

CANADA 101



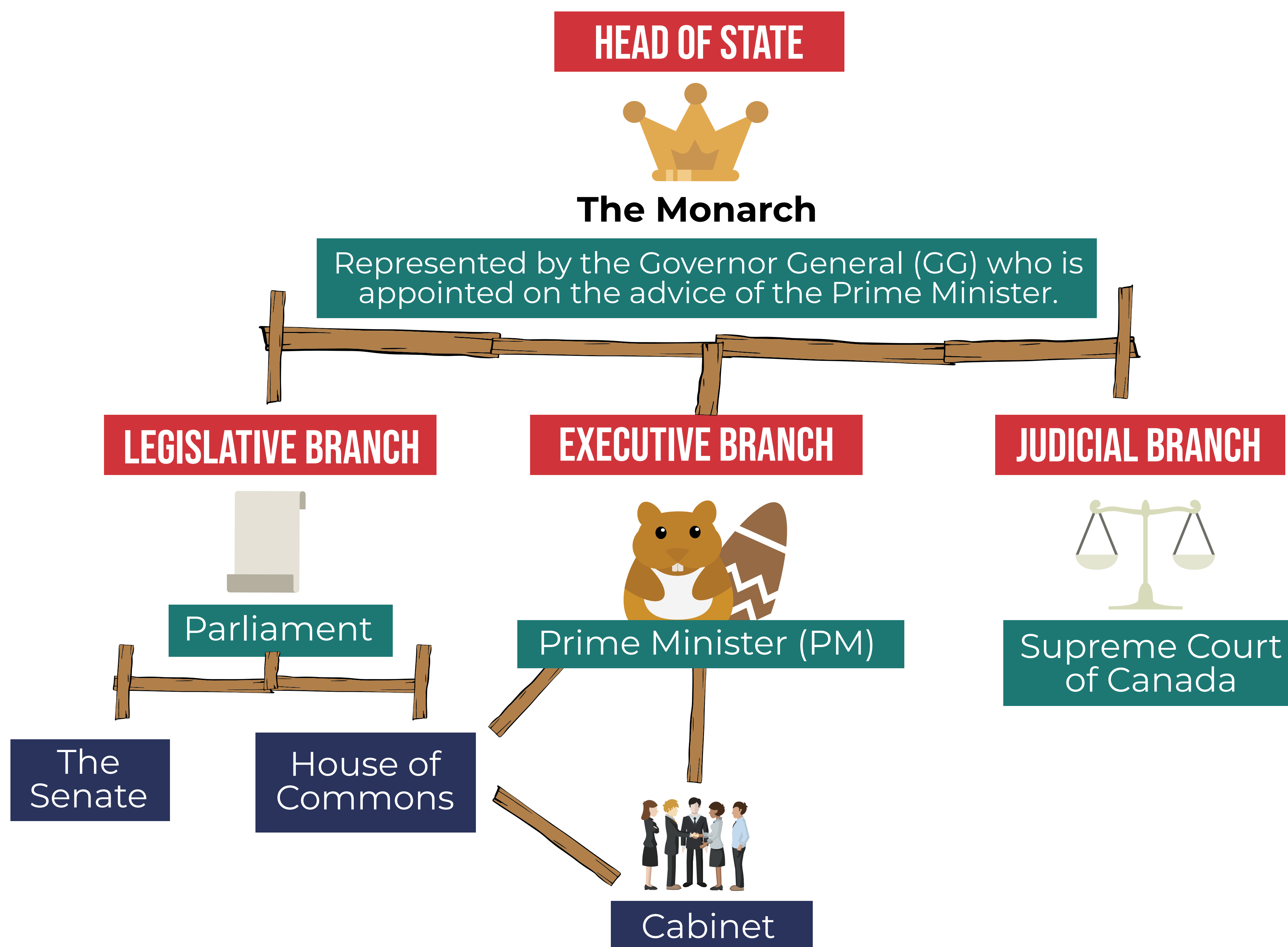
Everything you wanted to know about Canada's government and elections but were too afraid to ask...

The Parliamentary System

- Canada's government follows the Parliamentary system structure, a representative government in which an elected assembly legislates.
- Canada's national legislature (**Parliament**) is **bicameral**, meaning it is split into two chambers: **the House of Commons (the House)** and **the Senate**.



Federal Government Structure



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Canadian Branches of Government

The Legislative Branch (Parliament)

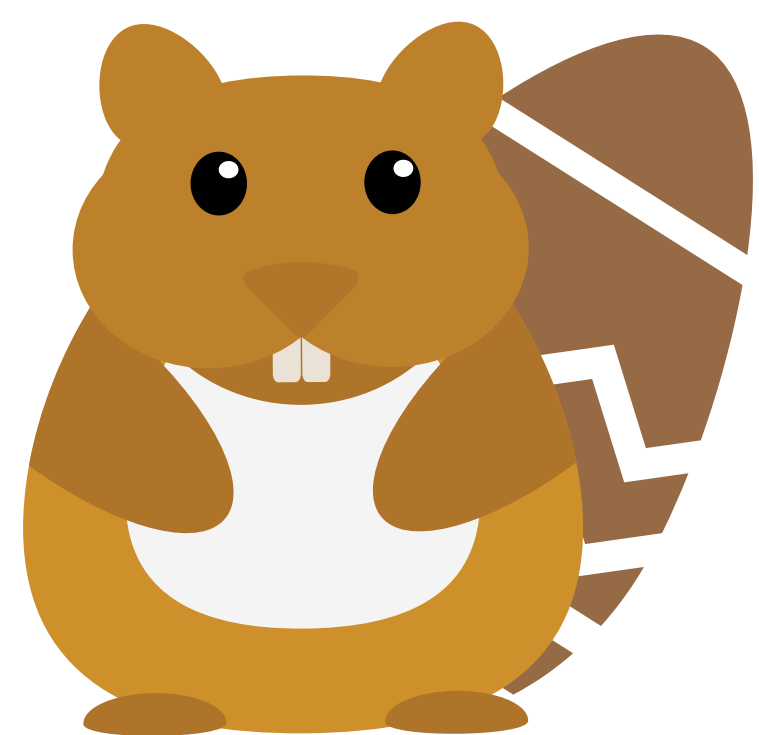
The House of Commons

- **338 Members of Parliament (MPs)**
- Each **MP is elected and represents** a geographical district in Canada called a **riding** or **constituency**.

The Senate

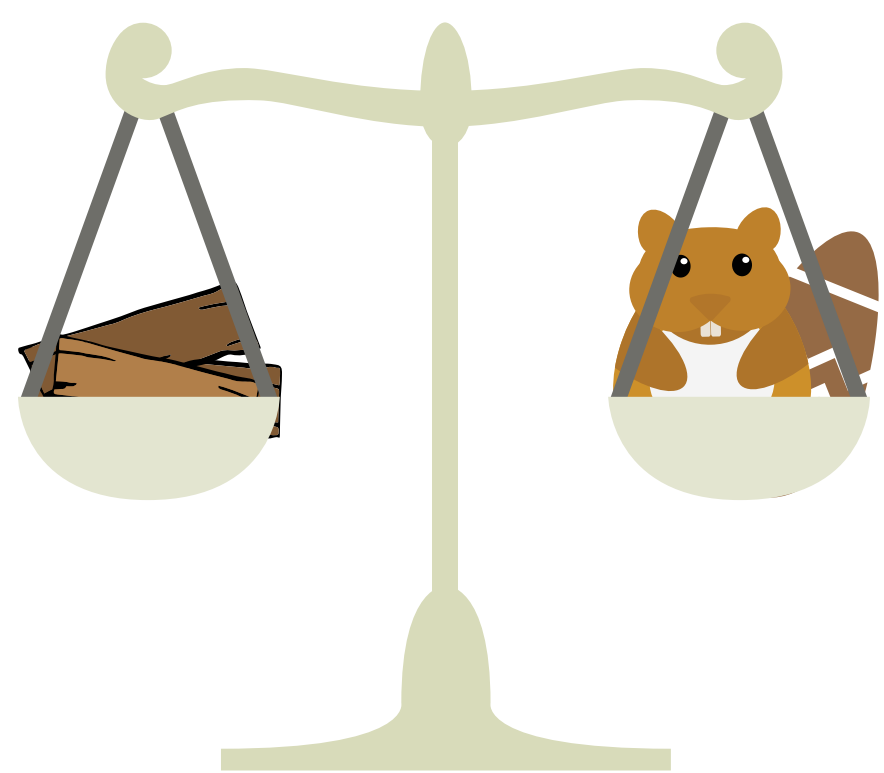
- **105 Senators**
- Senate vacancies are filled by new Senators appointed by the current PM.

The Executive Branch



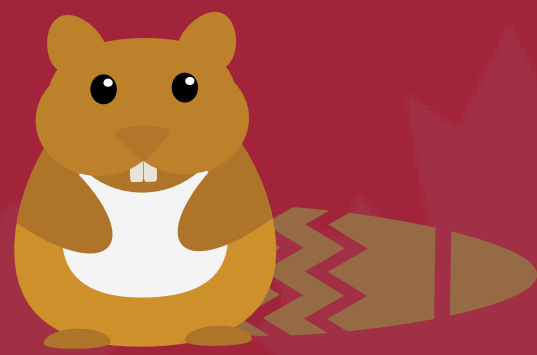
The PM is both the head of executive branch and an MP in the House. Canadians do not choose the PM when they cast their ballot, they vote for an MP and the corresponding political party earns a seat. The PM is the head of the party that wins the federal election. The PM appoints MPs to serve in Cabinet as Ministers of various portfolios.

The Judiciary Branch



The Judiciary Branch is headed by the Supreme Court of Canada, which is then divided into provincial and federal courts. It is independent of the executive and legislative branches. Federal judges (Justices) are appointed by the GG to interpret Canadian laws and are nonpartisan. There are nine Justices in the Supreme Court including the Chief Justice, the highest-ranking judge in the Court. There is no limit to how long a Justice can sit on the bench.

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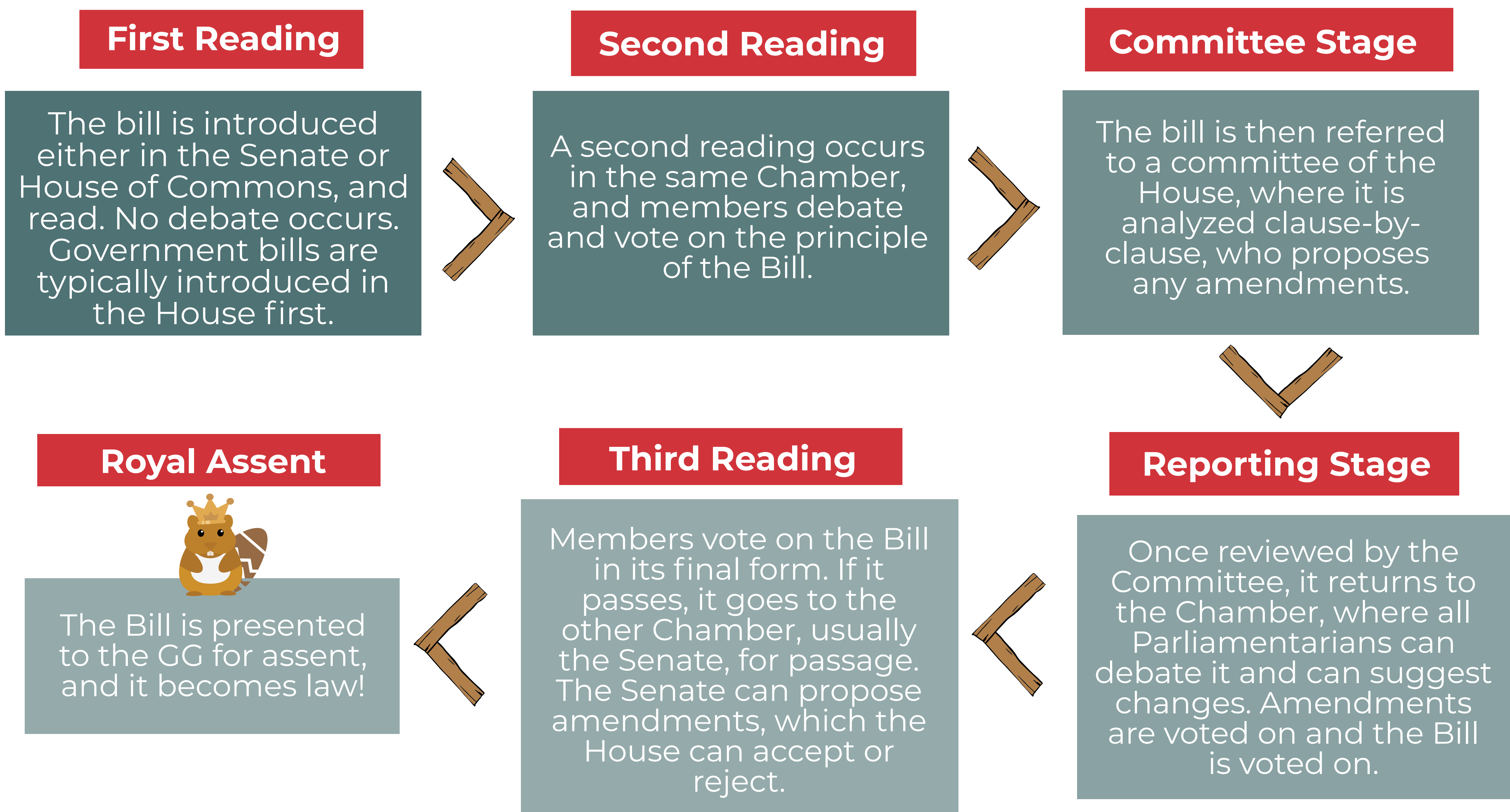


"I'm just a bill on Parliament Hill."

The Origins of a Bill

- Step I** A policy proposal is reviewed by the appropriate Cabinet Ministry, proposed to Cabinet for approval.
- Step II** If approved, the appropriate Ministry will give drafting instructions to the Department of Justice's Legislation Section.
- Step III** The bill is drafted in both English and French, and the responsible Minister approves it.
- Step IV** The Draft Bill is presented to Cabinet, and if approved, the Bill is introduced in Parliament.
- Step V** Parliament debates and votes on the Bill.

How a Bill becomes Law



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Frequently Asked Questions



When is Parliament in session?

- Parliament is not in **session** year-round.
- There are **3** main **sitting periods** in each session.
- There's no set length of days for a session and the number of sessions varies.

Do MPs stay in Ottawa year round?

- Session **adjournments** are called periodically for holidays. **Non-sitting** days occur on statutory holidays.
- MPs will typically be in Ottawa Monday through Thursday and return to their riding for Friday and the weekend.



What is a proroguing Parliament?

- When a session ends, a **recess** begins: Parliament is **prorogued**.

Why is Parliament dissolved?

- Parliament is **dissolved** for an election by the GG and a date is set for the first session for the next Parliament.



Sources

https://www.ourcommons.ca/About/ProcedureAndPractice3rdEdition/ch_09-e.html

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-provincial-and-territorial-legislatures-spend-fewer-days-in-session/>

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Vocabulary for Keeners

Parliamentary Glossary

- **Backbencher:** MP who is not a Minister and does not sit on the front benches in the House of Commons.
- **Caucus:** group of Senators and MPs from the same political party.
- **Chamber:** the meeting room in which Senators and MPs sit to debate and vote. There is a chamber for the Senate and House of Commons.
- **Hansard:** printed record of MPs' statements in the House.
- **House Leader:** The MP of a party responsible for its management in the House. They determine a schedule of House business through consultation with other parties' House Leaders.
- **Leader of the Official Opposition:** The leader of the political party with the second highest number of seats in the House.
- **Members' Statements:** daily 15-minute period where MPs who are not Ministers can speak on matters important to them.
- **Official Opposition:** the party with the second highest number of seats in the House.
- **Page:** a university student in the Senate or the House who carries messages and delivers documents during sittings of
- **Parliamentarian:** a Senator or MP.
- **Prorogation:** when the GG ends a Parliamentary session but does not dissolve it.
- **Question Period (Senate):** a period every day when oral questions may be addressed to the Leader of the Government, other ministers, and committee chairs.
- **Question Period (House):** a time every day in the House when MPs can ask Cabinet Ministers questions about their projects and policy proposals.
- **Red Chamber:** another name for the Senate.
- **Responsible Government:** the executive branch must have the support of the majority in the House to stay in power. If they lose a no confidence vote, they must resign or call an election.
- **Riding:** another word for constituency or electoral district.
- **Table:** placing a document before the Senate, the House, or a committee for consideration.
- **Party Whip:** member responsible for keeping other members of the same party informed about House affairs and ensuring their attendance in the