THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES
OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF QUÉBEC

December 2018
THE SOVEREIGN COUNCIL
(Oil on canvas mounted on the wall)

This painting was begun in 1926 by Charles Huot and completed in 1930 by Paul Bédard and Henri Bélisle, students at the École des beaux-arts, under the direction of Charles Maillard and Ivan Neilson. It hangs above the Speaker’s Throne in the former Legislative Council Chamber, now primarily used as a committee room.
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MESSAGE FROM
THE SECRETARY GENERAL

I am very pleased to introduce this brochure, which offers a window into the workings of the parliamentary committees at the National Assembly of Québec.

Over the years, and especially since the current Standing Orders came into force in 1984, the parliamentary committees have become an essential forum where Members of the National Assembly give clause-by-clause consideration to proposed legislation and oversee the spending and performance of government departments and bodies. The many public consultations held by the committees allow Members to learn about the views of individuals and organizations on a wide range of issues.

This brochure provides a brief history of Québec’s parliamentary committees, explains how they are set up and how they work, and describes what they do in the course of a legislature.

I hope you find it both enjoyable and instructive.

Secretary General
A BRIEF HISTORY

Parliamentary procedure as practised in Québec’s National Assembly descends directly from the rules and conventions of the British Parliament, whose origins date back to the 13th century.

Our legislative assembly was created in 1792. The first Standing Orders came the following year, along with special committees initially struck to look after internal affairs. Permanent or “standing” committees, as they became known in the 1970s, emerged in their wake, taking on a portion of the legislative workload. Over the years, it became clear to parliamentarians that the committees provided vital assistance to them in their many and wide-ranging duties and responsibilities.

The importance of committee work continued to grow throughout the 1960s and 1970s, as reflected by changes in the rules and procedures set out in the Standing Orders. During this period, the number of government departments and public bodies rose dramatically, as did the number of bills to be dealt with. Political life was becoming increasingly complex, and the committees’ duties and structure had to be adapted in light of these new realities. In addition, the Members of the National Assembly (MNAs) were demanding greater recognition for their work and greater autonomy for the committees they served on.

All of this led to the adoption of a new set of Standing Orders in 1984. Considered a major piece of parliamentary reform, the new Standing Orders made sweeping changes in the structure, membership, organization, duties and powers of committees.

Born out of this reform, today’s standing committees may be broadly described as follows:

- nine of the committees are sectorial committees, each of which specializes in a field of activity defined in the Standing Orders;
• the committees are also multi-purpose committees, since they may each, within their area of competence, take on the whole range of parliamentary mandates, that is, they may study proposed legislation (bills), examine budget estimates, and oversee the public administration;

• the committees are constituted as standing (i.e. permanent) committees under the Standing Orders, and their chairs and vice-chairs are elected by the committee members;

• the committees have a power of initiative to hold consultations and carry out studies or research on any question within their area of competence;

• the committees’ role as overseers of the public administration has been stepped up to include an obligation to hear, each year, at least one public body whose activities fall within their area of competence.

A committee in Québec’s parliamentary system may therefore be defined as a group composed of a limited number of MNAs who are responsible for examining any question within the jurisdiction assigned to them by the Assembly and for carrying out any mandate given to them by the Assembly. As a privileged venue for parliamentary work, committees enable MNAs to fully exercise their role as legislators by examining proposed legislation in detail. Committees also play an important role in the oversight of the public administration and provide a forum for public consultation on the important societal issues of the day.

Adjusting the Standing Orders to new parliamentary realities is an ongoing process. In its June 2000 report, entitled De la nécessité du contrôle parlementaire (The necessity of parliamentary scrutiny), a task force set up to study the committee system made a number of recommendations aimed at improving committee practices and performance. One of the report’s conclusions was that more had to be done to revitalize the spirit of the 1984 reform.

In 2004 and 2007, on the initiative of the President of the National Assembly and the House leaders, various proposals were made for parliamentary reform. These would ultimately result in the 2009 reform, which was at the heart of important changes in the names of the nine sectorial committees and their areas of competence. New rules were established for the submission and handling of petitions, and amendments to the Standing Orders encouraged and facilitated citizen participation in general consultations. These changes were to give MNAs more autonomy and more room to exercise initiative, help them carry out their work more efficiently, make parliamentary deliberations more democratic and create closer ties between the Assembly and the public.
The Public Administration Act, passed in May 2000, has also had an impact on the committee system. The Act laid out a new results-based management framework for the Administration centred on transparency and on increased accountability both to the Assembly and to its parliamentary committees.

Accordingly, all government departments and bodies are required to prepare the following documents, which are generally tabled in the Assembly: a service statement, a multi-year strategic plan, an annual expenditure management plan and an annual management report. Their most senior officials are then heard by the competent parliamentary committee.
HOW COMMITTEES ARE SET UP

AREAS OF COMPETENCE

The Standing Orders divide government activity into nine sectors and assign a sectorial committee to each sector.

**Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries, Energy and Natural Resources:** agriculture, fisheries, food, energy and natural resources.

**Committee on Citizen Relations:** citizen relations, cultural communities, immigration, status of women, families, seniors, youth and consumer protection.

**Committee on Culture and Education:** culture, education, vocational training, higher education and communications.

**Committee on Health and Social Services:** health, social and community services.

**Committee on Institutions:** chairship of the Conseil exécutif, justice, public security, the Constitution, indigenous affairs, international and intergovernmental relations.

**Committee on Labour and the Economy:** industry, trade, tourism, labour, income security, science, technology and the labour force.

**Committee on Planning and the Public Domain:** local and regional community development, land use planning and development, municipal affairs, sport and recreation, and housing.

**Committee on Public Finance:** finance, the budget, government administration, the public service, revenue, pension plans, procurement and services.

**Committee on Transportation and the Environment:** transportation, the environment, wildlife and parks.

Two other standing committees have more specific mandates relating, in one case, to government oversight and, in the other, to the Assembly’s internal affairs.
The Parliamentary Committees of the National Assembly of Québec

The Committee on Public Administration, created in April 1997, devotes itself to overseeing the public administration and examining the financial commitments of government departments and bodies.

Lastly, the Committee on the National Assembly drafts the procedural rules and Standing Orders that govern the Assembly, coordinates the work of the other committees and authorizes committees to meet outside the precincts of the National Assembly.

MEMBERSHIP

The membership of each of the nine sectorial committees and of the Committee on Public Administration is set at 10 MNAs—six from the parliamentary group forming the Government and four from the Official Opposition. If an independent MNA or an MNA from another parliamentary group is appointed, the committee’s membership increases to 12—seven MNAs from the group forming the Government, four from the Official Opposition and one independent MNA or one MNA from an opposition group other than the Official Opposition. Committee members are appointed by the Committee on the National Assembly, for a two-year term, from among the MNAs proposed by the whips of their respective parliamentary groups.

For the 42nd Legislature, committee membership has been set at 13 MNAs—seven from the parliamentary group forming the Government, four from the Official Opposition, one from the Second Opposition Group and one from the Third Opposition Group. If an independent MNA is appointed, the committee’s membership increases to 15—eight from the parliamentary group forming the Government, four from the Official Opposition, one from the Second Opposition Group, one from the Third Opposition Group and one independent MNA.

The Committee on Public Administration normally has 10 permanent members; however, for the 42nd Legislature, this number has been raised to 13. The Committee on Public Administration includes eight temporary members in addition to its permanent members. Of these eight, five are from the parliamentary group forming the Government and three are from the Official Opposition. Temporary members are appointed by the whips of their respective parliamentary groups for a single meeting or for the duration of proceedings on a particular matter.

The members of the Committee on the National Assembly are appointed according to the parliamentary office they hold in the National Assembly. The Committee thus consists of the President and Vice-Presidents of the National Assembly, the House leaders, the whips of the parliamentary groups and, once elected, the chairs of the other 10 parliamentary committees.
JOINT COMMITTEES, SELECT COMMITTEES AND SUBCOMMITTEES

Other committees may be struck for a particular purpose as the need arises. With the authorization of the Committee on the National Assembly, two or more committees may form a joint committee to examine together a matter that bears on each committee’s area of competence.

If the Assembly wishes to have certain MNAs examine a specific matter that does not fully correspond to the type of mandate normally given to the standing committees, it may establish a select committee. A select committee’s terms of reference are defined, and its members appointed, by a motion of the Assembly. The Assembly may also appoint a chair and vice-chair to the committee and order it to report by a certain date.

A subcommittee may be struck by any standing or temporary committee in the course of any mandate, whether assigned by the Assembly or self-initiated. Subcommittees are composed of members of their parent committees. A motion to set up a subcommittee must be supported by the majority of each parliamentary group represented on the parent committee.

Joint committees and select committees cease to exist when their reports are tabled in the Assembly and subcommittees, when their reports are tabled with their parent committee.

CHAIRSHIPS

The chair and vice-chair of a committee are elected for a two-year term by the committee members at the committee’s first meeting. A committee’s choice of chair and vice-chair must be supported by a majority of the committee members from each parliamentary group represented on the committee. This lends the necessary legitimacy to these offices and invests the incumbents with the authority they need to run committee meetings smoothly and efficiently. Of the nine sectorial committees, six are chaired by MNAs from the parliamentary group forming the Government and three, by MNAs from the Official Opposition.

In the case of the Committee on Public Administration, the chair is always from the parliamentary group forming the Official Opposition and the vice-chair, from the governing party.

The Committee on the National Assembly is chaired ex officio by the President of the National Assembly.
ROLE OF THE CHAIR

Following the provisions of the Standing Orders, the chair presides at meetings and organizes the committee’s work. The chair is free to participate in debates, introduce motions and vote; however, in light of the unique role they play in the conduct of proceedings, committee chairs have traditionally chosen to limit their participation in debates, especially in the case of mandates issuing from the Assembly.

The chair convenes the committee on his or her own initiative or at the request of the Assembly. During meetings, the chair ensures that the procedural rules are followed, and thus that members’ rights are respected and order and decorum maintained. The chair has the exclusive power to suspend a sitting at any time and to call to order an MNA or any other person who is disrupting proceedings. Rulings of the chair are final, without appeal, and not subject to debate. The chair’s signature is required to authenticate certain committee documents—the minutes taken by the committee clerk, for instance, as well as the copy of any bill given consideration by the committee (this remains the official copy until the bill receives final assent).

ROLE OF THE VICE-CHAIR

The vice-chair assumes the duties of the chair if the latter so requests or is absent or unable to act. In the spirit of the Standing Orders, the chair and vice-chair have complementary roles. The vice-chair does not belong to the same parliamentary group as the chair. For the 42nd Legislature, the Committee on Labour and the Economy and the Committee on Public Administration each have two vice-chairs.

ROLE OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE

The chair, the vice-chair and the clerk form the committee’s steering committee. The steering committee plans committee meetings and is responsible for committee administration. The chair and vice-chair work together to help the committee members reconcile their expectations and opinions in order to reach a consensus. This aspect of their role can be a decisive factor in the committee’s success, particularly where self-initiated or oversight mandates are concerned.
ROLE OF THE TEMPORARY CHAIR

If both a committee’s chair and vice-chair are unavailable to preside at a meeting, a temporary chair may step in. Temporary chairs are appointed by the President of the National Assembly from a list approved by the Committee on the National Assembly. The temporary chair does not take part in committee deliberations and is not entitled to vote, unless he or she is a member of the committee.

ROLE OF THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

MNAs usually become members of a particular committee out of some personal interest in its area of competence. Their appointment as committee members gives them a special status and influence distinct from that of non-members and temporary members. They quickly become knowledgeable in their committee’s sector, a fact which necessarily makes for more insightful consideration of legislation and more efficient scrutiny of the Government’s actions.

Committee members participate actively in the work of their committee. They have the right to speak, propose motions and vote. Under the Standing Orders, a member may be temporarily replaced, but the committee must be informed of the fact at the outset of proceedings. The importance of the permanent members is reflected in the fact that their replacement by a substitute may last no longer than the proceedings dealing with the particular matter concerned or, in the case of a mandate from the Assembly, no longer than a single meeting.

ROLE OF THE MINISTERS AND OPPOSITION CRITICS

A minister sits on a committee while it is examining a bill he or she introduced, or when designated by the Assembly to sit on the committee for the duration of a mandate. An opposition critic will normally belong to the committee whose area of competence corresponds to his or her shadow portfolio. Under the Standing Orders, ministers and opposition critics do not enjoy rights or privileges beyond those of other committee members, except in certain cases with regard to speaking time. Their influence is nonetheless considerable. They are favoured speakers and play a decisive role. During a self-initiated mandate, a minister may be heard by a committee, at the request of its members, even though he or she is not a member of the committee.
ROLE OF THE COMMITTEE CLERK

The chief public servant of each committee is its clerk, who is attached to the General Directorate for Parliamentary Affairs. He or she fills a multi-faceted role as the committee’s recording secretary, administrator, coordinator and main adviser on parliamentary procedure. The clerk of a committee works closely with the chair and vice-chair, and sits on the committee’s steering committee ex officio, but serves all the committee members equally.

The clerk gives notice of meetings and other committee activities; prepares the committee’s order of business; keeps its minutes and drafts its reports; registers and keeps custody of documents submitted to or produced by the committee; signs (and thereby authenticates) official documents; establishes and maintains contact with persons who have a stake in the committee’s work such as political staff, representatives of government departments and bodies, pressure groups, journalists and members of the public; and coordinates research.

In short, committee clerks take all the measures needed to ensure that committee work and any travel undertaken by committee members will go smoothly. Each clerk has an assistant.

ROLE OF THE LIBRARY’S RESEARCH SERVICE

Depending on its needs, a committee may be granted other resources, including those of the Research Service of the National Assembly Library. The Service often carries out research and provides documentation as required for committee mandates, typically in connection with orders of initiative (i.e. self-initiated orders or mandates), the oversight of public bodies, accountability hearings with government departments, the follow-up of Auditor General reports or the analysis of annual government management reports.
HOW COMMITTEES WORK

PUBLIC, DELIBERATIVE AND IN CAMERA MEETINGS

Public meetings are open to the public and to members of the Press Gallery. Committee meetings are public as a general rule, but the committees may also hold private deliberative meetings and in camera meetings. The main mandates dealt with at public meetings are special consultations and clause-by-clause consideration.

Deliberative meetings are private, attended only by committee members and staff, and serve mainly to plan committee work and communicate information to members. They provide a more flexible working arrangement for the committee, which alternatively may delegate planning and organizing tasks to its steering committee.

When an in camera meeting is held, the proceedings cannot be reported or divulged without the unanimous consent of the committee and any other participants.

COMMITTEE ROOMS

Four rooms of the Parliament Building are reserved primarily for committee use: the Legislative Council Chamber, the Louis-Joseph-Papineau Room, the Louis-Hippolyte-LaFontaine Room, and the Premiers-Ministres Room. Each of these rooms has sound recording equipment, and some also have broadcasting and video conferencing equipment.

Committees may hold meetings outside the Parliament Building, anywhere in Québec, but to do so they must obtain the authorization of the Committee on the National Assembly.
ACCESS TO PROCEEDINGS

Since 1989, the proceedings of all public committee meetings are recorded and transcripts are published in the *Journal des débats* (Québec’s Hansard), an electronic version of which is available on the National Assembly website. Most public meetings also air as live or delayed broadcasts on the Assembly television channel. Public meetings are broadcast live on the Assembly website, where it is also possible to access audio and video archives of most public hearings since 2002 and those of clause-by-clause consideration of bills since 2009.
SCHEDULE

Committees may meet Monday to Friday even if the Assembly is not sitting. If the Assembly is sitting, committees may not meet during Routine Proceedings, which includes Question Period.

Outside the Assembly’s sessional periods

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
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<tr>
<td>2 p.m. - 6 p.m.</td>
<td>9:40 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.</td>
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During the Assembly’s ordinary hours of meeting

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<th>Monday</th>
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<td>2 p.m. - 6 p.m.</td>
<td>10 a.m. - 12 noon</td>
<td>9:40 a.m. - 11 a.m.*</td>
<td>9:40 a.m. - 11 a.m.*</td>
<td>9:40 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:40 p.m. - 6 p.m.*</td>
<td>3 p.m. - 6 p.m.</td>
<td>11 a.m. - 1 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.</td>
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During the Assembly’s extended hours of meeting

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<td>1:40 p.m. - 6 p.m.*</td>
<td>3 p.m. - 6 p.m.</td>
<td>11 a.m. - 1 p.m.</td>
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<td>7:30 p.m. - 10:30 p.m.</td>
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* Routine Proceedings (committee work suspended)
WHAT COMMITTEES DO

SECTORIAL COMMITTEES

The nine sectorial committees respond to many different types of mandates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orders of reference</th>
<th>Orders of initiative</th>
<th>Statutory orders</th>
<th>Orders in compliance with the Standing Orders</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Examine bills</td>
<td>Examine regulations and draft regulations</td>
<td>Examine annual, periodic and ad hoc reports</td>
<td>Hold interpellations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examine budget estimates</td>
<td>Monitor government departments’ and bodies’ accountability</td>
<td>Examine the implementation of statutes</td>
<td>Hear the Chief Electoral Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examine any other matter</td>
<td>Examine public bodies’ policy directions, activities and management</td>
<td>Examine regulations and draft regulations</td>
<td>Hear the Public Protector (Québec Ombudsperson)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Examine petitions</td>
<td>Hold public hearings</td>
<td>Hear the Auditor General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Examine any other matter of public interest</td>
<td></td>
<td>Continue the debate on the budget speech begun in the Assembly</td>
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</table>

ORDERS OF REFERENCE

Orders of reference account for 85% of the work done by committees and take precedence over other mandates.

Clause-by-clause consideration of bills

Most of the mandates referred to the committees by the Assembly are for clause-by-clause consideration of bills. All MNAs can introduce bills, except money bills, which can only be introduced by ministers. Bills are divided into two broad categories: public and private.
Public bills deal with matters of general or public interest. In its clause-by-clause consideration of a public bill, a committee examines each of the bill’s sections and amends them as it sees fit. The committees often hold special consultations on a bill before beginning clause-by-clause consideration.

Private bills pertain to special or local interests and seek to obtain exclusive rights or privileges for an individual, a corporation or a municipality. Clause-by-clause consideration of a private bill is normally preceded by a public hearing with the petitioner or petitioners and any other persons who have expressed a desire to be heard. The public hearing and clause-by-clause consideration generally take place during the same meeting.

Examination of the budget estimates

The budget estimates quantify the money to be granted to each government department and body for its annual operations. In its role as public spending watchdog, the Assembly has delegated the task of examining the budget estimates to the committees. This process may begin no earlier than 15 days after the estimates have been tabled in the Assembly, usually in April, and continues for a maximum of 200 hours. The time allotted to the estimates of a single government department is no more than 20 hours, during which the committees examine the programs for which estimates are to be voted on. Accompanied by senior public servants, each minister appears before a committee to justify the estimates requested by the department and public bodies under his or her authority.

Examination of any other matter

The Assembly may refer the examination of any other matter to the committees according to their respective areas of competence. This type of mandate usually requires general or special consultations. For example, in 2015, the Committee on Citizen Relations held special consultations on the 2008–2013 Government Action Plan Concerning Sexual Assault.
ORDERS OF INITIATIVE

A committee can take up a mandate on its own initiative if a majority of the committee members from each parliamentary group vote to do so. Once it has adopted the mandate, the committee has complete freedom to organize its work as it sees fit. It may also delegate the organization of the related proceedings to its steering committee.

Examination of public bodies’ policy directions, activities and management

Each committee is required to annually examine the policy directions, activities and management of at least one public body whose activities fall within its area of competence. The public body that will come under review is chosen by the committee itself during a deliberative meeting.

Accountability hearings with government departments and bodies

Each committee must, within its area of competence and at least once every four years, hear the ministers who consider it expedient to be heard and the deputy ministers of government departments or chief executive officers (CEOs) of public bodies, as applicable, to discuss their administrative management.

Examination of petitions

Once a petition has been presented, the competent parliamentary committee has 15 days, at the request of one of its members, to meet and decide if it will take up the petition. If the mandate is adopted, the committee may hear the originator of the petition, the originator’s representatives as well as any other person or organization it sees fit. The committee must then table its report within 30 days after its decision.

Examination of any other matter

A committee may, on its own initiative, take up any subject or question that it wishes to pursue.
Having adopted a mandate and defined the scope of its work, the committee may decide to invite individuals and organizations with relevant knowledge or experience to testify before it. Prior to this step, it may publish a consultation document or even hold online consultations.

**Examination of regulations and draft regulations**

Regulations and draft regulations are framed by the Government to flesh out the application of a statute. Their examination in committee is one of the means by which Parliament scrutinizes delegated legislation. Under the *Regulations Act*, the Assembly has the power to disallow any regulation or regulatory provision adopted by the Government.

**STATUTORY ORDERS**

This type of order issues from the legislation in force in Québec. It may require that a committee examine annual, periodic or ad hoc reports, look at how a statute is being carried out, examine regulations or draft regulations, or hear the CEO of a public body. The statute prescribing such a mandate will define its nature and assign it to the competent committee.

A committee that receives such a mandate organizes its work in accordance with the provisions of the statute concerned. Ordinarily, the committee hears the CEO of the body responsible for carrying out the statute. For instance, under the *Act respecting educational institutions at the university level*, the Committee on Culture and Education must hear the head of each institution every three years.

**ORDERS IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE STANDING ORDERS**

Some of the mandates that fall to the sectorial committees are provided for in the Standing Orders. Interpellations are the most common of these. An interpellation is a debate between a minister and an opposition MNA on a current issue or matter of general interest. Interpellations are held on Fridays from 10 a.m. to 12 noon in the National Assembly Chamber during the weeks when the Assembly is sitting, but none may be held during the period when it keeps extended hours.
Other mandates in this category deserve mention because of their singular character. Two such mandates—to continue the debate on the budget speech begun in the Assembly and to study budgetary policy and the state of public finances—belong exclusively to the Committee on Public Finance.

In addition, once a year, the Committee on Institutions must hear the Chief Electoral Officer and the Public Protector (Québec Ombudsperson), and the Committee on Public Administration must hear the Auditor General.

**PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS**

Public consultations are an important means by which individuals and organizations may voice their opinion on proposed legislation and other subjects of interest. Public consultations are of three kinds: general, special and online.

**General consultations** allow individuals and organizations interested in a subject under examination to express their point of view during committee hearings. Participants often submit a brief, but it is also possible to request to be heard without doing so. The committee clerk has a notice published in the major dailies, on the National Assembly website and in the *Gazette officielle du Québec* ahead of a general consultation.

**Special consultations** are only open to individuals and organizations invited by the committee. Their opinions are sought either because they are directly concerned by the matter in question or because they have been recognized as possessing experience relevant to the discussion.

Finally, online consultations may be held by a committee as part of a self-initiated mandate. As well, certain mandates referred to a committee by the Assembly provide for both a general consultation and an online consultation. In such cases, anyone who wishes to express an opinion may do so by completing an online questionnaire on the Assembly website.
ONLINE COMMENTS

Since March 2010, citizens can send in their comments on any bill introduced in the Assembly and on most of the mandates that are before the parliamentary committees. All they have to do is complete an online form on the Assembly website. Their comments are passed on to the MNAs concerned.

MANDATES OF THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Much like the public accounts committees found in most British-style parliaments, the Committee on Public Administration devotes its time exclusively to scrutiny of the public administration. Its role is to examine the financial commitments and administrative management of government departments and bodies.

The Committee tables a report with recommendations in the Assembly, usually at the end of each sessional period. This report is the subject of a debate in the Assembly within 15 days after being tabled.

Examination of financial commitments

The Committee on Public Administration’s mandate is to examine the financial commitments of $25,000 or more that are authorized by the Conseil du trésor, the Conseil exécutif or the government departments. This comes to more than 20,000 financial commitments per year. In order to do this work efficiently and effectively, the Committee uses a sampling method to select which financial commitments will be examined over the course of a given year.
Hearing of deputy ministers and CEOs

Under the Public Administration Act, the Committee, in concert with the sectorial committees, is required to hold accountability hearings with the deputy ministers of government departments and the CEOs of public bodies at least once every four years. To this end, the Committee examines the annual management reports of the government departments and public bodies and selects those on which it wishes to hold a public hearing in order to take a closer look at certain aspects of the organization’s administrative management. The examination of financial commitments typically takes place at the same time as the examination of a department’s administrative management.

Hearing of the Auditor General of Québec on his or her annual management report

Each year, in accordance with the Standing Orders, the Committee hears the Auditor General on his or her annual management report and financial commitments.

Hearing to follow up on a report of the Auditor General of Québec or the Public Protector

The Committee on Public Administration may hold a public hearing with the deputy ministers of government departments and the CEOs of public bodies to discuss their administrative management when it has been commented on in a report of the Auditor General of Québec or the Public Protector.

Annual report—Public Administration Act

The Committee is also mandated to examine the annual report on the carrying out of the Public Administration Act.

Examination of any other matter

Finally, the Committee may examine any other matter referred to it by the Assembly.
MANDATES OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

The Committee on the National Assembly plays a role that bears no comparison to that of the other parliamentary committees, its purpose being to provide a forum for discussion and decision making on all aspects of the Assembly’s and committees’ operations.

This committee’s role is horizontal rather than sectorial. Thus, it drafts the Standing Orders and the Rules for the Conduct of Proceedings in the National Assembly and, at the beginning of each legislature and every two years afterwards, determines the membership of each committee and the allocation of chairships; it coordinates the work of the other committees, in particular by determining which committee a given public body is accountable to and by clarifying, as needed, the committees’ areas of competence; it approves the list of temporary chairs; it authorizes committees, steering committees or specific members to travel or to meet outside the precincts of the Assembly; it hears persons who are required by law to be appointed by the Assembly, such as the Chief Electoral Officer, the Public Protector, the Auditor General, the Lobbyists Commissioner and the Ethics Commissioner; lastly, it exercises all other functions conferred on it by the Standing Orders. For example, the Committee may inquire into the conduct of an MNA or any other person alleged to have breached the Assembly’s rights and privileges.

Through the Subcommittee on Parliamentary Reform, the Committee also studies proposals to amend the Standing Orders.

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

For each of these mandates, except interpellations, the committee in question tables a report in the Assembly. Along with the minutes of the proceedings, this report may also contain any observations, conclusions or recommendations that the committee adopted. A report containing recommendations gives rise to a two-hour debate in the Assembly within 15 days of the report being tabled (except in the case of a mandate examining a petition).
STATISTICALLY SPEAKING...¹

The annual statistical report published by the General Directorate for Parliamentary Affairs provides a clear portrait of the work MNAs carry out in committee.

Between them, the committees carry out an average of 128 mandates annually, requiring 446 meetings for a total of more than 1,319 hours. Most proceedings are open to the public and take place while the Assembly is sitting.

Every year, the committees hear more than 568 witnesses on average in public hearings, in the course of which they receive just over 668 briefs from participating individuals and organizations.

¹ The statistics cited are based on average figures for the years 2008–2009 to 2017–2018.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


Québec. Act respecting the National Assembly, CQLR c. A-23.1.


ON OUR WEBSITE
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All committees:
• Weekly schedule
• General consultation notices

Each committee individually:
• Committee membership, committee members’ bios
• Areas of competence
• Detailed schedule of hearings
• Briefs
• Documents tabled
• Amendments
• Consultation documents
• Reports containing observations, conclusions and recommendations
• *Journal des débats*: transcripts of public meetings
• Live audio/video broadcasts of public meetings
• Audio/video archives of public hearings

Other:
• Text and status of public and private bills
• Citizen participation: how to launch a petition, comment on a matter under examination, participate in a consultation or request the introduction of a private bill
THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES
OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF QUÉBEC

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