

The senators are appointed by the governor general on the recommendation of the prime minister. They hold office until age 75 unless they miss two consecutive sessions of Parliament. Until 1965, they held office for life, and the few remaining senators appointed before that date retain their seats. Senators must be at least 30 years old, and must have real estate worth \$4 000 net and total net assets of at least \$4 000. They must reside in the province or territory for which they are appointed: in Quebec, they must reside or have their property qualification in the particular one of Quebec's 24 senatorial districts for which they are appointed.

The Senate can initiate any bills except money bills. It can amend or reject any bill whatsoever. It can reject any bill as often as it sees fit. No bill can become law unless it has been passed by the Senate.

In theory these powers are formidable. But the Senate has not rejected a bill for over 40 years, and it very rarely makes any amendment that touches the principle of a bill. The many amendments it does make are almost always clarifying, simplifying, tidying-up amendments, and are almost always accepted by the House of Commons. The Senate's main work is done in its committees, where it goes over bills clause by clause, and hears evidence, often voluminous, from groups and individuals who would be affected by the particular bill under review. This committee work is especially effective because the Senate has many members with specialized knowledge and long years of legal, business or administrative experience. There are ex-ministers, ex-premiers of provinces, ex-mayors, eminent lawyers and experienced farmers.

In recent decades, the Senate has taken on a new job: investigating important public problems such as poverty, unemployment, inflation, the aging, land use, science policy, Indian affairs, relations with the United States, and the efficiency (or lack of it) of government departments. These investigations have produced valuable reports, which have often led to changes in legislation or government policy. The Senate usually does this kind of work far more cheaply than royal commissions or task forces, because its members are paid already and it has a permanent staff at its disposal.

The House of Commons

The House of Commons is the major law-making body. It has 295 members, one from each of 295 constituencies. In each constituency, or riding, the candidate who gets the largest vote is elected, even if his or her vote is less than half the total. The number of constituencies is changed after every census, pursuant to the Constitution and the *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act* that allots parliamentary seats roughly on the basis