

A RESEARCHER'S GUIDE

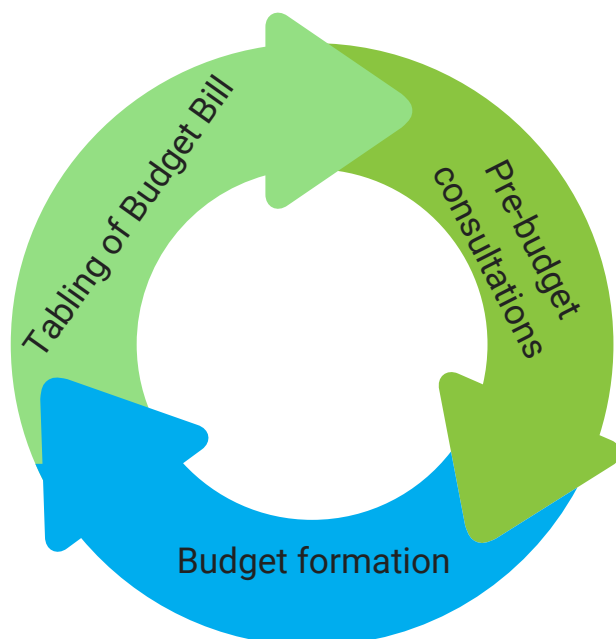
FEDERAL BUDGET TOOLKIT

PREPARED BY
EVIDENCE FOR DEMOCRACY

WHAT'S IN A BUDGET?

Every February or March, the Finance Minister gives a statement and tables a “Budget Bill,” in the House of Commons. The Budget details, among other things, how the government will spend and tax over the next fiscal year, which runs from April 1 - March 31.

A number of government bodies support the drafting of the Budget, including departments, which provide budgetary priorities, and the Standing Committee on Finance (FINA) who support pre-budget consultations and report these to the Minister of Finance.



HOW YOU CAN BE ENGAGED

The budget engagement process starts at the end of Summer and runs until after the budget is delivered the following Spring. There are multiple opportunities to have your voice heard. Here's how you can participate through submitting briefs, testifying at committee, and talking to your representative.



MEET WITH YOUR MP

Everyone is vying for a spot in the federal budget - including big corporations with entire lobbying teams. We need to get the word to as many MPs and decision-makers as possible to let them know why investing in science and evidence makes sense.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

The multi-partisan Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance (FINA) will accept pre-budget briefs in (generally in July and August). Pre-budget briefs are short documents that identify what an organization or individual want to see in the next federal budget - they receive hundreds of these each year.

PRE-BUDGET HEARINGS

FINA tours Canada and also invites experts to join them in Ottawa to testify at "pre-budget hearings." This is usually in late Summer and early Fall. It's okay if you have never testified at a Parliamentary Committee - E4D can help with training and information.

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE

The Department of Finance usually accepts pre-budget briefs in late Fall, and often provides additional engagement opportunities through social media and online surveys.

FEEDBACK AND ANALYSIS

Once the federal budget has been introduced in the House of Commons, usually in February, it's important to close the loop and provide analysis and feedback. This is especially important if you've met with your MP - it's a chance to say thank you, and provide helpful paths forward for the next budget.

ENGAGING WITH THE

FINANCE COMMITTEE (FINA)

Every year The House of Commons' Finance Committee carries out consultations ahead of the drafting of the Federal Budget. You can have your say in the Federal Budget by submitting a formal brief to this committee by their specified deadline.

WHAT IS A PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION?

Organizations and individuals submit a written brief detailing what should be included in the Federal Budget from their, or their organization's, point of view. It provides fact, opinion, and recommendations in regard to where the government should spend their money. From trade unions, to universities, to lobby groups, to corporations - the Finance Committee receives hundreds of submissions each year.

WHAT SHOULD MY BRIEF LOOK LIKE & HOW DO I SUBMIT IT?

- It should contain facts and interpretation that clearly answer the Committee's stated interests for this pre-budget consultation
- It should be under 2,000 words and, properly referenced
- Include an Executive Summary
- Clearly state your name, or the name of your organization on the cover of your brief
- Submit your brief online, in PDF form. Fill out the brief form noting your information, and upload the document

ENGAGING WITH THE **FINANCE COMMITTEE (FINA)**

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I SUBMIT A PRE-BUDGET BRIEF TO FINA?

- The Clerk of the Committee will have it translated as all briefs must be in both official languages.
- It will be disseminated to the members of the committee, and will be publicly available for all Canadians to read.
- You will be added to a list of members of the public who have requested to appear before the Committee.
- The Committee chooses a number of groups and individuals to testify to the committee “pre-budget hearings” regarding their expertise and recommendations made in their brief. Pre-budget hearings typically start in September, and can happen in Ottawa, and across the country.
- The Committee drafts a report of recommendations, based in part on what they have heard from submissions, testimony, and briefs, to the Minister of Finance.

THE COMMITTEE'S INTERESTS

It is helpful to frame your submission to answer questions the committee has presented. Every summer, FINA will release guiding questions, telling you what they would like to see. Some past examples are:

- What federal measures would help Canadians to be more productive?
- What federal measures would help Canadian businesses to be more productive and competitive?

WRITING A BRIEF

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- How would funding increases for research impact the productivity and competitiveness of Canadian science?
- What do I, or my organization, hope to see for government science?
- What facilities or programs are integral to the success of public science? How do they affect Canadians?
- What kind of support do I want to see for Early Career Researchers, and how would this specific recommendation impact the future of Canadian business, productivity, and competitiveness?
- What research do we need today to ensure we have the evidence to inform future policy challenges?



TESTIFYING?

If you are selected to testify, or are participating in pre-budget hearings in your community and need help - reach out to our team! We can coach you and outline what to expect.

ENGAGING WITH THE **DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE**

The Department of Finance will also accept pre-budget briefs. These are generally submitted later in the budget cycle, around December.

This means you can submit TWO pre-budget briefs: one to the multi-partisan parliamentary finance committee (FINA), and one to the government's Department of Finance. The guidelines for crafting the brief are generally similar.

HELPFUL HINTS

- Use their language. The government has stated its priorities.
- Show how your priorities fit with theirs, and use their language to demonstrate it.
- Keep it short and use plain language. This has to be translated, and read among hundreds of submissions.
- If you're selected to testify at a pre-budget hearing in the Fall, call us! We'll help you prepare and practice.

ENGAGING WITH **YOUR M.P.**



NEED HELP?

Unsure of how to schedule a meeting with your MP or what it will be like? We can help you!

See our toolkit "A Researcher's Guide to Talking to your MP," or contact our team.

Engaging with your Member of Parliament through scheduling a meeting is a great way to engage with the pre-budget process. It is also an opportunity to build a relationship with your representative, and to give them an idea of what kind of research is funded through government initiatives or at research institutions in their ridings.

Government M.P.s will submit letters to the Department of Finance detailing budgetary requests for their ridings, and their priorities. Opposition M.P.s will go through a similar process -- in addition, their party will also submit a letter with budgetary asks. Asking your M.P. if they can include science funding in their budgetary submissions and letters is a great, concrete request of your representative.

LEARN MORE

E4D's guide to talking to your MP

The House of Commons Guide for Submitting a Brief

Contact information for the Clerk of the Finance Committee

The International Budgetary Organization's "Open Budget Survey"

Example of a submission from E4D's pre-budget brief (2017)

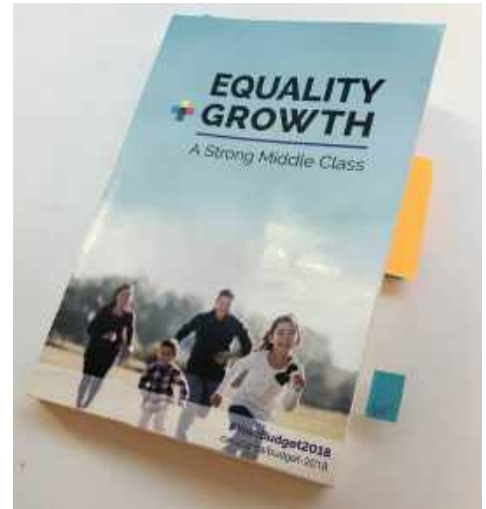
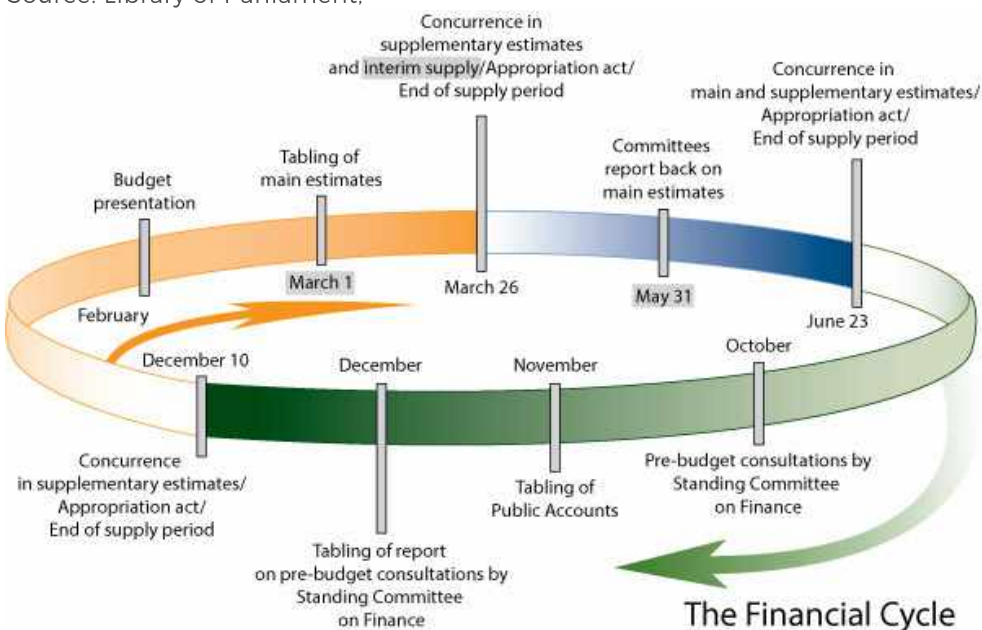


Diagram of Parliament's Fiscal Cycle
Source: Library of Parliament.





Evidence for Democracy (E4D) is the leading fact-driven, non-partisan, not-for-profit organization promoting the transparent use of evidence in government decision-making in Canada.

Through research, education and issue campaigns, we engage and empower the science community while cultivating public and political demand for evidence-based decision-making.

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