



FACT SHEET:

Process for Election of the Speaker of the House of Commons

At the opening of the first session of a Parliament, the first scheduled item of business is the election of a Speaker. Before the commencement of this procedure, however, the Members, accompanied by the Table Officers, proceed forthwith to the Senate Chamber where the Speaker of the Senate informs them that the Governor General “does not see fit to declare the causes of his (her) summoning of the present Parliament of Canada, until a Speaker of the House of Commons shall have been chosen, according to law...”. At the conclusion of this address, the Members return to the House and proceed to elect a Speaker.

Candidates

All Members of the House, except for Ministers of the Crown and leaders of recognized parties, are automatically considered candidates for the position of Speaker. Any Member who does not wish to have his or her name appear on the list of candidates must so inform the Acting Clerk of the House in writing by no later than 6:00 p.m. on the day before the election is to take place.

Member presiding over the election

The election is presided over by the Member with the longest period of uninterrupted service who is neither a Minister of the Crown, nor the holder of any office within the House. This Member is vested with all of the powers of the Chair, save that he or she retains the right to vote in the ensuing election, and is unable to cast a deciding vote in the event of an equality of votes being cast for two of the candidates. The Mace (symbol of the authority of the House) rests beneath the Table until such time as a new Speaker is elected.

Before proceeding with the election, the Member presiding will call upon any candidate for the office of Speaker to address the House for not more than five minutes. When no further candidate rises to speak, the Member presiding will leave the Chair for 30 minutes and the sitting will be suspended. After this suspension, the sitting resumes and the voting begins.

Voting procedure

The election is conducted by secret ballot. A ballot box will be placed at the foot of the Table and voting booths will be placed on either side of the Table.

The voting begins when the Member presiding asks those Members who wish to cast their ballot to leave their desks by way of the curtains, to proceed along the corridors in the direction of the Chair and

to come to the Table through the door to the left of the Chair if the Member sits on the Speaker's left, or through the door to the right if the Member sits on the Speaker's right. At these doors, Members will have their names recorded by one of the Table Officers and be issued a ballot paper, on which will be listed, in alphabetical order, the names of the eligible candidates for the election of the Speaker. From there, with ballot paper in hand, Members will proceed to one of the voting booths at the Table.

To vote, they must rank the candidates in order of preference, placing the number "1" in the space adjacent to the name of the candidate who is their first preference, the number "2" in the space adjacent to the name of the candidate who is their second preference and so on, until they have ranked all the candidates for whom they wish to vote. It is not necessary for Members to rank all candidates. The Members will then deposit their ballot papers in the ballot box at the foot of the Table and will leave the area around the Table to ensure the confidentiality of the voting procedure for other Members.

When the Member presiding is satisfied that all Members wishing to vote have done so, the Acting Clerk and the Table Officers will withdraw from the Chamber with the ballot box and proceed to count the ballots. The Member presiding will then signify that the sitting is temporarily suspended while the counting of the ballots takes place.

Ballot results

The votes will initially be counted based on the first preferences indicated on each ballot paper. If one candidate was ranked first by more than half of the Members who cast votes, that candidate will be elected. However, if no candidate received the majority of votes in the first round, then the candidate with the fewest first preferences will be eliminated. If there is an equality of votes between two or more candidates, both or all of whom have the fewest first preferences, will be eliminated. The votes will then be recounted using the second preference, or the next eligible preference, on ballot papers where the first choice candidate has been eliminated. The process will continue in this manner until one candidate receives more than half of the votes cast. The Member presiding will then order the bells to be rung for five minutes and then call the House to order.

The Member presiding will then announce from the Chair the name of the successful candidate. After having invited the Speaker-elect to take the Chair, the Member presiding will step down. The Speaker-elect, standing on the upper step of the dais, then thanks the Members and assumes the Chair. The Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms places the Mace on the Table, signifying that now, with the Speaker in the Chair, the House is properly constituted.

Once the Speaker has been elected, the Acting Clerk will destroy all ballot papers and related records, in accordance with the Standing Orders. The Standing Orders enjoin the Acting Clerk not to divulge in any way the number of ballots cast for any candidate.

Second ballot, in case of a tie vote

If, at the conclusion of the counting of the votes, there is an equality of largest number of first preferences between two or more candidates, the Member presiding will indicate that a second ballot is necessary and will announce the names of the candidates on the second ballot. The Acting Clerk of the House will then provide Members with new ballot papers, on which will be listed, in alphabetical order, the names of the eligible candidates. The Member presiding will invite Members who wish to vote to leave their desks and to proceed to the Table in the same manner as for the first ballot.

The voting procedure for the second ballot is the same as for the first.

Reference:

[Standing Orders of the House of Commons](#)

For More Information

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