

parliament cheat sheet

writ	The document which states that an election (or referendum) will be conducted on a specific date. After the election, the name of the winning candidate is written on the writ, signed by the returning officer, and returned to the Chief Electoral Officer.
house adjourns	The end of a sitting (either by motion or pursuant to a Standing Order or special order) within a session. An adjournment covers the period between the end of one sitting and the beginning of the next. The House may adjourn for a few minutes or for several months (e.g. the Houses adjourns over the summer months).
fiscal year	The 12-month period, from April 1 to March 31, used by the government for budgetary and accounting purposes.
Member of Parliament (MP)	A person elected to the House of Commons. There are 338 Members of Parliament representing all of the areas of Canada in the House of Commons.
constituent	A person living in an area represented by a Member of Parliament in the House of Commons.
riding	Also known as constituency or electoral district. A geographical area represented by a member of the House of Commons. When you vote, you are voting for the candidates within your particular riding.
Question Period (QP)	A time set aside every day in the House of Commons when Members of Parliament can ask Cabinet Ministers questions about their projects.

Standing Order 31 (SO31) – also referred to as a Member’s statement	A daily 15-minute period preceding Question Period, when Members, who are not Cabinet Ministers, may make statements on matters of national, regional or local importance. Statements are limited in length to one minute and opportunity to speak is given equally to all private Members.
Private Member’s Bill (PMB)	A bill sponsored by a Member who is not part of the Cabinet. It usually refers to public bills.
on the hill / the hill	Refers to Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Ontario. The site of Parliament Buildings, including where the House of Commons and the Senate meets, as well as where the offices of MPs are located.
canvassing	The activity of initiating conversations with individuals in a particular area, often used during political campaigns to get voter support/opinions on political issues (e.g. going door-to-door).
non-partisan	Someone or something that has no allegiance to any political party.
speech from throne	A speech delivered by the Governor General at the opening of a session of Parliament, which outlines the government’s plans for the session. The speech is delivered in the Senate chamber in the presence of the members of both Houses.
vote of confidence	A vote to determine whether the elected parliament still has confidence in the appointed government to implement its policies, enact legislation or authorize expenditures. A minority government must maintain the confidence of the House to continue in power.
prorogation	The ending of a session of Parliament. Prorogation brings all proceedings to an end before Parliament. During a prorogation, Members are released from their parliamentary duties until the House and its committees resume activities in the new session.

	Prorogation also refers to the period of time a Parliament stands prorogued.
Shadow Cabinet	The group of members in each opposition party, especially the official opposition, chosen to act as party critics for each of the ministerial portfolios.
Shadow Minister	A member of the Shadow Cabinet. They are a member of an opposition party who is chosen to act as a critic for an individual ministerial portfolio.
Critic	A member of an opposition party who provides critique on policy matters to the government's position. Each opposition party has a critic (and sometimes a deputy critic) for each of the ministerial portfolios.
House leader	The member of a party responsible for its management in the House. The Government House Leader works on the government's behalf to determine a schedule of House business through consultation with the house leaders of the opposition parties.
Whip	A member charged with keeping other members of the same party informed regarding House business and ensuring their attendance in the House or in committee, especially when a vote is anticipated. Each party normally has a chief whip and one or more deputy whips.

Updated: July 2021