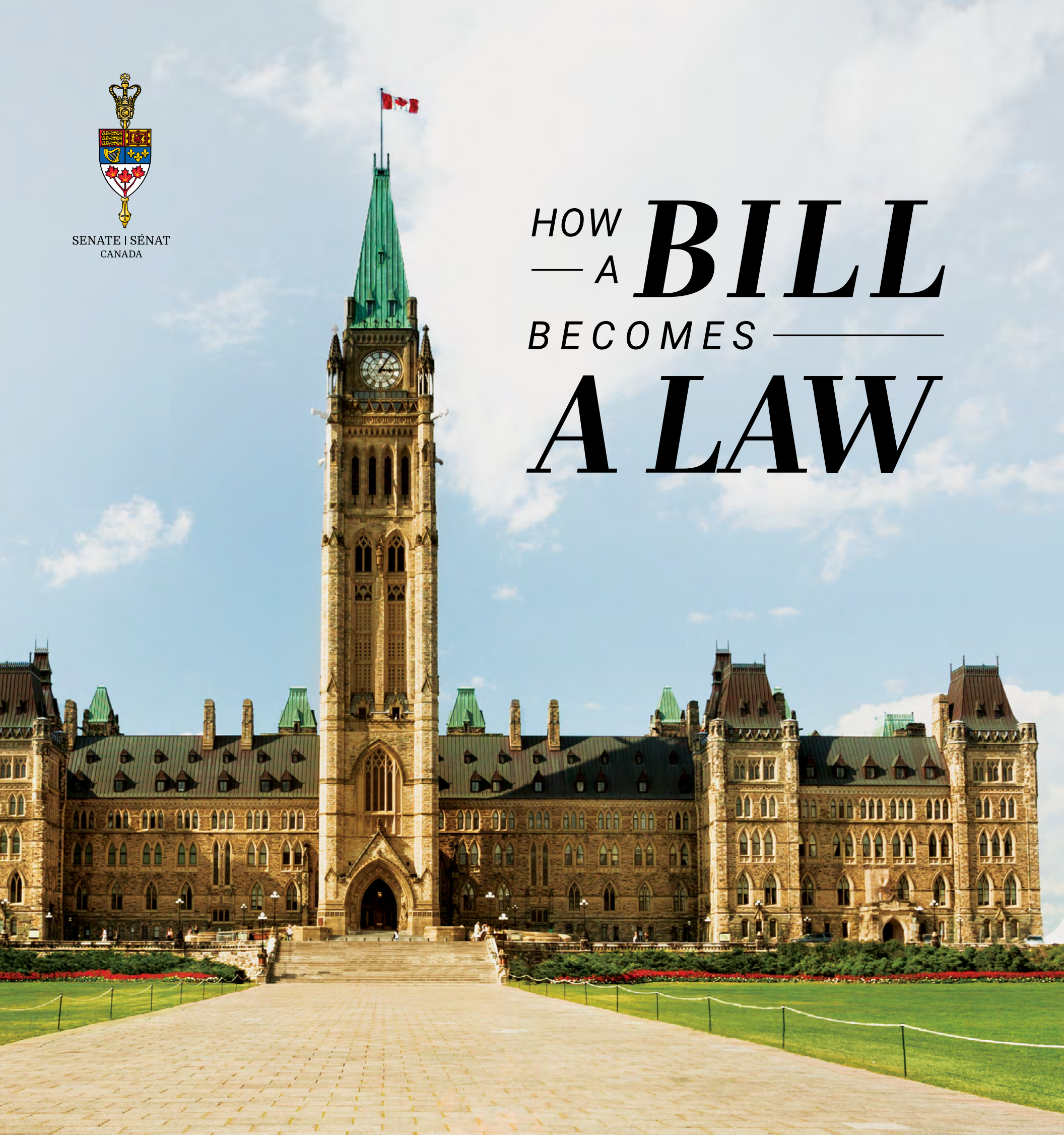




SENATE | SÉNAT  
CANADA

# HOW — A **BILL** BECOMES — **A LAW**



## WHAT IS A **BILL?**

**A proposal to create a new law, or to change or repeal an existing one.**

In Canada's Parliament, bills may originate in either of its two houses – the Senate and the House of Commons. Most legislation begins in the House of Commons, where bills are assigned the letter "C" and a number (e.g., C-201). Bills that are introduced in the Senate are given the letter "S" and a number (e.g., S-201).

Regardless of where a bill originates, it must be passed by both houses in identical form before it can receive Royal Assent and become law.

# This is how a Senate bill goes through Parliament:

## ① *First* reading

- The bill is received in the Senate Chamber and copies are given to senators.
- This provides senators with the chance to see what issues are being addressed, although the merits of the bill are not yet debated.



## ② *Second* reading

- Senators debate the scope of the bill.
- Generally, it cannot be amended at this stage.
- If it passes a vote, it is sent to a Senate committee for further review.

## ③ *Committee* stage

- Senators call experts and people who may be affected by the bill to provide analysis and insight.
- Committee members study the bill in detail, clause by clause.
- Committee members may make amendments to the bill at this stage.
- The committee adopts a report on the bill, with or without amendments.
- The report is sent to the full Senate for consideration.



## ④ *Committee report* stage

- If the committee report recommends amendments, it is considered by the whole Senate (i.e., by all 105 senators).
- Senators can propose further amendments.
- Debate focuses on these amendments.



## ⑤ *Third* reading

- Senators can propose amendments.
- Senators vote on the bill and its amendments.
- If it passes, the bill is sent to the House of Commons, where it goes through a similar process.



## ⑥ Sent to *House of Commons*

When the Senate amends a bill from the House of Commons, or vice versa, both chambers exchange messages until they agree on the final text of the bill.



## ⑦ *Royal* Assent

Once passed by both chambers in identical form, a bill becomes law when the monarch or designate – usually the governor general – grants Royal Assent. Royal Assent can be given in the Senate Chamber or at Rideau Hall, the governor general's residence.



**Want to learn more about how things work in the Senate?**

Visit our webpage, *The Senate Explained*, for information about what goes on in the Senate Chamber and in committees.