



# CHAMBER DOCUMENTS

## DEFINITION AND PURPOSE

For each sitting of the Senate, three documents are published in both official languages: the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* (the Senate's official agenda), the *Journals of the Senate* (the Senate's official record), and the *Debates of the Senate* (the edited transcript of proceedings). With the exception of the *Order Paper and Notice Paper*, these documents are no longer printed in paper form, but are available electronically on the Internet (at [sencanada.ca](http://sencanada.ca)). This note explains what information each of these documents contains and how they interact with one another.

## ***ORDER PAPER AND NOTICE PAPER***

The *Order Paper and Notice Paper* is the official agenda of the Senate. It sets out all items of business before the Senate, including items for future sittings. It is prepared in advance of each sitting based on decisions taken at the previous sitting and notices given by senators.<sup>1</sup> The document outlines the Order of Business – the structure of a typical sitting day – and identifies specific items – bills, reports, motions or inquiries – that may be debated during the sitting.

### ***BEFORE THE ORDERS OF THE DAY***

Each sitting is divided into two parts. The first one includes Senators' Statements, Routine Proceedings, Question Period and Delayed Answers. The Senate does not deal with the items listed on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* until it has completed the first part of the sitting. Routine Proceedings is particularly important for setting the Senate's agenda. It is a period during which senators can give notice of motions or inquiries for future sittings, provide reports or other documents for the Senate's information or for future consideration, and introduce bills. Government notices of motions and notices of inquiries are automatically included in the Orders of the Day,<sup>2</sup> while notices for non-government motions and inquiries are included on the Notice Paper. With certain exceptions, such as an amendment, a question of privilege or an emergency debate, the Senate cannot consider an item that does not appear on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* unless leave is granted.<sup>3</sup> Leave is a request to vary from the provisions of the *Rules of the Senate* and usual practice, and must be agreed to by all senators present without objection.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY AND NOTICE PAPER**

Once the Senate has concluded Question Period and received any delayed answers to oral questions or answers to written questions, it moves to the second main part of the sitting: the items listed on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper*. Government Business – including items on notice – is called before Other Business (non-government items). Within each of these large groupings, the more advanced stages of the legislative process (such as third reading) are called before the earlier stages of the process (committee reports on bills or second reading).

Bills appear on the Order Paper in ascending numerical order within each category, with Senate government bills preceding Commons government bills in the relevant categories. Committee reports on bills are listed according to bill number while committee reports on matters not related to bills are assigned a chronological number according to the order in which they were put on the Orders of the Day. Separate numerical lists are kept for Government Business and for Other Business.

Motions and inquiries are also assigned a chronological number based on the order in which notice was given, with separate sequences of numbers for Government Business and Other Business. To facilitate tracking, they retain this number for the rest of the session. In most cases, the assigned number appears on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* and determines the order in which these items are listed and called.<sup>4</sup>

A notice for a non-government motion or inquiry remains on the Notice Paper, which is found after the Orders of the Day, until the sponsor moves the adoption of the motion or launches the inquiry. If the debate on the motion or inquiry is adjourned, the item is moved to the Orders of the Day for the next sitting of the Senate, appearing under the appropriate category and in ascending numerical order. Once the Senate has dealt with a motion or concludes debate on an inquiry, the item is removed from the *Order Paper and Notice Paper*.

Every sitting day, each item on the *Order Paper and the Notice Paper* of that day is called and is eligible for debate, unless the sitting ends before the item is reached. There is therefore generally an opportunity to debate each item at each sitting. Government Business stays on the Order Paper until it has been disposed of. However, when it comes to items of non-government business, a counter shows the number of sittings during which they have been called and stood (i.e. neither debated nor adjourned by motion). If an item is called for 15 sittings and stood each time, it is dropped from the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* if no other action is taken. However, if the item is debated or adjourned by motion at any time, the counter drops back to zero and the count begins again.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the name of the senator who moved the adjournment or in whose name the debate was adjourned is usually indicated in the case of items of non-government business.<sup>6</sup> This indication does not, however, prevent other senators from speaking on the items or prevent the Senate from deciding on them.<sup>7</sup>

### **WRITTEN QUESTIONS**

Questions from senators seeking statistical data or other information not readily available, or questions to which a written response is requested, may be submitted to the Clerk of the Senate in writing for inclusion in the *Order Paper and Notice Paper*.<sup>8</sup> Appendix A of this document contains a sample letter to the Clerk of the Senate to submit a written question.

Unanswered written questions appear at the end of the document and are published in the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* of the sitting day that follows their receipt, as well as at the start of each subsequent sitting week until the earlier of the following: an answer is tabled; a written explanation why an answer has not been provided is tabled; the question is withdrawn; or the expiration of the 60-day period to submit an answer or explanation.<sup>9</sup> A senator may not have more than four written questions on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* at a time.<sup>10</sup>

The Leader or Representative of the Government, or the Deputy Leader or Legislative Deputy of the Government, must table either the government's answer to the question or a written explanation why an answer has not been provided within 60 calendar days of a written question first appearing on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper*.<sup>11</sup> If neither of these items has been tabled within the 60-day period, the absence of an answer is deemed referred to the Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament for consideration and report. The referral is also recorded in the *Journals of the Senate* at the first opportunity.<sup>12</sup> Periods during which the Senate does not sit count towards the 60 days if Parliament has not been prorogued or dissolved. Questions are not automatically renewed in a new session or Parliament; they must be resubmitted, and would count towards the limit of four written questions.

A senator may request that their written question be withdrawn by writing to the Clerk of the Senate. In that case, a note to that effect is included in the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* the next time the question would have been published there.<sup>13</sup>

### **THE SCROLL – AN ADMINISTRATIVE VERSION OF THE ORDER PAPER AND NOTICE PAPER**

The Scroll is an administrative document based on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper*. It is printed on large-format paper, with space for notes and abbreviated text for long items of business. An annotated version of the Scroll is also prepared for the Speaker's use during the sitting.

In addition, a summarized version of anticipated business, known as the Scroll Notes, is circulated by email to all senators prior to each sitting. These notes are not authoritative and are subject to change at any time.

### **JOURNALS OF THE SENATE**

The *Journals of the Senate* are the official record of Senate proceedings. The Journals note all proceedings, decisions and votes taken in the Senate in the course of a sitting. Presented reports<sup>14</sup> appear in their entirety in the Journals, as do the lists of

senators who were present in the chamber and who were in attendance to business pursuant to the Senators Attendance Policy.<sup>15</sup> Rulings and statements by the Speaker are also included.

The unrevised Journals are prepared based on the Clerk's scroll<sup>16</sup> and published after each sitting in both languages. Any error or omission related to the attendance of senators is noted in a corrigendum included in a subsequent issue of the unrevised Journals at the earliest opportunity. The unrevised Journals are generally posted on the Internet (at [www.sencanada.ca](http://www.sencanada.ca)) in the hours following the adjournment of each sitting.

The Progress of Legislation, a document showing the status of bills and the date each stage was completed in the Senate, is also updated in electronic format after each sitting. It is published in the Journals and the Debates of the last sitting day of each week.

At the end of each session, the Journals are revised, edited and published in bound volumes.<sup>17</sup> Proclamations relating to the appointment of a Governor General and to the opening, prorogation and dissolution of Parliament, as well as full indices and various lists of senators, committees and officers of the Senate are included in the bound volumes.

### ***DEBATES OF THE SENATE***

The *Debates of the Senate* are substantially a verbatim transcript of the proceedings of the Senate published after each sitting. They are prepared from the edited text of the transcripts of proceedings, often called the "blues." The transcripts may be edited to reduce repetition or to increase clarity.<sup>18</sup> Senators may correct errors or make minor alterations to the blues before these are published as the Debates, but they must obtain the agreement of the Senate to make substantial corrections to the Debates. If this permission is given, the correction is published in a subsequent issue of the unrevised Debates. The Debates are published in separate English and French documents that are available on the parliamentary website the morning after a sitting.

The first issue of the Debates every month includes an appendix listing the current officers of the Senate, members of the cabinet and various lists of senators.<sup>19</sup>

At the end of each parliamentary session, the Debates are further revised and full indices are added to produce the bound volumes of the Debates.

**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THE CHAMBER DOCUMENTS**

[Senate Procedure in Practice](#) (Chapter 4)

**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON OTHER POINTS COVERED IN THIS NOTE**

[Senate Procedural Note No. 2, Order of Business of Sittings](#)

[Senate Procedural Note No. 3, Debate](#)

[Senate Procedural Note No. 4, Voting](#)

[Senate Procedural Note No. 5, Legislative Process](#)

[Senate Procedural Note No. 9, The Speaker of the Senate](#)

[Senate Procedural Note No. 12, Parliamentary Privilege](#)

[Senate Procedural Note No. 14, Leave of the Senate](#)

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**References**

- <sup>1</sup> No *Order Paper and Notice Paper* is prepared for the first two sittings of a new Parliament, nor for the first sitting of a subsequent session of Parliament.
- <sup>2</sup> Rule 4-13(2). Items of Government Business never appear on the Notice Paper.
- <sup>3</sup> For a list of motions that can be moved without notice, see rule 5-7.
- <sup>4</sup> Exceptions include a motion moved with leave and decided the same day, and an inquiry debated with leave and concluded on the same day. Although these motions and inquiries receive a number as well, they do not appear on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* since they are disposed of on the same day.
- <sup>5</sup> Rule 4-14(2).
- <sup>6</sup> Examples of when this name would not be indicated include when a Speaker's ruling is pending on the item or when the Senate adjourns by order or decision before debate on the item is adjourned.
- <sup>7</sup> Rule 6-10(2) and *Senate Procedure in Practice*, June 2015, pp. 73-74. On the fact that debate can continue even if the senator in whose name an item was adjourned has not spoken, and without that senator's agreement, see Speakers' rulings of February 7, 2007, and December 10, 1996.
- <sup>8</sup> Rule 4-9(2). See Appendix A for a sample letter to the Clerk of the Senate.
- <sup>9</sup> Rule 4-9(3).
- <sup>10</sup> Rule 4-9(5). Note: Pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on May 8, 2024, rule 4-9(5) does not apply to questions published prior to May 8, 2024.
- <sup>11</sup> Rule 4-9(6). Note: Pursuant to the order adopted by the Senate on May 8, 2024, the application of rule 4-9(6) to questions published prior to May 8, 2024, comes into effect on November 8, 2024.
- <sup>12</sup> Rule 4-9(8).
- <sup>13</sup> Rule 4-9(4).
- <sup>14</sup> Presented reports require a decision of the Senate. Reports that are for information purposes only are tabled. Tabled reports are given a sessional paper number and are not printed in the Journals. Both types of reports can be put on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* for consideration at a future sitting. Copies of all reports can be obtained by going to the relevant committee's web page or by contacting the Senate's Chamber Operations and Procedure Office.

- <sup>15</sup> For additional information on the Senators Attendance Policy, see Chapter 2 of *Senate Procedure in Practice*, June 2015.
- <sup>16</sup> A handwritten record of proceedings kept by the Clerk of the Senate for each sitting.
- <sup>17</sup> Rule 14-6.
- <sup>18</sup> *Senate Procedure in Practice*, June 2015, pp. 78-79.
- <sup>19</sup> The lists of officers of the Senate and the ministry only appear in the PDF version of the Debates. The HTML version includes a link to the list of senators that is found on the parliamentary website.

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Appendix A – Sample letter to the Clerk of the Senate

Submission of a Written Question

Date

(NAME)  
Clerk of the Senate  
Room A-408, Senate of Canada Building  
Ottawa ON K1A 0A4

Dear (NAME):

Pursuant to rule 4-9(2) of the *Rules of the Senate of Canada*, I am submitting the enclosed Written Question to be placed on the *Order Paper and Notice Paper*.

Sincerely,

Senator's Name

Senator

Encl.