

The Legislative Branch of Government

The legislative branch has the power to *make and change laws*.
Also called **Parliament**.
(LEGislative think "LEGal!")

Federal level → Governor General, Senate, House of Commons

Governor General is the Queen's representative in Canada. The Queen appoints the Governor General on the advice of the Prime Minister. The Governor General usually serves for five years. One of the most important roles of the Governor General is to ensure that Canada always has a Prime Minister. For example, if the Prime Minister were to die in office, the Governor General would have to choose a successor. The Governor General acts on the advice of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. The duties of the Governor General include the following: represents the monarch; performs ceremonial tasks such as reading the Speech from the Throne; giving Royal Assent to bills; signing state documents; and dissolving Parliament for an election.

The Senate

- ⊞ Referred to as the "upper house of Parliament" as well as the "chamber of sober second thought" because they are not elected so they do not feel the pressure to vote any specific way to please voters. Its primary function is to review government legislation from the House of Commons. The Senate studies, amends and either rejects or approves bills passed by the House of Commons. No bill can become law until it has been passed by the Senate. Senators also study major social, legal and economic issues through their committee work.
- ⊞ The Senate has 105 members. Senators must be Canadian Citizens, at least 30 years of age and live in the province or territory they represent and own \$4,000 worth of property. They may serve until they are 75 years of age
- ⊞ The Senate is currently a hot topic for reform as many Canadians question the usefulness of the Senate especially considering the enormous cost involved in running it.

DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSE OF COMMONS SEATS	
AREA	SEATS
Ontario	106
Quebec	75
Nova Scotia	11
New Brunswick	10
Manitoba	14
British Columbia	36
Prince Edward Island	4
Saskatchewan	14
Alberta	28
Newfoundland and Labrador	7
Northwest Territories	1
Yukon Territory	1
Nunavut	1
TOTAL	308

The House of Commons

- ⊞ Most powerful part of the legislative branch at the federal level
- ⊞ The House of Commons is the major law-making body in Parliament. On Parliament Hill in Ottawa, in the Commons Chamber, elected members (MPs) devote most of their time to debating and voting on bills. The Chamber is also a place where Members represent constituents' views, discuss national issues and call on the government to explain its actions.
- ⊞ Consists of 308 seats – one for each MP - determined by Canada's population including the Prime Minister.
- ⊞ Debates controlled by the **Speaker of the House** who is an elected member of parliament and is chosen by the other MPs. Speaker's job is to apply the rules of Parliament fairly and firmly to all members, including the Prime Minister!
- ⊞ In the House of Commons MPs sit with their political party. The party that holds the most seats is the government. All MPs from other parties are known as the **Opposition**
- ⊞ The role of the Official Opposition is to challenge government policies, hold the government accountable for its actions and give voters an alternative in the next election.
- ⊞ **Leader of the Opposition** is the leader of the party with the second largest membership in the Commons. Each opposition party in the Commons has its own leader and appoints critics from among its members. Each critic handles a certain subject, such as health or defence. They present their party's policies on the subject and comment on government policies.

Provincial level → Lieutenant - Governor, Legislative Assembly

Federal Legislative Branch

Canada

Governor General

Current governor general: _____

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THE SENATE

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The House of Commons

Provincial Legislative Level

Ontario

Lieutenant - Governor

Current lieutenant governor: _____

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⊞ **Legislative Assembly:** Provincial equivalent to the House of Commons. In Ontario, the elected Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) make up the legislative assembly. In Toronto, MPPs meet to discuss debate and vote on public issues at Queen's Park.
There is no senate at the provincial level.