

## CHAPTER 4

### The Future Role of the Senate and the Objectives of Reform

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The first question to be considered by the Committee was what the role of a second chamber of Parliament should be. In this chapter we examine that question and go on to consider what the objectives of Senate reform ought to be.

Our conclusions are, briefly, that the principal role of Parliament's second chamber should be to represent the sometimes diverse interests of the people of Canada's provinces and territories — one of the main roles intended for it in 1867 — and that a major objective of reform should be to strengthen the Senate's capacity to fill that role.

#### The role of the Senate

We noted in Chapter 3 that the two original functions of the Senate were to represent regional interests and to be a counterweight to the democratically chosen House of Commons. We also noted that, in recent years, the Senate has performed — and performed well — two other functions: the technical improvement of legislation and the investigation of questions of public policy.

At various times it has been proposed that a reformed Senate should provide for the representation of particular interests, among them the following:

- the direct representation of the interests of the provincial level of jurisdiction in federal legislation and in the exercise of certain federal executive powers;
- the representation of national minorities — not only French-speaking Canadians but also aboriginal peoples, ethnic minority groups and visible minorities; and
- the representation of francophones outside Quebec and of anglophones in Quebec.