session is divided into spring and fall periods, these periods are called sittings, as are the daily meetings of the Assembly. Under the Constitution, the Legislature must hold at least one session per year.

**Speaker:** An MLA elected by all other MLAs to maintain order in the House in an impartial manner.

## Curriculum-Connections

Participation in the Mock Legislature will integrate the following areas of study.

### **SOCIAL STUDIES**

Social Studies develops the key values and attitudes, knowledge and understanding, and skills and processes necessary for students to become active and responsible citizens, engaged in the democratic process and aware of their capacity to effect change in the communities, society, and the world.

To help students achieve this goal, the program encourages them to participate in the democratic process as represented by the mock passage of a bill. This involvement should deepen their understanding of the roles, rights, and responsibilities of citizens in a democratic society.

### **LANGUAGE LEARNING**

Listening and speaking enable students to explore ideas and concepts as well as to understand and organize their experiences and knowledge.

The Mock Legislature will help develop the following skills:

- ability to organize and present ideas and information in order to communicate ideas effectively
- ability to think analytically to improve critical reading, listening, and writing skills.

### **FINE ARTS-DRAMA**

It can develop the whole person by giving form and meaning to experience through acting out. Students will play the parts of the persons involved in the passage of a bill. At the Legislature costumes are provided for key players, and all students will have a role. Through participating in the role play, the students will remember the process involved in passing a bill.

### **FINE ARTS-ART**

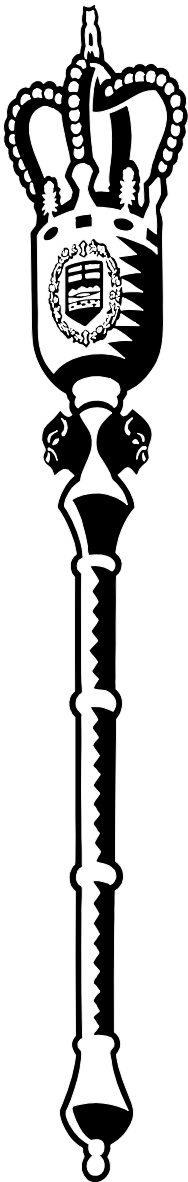
Art education is the acquisition of knowledge through the elements and principles of design from functional and fine arts concepts.

To achieve these ends, a class will be encouraged to create its own mace to be used in the Mock Legislature program.

\*Alberta Education. *Program Rational and Philosophy-2005*

## 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. It must be present in the Chamber when the Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) are in session. For more information on the history and significance of the mace, please see *The Citizen's Guide to the Alberta Legislature*.



### Materials

- cardboard cylinders (from paper towels, wax paper, et cetera) or a broom handle
- construction paper
- plastic containers (from yogurt, ice cream, et cetera)
- scissors
- glue
- coloured markers
- miscellaneous decorations

1. On the bottom of the plastic container trace the circumference of the cardboard cylinder. Cut out the circle.
2. Draw the crown of your mace on construction paper. Cut it out. The crown should be taller than the plastic container. Decorate the crown with coloured markers and decorations. Glue it to the plastic container.
3. To make the handle, use the broom handle or cylinder or tape two or three cylinders together end to end.
4. Decorate the handle. You can draw symbols of Alberta such as wild roses, mountain sheep, lodgepole pine trees, great horned owls, or bull trout. Alberta's mace also has a beaver, bison, and wheat.
5. Insert the handle into the hole of the container. You might need tape to hold it in place.
6. Use your mace as the legislative symbol during your debate.

**Printed under the authority of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta**