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# Tories plan new session of Parliament, to begin Mar. 3

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CTV.ca News Staff  
Date: Wed. Dec. 30 2009 8:51 PM ET

Prime Minister Stephen Harper asked the Governor General on Wednesday to prorogue Parliament until March 3, ending weeks of speculation that the legislature would not sit until after the Olympic Games have concluded in Vancouver.

Harper spoke with Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean Wednesday morning by telephone, according to his press secretary, Dimitri Soudas. The prime minister now plans to begin a new session of Parliament by delivering a Speech from the Throne on March 3, Soudas said. The government will present a budget the next day.

Parliament is currently on Christmas break and MPs were scheduled to return to the House on January 25. But rumours had been rampant swirling in recent weeks that Harper would ask to shut down Parliament until after the Winter Olympics in Vancouver are complete.

The announcement marks the second time Harper's Conservative government has prorogued Parliament since the 2008 election.

In an interview with CTV News Channel, Soudas called the decision "quite routine."

"There's nothing out of the ordinary about doing this," he said.

But Nelson Wiseman, an expert in Canadian politics at the University of Toronto, described the announcement as "unusual."

"I don't know when we've had two prorogations in this short amount of time," he said.

The move means that any legislation Parliament was considering is now dead, Wiseman added.

"It's as if you just had an election, you just start completely from scratch," he said. "And it also shows that the government didn't really care that much about its legislative agenda."

Parliamentary committees will be suspended as well, including one that is investigating Afghan detainee abuse, an issue that has been plaguing the Conservatives for months.

In a statement, Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff criticized the decision.

"Mr. Harper is showing his disregard for the democratic institutions of our country," Ignatieff said in a statement. "The decision to prorogue is about one thing and one thing only - avoiding the scrutiny of Parliament at a time when this government is facing tough questions about their conduct in covering up the detainee scandal."

"It's clear Mr. Harper will stop at nothing to prevent the truth about his government's actions from coming to light - even at the expense of Canada's critical economic recovery," Ignatieff said.

CTV's chief political correspondent Craig Oliver said prorogation will also give Harper time in which to appoint another group of new Senators. By filling five vacant Senate seats with Conservative supporters, the party would hold a majority in the Red Chamber and, by extension, on Senate committees, Oliver said.

### Photos



Prime Minister Stephen Harper speaks to reporters during a wrap up press conference following the 2009 United Nations Climate Change conference in Copenhagen, Denmark on Friday, Dec. 18, 2009. (Sean Kilpatrick / THE CANADIAN PRESS)  
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### CTV News Video

#### CTV National News: Craig Oliver on the break

Prime Minister Stephen Harper asked Governor General Michaëlle Jean to prorogue Parliament until March 3rd on Sunday, the second time he has done so in less than a year.

#### CTV News Channel: Dimitri Soudas, spokesperson

A spokesperson for Prime Minister Stephen Harper responds to comments saying that the only reason for proroguing parliament is to suspend the investigation into the Afghan detainee issue.

#### CTV News Channel: Nik Nanos, Nanos Research

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