

Glossary

A

Act

A law passed by the Legislative Assembly. For example, *The Official Languages Act*.
(See Law)

Adjournment

A term used to indicate when the meeting is finished for the day.

Amend

To change or improve something. For example, a piece of legislation.

Assent

A bill that has been passed by the Legislative Assembly is approved by the Commissioner and becomes law.

B

Ballot

A piece of paper you fill in to record your vote.

Bell

Bells are used to call Members to the House. They are used at the start of each sitting day and following breaks.

Bill

A proposal to make a new law or change one that already exists.

Board of Management

Chaired by the Speaker, administers the Assembly support services and advises the Legislature on matters such as Members' indemnities, benefits and allowances, and provide for the management and operation of the Office of the Legislative Assembly

Budget

A plan placed before MLAs each year which shows how much money the government expects to receive and how the government wants to spend it.

By-election

A special election held to replace an MLA who has resigned or retired.

C

Cabinet (See Executive Council)

Candidate

Someone who wants to be elected to the Legislative Assembly.

Caucus

A meeting of all 19 members of the Legislative Assembly to plan items for debate in the Legislature.

Chairperson (Chair)

Someone who is in charge of a meeting or committee.

Chamber

The large, round room in the Legislative Assembly building where Members meet.

Clerk

Advises the Speaker and Members on the Assembly's procedures. The Clerk sits at a table in front of the Speaker in the Chamber and is responsible for keeping the official record of the proceedings, preparing Assembly documents.

Coat of Arms

An official symbol used by the Northwest Territories to indicate authority, ownership, and identity.

Commissioner

A person appointed by the federal government who gives final approval to all Northwest Territories laws.

Committee

A group of Members who discuss or investigate a particular subject. **(See Committee of the Whole; Standing Committee; Special Committee)**

Committee of the Whole

Members of the Legislative Assembly who meet in the Chamber to discuss bills, documents or issues. This meeting is less formal than Session. The Deputy Speaker chairs Committee of the Whole.

Consensus

A type of government where there are no political parties. The Northwest Territories and Nunavut are the only Legislative Assemblies in Canada to use this style of government. Decisions are made using a majority vote.

Constituency (Riding)

The area represented by a Member of the Legislative Assembly. In the Northwest Territories there are 19 constituencies. For example, Yellowknife South, or Deh Cho.

Constituents

People living in a constituency.

D

Debate

A discussion in which the arguments for and against a subject are presented according to specific rules.

Democracy

A way of governing in which people elect representatives to form a government on their behalf.

Department

One particular area or interest of government, controlled by a Minister. For example, the Department of Infrastructure.

Deputy Minister

A government employee in charge of a department who reports to the Minister responsible for that department.

Draft Bill

An early version of a bill, before it is introduced into the Legislative Assembly.

E

Election

A process to choose Members of the Legislative Assembly. Residents of the Northwest Territories (voters) choose one name from a list of candidates. The person who gets the most votes becomes a Member of the Legislative Assembly.

Executive

The part of government which carries out the laws.

Executive Council (Cabinet)

The senior decision-making body of the Government of the Northwest Territories. The Executive Council puts government policies into practice and is made up of seven Ministers, including the Premier.

Expenditure

A formal request to have the Assembly do something, order something to be done or express an opinion on a matter.

Move (a motion)

To make a formal proposal in the form of a motion.

N

News Conference

An event for journalists where a major announcement is made.

News Release

A written major announcement that is sent to the media.

Notice of Motion

An announcement, either oral or written, of a Member's intent to present a motion. Members are usually required to give forty-eight hours' notice before they introduce a motion.

Notice of Motion for First Reading of Bills

A Member is required to give forty-eight hours notice before giving First Reading of a Bill.

O

Oath

A solemn promise, using God's name or by making an affirmation to do something.

Official Languages

French, Chipewyan, Gwich'in, North Slavey, South Slavey, Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun, Inuvialuktun, Tlicho, Cree, and English are the Northwest Territories official languages.

Commissioner's Address

The statement read by the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories on the opening day of each session.

Oral Questions (Question Period)

During this time any Member can question Ministers about government policies and practices.

Order

Correct or proper conduct in meetings.

Orders of the Day

The agenda which outlines the daily order of business in the Assembly.

Out of Order

A Member whose words, behavior or actions do not follow the rules, practices and procedures of the Legislative Assembly.

P

Page

A grade seven to nine student who is hired during session to serve Members by delivering messages and materials to them in the Chamber.

Petition

A document presented to the Assembly by a person or group of people asking for action on a matter. It usually has many signatures from people who agree with the request.

Plebiscite

A vote by the qualified voters of the Territory on a question.

Point of Order

A question raised by a Member about whether proceedings in a meeting are being done according to the rules.

Portfolio

Department(s) that a Minister is responsible for.

Premier

The person responsible for the management of the Executive part of government. The Premier of the Northwest Territories is selected by all Members.

Proceedings

The formal actions and decision of the Assembly.

Prorogue

To end a session of the Legislative Assembly.

Provincial

Belonging to a particular province or provinces rather than the Territories or whole country.

Public Gallery

The seating area overlooking the Chamber of the Legislative Assembly where the public, media, special guests, and other observers sit.

Q

Question

A matter to be debated and voted on. The term is also used to call for a vote on an issue being debated.

Quorum

The minimum number of Members that must be present to hold a meeting.

R

Recess

The time between sessions of the Assembly. Often used to refer to a long adjournment.

Replies to Commissioner's Address

Each Member is entitled to make one reply to the Commissioner's Address.

Reports of Standing and Special Committees

A period during the daily business of the Assembly when the Chair or Member of a Committee tells all the Members what that Committee has been doing.

Report Progress

The Committee of the Whole provides a brief report to the Speaker on the progress it has made in its discussion of bills and other matters.

Ruling

A formal decision made by the Speaker, usually on a matter of procedure in the House.

Riding- See Constituency.

S

Second (a motion)

To formally support a motion so that it can be considered at a meeting.

Second Reading

An important step in the legislative process when the Minister or Member sponsoring a bill makes a speech about why such a bill is needed.

Sergeant- at- Arms

A person who is responsible for the security of the Members and the Legislative Assembly building. The Sergeant-at-Arms goes with the Speaker when he or she enters or leaves the Chamber, and is responsible for the Mace.

Session

A formal meeting of all members of the Legislative Assembly, started by a Commissioner's Opening Address and ending with prorogation.

Sittings

The meeting of the Assembly within a session.

Speaker

A Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) who is chosen to be the spokesperson of the Assembly. The Speaker enforces the rules and controls the debates.

Speaker's Chair

The large, raised chair at the front of the Chamber in which the Speaker sits.

Special Committee

A group of Members appointed to study a particular issue. (For example, the Special Committee to Increase the Representation of Women.)

Standing Committee

A group of Members which meet regularly to discuss certain issues. The Legislative Assembly has five Standing Committees: Accountability & Oversight, Social Development, Government Operations, Board of Management, and Rules & Procedures.

T

Table

To present a document to the Legislative Assembly.

Third Reading

The last stage of debate of a bill, at the end of which the bill is voted on.

U

Unparliamentary

Words or actions used in the Assembly which the Speaker judges to be offensive or disorderly.

V

Vote

A formal way of expressing a choice, such as putting your hand up or marking a piece of paper.

W

Witness

A person who answers questions about a specific issue in the Assembly.

Written Questions

Detailed questions read to a Minister by a Member which are also given in a written form. The Minister later writes an answer to the question.