

*Parliament in Commonwealth Countries Module: Legislation & Committees*

*Week 3: March 23, 2009*

### Learning Objectives

At the end of this week, you should be able to meet the following learning objectives:

- Describe the different types of legislation that parliament considers;
- Understand the stages through which a bill passes to becomes an act or law;
- Distinguish between primary and secondary legislation.
- Understand the purpose, role and functions of parliamentary committees;
- Understand why and how committees are established;
- Distinguish between the various types of committee;
- Explain how committees scrutinize the work of the Executive;
- Understand how committees operate and how they report back on completion of their work;
- Discuss the roles and responsibilities of the chair and Members of a committee;
- Consider resource requirements for fulfilling the responsibilities of a committee.

### Instructions:

#### Step 1: Read

Begin this week by reading **Unit 5: Legislation** and **Unit 6: Parliamentary Committees and Scrutiny of the Executive**. We move in this week as we noted above to consideration of two of the parliamentarian's major roles and the responsibilities associated with them. The unit on legislation deals with the processes of how laws are made. The unit on scrutiny examines especially how committees operate, and this is for the reason that much of the work of scrutiny and oversight is done through parliamentary committees. As before, it will be useful for participants to draw attention in forum discussions to those aspects of practice and procedure which are unique to their legislatures or legislatures they know about.

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## Step 2: Respond

Work through the end of unit questions for unit 5 and 6. Many of these questions use the term 'your parliament'. **Please do not feel that you have to confine your comments to the parliament of your country or the legislature you work in, You are free to discuss any parliament of your choice whose operations you are familiar with and you need not name it unless you want to.** In other words, you may, if you wish, discuss a question in general rather than in specific terms, especially if this will help you to be freer in your discussion.

## Step 3: Self-Test

Test your work against the responses listed in the 'self-test' posted on the website's Workbook page. These sample answers will be posted in the course of Week 3.

## Step 4: E-Discussion

There are four e-discussion questions for this week dealing with these two major responsibilities of a parliamentarian. They should give participants plenty of scope for seeking answers to any questions they have, discussing different approaches to these responsibilities and informing us about how these matters are viewed in countries and legislatures with which they are familiar. The questions for discussion are:

1. Describe the work done in the legislature between the first and third readings of a bill.
2. Should there be safeguards in regard to the formulation of secondary or delegated legislation? If so, do you believe the safeguards available in your parliament are sufficient and satisfactory?
3. Do you consider that your parliament's committee structure is suited to the needs of your country?
4. Is it considered desirable in your country that society – individuals as well as groups – should have the opportunity to contribute through committees to the work of the legislature? If so, does it happen and to what extent?

Once again I hope that these questions will give all participants a chance to explain the practice in some country or legislature and to discuss why such practices best suit the requirements of the country or legislature. Sometimes there will be room for improvement and participants' discussions may highlight what these could be.

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Let us see what interesting ideas and facts get posted on the website.

Raja Gomez

Course Moderator

