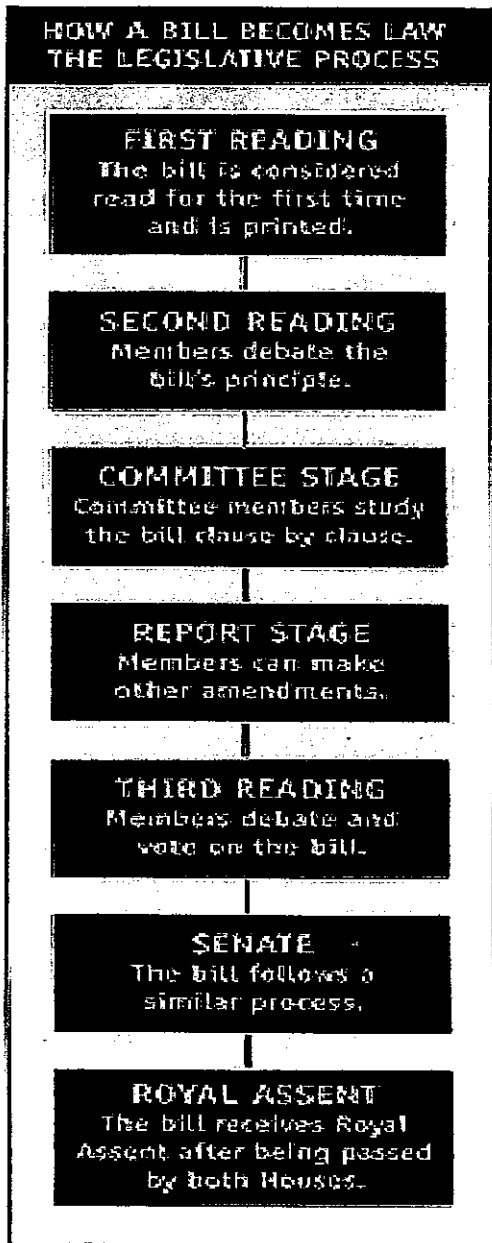


# Making Canada's Laws



When you fly in an airplane, visit a national park or buy a product in a store, you are doing something that has probably been touched by a law made in Parliament.

An idea to make a new law or to change an existing law starts out as a "bill." Each bill goes through several stages to become law. At first reading, the bill is considered read for the first time and is printed. There is no debate. At second reading, Members debate

the principle of a bill — Is the idea behind it sound? Does it meet people's needs? If a bill passes at second reading, it goes to a committee of the House.

Committee members study the bill carefully. They hold hearings to gather information. They can ask for government officials and experts to come and answer questions. The committee can propose amendments, or changes, to the bill.

When a committee has finished its study, it reports the bill back to the House. The entire House can then debate it. During report stage debate, Members can suggest other amendments to the bill.

Once report stage is over, the bill is called for third reading debate. Members who voted for the bill at second reading may sometimes change their minds at third reading after seeing what amendments have or have not been made to the bill. After a bill has passed third reading in the House of Commons, it goes through a similar process in the Senate. Once both Chambers pass the bill in the same form, it is given Royal Assent and becomes law.

The chart shows the usual path followed by government bills introduced in the House of Commons.

- Any MP may introduce a bill to the House of Commons. It's called a **Private Member's Bill**, but hardly ever used. If the bill has money attached to it, and 99% of the bills will cost money, the bill is usually introduced by either a Cabinet Minister, or the PM. Private Member's Bills are hardly ever successful.
- **Orders-in-council:** If Parliament is not in session, the government can still pass a law. They are called orders-in-council. Any law passed by order-in-council means that MP's are cut out of the law-making process. They are not debated or questioned. The hope is that orders-in-council are only used in emergency situations, and not as an abuse by the government to pass laws without debate in the House of Commons.