

# GLOSSARY



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**Act** - A bill that has received Royal Assent and has become a law.

**Backbencher** - Any MPP who is not a Cabinet Minister, the leader of a party, a whip, or a ministry critic. See glossary entries for further information on these roles.

**Ballot** - A sheet of paper that lists the names of all candidates standing for election.

**Bicameral** - A legislature that has two law-making Houses or Chambers. For example, the Parliament of Canada in Ottawa is bicameral – it has both the House of Commons and the Senate.

**Bill** - A proposed law.

**Cabinet** - A group of MPPs that is made up of the Premier and the Cabinet Ministers. The Cabinet decides the government's priorities and policies and decides which bills will be presented to parliament. The Cabinet is sometimes referred to as the Executive Council.

**Cabinet Minister** - An MPP that serves as the head of a ministry such as the Ministry of Education or Ministry of Transportation.

**Candidate** - A person who is running in an election.

**Caucus** - All elected members from the same political party.

**Chamber** - The room in the legislative building where MPPs meet to debate and make provincial laws.

**Citizen** - A resident of a province or country who has certain freedoms, rights and responsibilities.

**Clerk** - The person who advises the Speaker and the MPPs on the rules and procedures of parliament. The Clerk also counts the votes in the Chamber, monitors time during debates, and swears in newly-elected MPPs.

**Committee** - A small group of MPPs from all political parties that meet to discuss bills. Members of the public can share their thoughts and ideas about a bill during most committee meetings.

**Constituency** - A geographic area of Ontario that is represented by an elected MPP in the Legislative Assembly. Ontario is divided into 107 constituencies, also called ridings or electoral districts. A person who lives in a constituency is called a constituent.

**Debate** - An organized discussion where participants present different opinions.

**Democracy** - A form of government where citizens elect representatives to govern and make decisions on their behalf.

**Deputy Speaker** - An MPP who fulfills the Speaker's duties when the Speaker is unavailable to preside over the debates in the Chamber.

**Election** - A process where citizens vote for a candidate to represent their constituency in the parliament. In Ontario, an election is usually held every four years.

**Federal government** - The level of government that is responsible for issues that affect Canada as a whole country. Our federal government is located in Ottawa, Canada's capital.

**Government** - The political party with the greatest number of elected members.

**Hansard** - The word-for-word printed record of the daily proceedings in the Chamber and committees. Hansard is named after the family that began the tradition of recording the proceedings in the British House of Commons. It has been the official transcript of

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Ontario's parliamentary proceedings since 1944.

**Hansard reporters** - Hansard Reporters use a computer to record the first few words that a recognized MPP says, and all interjections said during meetings of parliament and committees.

**House** - Another term for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It can also refer to the Chamber, where the Legislative Assembly meets.

**House Leader** - One member from each political party who is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the party in the Legislature. The House Leader for the governing party is always a member of Cabinet and is responsible for announcing the daily order of House business. The House Leaders from each party meet weekly to plan the business of the Legislature.

**Legislative Pages** - Students in grades 7 and 8 from all over Ontario who act as messengers in the Chamber. Pages usually serve a term that lasts between two and four weeks and are granted a leave of absence from school to work at the Legislature.

**Legislative process** - The process by which bills are approved by parliament and become laws.

**Lieutenant Governor** - The person who represents The Queen in Ontario. He or she is appointed by the Governor General of Canada on the advice of the Prime Minister for a five-year term.

**Mace** - A ceremonial staff that is a symbol of the Speaker's authority to oversee the Legislature. The Mace is carried into the Chamber by the Sergeant-at-Arms, and must be present during all legislative meetings.

**Majority government** - When the governing party holds more than half of the seats in the House, it is called a majority government.

**Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP)** - A person who is elected to represent the concerns of their constituents in Ontario's provincial parliament and at home in their constituency. To be eligible to run as an MPP, a candidate must be 18 years of age or older, a Canadian citizen, and a resident of the province. Ontario is the only province to use the term MPP as the title of its elected provincial representatives.

**Ministry** - A government department that is in charge of one or several of the provincial government's responsibilities. For example, the Ministry of Education.

**Ministry critic** - Members from the opposition who are appointed to scrutinize the activities and policies of the ministries. They may question Cabinet Ministers during the daily question period in the House.

**Minority government** - If the government party holds less than half of the seats in the House, it is called a minority government.

**Municipal government** - The level of government that is responsible for issues that affect a city, town, village, or township. The municipal government receives its power from the provincial government.

**Non-partisan** - A person that is not affiliated with a political party.

**Official Opposition** - The political party with the second-highest number of elected members after the government party.

**Opposition** - All political parties and independent MPPs who do not belong to the governing party.

**Partisan** - A person who is affiliated with a political party and supports that party's policies.

**Political party** - A group of people who share the same political beliefs. They join together in organizations and nominate candidates to run in elections.

**Premier** - The leader of the political party with the highest number of elected MPPs. The Premier is the head of the provincial government, and is responsible for working with the Cabinet Ministers to develop policies and set priorities for the government.

**Prime Minister** - The leader of the political party with the highest number of elected Members of Parliament (MPs) in Canada. The Prime Minister is the head of the federal government.

**Procession** - Every day that the Legislative Assembly meets, the Sergeant-at-Arms carries the Mace and leads a procession through the

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hallways of the Legislative Building to the Chamber. The Speaker, Clerk, Table Clerks and two Legislative Pages follow the Sergeant-at-Arms. Once in the Chamber, the Mace is placed on the Clerk's table with the crown pointing towards the government party.

**Provincial government** - The level of government that is responsible for issues that affect the whole province. Our provincial government is located in Toronto, Ontario's capital.

**Question Period** - The daily period when members of the opposition and government backbenchers have the opportunity to ask the Cabinet Ministers about the activities and policies of their ministries.

**Readings** - Steps a bill must pass through in order to become a law. Readings give MPPs the opportunity to study a bill and suggest how to improve it before it becomes a law. In Ontario, a bill goes through three readings.

**Ridings** - A geographic area of Ontario that is represented by an MPP in the Legislative Assembly. Ontario is divided into 107 ridings, also called constituencies or electoral districts.

**Royal Assent** - If the majority of MPPs vote to make a bill a law, it is presented to the Lieutenant Governor for Royal Assent, named so because the Lieutenant Governor is agreeing to the bill on behalf of The Queen. This last step of the legislative process makes the bill a law.

**Senate** - One of the two law-making Houses of Canada's federal parliament in Ottawa. It can also refer to the room where the Senators meet.

**Sergeant-at-Arms** - The person who is responsible for maintaining law and order in the House on behalf of the Speaker, and oversees security services and property management at the Legislative Building. He or she is also the guardian of the Mace.

**Speaker** - The MPP who presides over the debates in the Chamber. The Speaker's job is to uphold the rules of parliament and ensure that all business of the Chamber is carried out in an orderly manner. The Speaker is elected from among the MPPs, but does not participate in debates and only votes in the event of a tie.

**Speech from the Throne** - A speech delivered by the Lieutenant Governor at the beginning of each new session of parliament. This speech outlines the government's initiatives and plans for the new session of parliament.

**Standing Orders** - The rules and procedures for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. The Clerk advises the Speaker and MPPs on these rules so that order is maintained in the Chamber.

**Third Party** - The political party with the third-highest number of elected members after the government party and the official opposition.

**Unicameral** - A legislature that only has one law-making House or Chamber. For example, Ontario's provincial parliament is unicameral – it has only the Legislative Chamber.

**Vote** - A way for a person or group of people to make a decision. For example, a vote is a way for citizens to choose who represents them in parliament. It is also a way for MPPs to decide whether a bill should become a law.

**Whip** - One Member from each political party who is chosen to keep the other Members of their political party informed about House business. The Whip also ensures that Members are present in the Chamber, especially when a vote is being held. Legislative Chamber, Legislative Assembly of Ontario

