

Hurry Up and Wait: Consequences of the Procedural Chess Game at Queen's Park

Clara Pasieka

Thesis

This research begins by framing the ideal functioning of the legislature, followed by tactical and strategic moves for either side to speed up or slow down legislation, including some of the best historical examples of their use, followed by cautionary notes of the consequences of gaming the house for MPPs of both the governing and opposition parties, as well as, for civic engagement.

Methodology

- Mixed Method
- Engaging in hermeneutical dialogue and 20 interviews with current & past politicians & a clerk
- Observation of Legislative proceedings and an analysis of Hansards and all significant Standing Order changes over the last thirty years
- A media scan for procedural incidents which garnered media attention over the last 30 years
- A literature review of chess strategy from the perspective of some of the Grandmasters.

A Strategy Book to Accompany the Ever Changing Rule-Book

The Obstructionists' Playbook

The Quick and Dirty Playbook

Moves to Slow Down Legislation

Moves to Speed up Legislation

The Filibuster

Bills with Absurdly Long Titles

Motion to Adjourn

Causing a Disruption

Use of Amendments

MPP Perspectives on Slowing Down the Passage of Legislation

The Good:

- Draw Public attention to an issue
- Tune Ontarians into politics through press "the procedural game" generates
- Demonstrate to a base
- Demonstrate to government you are serious
- Cause government to make concessions (rare)

The Bad:

- Seen by some Government MPPs as "childish", "Posturing", "Protest Party"
- Can limit opposition's own opportunity for genuine debate

Core Recommendations

- A return to more meaningful House Leader Meetings
- Consensus-based decision making between House Leaders when deciding on time allocation each week
- Retaining government veto over time allocation after other avenues have been exhausted

Time Allocation

Recall of House During an Adjournment

MPP Perspectives on Speeding up the Passage of Legislation

The Good:

- Government often criticized for moving too slowly, this counters this
- Demonstrates we are active not all talk
- some moves reduce chance of repetition
- Do more for Ontarians with same number of sitting days
- Some legislation is urgent, moves to accelerate can reduce anxiety in those affected

The Bad:

- Time Allocation named as most harmful; viewed as creating a democratic deficit as not all MPPs who want to get to give voice to a bill
- Reduces public consultation through committee or stakeholder meetings with ministries once they hear of a bill
- Views that it disproportionately affected the North and remote communities

Limitations & Opportunities for Further Research

- No element of this paper's research mythology was exhaustive
- MPP perception bias when reporting incidents
- The way these moves manifest at the Committee level, which though less public-facing is where public consultation can be most hindered or helped by parliamentary procure

"The most powerful weapon in chess is to have the next move" - David Bronstein, Chess Grandmaster