



Election-Related Terminology

*Provided by Lucas Malinowski and Mike Donison
to complement the panel discussion*

[What's Next in the Canadian Political Landscape?](#)

Dissolution of Parliament

The Governor-General, on the advice of the Prime Minister, ends the current Parliament which triggers a general election for a new House of Commons, resulting in a new Parliament. All MP's no longer hold office, although they remain on full pay and allowance to and including Election Day. The Senate is also discharged, although Senators continue to hold their offices and remain on full pay and allowance.

Prorogation of Parliament

The Governor-General, on the advice of the Prime Minister, in effect suspends both the Senate and the House of Commons in a current Parliament from sitting until a set date. It has the effect of ending the current Session of Parliament and all measures currently before Parliament including all government bills at any stage are effectively cancelled. There is an exception for Private Members' Bills, which are automatically reinstated in the new Session which commences at the end of the prorogation period.

Summoning of Parliament

The Governor-General, acting on the advice of the Prime Minister, at the same time as granting either a Dissolution or a Prorogation, orders all the Senators and either existing MP's (in the case of a Prorogation), or the newly elected MP's (in the case of a Dissolution), to meet and commence the business of the new Parliament (in the case of Dissolution), or a new Session of the current Parliament (in the case of Prorogation), on a set date.

Adjournment of either House of Parliament

Either House, as determined through its Speaker, simply ends daily sittings of that House to a set date. Both Houses remain in Session as such. It is possible for just one House to be not sitting, while the other continues to have daily sittings.

Prerogative Powers

These are the residue of legal powers remaining with the Crown, going back to the earliest of

English monarchs that Parliament has chosen not to legally remove from the Crown. They include such important powers as the prorogation and dissolution of Parliament, the entering into treaties and war, the appointment and dismissal (if necessary) of all Ministers of the Crown—including the Prime Minister, as well as all superior court justices in the provinces. It also includes the pardoning power. As a result of binding (politically, but not legally) constitutional conventions, the Crown almost never exercises any of these powers, except on the advice of the current Prime Minister. There have and can be exceptions in some rare cases involving dissolution, or prorogation, or any attempt by a Prime Minister after his party has been clearly defeated in a general election, to advise on the use by the Governor-General of any of these powers. However, the powers of appointment or dismissal of a Prime Minister would not be on advice from the current Prime Minister, but solely on the judgement of the Governor-General, but which is in most cases clear and obvious and pre-determined by the political process either in the House of Commons or by the voters in a general election.

Instrument of Advice

The required letter issued on the letterhead of the Office of the Prime Minister, personally addressed to the Governor-General, and personally signed by the current Prime Minister, in order to advise her to exercise any of her prerogative powers, including in particular, the dissolution, prorogation, or summoning of Parliament.

Statutory Powers of the Governor-General or the Governor-General in Council

These are any legal powers that are created and granted or delegated by Parliament directly by statute to either the Governor General alone, or the Governor-General in Council (in essence the Governor-General acting on the advice of the cabinet). The former would include such powers as the appointment of all Senators. The latter such things as the required order at the time of the dissolution of Parliament directing the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada to issue the necessary writs of election for each seat representing a constituency in the House of Commons.

Proclamation

The necessary document required to be issued and signed by the Governor-General in the exercise of any prerogative power and some statutory powers. These are only so issued by the Governor-General upon the advice of the Prime Minister, and/or cabinet as the case may be.

Money Bill

Any proposed legislation before Parliament, certified by the Speaker of the House of Commons, to directly involve the expenditure, and/ or the appropriation of public monies (supply), or for the direct raising of revenue by taxation. Such bills, by law, can only be introduced into Parliament in the House of Commons and not in the Senate. If the necessary

supply has not been voted by Parliament in advance for all, or part of the next fiscal year (commencing April 1 of each year), then the government commencing that April 1 is not allowed to spend any money for the governance of the country at all. The only exception is if Parliament has been dissolved before that April 1 date.

Governor-General's Warrants or Special Warrants

These can be issued by the Governor-General, acting on the advice in effect of the Prime Minister and/or the cabinet, allowing the government to spend public monies that have not yet been appropriated by Parliament (supply), as long as Parliament is not prorogued—thus in a current session of Parliament, or after Parliament has been dissolved.

Standing Orders of the House of Commons

These are the binding rules of procedure of the House. They are applied and interpreted by the Speaker when necessary and can be amended, or suspended by an ordinary majority vote of those MP's present and voting on the floor of the House of Commons at the time.

The Confidence Convention

This is a politically binding rule, that if there is a recorded vote in the House of Commons that either expressly says the House no longer has confidence in and thus supports the government of the day, or the government determines that it involves such an issue of confidence then the current Prime Minister is required to attend upon the Governor-General and either resign as Prime Minister (which involves the automatic resignation of the cabinet), or advise her that Parliament should be dissolved, resulting in a general election for a new House of Commons during which time he and his cabinet remain in office.