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Our Country, Our Parliament: An Introduction to How Canada's Parliament Works

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Our Country, Our Parliament

AN INTRODUCTION TO HOW CANADA'S PARLIAMENT WORKS





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What's the Difference?

PARLIAMENT

- the Monarch (represented by the Governor General)
- Senators
- Members of Parliament (MPs)

- Monarch/
Governor General
- Prime Minister
- Cabinet members (Senators and MPs)

GOVERNMENT

- Executive (the Monarch/
Governor General, the Prime Minister and the Cabinet)
- Federal departments (such as National Defence, Justice and Finance)



WORD BUILDER – Parliament or Government

These two words don't mean the same thing!

Parliament is the legislative (lawmaking) part of government, made up of the Monarch, the Senate and the House of Commons. For example, *Parliament passed a bill*.

Government has two meanings:

- Generally, *government* refers to the management (governing) of a country.
- Specifically, *the Government* consists of the Prime Minister, the Cabinet and the federal departments they manage.

How to Use *Our Country, Our Parliament*

This book introduces you to Canada's Parliament. By the time you finish this book, you will understand:

- how parliamentary democracy works in Canada
- how people get appointed or elected to Parliament
- what Senators and MPs do
- how decisions made in Parliament affect you and your community

Parliament is a big place! To help you find your way around, a team of narrators have volunteered to help out.

What Do the Icons Mean?

You will see icons (symbols) in this book. These icons introduce you to new ideas and information.



WHAT ABOUT ME?

These sections contain discussion questions, or questions to ask yourself.



WORD BUILDER

This is where you can learn new words and phrases.



DID YOU KNOW?

Find out interesting facts about Parliament!



THE MAGNIFYING GLASS

Look closer when you see this symbol.

TALK ABOUT IT!

Look for this icon for suggestions on topics for discussion with your friends and family.

THINK ABOUT IT!

Think about why people acted the way they did. Imagine other ways they could have acted.

When a word is **in bold** you can find its definition in the glossary at the back of this book.

Your Narrators

Find out more about the narrators at the back of this book.





Canada: The Road to Democracy

CANADA IS A DEMOCRACY. WHAT IS A DEMOCRACY?

Democracy Defined

The word *democracy* describes a political system.

In a democratic country, all eligible **citizens** have the right to participate, either directly or indirectly, in making the decisions that affect them. Canadian citizens normally **elect** someone to represent them in making decisions at the different levels of **government**. This is called a representative democracy. Countries like Canada, the United States of America and the United Kingdom all have representative democracies.

Before European people came to Canada, many different Indigenous peoples governed their regions using many different political systems, including democracy.

TALK ABOUT IT

Students in your class may come from many different countries. Are these countries democracies? How many of your classmates have experience with other political systems? How are they similar to democracies? How are they different?



DID YOU KNOW? – Creating official designs for coats of arms is the responsibility of the Canadian Heraldic Authority. The **Governor General** is in charge of this organization.



CANADIAN COAT OF ARMS – A coat of arms is a symbol used to identify someone or something. Sometimes a coat of arms appears on an important building, or at the top of an official letter. This is the coat of arms of Canada. It contains many symbols that give us clues about Canada's history and what Canadians feel is important. See if you can spot:

- 1 the flag of the United Kingdom
- 2 the royal flag of France (fleur-de-lis)
- 3 symbols of England (golden lions, roses)
- 4 symbols of Scotland (red lion, thistles, unicorn)
- 5 symbols of Ireland (harp, shamrocks)
- 6 Canadian symbols (maple leaves)
- 7 symbols of monarchy (crowns, royal helmet)
- 8 the words (in Latin) *desiderantes meliorem patriam*, which means *they desire a better country*
- 9 the words (in Latin) *a mari usque ad mare*, which means *from sea to sea*



WORD BUILDER – The word *democracy* comes from the Greek word *demos* (meaning *the people*) and *kratos* (meaning *rule*). Early forms of democracy began around 2,500 years ago, in Athens and other Greek cities.

Using a dictionary, look up some other words that start with *demo*. List them with your class. Think about what they mean.

TALK ABOUT IT

What symbols identify you? Your family? Your community? Look around your neighbourhood. Can you see symbols that identify other people or things? Make a list of these symbols. List the other symbols your classmates collected. Do you all agree on what the symbols mean?



WORD BUILDER – Indigenous peoples

Indigenous (or Aboriginal) peoples are defined in the Canadian Constitution as including the Indian (First Nations), Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada. Each of these groups has distinct cultures, languages and traditions.

- Today, the term First Nations is often used instead of the word “Indian”, which many people consider outdated. There are roughly 630 First Nations communities across Canada (also called reserves).
- The Inuit live in the northern regions of Canada, Russia, Alaska and Greenland, and are united by a common culture and language. Approximately 64,000 Inuit reside in Canada.
- The term Métis, broadly defined, includes all persons of First Nations and European ancestry who identify themselves as Métis.

THINK ABOUT IT

Does your school have a student council? How do you decide which students will represent you? What decisions does a student council have to make? Why is it important that you have a representative?

Confederation

Canada became a country, the Dominion of Canada, in 1867. Before that, British North America was made up of a few provinces, the vast area of Rupert’s Land (privately owned by the Hudson’s Bay Company), and the North-Western Territory. By 1864, many leaders felt that it would be good to join into one country. Known as the Fathers of **Confederation**, these leaders met and wrote a **constitution** for the new country,

which had to be passed by the **Parliament** of the United Kingdom. Once passed, it became known as the *British North America Act*, or the *BNA Act*. This Act brought together the three provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Canada (which became the provinces of Ontario and Quebec). The *BNA Act* described the structure and main **laws** of the new country, as well as the division of powers between the new provinces and the **federal government**.



CANADA IN 1867 – Canada was much smaller in 1867. It included only four provinces: Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Where do you live? Was it part of Canada in 1867?



DID YOU KNOW? – The rest of Canada’s provinces and territories joined Confederation (became a part of the country) at later dates:

Photo reproduced with the permission of Natural Resources Canada 2008, courtesy of the Atlas of Canada

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 1867 Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia | 1873 Prince Edward Island |
| 1870 Manitoba, Northwest Territories | 1898 Yukon |
| 1871 British Columbia | 1905 Alberta, Saskatchewan |
| | 1949 Newfoundland and Labrador |
| | 1999 Nunavut |



1860 1870 1880 1890 1900 1910 1920 1930 1940 1950 1960 1970 1980 1990 2000

We have had a type of democracy in Canada since the mid-1300s! Did you know that the Haudenosaunee (or Iroquois) Confederacy is the oldest democracy in North America?





House of Commons Collection, Ottawa



THIS PAINTING, CALLED "FATHERS OF CONFEDERATION," is based on the original, "Meeting of the Delegates of British North America." The men shown here helped make the final agreement that created Canada. After years of political **debate**, there were three historic meetings in Quebec City, Charlottetown and London, England, to decide the future creation of Canada.

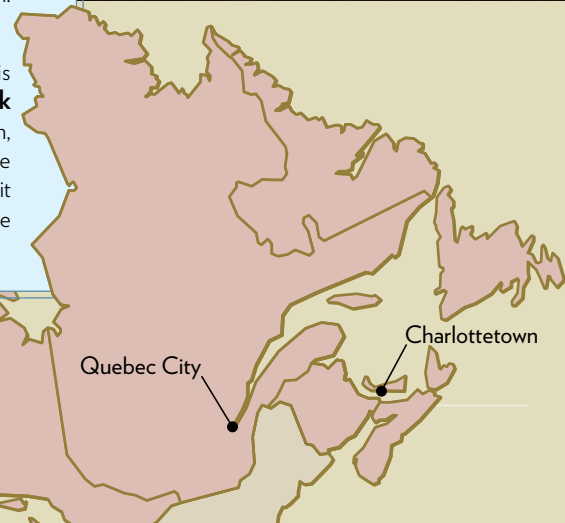
The artist, Robert Harris, worked mostly from photographs of the men.

- 1** the **Right Honourable**
Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada's first **Prime Minister**

- 2** the **Honourable**
Sir George-Étienne Cartier, one of Macdonald's closest friends and collaborators



DID YOU KNOW? – The original painting by Robert Harris burned during the fire that destroyed most of the **Centre Block** of the Parliament Buildings in 1916. When Centre Block was open, a copy of the painting by Rex Woods hung in one of its committee rooms. The main difference between the two is the addition of a portrait of Robert Harris and three more delegates to the London Conference of 1866 (who were officially recognized in 1927).



THINK ABOUT IT

Why are there no women in this painting?



THE QUEEN IS SIGNING THE CONSTITUTION ACT, 1982.

- the Honourable Gerald Regan (Secretary of State of Canada)
- the Right Honourable Pierre Trudeau (Prime Minister)
- the Honourable Michael Pitfield (Clerk of the Privy Council)
- the Honourable Michael Kirby (Secretary to the **Cabinet** for Federal-Provincial Relations and Deputy Clerk of the Privy Council)
- Queen Elizabeth II

Based on Robert Cooper, Canada. Office of the Prime Minister Collection, Library and Archives Canada, e02282980



The Constitution

The Constitution is the highest law in Canada. It includes several different laws, decisions by judges, agreements between the federal and **provincial governments**, and traditions. The main written parts of the Constitution of Canada are the *Constitution Act, 1867* (this used to be called the *British North America Act*) and the *Constitution Act, 1982*.

Constitution Act, 1982

In 1982, the Queen and the Right Honourable Pierre Trudeau, Prime Minister, signed the *Constitution Act, 1982*, which includes the *British North America Act* and the **Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms**.

WHAT ABOUT ME?

List some of the rules or laws that affect you. Does your family or your school have rules? Are these rules written down? Who is responsible for enforcing the rules? Are these rules easy to change? What would happen if the rules were easy to change?

WORD BUILDER

NOUN	VERB	ADJECTIVE
colony	colonize	colonial
government	govern	governmental
symbol	symbolize	symbolic

- Try using some of these words in sentences. Notice the endings on the adjectives: *-ial, -al, -ic*.
- See if you can fill in the table with some of these other nouns: contact, collection, identity, democracy.

WORD BUILDER – Many words can be

changed from a verb to a noun by adding *-ment*:

- amend → amendment
- govern →
- argue (careful of the *e!*) →
- assess →
- assign →

Brainstorm with your class. What other words follow this pattern? Try using both the verbs and the new nouns in sentences.

The *Constitution Act* is difficult to change. For some parts of the Act, the **Senate**, the **House of Commons** and all provinces must agree to any amendments (changes). Other parts can be changed with the agreement of the Senate, the House of Commons and at least seven provinces with more than 50% of the total population of all the provinces.





Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* forms the first part of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. Here are some protections that the *Charter* guarantees:

- freedom of religion, of thought, of expression, of the press and of peaceful assembly
- the right to participate in political activities and the right to a democratic government
- the freedom to move around and live within Canada, and to leave Canada
- legal rights such as the right to life, liberty and security
- equality rights
- language rights



CANADIAN CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

- 1 the Canadian coat of arms
- 2 the flag of Canada
- 3 the Parliament Buildings (Centre Block)
- 4 signature of the Right Honourable Pierre Trudeau (Prime Minister in 1982)

TALK ABOUT IT

Canadians can go to court if they feel that their *Charter* rights aren't being respected. Look online or in the newspaper. Can you find stories about these court challenges? What rights are most important to you and to your family and friends?



WORD BUILDER – Look closely at this word:

FREEDOM

The word divides into two – *free* and *dom*. The word *free* comes from the old German *frei* (meaning *beloved*) and the Sanskrit *priyah* (*beloved*); *-dom* is sometimes added to the end of a word to make it a noun (wisdom, kingdom). What other words contain the word *free*?

1



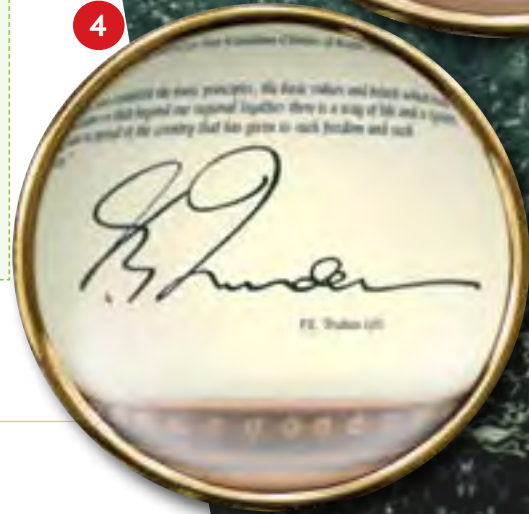
2



3



4



Canada's System of Government



Overview of the Federal Branches of Government

Three branches work together to govern Canada: the executive, legislative and judicial branches. The executive branch (also called *the Government*) is the decision-making branch, made up of the **Monarch** (represented by the **Governor General**), the **Prime Minister**, and the **Cabinet**. The legislative branch is the law-making branch, made up of the appointed **Senate** and the elected **House of Commons**. The judicial branch is a series of independent courts that interpret the **laws** passed by the other two branches.

Parliament itself is made up of the following three parts: the Monarch, the Senate and the House of Commons.

Canada is a **constitutional monarchy**, which means that we recognize the Queen or King as the **Head of State**, while the Prime Minister is the **Head of Government**.



The Three Levels of Government

Canada has three main levels of government.

1

The federal level (from the Latin *foedus*, meaning *league*).

This level of government deals with areas of law listed in the *Constitution Act, 1867* and that generally affect the whole country. (See list on next page.)

2

The provincial level (from the Latin *provincia*, meaning *under Roman rule*: from *pro*, to be in favour of something, and *vincere*, to conquer) **and the territorial level** (from the Latin *terra*, meaning *land*).

In each of the 10 provinces in Canada, the **provincial government** is responsible for areas listed in the *Constitution Act, 1867*, such as education, health care, some natural resources, and road regulations. Sometimes they share responsibility with the **federal government**. The three territories have their own governments, with responsibilities that are given to them by the federal government.

3

The municipal level (from the Latin *municipalis*, meaning *of a citizen of a free town*).

This is the level of government that is usually based in a city, town or district (a *municipality*). Municipal governments are responsible for areas such as libraries, parks, community water systems, local police, roadways and parking. They receive authority for these areas from the provincial governments.

Across the country there are also *band councils*, which govern First Nations communities. These elected councils make decisions that affect their local communities.



 **Country**
— **Federal Level**

 **Province/Territory —**
Provincial/Territorial Level

 **Municipality — Municipal Level**

The Division of Powers

The federal level of government has powers that are different from those of provincial governments, including:



- national defence
- foreign affairs
- employment insurance
- banking
- federal taxes
- the post office
- fisheries
- shipping, railways, telephones and pipelines
- Indigenous lands and rights
- criminal law

The federal government makes decisions that affect Canadians every day.

The federal government tries to make things fairer among the provinces. Through *equalization payments* (extra money) given to provinces that are less wealthy, the federal government tries to make sure that the standards of health, education and welfare are the same for every Canadian.

In the same way that it lists the powers of the federal government, the *Constitution Act, 1867* lists the powers of the provinces, including:

- direct taxes
- hospitals
- prisons
- education
- marriage
- property and civil rights

The Act also says that the power over agriculture and immigration should be shared between the federal and provincial governments.

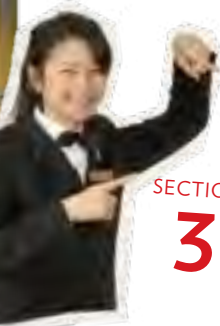
WORD BUILDER

NOUN	ADJECTIVE	RELATED WORDS
federation	federal	confederation federalize federate federalism

WHAT ABOUT ME?

The next time you go to a park, notice which level of government is managing it: federal, provincial or municipal. You can usually tell by the signs at the entrance. Do you notice any differences between these parks? Think about their location and what services and activities they have. Look at the Parks Canada website. Why do you think these national parks were created? How about provincial parks? City parks?





Canada's SECTION 3 Democracy in Action

Elections

Federal **elections** must be held at least once every four years to decide who will represent Canadians in the **House of Commons**.

Canada is divided into areas called **ridings** (also called **constituencies** or electoral districts). **Canadian citizens vote** for the candidate in their riding who they think will best represent them. There are usually many different candidates in each riding. They may represent a political party or be running independently.

How does a person become a candidate? First, he or she has to be *nominated* (or chosen) by fellow party members in his or her riding during a special meeting called a *nomination meeting*. If more than one person in the party wants to be a candidate for that riding, there is a vote during the nomination meeting to decide who it will be.

If a person does not belong to a party, then he or she can run for election in his or her riding as an *independent candidate*.

On Election Day, the candidate with the most **votes** becomes a **Member of Parliament** (MP or Member of the House of Commons) and represents his or her riding in the House of Commons in Ottawa. The party with the highest number of elected MPs across the country usually forms *the Government*. The leader of that party becomes the **Prime Minister**.

THINK ABOUT IT!

Imagine you were going to run in the next federal election. Do you know which party you would want to represent? Or would you choose to run as an independent? How would you decide?



DID YOU KNOW? – Because each riding should represent a relatively fixed number of people, as the population increases, the number of ridings has to be increased and the boundaries redrawn. In 1867, Canada had only 4 provinces and 181 ridings. Today, there are 338 ridings.

Running for office takes dedication and lots of hard work. Some candidates run many times before they win an election. Once the candidates are elected, they spend part of the year in Ottawa and part of the year in their home ridings.

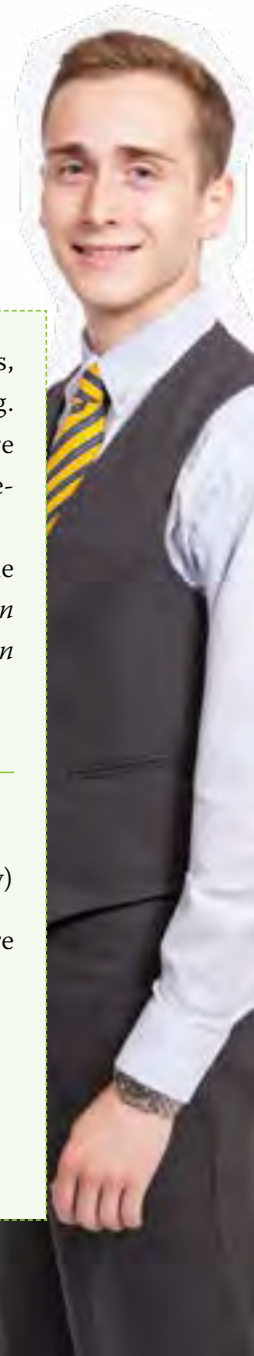


WORD BUILDER – In the world of politics, the verb *to run* has a specific meaning. To run in an election means that you are competing with other candidates to represent your riding. During an election, you may hear the expressions *run for office* and *running in an election*. They both mean *to compete in an election as a candidate*.

VERB	NOUN	ADJECTIVE
to elect	election	electoral (process, vote, officer) or elective (surgery)

The word *elect* means to choose. Here are a few sentences with the word *elect*:

- She was elected in 2006.
- An election will be held this year.
- He is the **Chief Electoral Officer**.





Dissolving Parliament

The Prime Minister asks the **Governor General** to end (or dissolve) **Parliament** and call an election. **Dissolution** (the act of dissolving) happens when:

- the Government's fixed four-year term is complete, or
- the Government loses a vote on certain important **bills** – on the **budget**, for example – in the House of Commons. These are known as *votes of confidence*.

Campaigns

After an election is called and before the day voting takes place (usually called Election Day), each candidate competes with the other candidates in the riding to convince voters why he or she is the best choice. This is called a *campaign*. A candidate tells voters his or her message in many different ways:

- campaign signs
- door-to-door canvassing
- advertising campaigns (on television, radio and social media, and in newspapers, for example)
- public meetings
- **debates**

Many of these activities cost money. There are rules about how much money candidates are allowed to spend on campaigns, and how much money people are allowed to give to candidates.

Of course, to do all this work, candidates have several people helping them. These people are called *campaign workers*. People of any age, including youth, can help out on campaigns.

WORD BUILDER – A teacher can dismiss class – that is, the teacher can tell the class that they can go home. The Governor General can dissolve Parliament, which is somewhat similar. These words both start with *dis-*. Take a look at these words:

- disable
- dissolve
- disappear
- disagree

Like the prefix *un*, *dis* makes the root word into its opposite. Try using *dis* with the following familiar words, then create some sentences with them: advantage, approve, believe, colour, comfort, connection, courage, engage, infect, illusion, satisfy, respect.

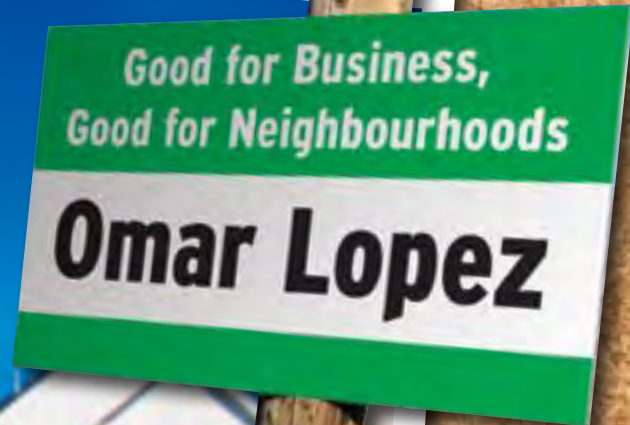
Sometimes, the *dis* word is used more than the root: disgust, for example. The root *gust* (which is associated with the sense of taste) is not as familiar to English speakers as *disgust*.





THESE ARE CAMPAIGN SIGNS.

What do these signs have in common? What is different? What message do you think each candidate is trying to send to voters?



 **WHAT ABOUT ME?**

Have you ever participated in an election? Young people across Canada get involved in elections by volunteering to help candidates, attending public debates and expressing their views on social media. Some issues that are often important to young Canadians are access to colleges and universities, employment and skills training and equal rights. Think about what election issues are important to you.

farmers

religion

climate change,

health-care

WORLD

WAR:

schools


Political Parties

Canada has many different political parties. People in the same party usually have similar opinions about public issues. In Parliament, members of different parties often have different opinions. This is why there are sometimes disagreements during elections and when Parliament is **sitting**.


Having different parties allows criticism and encourages debate. Canadians have a choice to express their views by voting for a member of a specific party during election time. This is called the *party system*.

 **WHAT ABOUT ME?**

You probably have opinions on and ideas of what would be good for Canada. Think about one issue that is important to you (the environment, immigration, education, or **law** and order, for example). Research some of the major political parties in Canada to find out where they stand on your issue. Which one do you think has the best ideas? Imagine you are creating a political party. What issues are important?

 **WORD BUILDER** – The word *campaign* comes from the Latin *campus*, which means *field*. In ancient times, armies would *take to the field* when they fought. In English, we still use the word *campaign* to mean a military battle or series of battles. We can also use the word *race* to describe an election competition. *Race* comes from the Old Norse *ras*, meaning *running water*. Like many words in English, we can use *race* either as a noun or as a verb.

NOUN	VERB	EXAMPLES
race	to race	She ran a very good race. He raced to the finish line.
vote	to vote	
form	to form	
act	to act	
help	to help	

 **WORD BUILDER**

- issue
- policy
- idea
- opinion

These words are difficult to explain because they are abstract. Look them up in a dictionary if you do not know them. Can you use these words in a sentence?

Voting

A Canadian citizen who is 18 years of age or older by Election Day can vote after he or she has registered with Elections Canada. Elections Canada will then add him or her to the voters' list.

On Election Day, most voters go to a nearby location called a polling station, where their names are checked off the voters' list. If they have not yet registered, they can do so at this time. At the polling station, each voter is given a ballot (a piece of paper listing all the candidates in the riding). Voters do not have to tell anyone who they are voting for — it is a secret ballot.

Voters make an X beside the name of the candidate they prefer. Then they fold up the ballot and place it into a ballot box.

If they incorrectly mark a ballot, or mark more than one name, that is called a spoiled ballot and it will not be counted.

Citizens can vote even if they are away from home on Election Day. Elections Canada has information on how to vote in advance, either in person or by mail. Some university campuses, youth centres and Friendship Centres even host special advance polling stations.

Once voting ends, the votes are collected and added up. This can take a long time. Television stations and websites have special features reporting the election results. Some races are very close and are decided by a small number of votes.

The minimum age to run in an election is 18 years old. The youngest person ever elected to Parliament was Pierre-Luc Dusseault, who was 19 years old when he was elected in 2011.



TALK ABOUT IT!

How do you think elections work in other countries? Try asking to see if your friends or family know. Here are some questions you might want to ask:

- Who is allowed to vote?
- How often are elections held?
- Where do people vote?
- Is the ballot secret?
- How do people find out who wins?

BALLOT BOX

- 1 Elections Canada logo
- 2 polling station number
- 3 slot for completed ballot



BALLOT

- 1 candidate's name (ordered alphabetically)
- 2 political party of the candidate
- 3 circle where the voter writes "X" to choose



Forming a Government

When the election is over, all winning candidates become Members of Parliament, or MPs for short. The MPs whose party does *not* form the Government are called **opposition** MPs. The **Official Opposition** is usually the party with the second-highest number of elected members after the winning party. The leader of this party is called the **Leader of the Official Opposition**.

? **DID YOU KNOW?** — Agnes Macphail was the first woman elected to Parliament. She served as an MP in the **House of Commons** from 1921-1940.



Yousuf Karsh / Library and Archives Canada / PA-165870

When it is time for Parliament to sit, **parliamentarians** will discuss and debate new bills (proposed laws) and make decisions that affect every Canadian. For more information on bills, see *The Process of Passing a Bill* in Section 4.

I work in the Parliament Buildings. When Parliament is in **session**, the **Senators** and MPs are in town. They meet to discuss issues and policy and to debate bills, both in the **Chambers** and in **committee**.

WHAT ABOUT ME?

Who is your MP? What riding do you live in? What party does your MP belong to? Do you know where your MP's riding office is? Look it up if you do not know! Your MP has people working in his or her office who can help you if you have a problem, such as difficulty getting a government service, or if you have a complaint or question about government. It is your MP's job to listen to *all* his or her **constituents** (people who live in the riding), even if they did not vote for him or her.

THINK ABOUT IT

Would you rather be a Senator or an MP? What do you think the advantages and disadvantages of each role might be?

WORD BUILDER



SENATE

This word comes from the Latin *senex*, meaning *elder*. Literally, it means a *council of elders*.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

The word *commons* comes from the Latin *communis*, which means *shared by many*. Other related words are community, communication and commune.



The Business of Parliament



The Role of the Monarch

Canada's **Monarch** (King or Queen) is also Monarch of several other independent nations. The Monarch, on the advice of the **Prime Minister**, appoints a Canadian to represent him or her in Canada. This person is called the **Governor General**.

The Governor General has several duties related to **Parliament**. He or she swears in the Prime Minister as **Head of Government** and opens a new session of Parliament with the **Speech from the Throne** in the Senate Chamber. This is a ceremonial speech, written by the Privy Council Office, in which the Governor General describes the goals of the new **Government**. He or she also dissolves Parliament, and gives **Royal Assent** to **bills** passed in Parliament.

The role of the Governor General also includes:

- serving as Commander-in-Chief of Canada (of the Canadian Forces)
- hosting foreign dignitaries and visiting other countries at the request of the Prime Minister
- celebrating excellence by giving awards to outstanding Canadians

WORD BUILDER

GOVERN – from the Greek word *kybernan*, meaning *to steer a ship* (the same root as the word *cyber*). Govern is a verb: *The King governed well and wisely*. Can you think of other words that stem from *govern*?

MONARCHY – from the Greek *monarkhia*, meaning *ruling of one*. It contains two parts: *mono-*, which means *one*, and *arkhein*, which means *to rule*. *Mono* is used often in English. Think of these words:

- monopoly
- monotonous
- monologue

-archy sometimes ends words that describe how something is ruled. For example:

- anarchy
- hierarchy



The Governor General has two official homes where he or she lives and works: Rideau Hall in Ottawa, not far from Parliament Hill, and the Citadelle in Quebec City.

The Two-Chamber System: The Senate and the House of Commons

Canada has a **bicameral** parliamentary system (the prefix *bi-* means *two*). That means that there are two separate **Chambers**, each housing its own separate group of **parliamentarians**: the **Senate** (p. 24) and the **House of Commons** (p. 26).

DID YOU KNOW?

The Stanley Cup, the highest prize in the National Hockey League, was a gift from Canada's sixth Governor General, Baron (Lord) Stanley of Preston (served 1888–1893). The trophy was originally named the "Dominion Hockey Challenge Cup."



DID YOU KNOW? – The Senate and the House of Commons are also called the **Upper Chamber** and the **Lower Chamber**. Another way to talk about either of these places is to say "Chamber."





The Senate

Senators are appointed by the Governor General on the Prime Minister's recommendation.

The formula for the number and distribution of Senators was written into the **Constitution**. In 1867, the Senate started with 72 members, but this increased as the country's population and geography grew. The number of seats in the Senate is now 105. A Senator must be at least 30 years old and must retire by his or her 75th birthday.

PROVINCE/TERRITORY	SENATORS
British Columbia	6
Alberta	6
Saskatchewan	6
Manitoba	6
Ontario	24
Quebec	24
New Brunswick	10
Nova Scotia	10
Prince Edward Island	4
Newfoundland & Labrador	6
Yukon	1
Northwest Territories	1
Nunavut	1
TOTAL	105

DID YOU KNOW? – The **Mace** is the traditional symbol of the Senate's and Speaker's authority. Notice how it has a crown at the top? Once the Mace is laid on the Table, the Senate is officially in session.

Chamber Business

The Senate has an important role in the law-making process: it reviews and **debates** bills proposed by both Chambers. Although Senators usually consider bills proposed by the House of Commons, they also suggest new bills (but these bills cannot be about spending public money or creating taxes). Bills must pass through both Chambers — the Senate and the House of Commons — and be given Royal Assent before becoming **law**.

All debates that take place in the Senate are recorded and published in both official languages. In addition, Senators present petitions, table documents, discuss **committee** reports and make statements in the Chamber.

DID YOU KNOW? – The Governor General can and does enter the Senate Chamber, but by tradition he or she does not go into the House of Commons. That is why the Speech from the Throne and the Royal Assent **ceremony** happen in the Senate.



SENATE CHAMBER

- 1 Throne (This is where the Monarch or the Governor General sits to read the Speech from the Throne, which tells Canadians what to expect during a new session of Parliament, and gives Royal Assent.)
- 2 Speaker of the Senate
- 3 Clerk of the Senate and the Parliaments
- 4 Page
- 5 Senators
- 6 Mace
- 7 Red carpet (red for monarchy)
- 8 Usher of the Black Rod

As **Senate pages**, we get to see the action up close. We are all university students. Only 15 of us are chosen every year.

I handle official documents and give messages to Senators when they are in session and in committee. Take a look at the picture on the next page and see if you can find one of us!





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The House of Commons

The House of Commons is the elected law-making body in Parliament. When **MPs** meet together in the House of Commons Chamber in Ottawa, we say that the House is *in session* or is *sitting*.

How is the seating of MPs in the House of Commons arranged? In the House of Commons Chamber, politicians from the same party normally sit together. The **governing party** sits to the right of the **Speaker of the House of Commons**. The **Official Opposition** sits directly opposite the Government. Where the members of the other **opposition** parties sit depends on the number of MPs elected from each party.

Chamber Business

The work of an MP in the Chamber includes reviewing and debating new bills that affect all Canadians. It also includes taking part in **question period**, making statements about important events and issues from the **riding**, raising issues and presenting recommendations and reports.

As House of Commons pages, we handle documents and distribute messages to MPs when they are in the Chamber. Every year, 40 first-year university students are selected to be pages. Can you see where we usually sit when the House is in session? (view page 27).

Usually, **Cabinet Ministers** and **Parliamentary Secretaries** introduce bills, but individual MPs can also introduce new bills (called **Private Member's bills**), as long as the bills do not involve taxes. The House is also where the **budget** estimates for each ministry or area of government services are debated and passed.

W WORD BUILDER – Some English words can be used as nouns or as verbs.

NOUN	VERB
bill	to bill someone
EXAMPLES: The health care bill passed second reading. The parliamentary restaurant will bill him for the dinner.	
report	to report
EXAMPLES: The House committee's report was very detailed. The Senator will report back to the committee.	
study	to study
EXAMPLES: The study shows that Canadians like their flag. The Prime Minister studied law in university.	
change	to change
hold	to hold
pass	to pass

Create sentences using these words:



COMMONS CHAMBER

- 1 Speaker of the House of Commons
- 2 Clerk of the House of Commons
- 3 Page
- 4 Government Members
- 5 Opposition Members (the Official Opposition along with MPs from other parties and independent MPs)
- 6 Prime Minister (the leader of the governing party)
- 7 Mace (the symbol of authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons. The Mace is placed on the Table and points towards the Government to show that the House is sitting.)
- 8 Green carpet (The green colour of Canada's House of Commons is the same as that used in the House of Commons in England for well over 300 years.)



DID YOU KNOW? – The first woman to take the chair as Speaker in Parliament was the Honourable Muriel McQueen Fergusson (left). She was Speaker of the Senate from 1972 to 1974. The **Right Honourable** Jeanne Sauvé (right) served as the first female Speaker of the House of Commons from 1980-1984. She was also the first woman to be appointed Governor General of Canada (1984-1990).



The Prime Minister

In Canada, the leader of the political party that wins the most seats in the House of Commons usually becomes Prime Minister. (This is in contrast to some countries, where **citizens vote to elect** their leader directly, such as the President in the United States.) He or she is sworn in by the Governor General.



TALK ABOUT IT!

Who is the Prime Minister of Canada?
What skills should a prime minister have?
Would you make a good prime minister?
What other countries have prime ministers?
Presidents? Both?

WORD BUILDER

PRIME – from the Latin *primus*, meaning *first*. Here are some other words and phrases that contain prime:

- primary
- prime-time television
- prime number

The Cabinet

The Prime Minister chooses members of the **Cabinet**. There are usually MPs (and often one Senator) who belong to the party in power. Those who head government departments are called *Ministers*. Each province generally has at least one **Cabinet Minister**. As Canada has grown and changed, the Cabinet has also grown and evolved, with ministries sometimes being renamed, added, dropped or reorganized.

The Cabinet takes *collective responsibility* for government policies. It must, in public, agree with the Government's decisions or resign.

THINK ABOUT IT

A hundred years ago, Canada had a Ministry of Railways and Canals and a Ministry of Overseas Military Forces. Why do these departments no longer exist? Some newer departments include Environment Canada and Public Safety Canada.



DID YOU KNOW? – There is a person called the **Whip** for each political party in the Senate and the House of Commons. He or she makes sure that Members from the party know what is going on in the Chamber, and that they are present when there is an important vote. In practice, the whips also assign each party's members to committees.

SENATE SPEAKER'S CHAIR

- 1 This chair is for the Speaker.
- 2 This one is for the Monarch or the Governor General.
- 3 This one is for the Monarch's or Governor General's consort (husband or wife).

When the Monarch or the Governor General attends the Senate, such as for the Speech from the Throne or Royal Assent, the Speaker's chair is removed.



WHAT ABOUT ME?

The work of the **federal government** is done through departments (or ministries) and agencies. Here are some examples of federal departments' areas of responsibility: the environment, citizenship and immigration, foreign affairs, defence and natural resources. Which department affects you the most? Which ones would you most like to work for?

WORD BUILDER

MINISTER – from the Latin *minister*, meaning *servant*. This word has the same root as *minor*. Related words include *administer* (administration, administrator) and *minor* (meaning *less* or *little*).

CABINET – originally, this word meant *small room*. Today, it sometimes means a cupboard or a piece of furniture where objects can be stored. In Parliament, it means the group of Ministers appointed by the Governor General at the request of the Prime Minister.



The Speakers

The Senate and the House of Commons each has a *Speaker*. The Speaker represents his or her Chamber when dealing with the other parts of Parliament (the Monarch or Governor General, the Senate and the House of Commons). Each Speaker is also responsible for making sure that rules of order are followed when his or her Chamber is sitting.

The Speaker of the Senate is appointed by the Governor General on the advice of the Prime Minister, usually for the life of the Parliament.



HOUSE OF COMMONS SPEAKER'S CHAIR

Look for the Speaker's chair on page 27.

Why do you think it's placed there?

The Speaker of the Senate enforces the Senate rules (or makes sure they are followed) about the order of speaking and the length of time a Senator gets to speak. He or she also announces the result of votes.

Electing a Speaker is the first thing the House of Commons does when beginning a new Parliament.

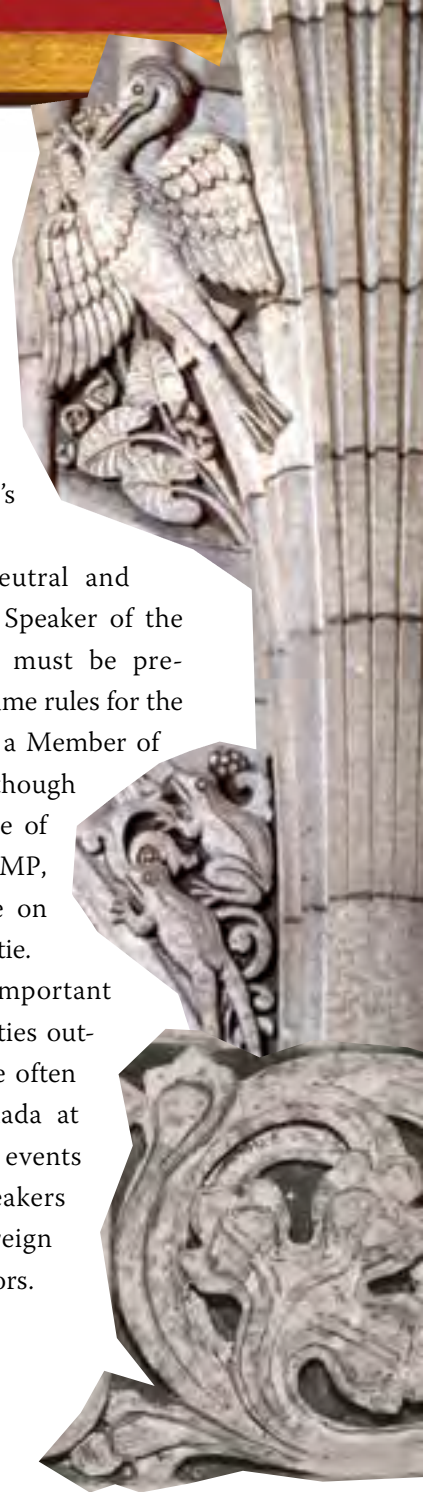
MPs choose which one of them will be Speaker by

secret ballot. All questions during debate in the House of Commons are directed through the Speaker.

Whenever a Senator or an MP enters, crosses or leaves the Chamber, he or she bows to the Speaker's chair.

Speakers must be neutral and fair. For example, the Speaker of the House of Commons must be prepared to enforce the same rules for the Prime Minister as for a Member of an opposition party. Although the Speaker of the House of Commons is an elected MP, he or she does not vote on decisions unless there is a tie.

The speakers have important diplomatic and social duties outside Parliament. They are often asked to represent Canada at important international events and meetings. The speakers also meet and host foreign dignitaries and ambassadors.





The Process of Passing a Bill

Making laws is tough work. Every day, something that you do or that you touch has been considered by a lawmaker. But how does an idea get to be a law that affects everyone?

The following shows how a bill is passed through either the House of Commons or the Senate.

Cabinet Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries typically introduce bills, but individual parliamentarians can also introduce bills (called Private Member's Bills).

DID YOU KNOW? – If a bill originates in the Senate, the bill is identified with the letter S and given a number; for example, Bill S-4. If a Bill originates in the House of Commons, it is identified with the letter C and given a number; for example, Bill C-78.

TALK ABOUT IT!

Take a walk around your neighbourhood. What do you see that needs changing? How can you change things, or get your government to change them? Talk to members of your family and your friends. What issues are important to them?



1 FIRST READING *50*

Any idea for a new law or a change to current law is written down. The idea is now called a *bill*. The bill is printed and read in the Chamber where it is introduced.

2 SECOND READING *60 60*

The bill is given a Second **Reading** in the Chamber where it is introduced, where parliamentarians debate the idea behind the bill. They consider questions such as, “Is the idea behind the bill good?” “Does it meet people’s needs?” “Who will be affected by this bill?” If the Chamber votes for the bill and it passes this stage, it goes to a committee.

3 COMMITTEE STAGE

At the Committee Stage, the bill is studied carefully.

Committee members hold *hearings* or special meetings where different people inside and outside government can make comments about the bill.



The committee can ask for government officials and experts, or *witnesses*, to come and answer questions. The committee can suggest changes or **amendments** to the bill when it gives its report to the Chamber.

4 REPORT STAGE

At the Report Stage, the committee reports the bill back to the Chamber. All parliamentarians can then debate it. During this stage, those who were not part of the committee that studied the bill can suggest changes to the bill.

5 THIRD READING *60 60 60*

The bill is then called for a Third Reading. The parliamentarians debate it again. Sometimes they can change their minds about a bill. They might vote for it at Second Reading but not at Third Reading

if they do not like the changes made to the bill. If it passes

Third Reading, the bill then goes to the other Chamber, where it goes through the same stages.

6 ROYAL ASSENT

Once both the Senate and the House of Commons have passed the bill in exactly the same wording, it is given to the Governor General (or his or her appointed **representative**) for Royal Assent (final approval), and it can become law.



HOW THE GOVERNMENT TURNS A GOOD IDEA INTO A LAW

THE GOVERNMENT
LEADS THE WAY WITH
**A GOOD IDEA
FOR A NEW LAW!**



THE MINISTER OR THE MEMBER
**INTRODUCES THE
GOOD IDEA BILL**

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Introduction and First Reading:
Reading of the title of the bill (The Good Idea Bill)

Second Reading:
Debate in Chamber and vote on the idea behind the Good Idea Bill

Committee Stage:
A parliamentary committee examines the Good Idea Bill line by line in committee.

Report Stage:
If the parliamentary committee proposes no amendments on the Good Idea Bill, the report stage is then skipped

Third Reading:
Debate and vote on the changed version of the Good Idea Bill

**THE GOOD IDEA
BILL PASSES!**
NOW IT GOES TO
THE SENATE.

SENATE

Introduction and First Reading:
Reading of the Good Idea Bill

Second Reading:
Debate and vote on the idea of the Good Idea Bill

Committee Stage:
A parliamentary committee examines the Good Idea Bill line by line in committee.

Report Stage:
If the parliamentary committee proposes no amendments on the Good Idea Bill, the report stage is then skipped

Third Reading:
Debate and vote on the changed version of the Good Idea Bill

**THE GOOD IDEA BILL
PASSES THE
OTHER CHAMBER!**
NOW IT'S
ABOUT A LAW.



ROYAL ASSENT

The Good Idea Bill receives Royal Assent after being passed by both Houses (the Senate and the House of Commons).



PRESENTING THE
**NEW GOOD
IDEA LAW!**

? **DID YOU KNOW?** – During the ceremony to receive Royal Assent, bills that have to do with taxes and financial matters are tied with a green ribbon; all others are tied with a red one.



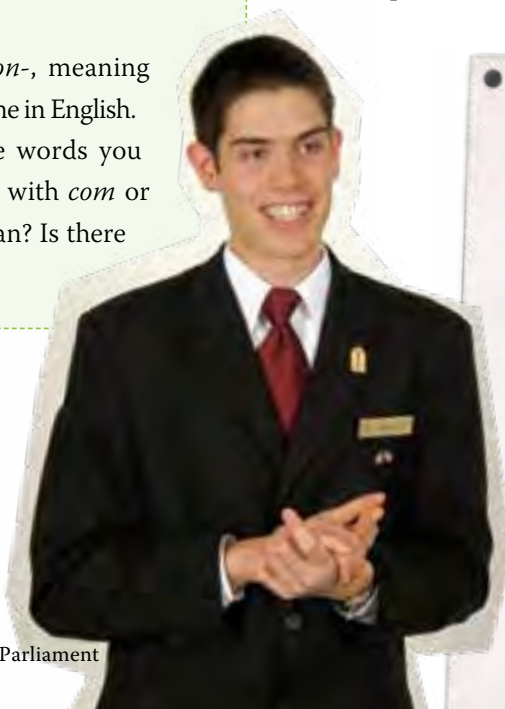
WORD BUILDER – Both Senators and MPs work on committees. You probably have committees at your school. The root of this word comes from *commit* — from the Latin word *committere, com-* (*together*) and *mittere* (*to put, or send*).

NOUN	VERB
a commitment	to commit
a committee	

Here are some sentences:

- The Senator is busy; she has a commitment this afternoon.
- He sits on the Human Rights committee.
- MPs commit many hours to committee work.

The prefix *com-* or *con-*, meaning *together*, is a common one in English. Write down all of the words you can think of that start with *com* or *con*. What do they mean? Is there a connection?



On the Job with a Senator

When Parliament is in session, Senators spend a lot of time in Ottawa. During the week, they debate and vote on bills in the Senate Chamber. Much of their work is done outside the Chamber, however. Senators often sit on at least two different committees. In committee, Senators work hard to understand all details of a proposed bill: they hear evidence from groups and individuals who will be affected by the proposed **legislation** and recommend changes. Members of the committees also review budgets and investigate issues that are important to Canadians, such as health care, children's rights and official languages. Committees also report on those issues. In addition,

Senators take part in **caucus** meetings. All these meetings mean serious research and preparation.

Senators also like to meet the people they represent in their regions. Between Chamber debates, committee work, meetings and travel, they try to find time to make public speeches and attend important national and international events.

Senators have many years of experience in the working world. They may have had prominent careers in politics, medicine, the military, law, sports, journalism, education or business. Their rich backgrounds make them experts in their fields. This helps them make decisions about bills that the Government wants to pass, or to advise the Government on new or better policies.

Senate — SAMPLE CALENDAR

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
8:00-10:00		Preparation for House Briefings, correspondence, return calls	Committee meeting	Regional Caucus	Return calls, Committee meeting	Research to prepare for introducing a bill	
10:45-12:00		Staff meeting, review research projects and current legislation	Prepare speech on bill (reading of a bill)	National Caucus	Replace another Senator at a Committee meeting	Return calls, meet staff to discuss schedule, office budget	
12:00-1:30		Lunch at an embassy	Senate Caucus (with both sides)	Lunch meeting	Circle 11 Parliamentary Association meeting + 20 lunch	Flight home	
1:30-3:30		Meeting with departmental officials to discuss draft regulations	Senate Sitting	Senate Sitting	Senate Sitting		Speech to the Rotary Club
3:30-5:30	Flight to Ottawa	Committee Meeting	Senate Sitting	Senate Sitting	Senate Sitting	Arrive home	
5:30-8:00	Arrive Ottawa	Dinner with informal "Auto Caucus"	Return calls, review correspondence, Terry Fox reception	Senate Sitting	Appear as a panel member on a CIBC program		
8:00-10:00			Meet with regional health chair				

A Day in the Life of a Member of Parliament

In addition to their work in the Chamber, MPs have many responsibilities. They are accountable (must answer) to the people who voted for them. At the same time, they must follow their party leader. While Parliament is in session, MPs typically spend Monday to Thursday in Ottawa, and Fridays and weekends in their riding, although this can change depending on their meeting schedules and on Parliament's business. When Parliament is sitting, there is a routine schedule to follow called the *Daily Order of Business*. MPs spend a set amount of time in the Chamber, in their offices and in committees.

Like Senators, MPs work on committees to examine proposed bills in detail and to investigate issues. They also hear witnesses and report back to the House with their findings and recommendations. Some committees are permanent (these are called *Standing Committees*), and consider very important issues such as the environment or immigration. Other committees are formed (or *struck*) if a temporary

issue needs to be examined. MPs also spend time in caucus every Wednesday morning, where they discuss strategy and ideas for laws with the rest of the Senators and MPs from the same political party.

While in their home ridings, they attend events and meet with people and organizations to listen to their concerns. At their offices in their home ridings and in Ottawa, they have a group of people who help them set up meetings, and prepare for debates and committee meetings. These researchers and administrators are called *staff*.

While Parliament is in session, the House has a daily schedule. An average week looks like this:

WORD BUILDER

Constituent, from the same root as *constitution*, means *a part of*. In politics, a **constituent** is a person a politician represents.



HOURS	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
10:00 – 11:00					Government Orders
11:00 – 11:15	Private Members' Business				Statements by Members
11:15 – 12:00		Routine Proceedings	Caucus Meeting	Routine Proceedings	oral questions
12:00 – 12:30		Government Orders		Government Orders	Routine Proceedings
12:30 – 1:30	Government Orders				Government Orders
1:30 – 2:00					Private Members' Business
2:00 – 2:15	Statements by Members	Statements by Members	Statements by Members	Statements by Members	
2:15 – 2:30	oral questions	oral questions	oral questions	oral questions	
2:30 – 3:00					
3:00 – 5:30	Routine Proceedings Government Orders	Government Orders	Routine Proceedings Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers Government Orders	Government Orders	
5:30 – 6:30		Private Members' Business	Private Members' Business	Private Members' Business	
6:30 – 7:00	Adjournment Proceedings	Adjournment Proceedings	Adjournment Proceedings	Adjournment Proceedings	



TALK ABOUT IT!

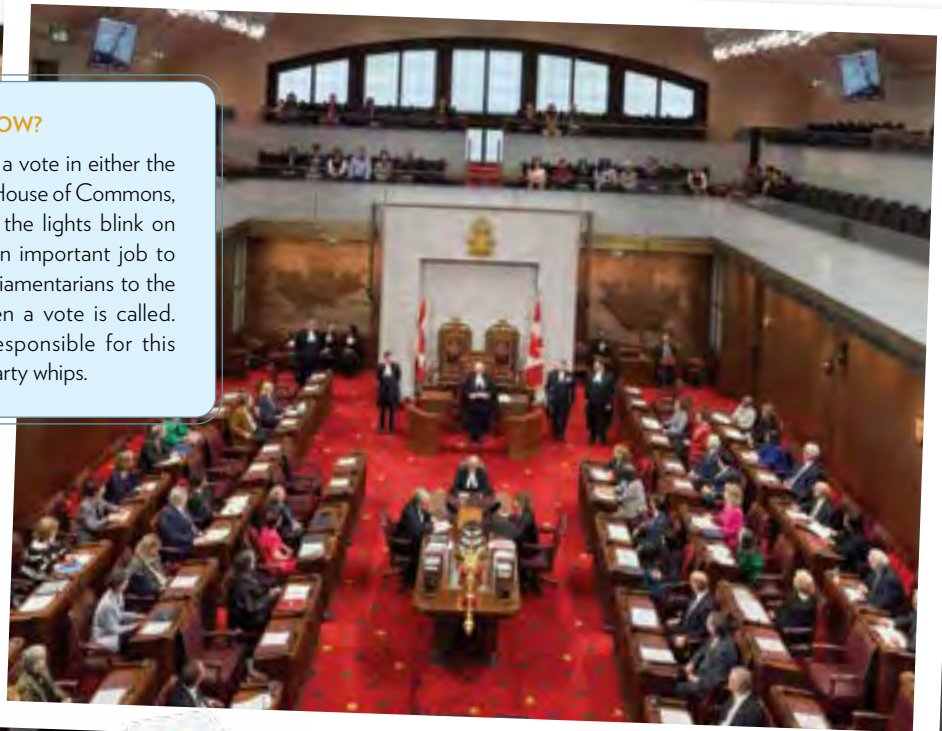
The liveliest part of the day in the House of Commons is question period (also called **oral questions**), where the Government MPs must answer questions from other Members. You can watch some of question period with your class. (Question period and other House of Commons business are shown on television and online, as well as recorded in *Hansard*, the word-for-word record of all discussion in the House of Commons.) How

do parliamentarians behave? Why is this so? How can you tell? What are other MPs doing while questions are asked?



DID YOU KNOW?

When there is a vote in either the Senate or the House of Commons, bells ring and the lights blink on and off. It is an important job to get all the parliamentarians to the Chamber when a vote is called. The people responsible for this task are the party whips.



DID YOU KNOW? – If you are touring the Parliament Buildings, you may be able to visit the Senate and the House of Commons Chambers. When the Chambers are sitting, you may even observe from the galleries and watch democracy in action.

Parliament 24/7

In 1977, Canadians were the first people in the world who were able to watch live televised broadcasts of debates and proceedings in their Parliament.

Today, with modern technology, there are many more ways to keep up with what is happening inside Parliament. Whether you are watching TV or browsing online, you can see broadcasts of the Senate and House of Commons debates, committee work and Question Period on the Cable Public Affairs Channel, better known (CPAC). You can also listen to podcasts. On the Parliament of Canada website, there are also webcasts of proceedings in the Senate and the House of Commons **Chambers** and **committees**. If there is a bill or an issue that really interests you, you can follow every stage of that legislation on the website.




DID YOU KNOW?

Most Senators and MPs have their own website. Use a search engine and look up your MP or a Senator to see what they are doing!

THINK ABOUT IT!

Why do you think it is important for Canadians to have access to a record of everything that is said in the House?



 One of the cameras in the Senate chamber at the Senate of Canada Building. The Senate began televising its proceedings in March 2019.



Your Capital

Citizens elect different people from their communities to different levels of **government** to make **laws**. These law-makers, or politicians, meet regularly to talk about current laws and to make new ones. They do this in a place called the **capital**. Ottawa, the national capital of Canada, is where federal politicians meet.



WHAT ABOUT ME?

Sometimes you may hear things like, “Ottawa sends soldiers” or “Ottawa makes a decision.” Of course, they do not mean the *city* of Ottawa; they mean the Government of Canada. Ottawa is the country’s capital. It is your capital. Look in a newspaper and notice how the word *Ottawa* is used. Is the article talking about something that affects you or your family?

TALK ABOUT IT!

All Canadian provinces and territories have capitals. Can you name them? (See answers below.) What is the capital of your province or territory? Is it the biggest city?



DID YOU KNOW?

The name *Ottawa* (or *adawe* in Algonquin) means *to trade* and was the name given to the First Nations people who controlled trade along the river.

CAPITAL	PROVINCE/TERRITORY
Edmonton	Alberta
Victoria	British Columbia
Winnipeg	Manitoba
Fredericton	New Brunswick
St. John's	Newfoundland & Labrador
Yellowknife	Northwest Territories
Halifax	Nova Scotia
Iqaluit	Nunavut
Toronto	Ontario
Charlottetown	Prince Edward Island
Quebec City	Quebec
Regina	Saskatchewan
Whitehorse	Yukon



Something is always going on at the Parliament Buildings, even when the **Senate** and the **House of Commons** are not **sitting**. Meetings, **committee** sessions, official visits and receptions occur regularly, and the work of researchers is constant.

Why Ottawa?

Choosing a capital city is not easy! Should it be in the centre of the country? Should it be the biggest city? Who decides where a capital should be?

In 1857, there were a few cities competing to be the capital city. To settle it, Queen Victoria chose Ottawa because it was centrally located between the cities of Montreal and Toronto, and was along the border of Ontario and Quebec (the centre of Canada at the time). It was also far from the American border, making it safer from attacks.



WORD BUILDER – Some words have two parts, like *lawmaker* (law + maker). Can you think of other words that use the word *law* or *maker*?

The word *capital* comes from the Latin word *caput*, which means *head*. *Capital* has many different meanings: very serious (capital punishment); money (capital investment); and very important (capital letter, capital city). Here are some other words that come from this same root: to cap something; a baseball or bottle cap; captain; caption.

The English word *citizen* comes from the Latin word *civis*, which means *a person who lives in a city*. Other words in this group include *city*, *civic* or *civilian*. Can you think of other terms that mean the same thing as *citizen*?

On and around Parliament Hill

Downtown Ottawa is where parliamentarians have their offices, make laws, and meet with advisors and citizens. Parliament Hill is a gathering place for Canadians to celebrate, protest, go on tours and enjoy the scenery. In 2019, Parliament underwent a big change – Centre Block, the permanent home of the Senate and House of Commons, closed its doors to undergo a multi-year renovation. During this makeover, the Senate Chamber is in the **Senate of Canada Building** and the House of Commons Chamber in **West Block**.

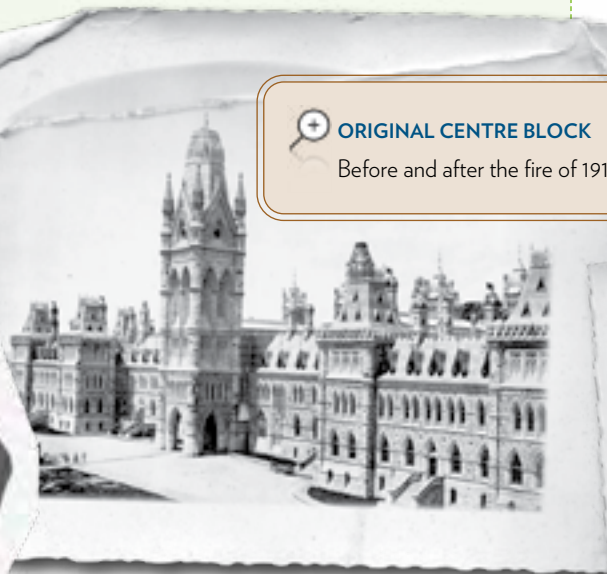
The Fire of 1916

The Centre Block you see today is not the original - the first Centre Block was destroyed by fire in 1916. The only part to survive was the Library of Parliament, which had fireproof iron doors. The East and West Block buildings, also located on Parliament Hill, were untouched by the fire.

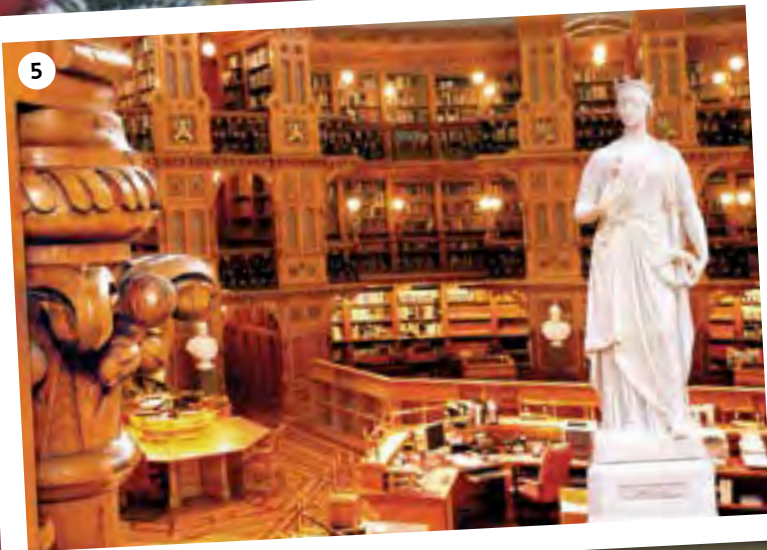


ORIGINAL CENTRE BLOCK

Before and after the fire of 1916.



5

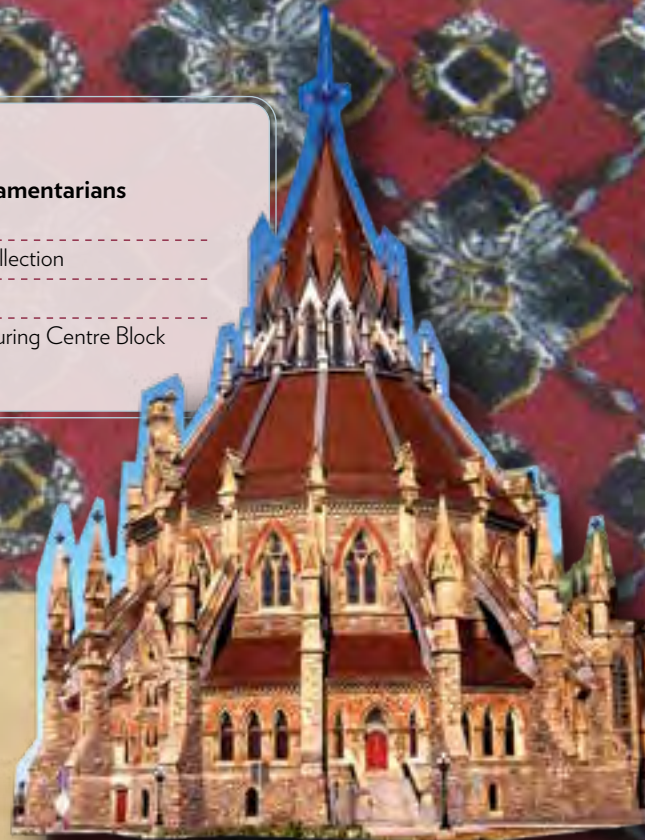


LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT

- the research centre for **parliamentarians** and their staff
- over 600,000 items in the collection
- over 350 employees
- The Main Library is closed during Centre Block renovations.

THE PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 Centre Block | 4 East Block |
| 2 Senate of Canada Building | 5 Library of Parliament |
| 3 West Block | 6 Centennial Flame |



6







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7 DID YOU KNOW? – The difference between gargoyles and grotesques is that gargoyles are usually waterspouts, while grotesques are fanciful and playful carvings. The word *gargoyle* comes from the French word *gargouille*, which means *throat* or *pipe*.



2

CANADIAN POLICE AND PEACE OFFICERS' MEMORIAL

- pavilion and memorial behind Centre Block
- honours all peace officers killed in the line of duty



5



THE CENTRE BLOCK

- 1 Peace Tower — 92.2 metres high
- 2 The carillon — 53 bells
- 3 Grotesques — these mythical creatures are fanciful and playful carvings
- 4 The flag — the national flag of Canada with the red maple leaf was first flown in 1965
- 5 The Books of Remembrance — the names of Canadians who have died in service to Canada are honoured in the Books of Remembrance, now located at West Block
- 6 Library of Parliament — opened in 1876

Library of Parliament — Malak



3



3



Parliament in Motion

Evolving Parliamentary Democracy

Because Canada has a **constitution**, Canadians have reliable rules to follow.

But sometimes, old **laws** do not fit society anymore. For example, in 1923 **Parliament** passed the *Chinese Immigration Act*, which closed Canada's doors to people of Chinese origin. This law was changed in 1947. The democratic system is flexible and allows Parliament to change old laws and create new ones.

National and even international events and issues influence Canadians' values on many levels. As Canadians consider these issues through open discussion and **debate**, their ideas may change over time. In turn, Canadians influence Parliament to change laws or introduce new ones.

THINK ABOUT IT

When Canada became a country in 1867, the laws were different than they are today. According to the laws of the time, many groups of people were not allowed to **vote** — people such as women, Chinese Canadians and Japanese Canadians. Why do you think this was? The voting age used to be 21, but in 1970 it was lowered to 18. Some Canadians talk about lowering the voting age again. How would lowering the voting age affect Canada and its youth? What if voting became mandatory?

WHAT ABOUT ME?

Think about the issues listed below. How do they affect you or your classmates? What might **parliamentarians** do about these issues?

- environmental concerns
- poverty
- reconciliation with Indigenous communities
- mental health
- street crime
- online bullying
- Canadian arts and culture
- preventing racial and ethnic intolerance

WORD BUILDER — FLEXIBLE / INFLEXIBLE

The word *flex* means *to bend*. If you are flexible, it can mean that you can bend in certain ways (touch your hands to the floor, for example), or it can mean that you are able to adapt to changes as they occur.

Consider these sentences:

- My yoga teacher is very flexible — she can put her foot behind her head!
- My yoga teacher is very flexible — she does not mind if I come on Mondays or Wednesdays.

Adding an *im-* or an *in-* to the beginning of a word sometimes turns the word into its opposite: flexible into inflexible, for example. Consider these words:

- polite impolite
- complete incomplete
- capable incapable
- sincere insincere

Careful! *-in* can also mean *incoming* or *into*. Here are some more words starting with *in* or *im*:

- interior, income, input, injury, involve, incline, include, investigate, important.

Look them up in your dictionary. Are they opposites?





Getting Involved in Democracy

The voting age in Canada for a federal **election** is 18. But voting is not the only way for you to get involved. If you feel strongly about an issue, there are many ways to express your views. Become knowledgeable about the issue by reading, researching and interviewing experts. Write to your local newspaper or post your thoughts on social media. Form a council. Send letters to a **Senator** or your **MP** to let them know how you feel. They may want to talk to you about it.

Helping out in an election campaign is another good way to get involved, no matter what your age. You can meet the candidate, help him or her prepare for public events, and help organize supporters. Does a political party interest you? Almost all parties have a youth wing that organizes events and distributes information.

Your local community might need your help — you can volunteer for a community association or for the board of your local

school, library or community centre. This is a great way to meet your neighbours and find out what is important to them. Community organizations have been successful across Canada in getting their concerns heard by politicians at all levels.

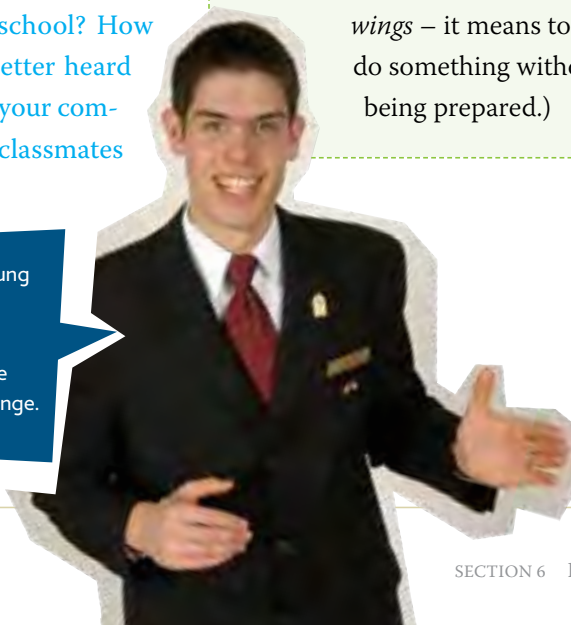
It is important to talk to your family about getting involved, too. Find out their opinions and discuss what issues are important to them. Canada's system of **government** works because of its **citizens**, and you are never too young to become part of it.

TALK ABOUT IT!

What organizations are you part of? Would you like to be more involved? How? Does your school have a student council? How are students elected? What role do they play in the school? How could student voices be better heard (both in the school and in your community)? Talk with your classmates about these questions.

Just because you may be too young to vote does not mean that you cannot get involved.

There are several ways to make your voice heard and to enact change.



WORD BUILDER – WING – from

Old Norse *wenge* (meaning *wing of a bird*). In English, the word *wing* means the wing of a bird, but also something that extends from a central base. Consider these sentences:

- The Canadian art collection is in the east wing of the museum.
- He belongs to the youth wing of the party.

Because the places to either side of a theatre's stage are called *the wings*, English also uses some phrases like:

- I have no idea what is on the test; I will just have to wing it. (Note: This slang comes from an actor learning his or her lines *in the wings* – it means to do something without being prepared.)



Glossary



amend – To change or improve something; for example, a law or an Act of Parliament.

amendment – A change that is made to a bill, a motion or a committee report with the intention of improving it.

B **bicameral** – Of two chambers, or rooms. Canada's Parliament is made up of two separate Chambers. They are the Senate and the House of Commons.

bill – A proposal for a law to be considered by Parliament.

budget – The government's plan for how it will collect and spend money each year.

C **Cabinet** – The group of ministers (mostly from the House of Commons and often one from the Senate) appointed by the Prime Minister. The Cabinet makes decisions about the Government's priorities and policies, the legislation that will be presented to Parliament, and how to collect and spend money.

Cabinet Minister – A person — normally a Member of Parliament or a Senator

— who is chosen by the Prime Minister, and appointed by the Governor General, to help govern. A Minister is usually the head of a government department.

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

– An important part of the Canadian constitution that ensures all people in Canada are guaranteed certain basic human rights and freedoms.

capital – The city where a country's legislature is located and the government carries out its business. The capital city of Canada is Ottawa. Each province and territory also has a capital city and a legislature.

caucus – A group made up of all Senators and Members of Parliament from the same political party. Caucuses meet regularly.

Centre Block – The permanent location of the Senate of Canada and the House of Commons. Centre Block is currently closed for major renovations. In the interim, the Senate of Canada and the House of Commons have moved to different buildings. Centre Block is recognizable by its clock tower, named the Peace Tower.

ceremony – A formal event that follows rules or traditions.

chair – The person in charge of a meeting. This person directs the discussion of business in a Senate or a House of Commons committee meeting.

Chamber – An important space where parliamentarians meet to discuss legislative business. The Senate Chamber, or Upper Chamber, is in the Senate of Canada Building. The Senate's furniture and carpet are red, a colour that signifies the monarchy. The House of Commons, also called the Lower Chamber, is in West Block. Its furniture and carpet are green, which follows the tradition set in Britain.

Chief Electoral Officer of Canada – This person is responsible for overseeing all federal elections.

citizen – A person who has full political and civil rights in his or her country.

Clerk of the House of Commons – The senior official in the Commons, and the main advisor to the Speaker and Members of the House of Commons regarding House rules and **procedures**.

Clerk of the Senate – The senior official in the Senate, and the main advisor to the Speaker of the Senate and to Senators regarding the Senate's rules and procedures.



committee – A group of Senators, Members of Parliament, or both, selected to study a specific subject or bill and write a report about it.

Confederation – The agreement by the provinces to join together to form the country of Canada and create a federal Parliament. This happened in 1867 with four present-day provinces: Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. The other six provinces and three territories joined at later dates.

constituency – The specific geographic area in Canada that a Member of Parliament represents in the House of Commons. (Synonym: riding or electoral district)

constituent – A person living in an area in Canada represented by a Member of Parliament.

constitution – The set of rules that a country like Canada follows to work as a country.

constitutional monarchy – A system in which the powers of the Monarch are limited by the written or unwritten constitution of the country. Canada is a constitutional monarchy. The Queen or King of Canada is our Head of State, whereas the Prime Minister is our Head of Government.



D **debate** – A discussion in which the arguments for and against a subject are presented according to specific rules. Discussions in the Senate and the House of Commons are called debates.

dissolution – The bringing to an end of a Parliament, either at the end of its four-year term or if the Government is defeated on a motion of non-confidence, by proclamation (an official announcement) of the Governor General on the advice of the Prime Minister. It is followed by a general election.

E **elect** – To pick one person from a group of several people by voting. The person with the most votes is elected.

election – The process of choosing a representative by vote. In a federal election, voters in each riding elect one representative to the House of Commons. The person who gets the most votes represents the riding.

F **federal government** – The government of Canada that acts and speaks for the whole country.

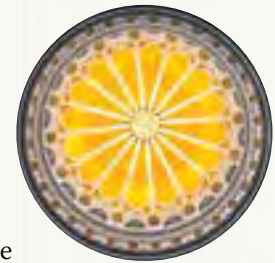


G **governing party** – The political party that forms the Government. Usually, more of its members were elected to the House of Commons than any other party.

Government – The political party with the most members elected to the House of Commons usually forms the Government. In the federal government, the Prime Minister and the Cabinet decide on policies and priorities, make sure they are put into action, and also guide the Government's legislation through the House of Commons and the Senate.

Government House Leader – The Minister responsible for managing the Government's business in the House, including negotiating the scheduling of business with the House Leaders of the opposition parties. (Synonym: *Leader of the Government in the House of Commons*)

Governor General – A person appointed by our Monarch, on the advice of the Prime Minister, to be the Monarch's representative in Canada. The Governor General is appointed for a term of five years. The term may be extended.



Government Representative in the Senate (formerly known as the Leader of the Government in the Senate) – Government Representative in the Senate (formerly known as the Leader of the Government in the Senate) – A Senator who is appointed by the Prime Minister to be the point of contact between the Senate and the House of Commons. This representative helps to direct debates on bills and make sure that all Senators have the information they need to conduct Senate business.

H Hansard – The daily official record of debates in the Senate and the House of Commons in English and French. Hansard was the surname of a British printer who prepared reports of parliamentary debates in 19th-century England. The *Hansard* is also called *Debates of the Senate* and *House of Commons Debates*.

Head of Government – In Canada, the Prime Minister holds the powers of the Head of Government and looks after the business of the country.

Head of State – Queen Elizabeth II, the Queen of Canada, is our Head of State. She is represented in Canada by the Governor General.

Honourable – A special title given to Senators and Cabinet Ministers for life, and to the Speaker of the House of

Commons as long as he or she is the Speaker. In Parliament, Senators and Members of Parliament use terms such as “Honourable Senator,” “The Honourable Member for...,” and “Honourable colleague” because traditionally they are not allowed to call one another by name in the Chambers.

House Leader – An MP appointed by his or her party to manage its business in the House of Commons. Every party has a House Leader.

House of Commons – One of three parts of Parliament. MPs meet and debate in the House of Commons Chamber.

I independent – A Member of the Senate or House of Commons who does not belong to a political party.

interest groups – Groups of businesses, associations and people with a common interest who ask MPs or Senators to speak for them and promote their interests. Their members are called *lobbyists*.

L law – A rule for all Canadians made by Senators, Members of Parliament and the Governor General through discussion and voting.



Leader of the Government in the House of Commons – See *Government House Leader*.

Leader of the Official Opposition or Leader of the Opposition (House of Commons) – The leader of the political party that usually has the second-largest number of MPs in the House of Commons.

Leader of the Opposition in the Senate – The leader of the party in the Senate that usually has the second-largest number of seats. The Leader of the Opposition in the Senate manages his or her party members’ activities in the Senate and in its committees.

legislation – Bills that are passed by Parliament.

legislative process – The steps by which bills are approved by Parliament and become laws.

Local government – The council that manages the business of a municipality (village, town or city) that is led by a mayor. Council members are elected by the people living in that area.

Lower Chamber – Another name for the House of Commons.

M Mace – A large, heavy, silver- and gold-covered staff that is a symbol of the power and authority of Parliament. The Senate and the House of

Commons each have a Mace. When the Senate and the House are in session, the Maces rest on the Clerk's Table in each Chamber.

Member of Parliament (MP) – Technically, members of both the Senate and the House of Commons are Members of Parliament, but most often this term is used for someone elected to a seat in the House of Commons. Members of the Senate are called Senators. Each Member of Parliament represents one of the ridings into which Canada is divided.

monarch – A king or queen of a country.

motion – A proposal by a Member for either the Senate or the House of Commons to do something, to order something to be done, or to express an opinion on a matter. To be considered by the Chamber, a motion must be seconded by another Member and voted on by all members. If adopted, a motion becomes an order or a resolution.

Official Opposition – The political party that usually has the second-largest number of MPs elected to the House of Commons. Both the House and Senate have an Official Opposition.

opposition – All political parties and independent Members who do not belong to the governing party.

oral questions – Another name for question period.

Page – A university student who works for the Senate or the House of Commons. He or she carries messages and delivers documents and other material to the Chamber during sittings of the Senate or House of Commons.

Parliament – Canada's Parliament is composed of the Monarch, the Senate and the House of Commons. Parliament has the power to make laws for Canada in certain areas of responsibility. A Parliament is also the period of time between an election and a dissolution.

parliamentarian – A Senator or a Member of the House of Commons.

parliamentary democracy – A system of government where the citizens express their political views by choosing representatives to go to Parliament to make laws on their behalf.

Prime Minister – The leader of the party in power and the Head of Government. The Prime Minister is normally an elected Member of Parliament and represents a constituency.



private Member – Another name for a backbencher: a Member of Parliament who does not have an official role in the House of Commons.

provincial or territorial government – Each of Canada's 10 provinces and three territories has a legislature that makes laws for the people living in that province or territory. Each legislature is located in the capital city of the province or territory.

Question period – A daily period of time in the Senate and House of Commons when parliamentarians ask the Government questions about its activities or important issues.

Reading (of a bill) – A word used for the stages during which a bill is debated in Parliament before it is passed to become a law.

report stage – A step in the passage of a bill through both the Senate and the House of Commons. The Report Stage is when the Senate or the House of Commons considers the report of the committee that has studied a bill, and when changes to the text of the bill may be proposed.

representative – A person who speaks for you.



responsible government – The Government, made up of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, must have the support of the majority in the House of Commons to stay in power. If the Government loses that support on a question of confidence, it must resign and ask the Governor General to call an election.

riding – Another word for constituency or electoral district.

Right Honourable – A special title given to Governors General, Prime Ministers and Chief Justices of the Supreme Court of Canada. The title can be used for the person's lifetime, even after retirement.

Royal Assent – The ceremony of Royal Assent takes place in the Senate Chamber and is performed by the Governor General or a deputy with Members of the House of Commons present.

S Senate – The Upper Chamber of Parliament has 105 seats.

Senate of Canada Building – The temporary home of the Senate of Canada. Located beside the Rideau Canal, the building was Ottawa's central train station until the late 1960's.

Senator – A person appointed to the Upper Chamber of Parliament by the Governor General on the advice of

the Prime Minister. A Senator represents a region of Canada.

Sergeant-at-Arms – The person who is responsible for security in the House of Commons. The Sergeant-at-Arms also carries the Mace when the Speaker enters and leaves the Commons Chamber.

session – The periods into which a Parliament is divided. Sessions start with a Speech from the Throne and are ended by prorogation (suspension).

sitting – A meeting of the Senate or of the House of Commons within a session. Usually one day long, although a sitting can last for only a matter of minutes or may extend over several days.

Speaker of the House of Commons – The Member of Parliament who is elected at the beginning of a Parliament by fellow MPs to keep order in the House of Commons and to ensure that its rules and traditions are respected.

Speaker of the Senate – The Speaker is appointed by the Governor General on the advice of the Prime Minister. The Speaker keeps order in the Senate and ensures that rules and traditions are respected.

Speech from the Throne – A speech delivered by the Monarch or the Governor General at the start of a new session of Parliament. The speech is read in the Senate Chamber and describes the Government's plans for the session.

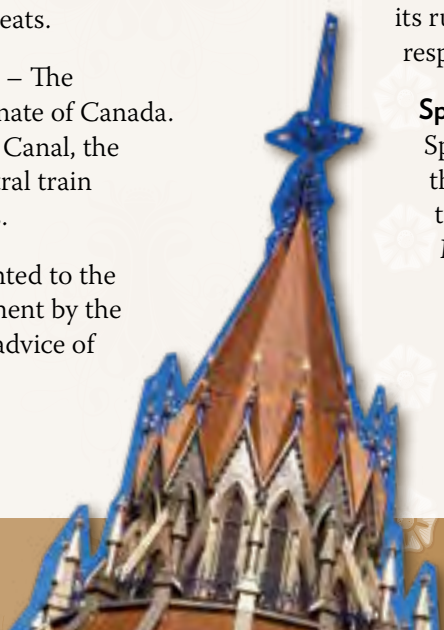
Supreme Court of Canada – The highest court in Canada. It has nine justices who are appointed by the Governor General, on the advice of the Prime Minister.

T table (verb) – To place a document before the Senate, the House of Commons or a committee for consideration.

U Upper Chamber – Another name for the Senate.

Usher of the Black Rod – An officer of the Senate whose responsibilities include delivering messages to the House of Commons when its Members' attendance is required in the Senate Chamber by the Governor General or a deputy.

V vote – To choose a representative in an election. Eligible Canadian citizens vote for their representatives to the House of Commons by secret ballot during federal elections. In the Senate and House of Commons, Members can vote either orally or by standing in their places.



W **West Block** – The temporary home of the House of Commons. Located on Parliament Hill, West Block is one of Parliament’s oldest buildings, completed in 1865.

Whip (noun) – The MP in a political party who is responsible for keeping other party Members informed about the Chamber’s business and making sure they are present in the Chamber, especially when a vote is expected. In the Senate, the Government Liaison is appointed by the Prime Minister.



Links

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA

www.parl.ca

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA EDUCATIONAL AND TEACHER RESOURCES

learn.parl.ca

TEACHERS INSTITUTE ON CANADIAN PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

learn.parl.ca

SENATE PAGE PROGRAM

www.sencanada.ca/en/about/working-at-the-senate/page-program/

HOUSE OF COMMONS PAGE PROGRAM

www.ourcommons.ca/about/pageprogram/Index-e.html

PARLIAMENTARY GUIDE PROGRAM

lop.parl.ca/guides

ELECTIONS CANADA

www.elections.ca

GOVERNOR GENERAL OF CANADA

www.gg.ca

CPAC, CABLE PUBLIC AFFAIRS CHANNEL

www.cpac.ca

Getting to Know Your Narrators

The narrators in this book were all real Senate and House of Commons pages and Parliamentary Guides at the time of writing. Their names have been changed to protect their privacy.

Sarah

As a Parliamentary Guide, I get to meet people from all around the world. It's an amazing opportunity.

Jacob

Growing up in Western Canada, I never thought I would get the chance to work at Parliament. I've learned so much about our country and government while working here.

Michelle

I came from British Columbia to become a House of Commons page. One of the biggest challenges of my job is memorizing all the names and ridings of the MPs.

Simon

As a House of Commons page, you have to stand whenever the Speaker stands. When I'm not working in the House, I like going out to youth groups and telling them about my job.

Marie

Working as a Senate page is such a unique experience. It's a fantastic job to have while going to university here in the National Capital Region.


Isabelle

I can work as a Senate page for one or two years. We come from all over Canada!

Daniel

Being a page is exciting work. I see important decisions being made every day. I also see a lot of the Parliament Buildings while I'm running around!



An ornate wooden doorway with intricate carvings and columns. The doorway is framed by a dark wood surround with decorative panels. On either side are tall, fluted columns with detailed capitals. The ceiling above the doorway features a decorative frieze with repeating motifs and a central shield-like ornament.

Cette publication est disponible en français.

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