



Parliamentary Book Shelf

La procédure parlementaire du Québec, Pierre Duchesne, ed., Québec National Assembly, 2000, p. 493.

The year 2000 has been a bumper year for books on parliamentary procedure. *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* came out in February, and now the National Assembly has released its own publication, *La procédure parlementaire du Québec*. Is this a sign that the next millennium will be the era of parliamentary procedure?

Edited by Pierre Duchesne, *La procédure parlementaire du Québec* is a 500-page guide to the procedures and traditions of the Quebec National Assembly. The authors made concision their goal: they simply offer a practical description of National Assembly customs without going into detail about every rule. The idea was not to produce a "history" of the National Assembly, and although some of the notes give the authors an opportunity to provide historical perspective, there are no extensive theoretical discussions of the origin or rationale for rules and practices. However, what makes this book interesting is that it appeals to readers of every stripe:

from members of the legislature to parliamentary assistants to anyone who wants to find out more about National Assembly rules or to compare those rules with the rules governing other legislatures.

The book is divided into fourteen chapters and two appendixes (Rules of the National Assembly, and Rules of Procedure). It also includes an index and a short bibliography of works dealing with procedure. The writing is clear, and the fact that the book is divided into small sections makes it fairly easy to search and read. Footnotes are used sparingly, which is unfortunate because they do enhance the text. Each chapter opens with a short summary of the main points covered in that chapter.

Apart from a few chapters on the role of the Speaker and parliamentary procedure, *La procédure parlementaire du Québec* devotes equal coverage to practices and the parliamentary process. Some chapters deal with procedures (order and decorum, the decision-making process, unanimous consent, etc.), while others describe the day-to-day workings of the legislature (how sessions work, routine business, budget allocations, etc.).

For those making their first foray into the world of the National Assembly, the book is worthwhile for its terminology alone. We are in familiar territory most of the time, but the National Assembly has over the years adopted new equivalents for many parliamentary terms that have British roots. For example, the rest of Canada uses the French terms "première lecture", "deuxième lecture" and "troisième lecture" to mean first, second and third reading, but Quebec uses the terms "présentation", "adoption du principe" and "adoption de projets de loi". Committees are referred to as "commissions", not "comités", and the French equivalent of notice is "préavis", not "avis".

As far as content goes, it is hard to summarize a book that covers every aspect of parliamentary practice and procedures. The information is up to date, relevant and well presented, and the entire book can be read the way it might be used by those who, day in and day out, have to interpret the rules and find precedents.

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