

How A Law Is Made: From a Bill to a Law

Problem

Inevitably, because of the diversity within Canada, many issues of concern arise that citizens of Canada want the government to address.

Example 1:

Concern is addressed by advocacy groups that old automobiles create pollution that presents environmental concerns. Advocacy groups propose that an age restriction should be put on all automobiles.

Example 2:

Many new immigrants have accreditations (such as doctors, engineers, nurses) that are not recognized in Canada. Lobbyists want the federal government to recognize foreign accreditations.

Example 3:

Parents want government to enact a law to help prosecute or pursue individuals who use the Internet for cyberbullying or who use social networking sites in ways that conflict with the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Pressure

Through various means, citizens of Canada can bring potential problems and issues to the attention of their elected officials.

- Petitions signed by 60 000 individuals
- Demonstrations
- Letters to Members of Parliament
- Media

First Reading

A potential bill is introduced to the House of Commons. An explanation of the bill is presented. The bill is printed for the first time. A bill may be introduced in the Senate; however, this seldom occurs. A bill is presented to the House of Commons. This is the first phase. There are two types of bills-public and private.

Public Bill

A public policy bill affecting all Canadians is presented by cabinet ministers. This is also known as a government bill.

Private Bill

This is a bill presented by a Member of Parliament that benefits individuals or groups.

Second Reading

Debate by Members of Parliament is centred on the principles of the bill and whether the bill meets the needs of Canadians. Is the bill a good policy? A vote is taken. If the bill receives a majority of the House of Commons votes, it is passed and moves to the parliamentary committee stage. If the bill does not receive a majority of the House of Commons votes, the bill dies.

Committee Stage

When a bill reaches the committee stage, a group of MPs or senators review the bill clause by clause. The group also considers discussion from groups of concerned citizens such as First Nations, labour unions, and lobbyists. The committee has three options:

1. Amend the bill by recommending changes to be considered by the House of Commons
2. Accept the bill in its original form
3. Reject the bill

Report Stage

The bill re-enters the House of Commons. The MPs debate the amendments made by the committee. There are two options at this stage:

1. Further amendments can be recommended by the House of Commons.
2. No further amendments are recommended.

Third Reading

Debate at this stage is rare. There is a vote on the final form of the bill, including all amendments. The bill is sent to the Senate where senators will study the bill to see that it meets the needs of Canadians. Two options may occur at the third reading:

1. The bill is accepted.
2. The bill is rejected.

Senate

The bill passes through the Senate or the second house. This is the second phase. The bill now progresses through the same steps as the first phase with the House of Commons.

Royal Assent

The bill is passed to the Governor General for signature. The bill becomes law.