
7. COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS AND THE SENATE



What are Committees and what do they do?

The House of Commons and Senate delegate most of the detailed study of proposed legislation and the scrutiny of government policy and programs to its committees.

There are four types of committees:

- **Committees of the Whole (House) :** As the name suggests, such committees are composed of the entire membership of the House of Commons. For the most part, Committees of the Whole examine appropriation bills. From time to time, the House sends other bills to the Committee of the Whole to expedite their passage.
- **Standing Committees:** These are committees appointed for the life of a Parliament to deal with subjects of continuing concern to the House. There are currently **19** standing committees. (See Appendices for a list of the Standing and Standing Joint Committees of the House of Commons.) For the most part, they parallel the government departments whose policy development, program administration and budgetary estimates they examine. Occasionally, the House may decide to send special inquiries to standing committees.
- **Special Committees:** Sometimes referred to as "task forces", special committees are appointed on an *ad hoc* basis by the House to study specific matters. Each special committee is established by a motion specifying its purpose and powers.
- **Joint Committees:** These committees are composed of members of both the House of Commons and the Senate. They may be appointed under the Standing Orders of each House (Standing Joint) or they may be created by special resolutions of the two Houses (Special Joint).
- **Sub-Committees :** Standing committees are free to delegate their responsibilities to any sub-committees they wish to create. Sub-committees may have all of the powers of the standing committee except the power to report directly to the House.

Powers of Committees:

Committees are given different kinds of powers by the House of Commons and Senate in relation to their specific tasks.