

How a bill becomes a law



Review



- ❧ The role of the legislative branch
- ❧ The bicameral legislature
- ❧ Seating in the House of Commons
 - ❧ Governing seats, Official Opposition seats
 - ❧ Backbenchers vs Cabinet Ministers

Minority vs Majority Governments

- ❧ The number of seats the governing party has in the House of Commons plays a major role
 - ❧ If the governing party gets a majority (more than 50% of the seats) they will have little resistance in passing laws
 - ❧ This relates to party solidarity and responsible government





❧ If the governing party is a minority (less than 50% but more than any other party) they will have difficulty passing legislation

❧ The governing party would need to get the support of members of other parties in order for any vote to pass

❧ If they cannot get a majority vote on an important bill (like the budget) this is a vote of non-confidence, and they will be required to step down

❧ We've had minority governments in 1925-26, 1962, 1965, 1972, 2004, 2006 and 2008

ACTUAL RESULTS USING
SINGLE MEMBER PLURALITY

HYPOTHETICAL RESULTS USING
PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION



SEATS	% SEATS	SEAT DIFFERENCE	PARTY	% VOTE	SEATS
167	54.2%	+45	CON	39.6%	122
102	33.1%	+8	NDP	30.6%	94
34	11%	-24	LIB	18.9%	58
4	1.3%	-15	BLOC	6%	19
1	0.3%	-11	GRN	3.9%	12
0	0%		IND	0.4%	1
0	0%		OTH	0.5%	2



Passing a Law – Step One



- ❧ When the government decides to deal with an issue, it must make a law
- ❧ A Member of Parliament presents a bill in the House of Commons
 - ❧ A bill is a document that explains the new law
- ❧ This first step is called the first reading, there is no debate in this step



Passing a Law - Step Two



- ❧ At the second reading, MP's discuss the bill.
 - ❧ They argue about whether or not it is needed and is the best solution to the problem
- ❧ Then the bill is studied by a committee of MP's.
 - ❧ There are several standing committees to set up for different issues
 - ❧ They can suggest changes and improvements, these are called amendments

Passing a Law - Step Three



- Once the bill has been debated and amended, a final version is presented at a third reading
- All MP's vote on whether or not to make it a new law. If most (over 50%) vote yes, the bill passes the House of Commons and moves on to the Senate



Passing a Law - On to the Senate (Steps 4 - 6)



- ❧ The Senate follows the same steps of first, second, and third readings
- ❧ If the Senate makes any changes to the bill, it has to go back to the House of Commons to be approved all over again



Notice this chamber is red instead of green?

Passing a law - the final stage



- ❧ When the bill passes the Senate, it goes to the Governor General to be signed.
- ❧ This is called the Royal Assent because the Governor General signs the bills on behalf of the Queen
- ❧ Once it is signed, it becomes an act of parliament and the law of the country.



Key terms we covered today



- œ Bill
- œ Majority government
- œ Minority government
- œ Royal assent

Other key ideas (some are review)

- Bicameral legislature
- Backbencher
- Cabinet Minister
- Party Solidarity
- Vote of non-confidence