

Arnold Viersen



**WELCOME
TO YOUR
FEDERAL
PARLIAMENT**

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I am pleased to provide you with a special booklet entitled “Welcome To Your Federal Parliament.” The information provided explains the daily procedures of Parliament, the legislative process and the different roles a Member of Parliament takes on once elected to the House of Commons.

Dating back to as early as 1791, our Canadian Parliament has many rich and longstanding traditions. I believe we all have a duty to participate in the democratic process whether it be running for public office or simply voting.

This booklet is intended to help you understand the legislative process and was written to provide you with answers to questions often asked by constituents looking to learn more about how our Parliament works.

It has been an honour and a privilege to serve you since 2015 and I cherish the opportunity you have given me to be your representative in Ottawa. If I can be of assistance to you, please write to me (postage-free to Ottawa), e-mail me or call my office. I always encourage my constituents to write to me so that I may better voice your concerns. As always, my staff and I would be pleased to help you.

In your service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "AL Viersen".

Arnold Viersen, MP
Peace River—Westlock

Make sure your opinion counts by returning the survey in this booklet postage-free.

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THE CANADIAN PARLIAMENT

The *Constitution Act*, 1867 states, “the executive government of and over Canada is declared to continue and be vested in the King.” He acts, ordinarily through the Governor General (whom he appoints on the advice of the Canadian Prime Minister). Parliament consists of the King, the House of Commons and the Senate.

The King of Canada

The King of Canada is the formal head of the Canadian state. He is represented federally by the Governor General, and provincially by the Lieutenant-Governors. All Federal Acts of Parliament begin with the words: “His Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate and the House of Commons of Canada, enacts as follows”. All MPs swear allegiance to the King of Canada and His successors.



Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada (1953-2022) during Canada Day celebrations in Ottawa. She visited Canada more than any other nation during her remarkable 70-year reign.

The Governor General

Governor General Mary Simon is the King’s representative in Canada. Under the Constitution, the Governor General is appointed by the King on the advice of the Prime Minister of Canada, for a term of five years, though the term may be extended.

The House of Commons

Canada has 338 constituencies/ridings. The candidate who gets the largest number of votes in each riding is elected to the House of Commons, the primary law-making body. (This is how you elect your Member of Parliament)

The number of constituencies may be changed every ten years, pursuant to the Constitution, and the *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act*, which allots parliamentary seats roughly on the basis of population. Every province must have at least as many Members in the Commons as it has in the Senate. The constituencies vary somewhat in size, within prescribed limits.

Distribution of Commons Seats

Ontario	121
Quebec	78
British Columbia	42
Alberta	34
Manitoba	14
Saskatchewan	14
Nova Scotia	11
New Brunswick	10
Prince Edward Island	4
Newfoundland & Labrador	7
Northwest Territories	1
Nunavut	1
Yukon Territory	1

The Senate

While seats in the House of Commons are distributed roughly in proportion to population, the 105 seats in the Senate are distributed to provide each major region of the country with roughly equal representation. Senators are appointed by the Governor General on the recommendation of the Prime Minister and hold office until age 75 unless they miss two consecutive sessions of Parliament.

The Senate can initiate any Bills except Bills providing for the expenditure of public money or imposing taxes. It can amend or reject any bill as often as it sees fit. A bill cannot become law unless it has been passed by the Senate.

Our Prime Ministers Since 1867

1. Rt. Hon. Sir John A. Macdonald 1867-73
2. Hon. Alexander Mackenzie* 1873-78
3. Rt. Hon. Sir John A. Macdonald 1878-91
4. Hon. Sir John J.C. Abbott* 1891-92
5. Rt. Hon. Sir John S.D. Thompson 1892-94
6. Hon. Sir Mackenzie Bowell* 1894-96
7. Rt. Hon. Sir Charles Tupper* 1896-96
8. Rt. Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier 1896-1911
9. Rt. Hon. Sir Robert L. Borden 1911-17
10. Rt. Hon. Sir Robert L. Borden 1917-20
11. Rt. Hon. Arthur Meighen 1920-21
12. Rt. Hon. William Lyon Mackenzie King 1921-26
13. Rt. Hon. Arthur Meighen 1926-26
14. Rt. Hon. William Lyon Mackenzie King 1926-30
15. Rt. Hon. Richard Bedford Bennett 1930-35
16. Rt. Hon. William Lyon Mackenzie King 1935-48
17. Rt. Hon. Louis Stephen St. Laurent 1948-57
18. Rt. Hon. John G. Diefenbaker 1957-63
19. Rt. Hon. Lester B. Pearson 1963-68
20. Rt. Hon. Pierre Elliott Trudeau 1968-79
21. Rt. Hon. Charles Joseph Clark 1979-80
22. Rt. Hon. Pierre Elliott Trudeau 1980-84
23. Rt. Hon. John Napier Turner 1984-84
24. Rt. Hon. Martin Brian Mulroney 1984-92
25. Rt. Hon. Kim Campbell 1992-93
26. Rt. Hon. Jean Chrétien 1993-2004
27. Rt. Hon. Paul Martin 2004-2006
28. Rt. Hon. Stephen J. Harper 2006-2015
29. Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau 2015-present

Distribution of Senate Seats

Alberta	6
British Columbia	6
Manitoba	6
New Brunswick	10
Newfoundland & Labrador	6
Northwest Territories	1
Nova Scotia	10
Nunavut	1
Ontario	24
Prince Edward Island	4
Quebec	24
Saskatchewan	6
Yukon Territory	1

The Prime Minister

Canadians do not directly elect their Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is the leader of the party that forms the government.

The Prime Minister is normally a Member of the House of Commons. A non-Member could hold the office but, by custom, should seek to be elected to a seat very soon after appointment. A Prime Minister may lose his or her seat in an election, but can remain in office as long as the party can command a majority in the House of Commons. He or she must, by custom, win a seat promptly. The traditional way of arranging this is to have a Member of the party resign, creating a vacancy, which gives the defeated Prime Minister the opportunity to run in a by-election.

**Prior to 1968, the title "Right Honourable" was accorded only to Prime Ministers who had also been sworn into the Privy Council for the U.K. Prime Ministers Mackenzie, Abbott and Bowell were only ever members of the Canadian Privy Council.*

The Cabinet

The Cabinet is the executive arm of the Government, consisting of those Members and Senators appointed by the Governor General on the advice of the Prime Minister. The Cabinet is the policy-forming body of the government. Some Cabinet Ministers may be responsible for more than one government department. They are responsible for reporting on their departments' activities to Parliament.

By convention, almost all Cabinet Ministers are Members of Parliament. Members of Cabinet are bound by collective responsibility, which refers to the principle that all members are, in the end, jointly responsible for the administration of Government and the policies enacted by the Government. As such, all Ministers must support the final decisions taken by Cabinet. If a Minister is strongly opposed to a decision of Cabinet, he or she must resign from cabinet before voicing public opposition.

Minister of State

The title Minister of State was created under the Ministries and Ministers of State Act, in 1971. While no specific duties are given to a Minister of State, they can be assigned by the Governor in Council to assist any Minister or Ministers having responsibilities for any department or other portion of the Public Service. Though not a full member of Cabinet, they are also bound by collective responsibility.

Parliamentary Secretary

A Parliamentary Secretary is appointed by the Prime Minister to assist a Minister. A Parliamentary Secretary may table documents or answer questions on behalf of the Minister. Like Cabinet Ministers, they are expected to vote in support of the Government's official position on all legislation.



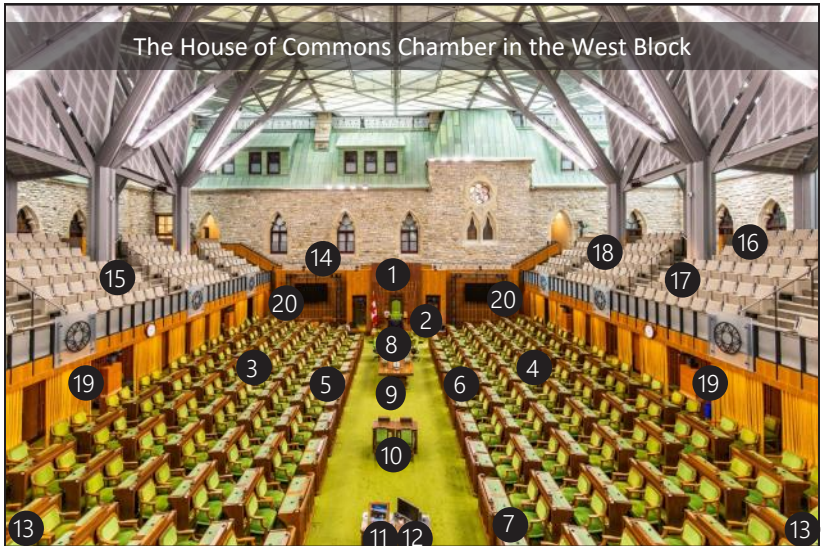
MP Arnold Viersen signs the register following his swearing in as the Member of Parliament for Peace River—Westlock following the election. The Clerk of the House of Commons conducts the ceremony and witnesses the signing.

The Opposition

In a parliamentary system, the Official Opposition is the driving force in holding the Government accountable and responsible. The process of contest and confrontation between the Government and the Opposition pushes the Government to produce policies that have the widest possible acceptance. A good Opposition shows leadership, discloses the flaws in the government and presents serious and acceptable policy alternatives. A good Opposition acts as the conscience of the Government in power and can wield considerable influence. A weak Opposition would not be able to ensure accountability, nor would it be considered a credible alternative or "Government in Waiting". The powers of the Opposition are severely limited if the governing party has a majority of the seats in the House of Commons.

Inside the Chamber

The House of Commons generally meets from September to June. Each day the House meets or sits is called a sitting day. When it is in session, the House meets Monday through Friday. Members are called to the House by the ringing of the bells. While the bells ring, the Speaker and the Clerks march through the Hall of Honour to the Commons Chamber, with the Sergeant-at-Arms leading the way carrying the mace. After taking the Chair, the Speaker leads the House in a brief prayer. On Wednesdays, the House is led in the singing of *O Canada*. The House is then called to order and the parliamentary day begins.



The House of Commons Chamber in the West Block

1. Speaker
2. Pages (at the foot of the Speaker)
3. Government Members
4. Opposition Members
5. Prime Minister
6. Leader of the Official Opposition
7. Leader of 2nd largest Opposition Party
8. Clerk and Table Officers
9. Mace (put the table when in session)
10. Hansard Reporters
11. The Bar (at the North entrance)
12. Sergeant-at-Arms (sits at The Bar)
13. Interpreters (back corners)
14. Press Gallery
15. Leader of the Opposition Gallery
16. Diplomatic Gallery
17. Speaker's Gallery
18. Senate Gallery
19. Television Camera
20. Screens for virtual participation

You can tour the temporary West Block Chamber virtually by using this QR code on your phone.



The Speaker

The Speaker of the House of Commons is elected by all Members of Parliament in a secret ballot after each general election. He or she must be a Member of Parliament. The Speaker is the highest presiding officer. He or she decides all questions of procedure and order, controls the House of Commons staff, and is expected to be impartial, non-partisan and as firm in enforcing the rules against the Prime Minister as against the humblest opposition backbencher. Several Deputy Speakers assist the Speaker.

House Officers

House Officers are the Clerks of the House and the Speaker's senior procedural advisers. They are seated at a long table in front of the Speaker. At the end of the table lies the mace, the symbol of the authority of the House of Commons. At the end of the Chamber, opposite the Speaker, sits the Sergeant-at-Arms. He has a number of ceremonial, administrative and security duties. Parliamentary pages are seated at various locations in the Chamber and carry messages to the Members.

Member of a Political Party

During elections, parties set out their position on the major issues. Once elected, voters expect an MP to support the policies put forth by the MP's party. If the MP refuses to do so, the government will not be in a position to honour its election commitments, nor will the Opposition be able to press effectively its objections. Based on election platforms and promises, Canadians determine how to vote. MPs have an obligation to support their political party and its leader as it attempts to implement these election promises, promises which can at times be controversial. Members of Parliament are not required to be a member of a recognized political party. However, it has proven more difficult for independent MPs to get noticed and elected in the Canadian political system and so most MPs are elected with a party affiliation.

As members of a political party, MPs also play a role in the functioning of the party. Each riding has a local riding association which organizes political events and helps in election campaigns. These local associations also help manage memberships, fundraising and volunteer organization.



The Rhodes Chair serves as the Speaker's Chair in the temporary House of Commons Chamber in the West Block.



While Arnold Viersen is a proud member of the Conservative Party of Canada, he is the elected MP for all Peace River—Westlock residents. While a person may run for political office under a particular political banner, once they are elected, they have a duty to represent and assist all constituents.

Business in the House of Commons

Routine Proceedings

Routine Proceedings covers many different items, not all of which are dealt with every day. A portion of each day is set aside for this purpose and it includes:

Tabling of documents: This is the first item called by the Speaker under Routine Proceedings. At this time Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries have the opportunity to table returns, reports, responses to petitions, Committee reports and other documents.

Statements by Ministers: A minister may make a short factual announcement or statement of government policy and the Opposition has the opportunity to respond.

Presenting of Petitions: This is an opportunity for Members of Parliament to rise and present petitions from Canadians. They can briefly mention the purpose and content of the petition, but they may not indicate support or opposition to the petition.

Introduction and First Reading: This is when draft Acts of Parliament are introduced and given First Reading. The proposer then gives a brief explanation of the Bill.

Presentation of Motions: A motion which, because of its substantive nature or procedural importance, is subject to debate before being put to a vote.

Presenting of Reports: Committees make their views and wishes known to all MPs by tabling their reports in the House. They reflect the opinion of the majority of the Committee. Reports may simply deal with routine matters affecting the operations of a Committee. Other times, following the completion of an inquiry, the Committee may table a report containing its findings and recommendations.

Government Orders

These are items of business (such as Motions, Bills or Questions) that the Government initiates and places on the agenda of the House. They typically represent the priorities of the Government and the heart of the Government's agenda.

Private Members' Business

Members who are not Cabinet Ministers can present Bills and Motions for debate during Private Members' Business. Items are selected at random to be discussed in the House and these items may be chosen to come to a vote. A one-hour period is devoted to this business each sitting day.

Less than 2% of Private Members' Bills or Motions are ever passed. Arnold Viersen was able to get his Motion M-47 passed unanimously in the House of Commons. As a result, the Standing Committee on Health did a study on the impacts of harmful online content on adults and children.



Arnold Viersen speaking in the House of Commons.

Oral Questions (Question Period)

This closely-watched 45 minutes is also known as Question Period. Question Period is what you would normally see on television. It is a chance for Opposition Members, and sometimes Members of the governing party, to seek information from the Government. By questioning the Prime Minister and the other Cabinet Ministers, Members call the government to account for its actions. Question Period is broadcast on the CPAC network Monday through Thursday at noon and at 9 a.m. on Fridays when the House of Commons is in session.



Arnold Viersen rises in the House of Commons during Question Period to ask a Minister a question about Canadian's travel rights.

Production of Papers

Members can ask the government to present certain documents to the House of Commons. The government can respond to these requests when this item is called.

Adjournment Proceedings

A Member who is dissatisfied with a reply received in Question Period can ask, in writing, for the matter to be raised again during the Adjournment Proceedings. A Cabinet Minister or Parliamentary Secretary will respond to the concerns raised.



Members of Parliament often participate in community events to help raise awareness of important issues and causes. Here, Arnold Viersen presents the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal to local Fire Chiefs.

Members of Parliament often host events on Parliament Hill with MPs and Senators from other parties. This allows for Parliamentarians to see and hear from Canadians directly and work together to raise awareness about important issues.

Here, Arnold Viersen is joined by some fellow Parliamentarians to raise awareness about the work of Ratanak International, a Canadian organization that rescues children who are being exploited in Cambodia.



The Role of a Member of Parliament

Constituency Representative

A Member of Parliament is responsible for dealing with any number of problems constituents may have in their dealings with the federal government. This can include everything from the late payment of pension cheques to immigration matters. An MP will contact various government departments on behalf of constituents in order to attempt to get these problems resolved.

Members of Parliament also represent their constituents by attending official functions on their behalf. For example, on Remembrance Day MPs lay wreaths at local memorials in honour of those Canadians who have served and died. Members of Parliament also attend official openings in the riding for such things as community centres or businesses, and are frequently asked to give speeches to various local organizations. School graduations, anniversaries, citizenship ceremonies and parades provide additional opportunities to meet with constituents. In order to serve the needs of constituents, MPs maintain offices in both the constituency and Ottawa.



Arnold Viersen meets with students during their school visit to Ottawa and Parliament Hill.

Duties in Parliament

Parliament provides MPs with the opportunity to raise matters of concern in a national forum.

Through debates, Question Period, and committee hearings, MPs are given the opportunity to shape the course of national affairs. Constituents expect an MP to be in Ottawa when the House is in session, and to take part in the business of Parliament. By doing so, not only are the concerns of constituents voiced, but the MP also has a chance to put the views of their constituents on the public record.



To learn more about booking a free tour of Parliament Hill for yourself or your group, please visit www.visit.parl.gc.ca

The Legislative Process

Most legislation, including Government Bills which are proposed by Cabinet Ministers, is first considered by the House of Commons. The Senate also initiates legislation, but any Bills concerning taxation or the expenditure of public money must originate in the Commons.

Both Houses must approve all Bills before they become law. Each Bill goes through several stages in the House. First Reading is a formality and there is no debate or discussion. Second Reading allows Members to debate the principle of a Bill. If a Bill passes Second Reading, it goes to a Committee of the House for detailed consideration. Witnesses are called and amendments to the Bill can be proposed.

When a Committee has completed its study, it reports the Bill back to the House. The entire House then has the opportunity to consider the legislation. During Report Stage debate, Members can propose additional amendments to the legislation. Once Report Stage is completed, the Bill is called for Third Reading debate. Members who voted for the Bill at Second Reading may sometimes change their opinion at Third Reading after seeing what amendments have or have not been made to the Bill. Once a Bill has passed Third Reading in the House of Commons, it must go through a similar process of readings in the Senate. Bills come into force on receiving Royal Assent on a date specified in the Bill or on a date set by Cabinet.

Private Members' Bills

Like Government Bills, a Private Member's Bill is a piece of draft legislation which is submitted to Parliament for approval and possible amendment before it can become law. Most Private Members' Bills originate in the House of Commons, but some Private Members' Bills are sent to the House of Commons from the Senate. In short, Members of Parliament who are not Cabinet Ministers can use Private Members' Bills to put forth their own legislative and policy proposals. A lottery system is used to determine who gets to present their proposals and in what order. This is known as the Order of Precedence. Most MPs will not get an opportunity to present legislation and less than 2% of this type of Bill passes.

SUMMARY OF THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

- ✓ **Introduction** – The process begins when a Bill is formally introduced by the sponsor.
- ✓ **First Reading** – The Bill is "read" for the first time without debate and printed.
- ✓ **Second Reading** – The principle of the Bill is debated. It is then voted on and the Bill is sent to a parliamentary committee. If the Bill is not passed, it 'dies on the Order Paper'.
- ✓ **Committee Stage** – A committee hears witnesses, examines the Bill clause-by-clause and submits a report with or without amendments.
- ✓ **Report Stage** – Additional amendments may be moved, debated and voted on.
- ✓ **Third Reading** – The Bill is debated a final time in the House and voted on.
- ✓ **Senate** – The Bill is sent to the Senate where a similar legislative process takes place.
- ✓ **Royal Assent** – Members are summoned to the Senate Chamber where the Bill is given Royal Assent and becomes law.

Our National Anthem

"O Canada" was proclaimed Canada's national anthem on July 1, 1980, one hundred years after it was first sung on June 24, 1880. The music was composed by Calixa Lavallee, a well-known composer; French lyrics to accompany the music were written by Sir Adolphe-Basile Routhier.

The song steadily gained in popularity. Many English versions have appeared over the years. The version on which the official English lyrics are based was written in 1908 by Justice Robert Stanley Weir. The official English version includes changes recommended in 1968 by a Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons. In 2018, Parliament voted to change 'thy sons' to 'of us' to be more inclusive.

*O Canada! Our home and native land!
True patriot love in all of us command.
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!
From far and wide,
O Canada, We stand on guard for thee.
God keep our land, glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.*

*O Canada! Terre de nos aïeux,
Ton front est ceint de fleurons glorieux!
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,
Il sait porter la croix!
Ton histoire est une épopée
Des plus brillants exploits.
Et ta valeur, de foi trempée,
Protégera nos foyers et nos droits,
Protégera nos foyers et nos droits.*

Peace River—Westlock Riding



These are the current riding boundaries for the Alberta constituency of Peace River—Westlock.

Riding boundaries can be adjusted every 10 years to adjust for population growth to ensure all ridings have approximately the same number of residents.

The Flag of Canada

The maple leaf is but the latest in a series of flags that have flown over what has become Canada. The search for a uniquely Canadian flag began in 1925. In 1946 a parliamentary committee called for designs to be submitted. Though more than 2,600 were received, Parliament was never asked to vote on a design.

In 1964 Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson renewed the search with a special committee that held 46 sittings and heard from heraldic experts, historians and citizens.

By October 1964, the number of designs had been narrowed to three: a Red Ensign with the fleur-de-lis and the Union Jack; a sprig of three maple leaves between blue bars; and a stylized maple leaf bar on a white square flanked by red bars. The committee endorsed the single maple leaf design.

After an intense and emotional debate, the House of Commons approved it on December 15, 1964. Two days later the Senate followed suit. Canada's national flag was proclaimed by Queen Elizabeth II on January 28, 1965 and inaugurated on February 15, 1965. Flag Day is celebrated annually on February 15th.



RULES FOR FLYING THE NATIONAL FLAG OF CANADA

The National Flag of Canada must always be flown on its own mast. It is considered improper to fly two or more flags on the same mast.

The flag shall not be used as a cover, for masking (curtain) or as a barrier.

While it is not technically incorrect to use the National Flag to cover a statue, monument or plaque for an unveiling ceremony, it is not common practice to do so and should be discouraged.

Nothing should be pinned to or sewn on the National Flag of Canada.

The National Flag of Canada should not be signed or marked in any way.

When the flag is raised or lowered, or when it is carried past in a parade or review, all present should face the flag, men should remove their hats, and all should remain silent. Those in uniform should salute.

Fly the flag with pride and dignity.

The Peace Tower

The Peace Tower on Parliament Hill is an important symbol of our democracy in Canada and is the most defining symbol of our Parliament Buildings.

The tower houses the Memorial Chamber which has the Books of Remembrance.

Just below the iconic clock is a public observation deck that provides incredible views of downtown Ottawa and the surrounding area. (This area is now closed for the renovations of Centre Block.)

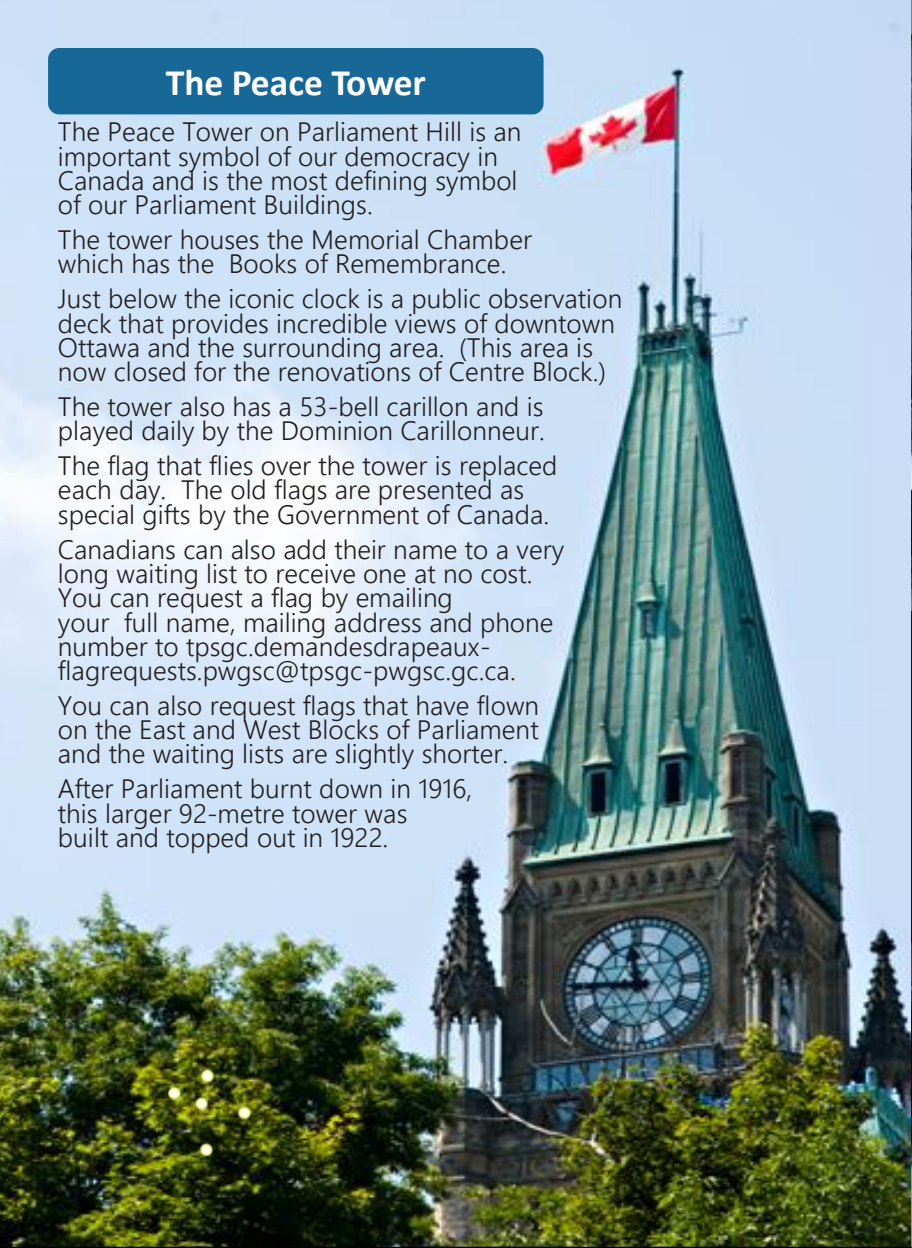
The tower also has a 53-bell carillon and is played daily by the Dominion Carillonneur.

The flag that flies over the tower is replaced each day. The old flags are presented as special gifts by the Government of Canada.

Canadians can also add their name to a very long waiting list to receive one at no cost. You can request a flag by emailing your full name, mailing address and phone number to tpsgc.demandesdrapeaux-flagrequests.pwgsc@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca.

You can also request flags that have flown on the East and West Blocks of Parliament and the waiting lists are slightly shorter.

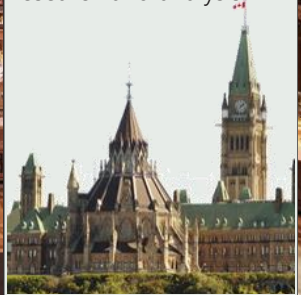
After Parliament burnt down in 1916, this larger 92-metre tower was built and topped out in 1922.



The Library of Parliament



Located behind Centre Block, it is one of the world's most stunning buildings and is the knowledge center for Parliament. It plays a key role in our democracy by providing parliamentarians and staff with impartial and confidential information, research and analysis.



The Books of Remembrance

The seven *Books of Remembrance* contain the names of over 120,000 Canadians who have given their lives in the service of our country. The books are kept on Parliament Hill and can be publicly viewed.

Every morning, in a solemn ceremony, the pages each of the seven books are turned to reveal a new list of names. You can search for the names of Canada's war dead and those that died in the Service of Canada online to see when their name will be presented by visiting www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/books/search.




The Historic Buildings of Parliament

A wide-angle photograph of the West Block of the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa, showing its Gothic Revival architecture with multiple spires and a prominent central tower.


West Block

A photograph of the East Block of the Parliament Buildings, featuring a large, ornate facade with a prominent green-roofed tower and Gothic architectural details.


East Block

A photograph of the Confederation Building, a large, multi-story building with a green roof and Gothic Revival architectural style.


Confederation Building

A photograph of the Justice Building, a large, multi-story building with a green roof and Gothic Revival architectural style.


Justice Building

A photograph of the Wellington Building, a large, multi-story building with a classical facade and a prominent portico.

Wellington Building

A photograph of the Office of the Prime Minister, a large, multi-story building with a classical facade and a prominent portico.


Office of the Prime Minister

A photograph of the Senate of Canada Building, a large, multi-story building with a classical facade and a prominent portico.

Senate of Canada Building

A photograph of the Library of Parliament, a large, multi-story building with a Gothic Revival facade and a prominent spire.

Library of Parliament

A large, central photograph of the Centre Block of the Parliament Buildings, showing the House of Commons on the left and the Senate on the right, with the central clock tower.

Centre Block with the House of Commons side on the left and the Senate side on the right.