**How does a bill become a law?**

**What is a bill?**

A bill is a proposed law that is introduced in either the House of Commons or the Senate. Most bills are introduced in the House of Commons. Bills can amend or repeal existing law or can contain completely new law.

There are two kinds of bills: public and private. Public bills relate to public policy and may be sponsored by a Minister (Government bill) or by a private Member (Members' bill). Private bills benefit a particular individual or group.

**What stages must a bill pass in order to become law?**

**In the First House:**

The first House can be either the House of Commons or the Senate and is always the House in which the bill was introduced. If the first House is the House of Commons then the second House is the Senate and vice versa. A bill must pass through all the following stages, regardless of the House in which it was introduced, in order to become law.

**1st Reading:** This is a formality whereby the bill is introduced to the House. The bill is then printed in its 1st reading form, often with explanatory notes.

**2nd Reading:** The main principle and purpose of the bill is debated. If passed, the bill is then referred to a committee for further study. In some instances, a bill may be referred to committee prior to receiving second reading. Bills are not re-printed at 2nd reading.

**Committee:** Committee members study the bill clause by clause. The committee may make amendments.

**Report Stage:** The committee presents its report, which may recommend that the bill be accepted in its 1st reading state, or with amendments, or that it not be proceeded with further. During report stage debate, members can propose further amendments to the bill.

**3rd Reading:** The House reviews the bill in its final form and then orders the printing of the 3rd reading bill. The 3rd reading copy includes any amendments made to the bill thus far.

**In the Second House:**

Once a bill has passed the 3rd reading stage in the first House, the bill goes to the second House where it must pass through the same stages. The Senate may amend, delay or refuse to pass bills, although traditionally the Senate passes most bills. Any amendments made by the second House however, must be agreed to by the first House or the bill does not become law.

**Royal Assent**

Royal Assent completes the enactment process.  Bills may be given Royal Assent in two ways: by the Governor General or her deputy in a formal ceremony that takes place in the Senate before an assembly of both houses, or by written declaration.  "Where royal assent is signified by written declaration, the Act is deemed to be assented to on the day on which the two Houses of Parliament have been notified of the declaration" (Royal Assent Act, S.C. 2002, c.15, s.5).   When a bill receives Royal Assent it is given a chapter number for the *Statutes of Canada*.

**When does an act come into force?**

An act comes into force on the date of Royal Assent, unless the Act itself states that it comes into force on some other day. Different sections of an act can come into force on different days. An exact date may be specified or a "commencement" section may state that the Act, or certain sections of the Act, will come into force "by order of the Governor in Council". This means an order in council is required to fix the date that the Act or sections of the Act come into force. These orders in council are often referred to as proclamations. The House of Commons and Senate do not have to be sitting in order for an order in council to be issued to proclaim an act or sections of an act into force.

**What happens if a bill is not passed?**

Not all bills become law. A bill "dies on the order paper" if it does not pass through all of the stages described above during a session of Parliament. A bill that has died on the order paper can, however, be reintroduced as a new bill, with a new bill number, in the next session of Parliament.

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