



# Educational Resources

## PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE SIMULATION - CLASSROOM HARMONY ACT

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### Role Cards

#### Committee members and officials

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**Senator/MP \_\_\_\_\_, Chair of the Standing Committee on Learning,  
Innovation and Technology**

**Ontario**

**Government**

**Personal profile:** You are 54 years old. You worked in the high-tech sector for many years and were very proud to be elected Chair of this committee. You think the committee has important work to do, as the world is changing so quickly. A bill like this — which seeks to limit the use of technology — is not the kind of bill you would normally support. You are undecided on the issue and will listen to the merits of the arguments from all perspectives so that you are ready to make a fair and balanced decision if you have to cast the tie-breaking vote.

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**Mr. / Ms. \_\_\_\_\_, Clerk of the Standing Committee on Learning,  
Innovation and Technology**

**Personal profile:** You are 44 years old, and you have worked as a clerk for the Parliament of Canada for 16 years. As a clerk, you are an expert in the rules of Parliament, and, when requested, you give advice to the chair and members of the committee on questions of procedure. It is very important that you remain neutral on issues before the committee so that you can fairly advise all members of the committee. Personally, you think this bill will be difficult to enforce and is not as important as other work that the committee is currently doing.

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**Senator/MP \_\_\_\_\_**

**Alberta**

**Government**

**Personal profile:** You are 61 years old, and you have been a parliamentarian for eight years. You are a retired family doctor, and you treated many children and youth when you were still a practicing doctor. You know how much social and peer pressure kids face in school and how it can cause depression and anxiety. You think it's a grand idea to ban social media from the classroom because students need a break from social pressures when they are in the classroom. Additionally, as a member of the governing party who proposed this bill you are more than happy to be supporting it.

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Senator/MP \_\_\_\_\_

### Ontario

### Government

**Personal profile:** You are 38 years old, and you have been a parliamentarian for one year. You use social media to stay connected to constituents in your home riding/province while you are in Ottawa. Both your party and the majority of your constituents support the bill, but you think it is flawed because the way that we communicate in the world has changed. Should you vote with your party and your constituents, or with your personal beliefs?

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Senator/MP \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Amendment*

### New Brunswick

### Government

**Personal Profile:** You are 43 years old, and you have been a parliamentarian for five years. You have a daughter who is 15 and a son who is 12, both of whom spend several hours each week watching and posting videos on YouTube. When this bill was going through second reading it was well-publicized in both the national media and the local papers in Fredericton. Your office has received a lot of feedback about this bill. Many of the callers are parents who support this bill because they believe students need a break from social media when they are at school. In addition to supporting the bill you will propose an amendment to the bill to add YouTube to the list of banned social media.

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Senator/MP \_\_\_\_\_

### Quebec

### Government

**Personal profile:** You are 52 years old and have been a parliamentarian for eight years. You are a lawyer, and before you took office, you worked for the Government of Canada in the Department of Justice. Because your party proposed the bill it is assumed that you will also support it. As a former lawyer in the Department of Justice you are concerned that the penalties in the bill are rather harsh and could be the focus of a judicial challenge. You are hoping to be appointed to cabinet and are worried that this will not happen if you get into a conflict with your leader and party caucus over this bill. You will do what you can to preserve the nature of the bill, while arguing that the penalties should be reduced.

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## PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE SIMULATION – CLASSROOM HARMONY ACT

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**Senator/MP** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Nova Scotia**

### **Government**

**Personal profile:** You are 50 years old, and you became a parliamentarian eight years ago. You have a PhD in chemistry, and you taught at a small university before entering politics. You enjoyed teaching, and you miss the students since leaving the university. You still keep in touch with colleagues from the university, and they often complain that many of their students do not pay attention in class because they are on their laptops surfing social networking sites. According to the professors, students are more focused on Facebook than formulas. You would like to apply this bill to university classes, but realize that this would be unrealistic. Your party supports the bill, your constituents have been calling your campaign office in support of the bill and you support the bill.

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**Senator/MP** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Ontario**

### **Government**

**Personal Profile:** You are 45 years old, and you became a parliamentarian five years ago. You were a business analyst before you were elected, and you are single with no children. You have never used social media because you think it is a waste of time and a popularity contest, although your campaign team managed a temporary Facebook account during the past election. You are glad you are not in high school now, where your popularity seems to be so connected to social networking. Although your party introduced this bill, an informal poll in a neighbourhood newspaper showed that many of people in your young and urban neighbourhood don't support the bill. If you vote against the bill, you risk hurting your political reputation within your party.

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**Senator/MP** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Quebec**

### **Government**

**Personal profile:** You are 57 years old, and you have been a parliamentarian for almost 20 years. You practiced law before getting involved in politics and you are happily married with a 32 year-old daughter in Vancouver. Even though you have used social media for politics, you think it is fundamentally bad for society because people don't spend enough time communicating face to face. On Facebook you can see photos of your daughter and get status updates about what she is doing, but you rarely get to hear her voice or get a chance to see her. Your party supports the bill.

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## PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE SIMULATION – CLASSROOM HARMONY ACT

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Senator/MP \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Amendment*  
**Opposition**

**Personal profile:** You are 27 years old, and you became a parliamentarian last year. You have been interested in politics since high school, and you first joined a political party at age 16. After studying political science at university, you worked for an MP for three years. You see yourself as an advocate for youth issues. You sympathize greatly with high-school students who oppose this bill, and you will propose an amendment to the bill that will lower the age of students included in this bill from 18 to 14 years old. Your party is officially opposed to the bill, and if the bill cannot be defeated you are at least hoping to amend the bill so that it only applies to younger students.

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Senator/MP \_\_\_\_\_

**Newfoundland and Labrador**

**Opposition**

**Personal Profile:** You are 36 years old, and you became a parliamentarian five years ago. You are a very committed member of your political party and you are often seen on the news criticizing the government and working diligently to oppose almost all government policies. Your party leader and caucus colleagues are strongly opposed to the bill, and your leader has requested that all members of the party should vote against it. Your feelings towards the bill are divided because you think the penalties are too harsh, but generally agree that classrooms should be free from the distractions of social media. You will have to decide if you are going to vote with your caucus, or vote according to your own feelings on the issue and risk serious political consequences.

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Senator/MP \_\_\_\_\_

**Saskatchewan**

**Opposition**

**Personal profile:** You are 59 years old, and you have been a parliamentarian for 18 years. You have two grown children and two grandchildren. You are well-respected, and you were a cabinet minister when your party was in power. Your staff maintains an active online profile for you, tweeting on your behalf and updating your Facebook page although you don't personally use it very often. You would like your grandchildren to go to school in an education system that uses the newest technologies and teaching strategies to help them adapt to a changing world. You and your party are officially opposed to the bill for this and other reasons.



## PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE SIMULATION – CLASSROOM HARMONY ACT

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Senator/MP \_\_\_\_\_

### British Columbia

### Opposition

**Personal profile:** You are 36 years old, and you were an English and social studies teacher for 12 years before coming to parliament. When you were teaching, you embraced social media in a variety of classroom assignments. Students discussed issues on online forums, made and posted “rants” about politics on YouTube, and you once asked students to submit a poetry assignment on Twitter. You think this bill should be opposed because it does not reflect the future of teaching. You have spoken out passionately against this bill in your own caucus and in the media, and you were able to convince your party leader to request that all members of caucus oppose this bill.

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Senator/MP \_\_\_\_\_

### Prince Edward Island

### Opposition

**Personal profile:** You are 37 years old and you came to parliament after working as a journalist and online blogger. You very strongly believe that people should have free access to use social media wherever they want, and that schools should embrace this new technology and way of communicating. You intend to work very hard to convince other committee members to support your position and are not willing to compromise on important aspects of the bill. Your party has not taken an official position on this bill, so you have a “free vote.” When voting, you should consider a variety of viewpoints on the bill, as well as your own.

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Senator/MP \_\_\_\_\_

### British Columbia

### Opposition

**Personal profile:** You are 42 years old, and you were elected for this first time in the last election. You represent an area that used to be quite industrial, but has experienced a huge growth in the high-tech industry in the last 10 years, including the new Canadian location for a major social media provider. You used to work for a video game company and you don’t want the government passing any bills that could hurt what you believe is an important industry. Your party has not taken an official position on this bill, so you have a “free vote.” When voting, you should consider a variety of viewpoints on the bill, as well as your own.

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Senator/MP \_\_\_\_\_

### Yukon

### Opposition

**Personal profile:** You are 41 years old, and you became a parliamentarian five years ago. You are a lawyer, and a strong supporter of civil rights. You are appalled that the government is trying to pass legislation that limits the ability of teachers to use their best judgment regarding classroom practices and also limits students' access to information and their right to freely communicate with each other. You believe that some remote communities in Canada — often in the North — would greatly benefit from the government doing more to make sure that schools, libraries and homes have the same access to technology as more populated parts of Canada. Your party has not taken an official position on this bill, so you have a “free vote.” When voting, you should consider a variety of viewpoints on the bill, as well as your own.

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### Lead minister and witnesses

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The Honourable Mr. / Ms. \_\_\_\_\_, Minister of Learning.

### British Columbia

### Government

**Personal profile:** You are a 52 year-old lawyer and former teacher, and you have been a parliamentarian for six years. You were appointed minister of learning two years ago, your first cabinet portfolio. As a cabinet minister you are expected to support all of the government's decisions and priorities. You are enthusiastic about this bill and spent some time last week discussing it with your son Jeremy, a young high school science teacher. You expected that Jeremy would find this bill helpful as he often grumbles about difficulties in keeping his students on task. You were surprised to find that Jeremy was concerned about the bill because he felt it would be hard to enforce, and because he was worried about potential punishment teachers might face if they could not prevent students from using social media in class. Despite Jeremy's concerns, you are sure that the bill will be effective.

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## PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE SIMULATION – CLASSROOM HARMONY ACT

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**Mr. / Ms.** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Witness representing the Anti-Facebook Coalition**

**Personal profile:** You are 27 years old, and are the president of the Anti-Facebook Coalition. You joined the coalition six years ago, after your younger brother experienced a period of sustained depression in high school after being routinely bullied and victimized by people on Facebook who posted unflattering photos of him and wrote nasty things on his wall. You were terribly worried about him and incensed that there were not more laws to control and limit how people use Facebook.

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**Mr. / Ms.** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Witness representing the Anti-Facebook Coalition**

**Personal profile:** You are 23 years old and recently graduated from university. From age 19 to 21, you were a very heavy user of different forms of social media. You spent many hours each week updating your online profiles and paid little attention in your classes because you were obsessively checking Facebook every few minutes. Your grades were terrible, and your parents eventually warned they would stop paying your tuition if you didn't stop wasting your time. You cancelled your accounts and graduated with the top marks in your program. As a way of giving back to current students you want to raise awareness about how to cope with and avoid this addiction.

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**Mr. / Ms.** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Witness representing High School Students' Rights Association**

**Personal profile:** You are 17 years old, and you will be graduating from high school this year. You got involved with the High School Students' Rights Association (HSSRA) last year on the suggestion of your aunt, who is a human-rights lawyer and knew about your interest in these issues. You are now one of the two co-chairs of the association. As a very focused student you can't believe the amount of time some of your friends waste during class on social media. However, you believe that students are old enough to make their own choices and face the consequences of poor understanding and marks. You think the bill should only be applied to younger students who need more guidelines for making their own decisions.



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**Mr. / Ms.** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Witness representing the High School Students’ Rights Association**

**Personal profile:** You are a 28 year-old lawyer who has been contracted by the High School Students’ Rights Association (HSSRA). You were involved in HSSRA as a teen and continued to support it when you went to university. The volunteer time you spent with the HSSRA inspired you to go to law school, and you are pleased to have a chance to challenge laws and policies that are discriminatory to young people.

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**Mr. / Ms.** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Witness representing the committee for the rights of children**

**Personal Profile:** You are 18 years old and co-president of the Committee for the Rights of Children. You are co-president with your cousin, who is 16, and the other witness. You two started this committee when you were 14 and 12. You are now a university student and want to become a lawyer. Your cousin and you started this group in your small town in Saskatchewan, and, thanks to Facebook, you now have 17,000 members all over Canada. Your group speaks up against laws and school policies that you think do not respect the rights of kids. You are a vegetarian, but think kids should have the right to make their own food choices.

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**Mr. / Ms.** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Witness representing the 3Rs Defence League**

**Personal Profile:** You are a 34 year-old lobbyist hired by the 3Rs Defence League to convince members of government and the public about the negatives of Facebook so they will pass the bill to put more controls on the use and access to social media. Since taking this job, you have cancelled your Facebook account and don’t really miss it much. It took up a lot of time and since giving it up you are making more of an effort to see your friends in person.

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**Mr. / Ms.** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Witness representing the Federation of Social Media Providers**

**Personal profile:** You are 34 years old and a full-time lobbyist for the Federation of Social Media Providers (FSMP). Your job is to promote social media as an important tool in 21<sup>st</sup> century life — good for business, good for social lives and good for sharing information. You were an early user of social media, and you see it as an essential part of life in Canada. Your goal is to protect the interests of social media providers from the government bodies and media who often portray social media as damaging.

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### Members of the press gallery

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Mr. / Ms. \_\_\_\_\_  
Journalist

**Personal profile:** You are a newspaper reporter for a major Canadian national newspaper and a regular member of the “parliamentary press corps.” You are 47 years old, and you have been covering Parliament closely for seven years. You attend committee meetings once in a while, only when there is an issue before a committee that is particularly controversial or interesting to the general public. You think that the vote for this bill might be interesting because some members of Parliament may not be in agreement with their party’s position on the bill. You are hoping to write a story that captures the politics behind the issue rather than just being about the issue itself.

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Mr. / Ms. \_\_\_\_\_  
Journalist

**Personal profile:** You are a writer who writes stories for the home page of an internet search engine. This story is of interest to the search engine, so they sent you to Ottawa from Toronto to attend the committee meeting. You are a 25 year-old user and supporter of social media who personally disagrees with the bill. You are asked to write a news story, not an opinion piece, for the search engine; however, you are expected to take a position in the article that matches the beliefs of your bosses at the search engine.

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Mr. / Ms. \_\_\_\_\_  
Journalist

**Personal profile:** You are a 33 year-old writer/journalist who writes features for a Toronto newspaper. You are writing a series of stories about high school in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. So far you have written articles about academic anxiety and service clubs. Next week’s feature will be on social media and schools, and your editor has sent you to Ottawa to attend this committee meeting. You use social media extensively as a journalist, but rarely use it to connect with your friends. As a well-known journalist, you don’t like to share too much private information online.

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## PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE SIMULATION – CLASSROOM HARMONY ACT

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**Mr. / Ms.** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Journalist**

**Personal profile:** You are 17 years old, and one of the editors of an Ontario newspaper written by and for high-school students. You live near Ottawa, and you took the day off school to come to Parliament to listen to this committee hearing and write an article for the newspaper. You are totally against this bill, but curious to hear the different arguments the witnesses and other committee members make.

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**Mr. / Ms.** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Journalist**

**Personal profile:** You are a rookie 27 year-old reporter for “Parl Talk,” a newspaper that covers Senate and committee hearings that involve witnesses or clause-by-clause review of bills and publishes them in a Parliament Hill newspaper. You don’t have a particular opinion on the issue and plan to write a story to help those who follow parliamentary politics to understand the main issues and arguments in the debate over the bill.

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