



# **PRE-TOUR LESSON 2 INTO THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH**

**GRADES 4-8**



## **Key Questions**

- What is the legislative branch?
- What is the Legislative Assembly and what is its purpose?
- How does the Legislative Assembly operate?

## **Students will...**

- Understand that the Legislative Assembly is a key piece of the legislative branch.
- Understand that the Legislative Assembly's role is to debate and create laws, among other things.
- Understand the basic procedure of the Legislative Assembly.

## **Teacher Primer**

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The legislative branch includes several parts, but the key and most public part is the Legislative Assembly. The Legislative Assembly is the body that debates and creates laws. It is occupied by the Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) that voters elect to represent them. The Legislative Assembly Service is the staff that helps facilitate the work of the Legislative Assembly. The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, a MLA that is chosen by the other MLAs to regulate debate and maintain order in the Assembly, is also an important role to highlight.

The work of the Legislative Assembly is directly related to several levels of curricula. Of most importance is the creation of bills and how they become laws. The slideshow that is included as part of this lesson is a valuable resource for both teacher and student alike to understand this process.

# Set

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Begin the lesson by having students recall prior learning from pre-tour lesson #1. Write up retained key learnings on the board. Confirm:

- Do they remember what the three branches of government are?
- Do they remember any details of any branch? Who/what is involved in each branch? What do the branches do?

Inform students that this lesson will focus on the legislative branch.

# Development

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Hand out copies of "The Legislative Assembly Note Guide" found at the end of this lesson, one to each student. Explain that they will be filling out the blanks that correspond with the slideshow you will be presenting and teaching from throughout the lesson. Set up "The Legislative Assembly: A Student's Guide to What it Does!" slideshow. This is available on the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan website where you found these lessons. Take the students through each of the slides, having them fill out the missing words as you go. Stop and discuss any concepts or terms as you see fit for your students. Some notable discussion topics might be:

- What do MLAs do?
- What is a political party?
  - It's a group of people with the same political ideas about how society should function. They represent different values and ways of viewing the world.
- What are cabinet ministers?
  - They are members chosen by the Premier to act as key decision makers. They make up a part of executive government and are responsible for different ministries or areas of government

# Development

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- What does it mean to have a bill reading?
  - It's an ancient parliamentary practice from the United Kingdom that dates back to a time when it was too expensive to reproduce a lot of copies of a bill. Instead, the Clerk read the document aloud to the members so they would know the contents of the bill.
- What is royal assent and why does it exist in our modern government system?
  - The Lieutenant Governor, on behalf of the monarch, gives final approval to a bill, enacting it into law. As a former colony of Great Britain, our system is based on the same parliamentary traditions. Today, royal assent is a constitutional duty of the monarch's representative, i.e. the Lieutenant Governor in Saskatchewan.
- What is the Crown's role in our system of government?
  - The Crown is separate from party politics. Mainly symbolic, but the role of its representatives in Canada and the provinces is to ensure the principle of responsible government is respected, meaning the executive branch is accountable to elected members in the House. They also ensure that a Premier or Prime Minister resigns after their party loses the majority in an election.

There is a lot of information included in the slideshow. It is helpful for students to see these concepts taking place in real life. Take the opportunity to show students video clips of the bills process they just learned about. This also gives you a chance to discuss why we film and publish the work of our Legislative Assembly. This is because a core principle of democracy is that it should be open, visible, and accountable to the people.

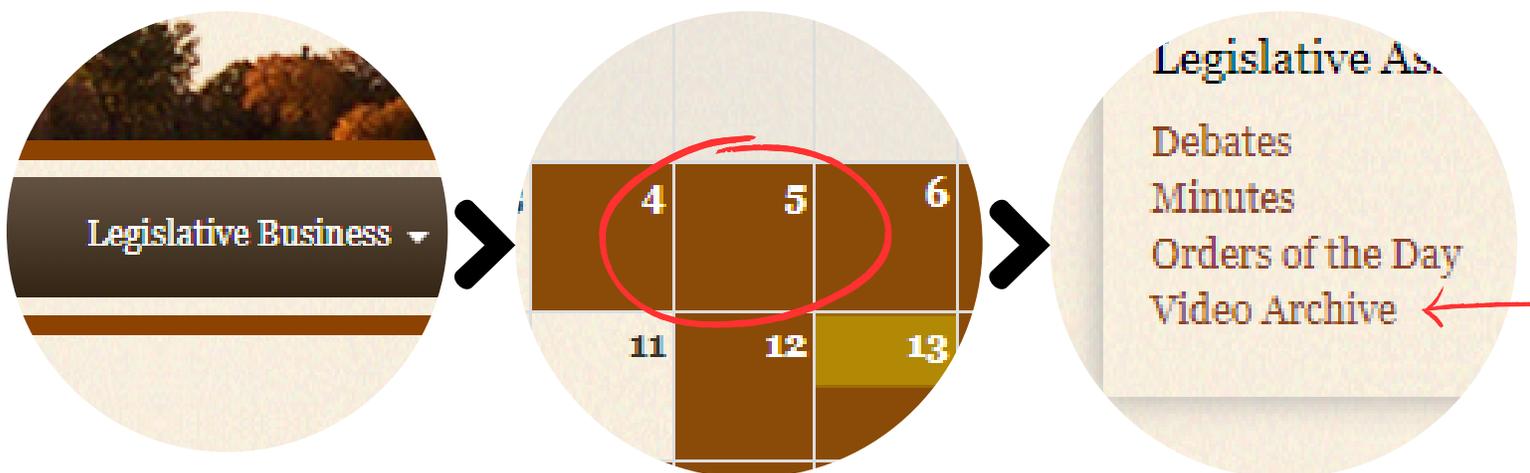
# Development

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Here's how to find the video clips for the bills process:

- Go to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan's website;
- Click on the "Legislative Business" tab and select "Find Assembly Records" from the drop-down list;
- Use the filter system above the calendar layout of dates to hone in on a past date. Go to November 2019;
- Click on November 5th in the calendar layout, scroll to the bottom of the page, and click "Video Archive." For this lesson, we will look at the journey of *The Tobacco Control Amendment Act, 2019* (vaping laws);
- The first reading for this bill begins at **2:32:18**;
- Use the same process to find the video archive for November 6th, 2019, and follow this bill through second reading, committee of the whole, and third reading. This begins at **2:38:47**. You can view as much of it as you like, but it spans from **2:38:47-2:57:00**;
- Use the same process to find the video archive for December 4th, 2019. The process of royal assent for this bill takes place at **2:27:20 - 2:30:06**.

Even if you prepare the videos before the lesson, it is worth showing the students the process to find the videos.



## **Development**

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Now that the class has learned and taken notes on how a bill becomes a law and has seen it in action, take a few minutes to quiz them on what they learned. This can be done by doing a "misconception check:" stating things that are not true about the topic so that students can, using their knowledge and notes, correct you. Ensure that you request as much detail as you can get from their corrections. Some misconceptions you can put forward include:

- The first reading is a time for debate to take place.
- The King or Queen personally arrives to give a bill royal assent.
- There are currently 50 seats for MLAs in the Legislative Assembly.
- Parliament comes from the French word which means "to yell."
- The party with the second most MLAs elected is called "the resisters."
- The public is not allowed to visit or sit in on the Legislative Assembly.
- Any others you can think of!

## **Closure and Assessment**

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This lesson is full of information, and it can be difficult to keep it all in order. It is okay and even encouraged to admit this to students! Students can now have a chance to give back a small bit of what they have learned today, in addition to what was gleaned from the misconception check activity.

Hand out a copy of "The Legislative Assembly 3-2-1" activity and allow students to complete it.

# The Legislative Assembly Note Guide

## **Slide One: Legislative Branch Review**

- The legislative branch is responsible for \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ laws.
- The legislative branch of Saskatchewan assembles in Regina, Saskatchewan. That is why it is called the capital city. The building that houses the Legislative Assembly is called the Legislative Building or nicknamed as “The Leg” (pronounced “Ledge”).
- The Legislative Building is a key part of \_\_\_\_\_ Park, the area around \_\_\_\_\_ Lake.

## **Slide Two: Let’s take a closer look...**

- The core part of the legislative branch is what is known as the \_\_\_\_\_.
- The Legislative Assembly is made up of people who voters choose, through elections, to \_\_\_\_\_ them.
  - These elected members are called \_\_\_\_\_ (Members of the Legislative Assembly).
  - MLAs usually belong to a \_\_\_\_\_. The political party with the most people elected during an election forms government. The party with the second most people elected forms the Official Opposition.
- When a political party holds the most seats, it will be able to pass bills more easily because it has more party members to vote \_\_\_\_\_.
- There are currently \_\_\_ seats in the Legislative Assembly.

### **Slide Three: So how does it work?**

- The Legislative Assembly typically meets for \_\_\_\_\_ days in the fall and \_\_\_\_\_ days in the spring.
- MLAs will spend much of their time debating and creating laws during these periods, along with reviewing government spending and debating topics of interest.
- After an election, the MLAs choose one of its members to be the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_.
  - The Speaker plays an impartial role, maintaining order in the Assembly and ensuring business is conducted according to its rules.
- In addition to the Speaker, staff of the Legislative Assembly Service also help support the MLAs in the House in an impartial way. They include clerks, pages, and the Sergeant-at-Arms.
- To help you remember what the MLAs do, remember another word we use for the Legislative Assembly: \_\_\_\_\_. Parliament comes from the French word “parler,” which means “to speak!”
- There is a process for how laws are passed and how debate can happen at each stage in the process. You’ll learn about this next.

### **Slide Four: A day in the Legislative Assembly...**

- A day in the life of the Legislative Assembly includes...
  1. The day begins with a non-denominational \_\_\_\_\_ .
  2. MLAs introduce guests that are watching in the gallery. This would include visiting classrooms!
  3. Petitions from the \_\_\_\_\_ are presented asking the Legislative Assembly to take action on certain issues.
  4. MLAs speak on a topic of their choice often highlighting people and events in their constituencies.

## **Slide Five: A day in the Legislative Assembly continued...**

5. Opposition members have a \_\_\_\_\_ period to ask the \_\_\_\_\_ questions.
6. Cabinet ministers (MLAs that oversee certain areas of government have a chance to announce new policies or programs).
7. \_\_\_\_\_ comes next. These are the items of business that government wants to achieve. This is when the work of bills becoming law begins. Think of bills as potential \_\_\_\_\_ in the making!

## **Slide Six: First Reading**

- First reading of a bill is its \_\_\_\_\_ to the Assembly and the public.
- After having first given two days' notice, a MLA (usually a cabinet minister) will put forward a motion to introduce their bill.
- If the majority of members agree with the motion, the bill becomes \_\_\_\_\_. Bills are posted on the Legislative Assembly website for anyone to read!
- There's no \_\_\_\_\_ at this stage. That will start at second reading after the Assembly and the public have had time to look it over.

## **Slide Seven: Second Reading**

- After first reading, there is a discussion on the \_\_\_\_\_ of the bill.
- The minister responsible for the bill highlights key sections and discusses why the bill should become law. At the end of their speech, the minister moves a motion for the bill to be read a second time.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_ then get to speak in \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ the bill. This can take several days.
- Once everyone who would like to speak to the bill has had their turn, members will vote on the minister's second reading motion.
- If the majority agree, the bill will go to a \_\_\_\_\_ for review.

### **Slide Eight: Review by Committee**

- Committees are made up of smaller groups of MLAs that look closely at the bill.
- They can ask the minister and officials detailed questions about the bill, and they can even bring forward members of the public to ask what they think about it.
- These meetings also give MLAs a chance to make \_\_\_\_\_ to the bill, called amendments.
- When the committee is done considering the bill, it reports back to the \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ to update the rest of the MLAs on its work and any amendments it made.

### **Slide Nine: Third Reading**

- Third reading gives MLAs and the public a chance to see the bill in its final form (including any amendments).
- \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ can happen again at this stage, but usually does not.
- Then another \_\_\_\_\_ takes place. If the bill passes this vote, it only has one more step before becoming a law!

### **Slide Ten: Royal Assent**

- This is where the \_\_\_\_\_ gets involved! It's the Queen or King formally agreeing to make the bill a law.
- In Saskatchewan, this is a symbolic ceremony that happens in the Chamber. The \_\_\_\_\_ arrives to give royal assent on behalf of the monarch.
- When the bill receives royal assent, it can come into effect either immediately or at a specific time set out in the bill.
- Once it is law, it is no longer called a bill but an \_\_\_\_\_!

# The Legislative Assembly

## 3-2-1



3 things you learned

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2 things you want to learn more about



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1 question you still have

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