



LESSON PLAN

ROLES IN PARLIAMENT

Recommended for Grades 5-8
Duration: Approximately 60 minutes

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

For information on parliamentary roles, visit:

www.ola.org/en/visit-learn/about-ontarios-parliament/parliamentary-roles

LEARNING GOALS

Students will be able to identify the various partisan and non-partisan roles in Ontario's Parliament and discuss their significance. Through group discussion and presentations, students will learn about the different parliamentary roles and responsibilities and understand their function in Ontario's Parliament.

INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION

(10 minutes)

Ask students which country Canada and Ontario's parliamentary system is based on. Our system is based on the British or Westminster tradition and along with the other countries in the Commonwealth, we share a **parliamentary system**, similar parliamentary roles, and traditions.

In Ontario, our laws are debated and created by the Members of Provincial Parliament from the different political parties in the Chamber at the Legislative Assembly (also referred to the House). There are some important figures who help with this process. Some are partisan and some are non-partisan. What does it mean to be partisan or non-partisan?

A helpful analogy is to imagine the Chamber as a game of hockey, where the political parties are the teams playing and the non-partisan roles as the people who make sure the game can happen (e.g. referees, announcers, score keepers, etc.)

Ask students what are some roles that you are familiar with in parliament? If students are unable to name any roles, ask them to list titles or positions (e.g. Premier, Speaker, and Lieutenant Governor), and ask them to predict what role that position has in the parliament.

INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION CONTINUED

Highlight other, lesser known roles in the House as well such as the following:

- Pages: These Grade 7 and 8 students help deliver messages, petitions, bills, and motions so that proceedings in the Chamber run smoothly
- Hansard Reporters: in the Chamber, these reporters capture parts of the debate and the interjections to ensure there are no gaps in the final script of Hansard, including the votes, the text of petitions and ministers' written statements. Hansard is the official record of House debates.

INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY

Small Group Presentations (15-20 minutes)

- Divide the class into groups and assign each a number from 1-5
- Print off the role descriptions activity sheet below and distribute to groups
- In groups, students will read and discuss the description of the role corresponding to their given number. Students will use the sheet to prepare a brief presentation about the key details about the role and explain why they believe the role is important.

CONSOLIDATION/GROUP DISCUSSION

(5-10 minutes)

After presentations, the class can discuss the following:

- Is there a role that stood out as particularly important to the function of the House?
- What is the importance of having both partisan and non-partisan roles in the House?
- Why do you think these roles have not been drastically changed over the past centuries?
- What are the pros and cons of tradition in the context of our parliament?

If you have access to the internet or a smart board, you can take a virtual tour of the Legislative Chamber to show students the locations of the positions and to conceptualize the parliamentary process and the roles. Otherwise, students can take a virtual tour as part of a home assignment or during computer class:

www.ola.org/en/virtual-tour



ACTIVITY SHEET

ROLES IN PARLIAMENT

Speaker	The Speaker's role dates back to the 14 th century British Parliament, where they acted as the go-between the King and parliament. At this time, it was a dangerous job because if the King was unhappy with a decision made in parliament the Speaker, as the messenger, could be executed. Today, the Speaker presides over the debates in the Legislative Chamber from a throne-like chair, maintaining order and advising the Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) about the rules of the House.
Sergeant-at-Arms	The Sergeant-at-Arms is responsible for security in the House and the Legislative Precinct. They are also the guardian of the Mace, the ceremonial staff used in parliament to symbolize the authority of the Speaker in the House. The Sergeant-at-Arms also has a ceremonial role.
Clerk	The Clerk is an expert in parliamentary rules and procedures and advises the Speaker and the Members on questions of procedure and interpretation of the rules and practices of the House. They are also responsible for keeping track of the votes in the Chamber and monitoring time during debates.
The Premier	The political party with the greatest number of elected members becomes the government, and their leader becomes the Premier. The Premier is the head of the provincial government and is responsible for working with their Cabinet Ministers to develop public policy and set priorities for the government.
Leader of the Official Opposition	The party with the second-greatest number of elected members after the government becomes the Official Opposition and their leader is referred to as the Leader of the Official Opposition. Their role is to hold the government accountable. The Leader, together with their party critics, scrutinize the activities and policies of the government, providing a counter voice during the proceedings of the House.

As a group, you will be giving a brief presentation about the role you have been assigned. Together, discuss the key responsibilities of the role and why it is important in the parliamentary process. Consider what would happen if the role did not exist. How would this disrupt the parliamentary process?

Use this space to jot down your ideas:

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