

The Governor-General appoints as Leader of the Opposition the Member of Parliament who has the support of the majority of Opposition Members of Parliament.

Parliamentary Committees

A significant portion of the work carried out by Parliamentarians is done through Parliamentary Committees. Both the Senate and the House of Representatives appoint Members to serve on Committees. Members of Committees examine legislation (Bills) and issues of importance to the country. When a Committee has completed its deliberations on a particular issue or Bill it reports its findings to the House or Senate.

There are three types of Parliamentary Committees:

- Sessional Select Committees that have to be formed during every Parliamentary session;
- Special Select Committees that are formed to address particular issues, including Bills. A Special Select Committee's life come to an end as soon as it has made its report to the Parliament; and
- Joint Select Committees are made up of Members of both Houses to consider matters of mutual interest; in most instances they are constituted to examine Bills

Staff of the Houses of Parliament

The Clerk to the Houses is responsible for the administration of the Parliament. The staff of the Houses of Parliament provides non-partisan support to all Parliamentarians to enable them to carry out their responsibilities as legislators.

For more information, please contact:



The Clerk to the Houses
Houses of Parliament
Gordon House
81 Duke Street
Kingston, Jamaica.

Tel#: (876) 922-0200 **Fax:** (876) 967-1708

Visit the Houses of Parliament website at:
<http://www.japarliament.gov.jm>

Welcome to Parliament



The Jamaican Parliament: An Overview

Jamaica's Parliament is the legislative arm of the State. In other words, the Parliament is responsible for making the laws that govern our country. It is a bicameral legislature based on the Westminster parliamentary model. In addition, the Parliament provides oversight of government ministries, departments and agencies. Members of Parliament also have the responsibility of making representation for the people they serve.

The Parliament of Jamaica consists of:

- Her Majesty the Queen
- the Senate (or the Upper House) and
- the House of Representatives (or the Lower House)

Before any law can take effect it has to be passed in both Houses and receive the Governor-General's Assent.

Our Parliament meets at the George William Gordon House which was named in honour of National Hero, George William Gordon who fought for the empowerment of all Jamaicans.

The Parliamentary Term

Each Parliamentary term usually lasts for five years – the interval between general elections. At the end of this five-year term, or earlier period, the Parliament is dissolved by the Governor-General on the recommendation of the Prime Minister. A general election must be held within three (3) months of the Parliament being dissolved.

Her Majesty the Queen

Queen Elizabeth II is the head of Parliament and the Governor-General is her representative in Jamaica. The Governor-General delivers the Throne Speech and gives the Assent to Bills that have been passed by the Parliament. Bills cannot become law without the Assent of the Governor-General.

The Mace is the symbol of royal authority during meetings of the House. The Mace has to be in its place for either House to lawfully meet.



The Mace represents royal authority during meetings of the Senate and the House of Representatives

The Senate (Upper House)

There are twenty-one (21) Senators in the Upper House. They are appointed by the Governor-General: thirteen (13) Senators on the recommendation of the Prime Minister and eight (8) on the recommendation of the Leader of the Opposition. The Senate is presided over by a President and in his/her absence a Deputy President. Both are elected by their fellow Senators when the Senate meets for the first time after a general election. The quorum for meetings of the Senate is eight (8) persons, not including the Presiding Officer. The Senate is governed by rules called Standing Orders.

The House of Representatives (Lower House)

The House of Representatives is made up of sixty-three (63) Members of Parliament (MPs). Each Member of Parliament is elected by voters to represent one of Jamaica's electoral constituencies. The political party to which the majority of MPs belong forms the Government. The Lower House is presided over by the Speaker and in his/her absence a Deputy Speaker. Both are elected from among the Members of the Lower House at the first sitting of the House of Representatives after a general election. The quorum for meetings of the House of Representatives is sixteen (16) persons, not including the Presiding Officer. The House of Representatives is also governed by rules called Standing Orders.

Prime Minister & Leader of the Opposition

The Prime Minister and the Leader of Opposition must be Members of the House of Representatives. In accordance with the Jamaican Constitution, the Governor-General appoints as Prime Minister the Member of Parliament who has the support of the majority of Members of Parliament.