Welcome to Parliament
Visit Canada’s Parliament

1. Senate (Senate of Canada Building)
2. House of Commons (West Block)
3. Centre Block (closed for rehabilitation)
4. East Block
5. Visitor Welcome Centre
Welcome

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to the Parliament of Canada. Whether you are visiting in person or learning from afar, we hope that you will enjoy discovering the people, traditions and history that make this institution unique.

Though it has its roots in British parliamentary democracy, our national legislature is distinctively Canadian, and a living reflection of our country’s rich diversity. During the time that the Parliament Building is closed, visitors will notice Canadian symbols throughout Parliament’s interim homes; our country and its peoples are likewise represented in the hard work of our Senators and Members of Parliament.

We hope you enjoy learning about Canada’s democracy, and encourage you to connect with Parliament to find out more.

The Honourable George J. Furey, Q.C., Senator
Speaker of the Senate of Canada

The Honourable Anthony Rota, M.P.
Speaker of the House of Commons

Building Canada through Confederation

Canada is a confederation of 10 provinces and three territories that share a common federal government. Parliamentarians work together in Parliament to represent Canadians from across the country.

Confederation: Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick come together to form Canada.
The Senate Chamber at the Senate of Canada Building

Completed in 1912, the Senate of Canada Building was originally Ottawa’s central train station. The station closed in 1966 and was later converted into a government meeting space. The building was rehabilitated to house the interim Senate during Centre Block’s closure.

The House of Commons Chamber at West Block

Completed in 1865, West Block is one of Parliament’s original buildings. Over the years, it has housed offices for Members of Parliament and government departments. As part of the building’s rehabilitation project, it was renovated to accommodate the interim House of Commons.
Canada’s System of Governance

Canada is a constitutional monarchy. This means the King or Queen is the Head of State, but the Prime Minister is the Head of Government. Bills are created and passed by Parliament, but the Governor General (the Monarch’s representative in Canada) signs them into law.

**How Parliament Works**
Parliament has three parts:

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<tr>
<th>The Monarch</th>
<th>The Senate</th>
<th>The House of Commons</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Head of State</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Upper Chamber</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Lower Chamber</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Represented by the Governor General</td>
<td>Appointed</td>
<td>Elected</td>
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<tr>
<td>Represents Canada by region</td>
<td>Represents Canada by population</td>
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Making Canada’s Laws

Canada’s legislative process involves all three parts of Parliament. To become a law, a bill must be approved by both chambers and the Governor General.

**How Does It Work?**

- A bill (proposed law) is introduced in either the Senate or the House of Commons.
- Parliamentarians debate the bill and vote to decide if it should be studied further.
- If the bill passes, it is sent to a committee, which studies it in depth and may suggest changes.
- The bill goes back for a final debate and vote based on the committee’s report.
- If the bill passes the vote, it is sent to the other Chamber, where it goes through the same process.
- Once the bill has been passed by both chambers, it goes to the Governor General for Royal Assent and becomes Canadian law.
The Senate

The Senate is Parliament’s independent Upper Chamber. Senators are appointed by the Governor General on the advice of the Prime Minister to represent Canada’s regions and minority groups. Seats are distributed by region to ensure equal representation across the country.

Senators at Work

Senators are Canadians of accomplishment and experience from various professional backgrounds. Senators refine legislation passed by the House of Commons, suggest amendments, introduce bills and debate on issues of the day.

Much of the Senate’s work is done in committee where Senators use their expertise and hear from witnesses as they study bills in depth. Committees focus on a wide range of subjects, from aging and poverty to national security.

The Speaker of the Senate

The Speaker is the presiding officer of the Senate and oversees its administration. The Speaker plays an important role in facilitating the conduct of business in the Chamber, ensuring that the rules, procedures and traditions of the Senate are followed.

The Speaker has many responsibilities outside the Chamber. Speakers have ceremonial and administrative duties, receive diplomats and foreign dignitaries and represent Canada abroad. Like other Senators, they also serve the people of their home region.

The Honourable George J. Furey, Q.C., Senator

Newfoundland and Labrador

Speaker Furey became the 45th Speaker of the Senate on December 3, 2015 and is the first from Newfoundland and Labrador.

Prior to becoming Speaker, he was actively involved in numerous Senate committees, including serving as Chair of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration and the Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs. Speaker Furey was appointed to the Senate in 1999, following a distinguished career as an educator and a lawyer.
The House of Commons

The House of Commons is the elected law-making body in Parliament. Each of the 338 Members of Parliament (usually called MPs) represents a specific geographic area in Canada, known as a constituency or riding.

Members of Parliament at Work

MPs serve as representatives of the people who live in their constituency and bring their concerns to the House of Commons. MPs spend much of their time debating, voting and participating in committees.

Most MPs belong to a political party. The party leader with the most seats becomes the Prime Minister and forms the Government. The second-largest party becomes the Official Opposition.

Every day when the House is sitting, 45 minutes are set aside for Opposition MPs to challenge the Government on its actions and policies. This process, called Question Period, helps keep the Government accountable to Canadians.

The Speaker of the House of Commons

The Speaker is the impartial referee of the House, maintaining order and enforcing the rules of debate. As the presiding officer of the House, the Speaker tries to ensure a balance between allowing the Government to conduct its business and protecting the Opposition’s right to be heard.

The Speaker oversees the administration and finances of the House, welcomes visiting dignitaries and diplomats, and serves the constituents in their riding, since the Speaker is also an elected MP.

The Honourable Anthony Rota, M.P

Nipissing—Timiskaming (Ontario)

On December 5, 2019, Anthony Rota became the 37th Speaker of the House of Commons.

Before being elected Speaker, he served as Assistant Deputy Speaker and Assistant Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole from 2015 to 2019 and was Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology in the 40th Parliament. Speaker Rota was first elected to represent Nipissing—Timiskaming in the House of Commons in 2004.
Rehabilitating Centre Block

Centre Block is currently closed for rehabilitation work to preserve and modernize the building for future generations.

As part of a long-term plan for all Parliament buildings, Centre Block is being upgraded to current building standards while still preserving its heritage character.

Visitors can still explore this historic building in virtual reality and online at experienceparliament.ca.

Beyond the Books

The Library of Parliament’s main branch in Centre Block is closed throughout the rehabilitation. The Library continues to offer parliamentarians and their staff customized research and analysis, news and information services, publications and educational resources that help Canadians learn about Parliament. The Library also provides guided tours of Parliament to over 350,000 visitors every year.

The Peace Tower

Centre Block’s iconic clock tower was completed in 1927 as a monument to peace and to commemorate those who gave their lives during the First World War. Inside the Tower is the Memorial Chamber, a space dedicated to fallen military members.

The Books of Remembrance

The Books of Remembrance commemorate the lives of over 118,000 Canadians who have died in military service. The books are elaborately decorated by hand and placed on stone altars. Visitors may see the books following a guided tour of the House of Commons at West Block.
Ways to Experience Parliament

• Reserve free guided tour tickets online at visit.parl.ca.
• Attend debates in the Senate or House of Commons public galleries.
• Watch live and recorded proceedings of the Senate at SenVu: senparlvu.parl.gc.ca and of the House of Commons at ParlVu: parlvu.parl.gc.ca.

Learn about Parliament
The Library of Parliament produces several bilingual educational publications, activities and videos about Parliament at learn.parl.ca.

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