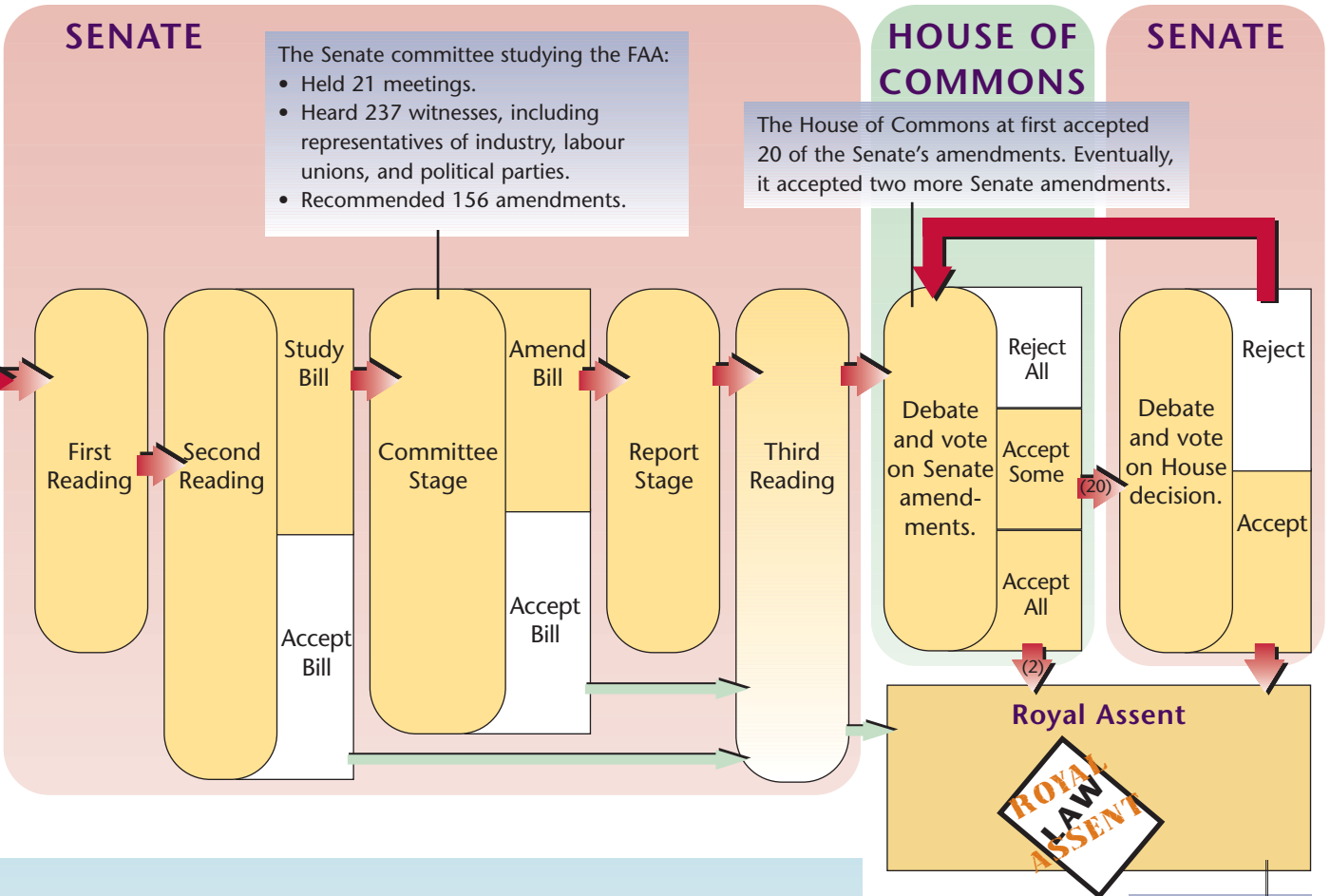


How does the process of passing a law create opportunities to build Canada as a society where people of many perspectives and views belong? What challenges does this process create for Canadians, in your opinion?



DID YOU KNOW?

The usual, basic path of law making in Canada is:

House of Commons ➡ Senate ➡ Royal Assent

The FAA went through an additional loop through the House of Commons and Senate, as these two bodies sought agreement on the final form of the FAA. This took time, but it also allowed a fuller debate of the issues involved.

Royal Assent
 Bill becomes law after the Governor General gives Royal assent. This is a formality.

The FAA became law on December 12, 2006.



PASSING A LAW

Our prime-minister-for-a-day becomes impatient..



Why is making laws so difficult? You're my assistant - can't you speed this up?

It's not supposed to be easy to make laws. Canada is a diverse country. Canadians have different identities, perspectives and needs - different priorities.

I'm a Canadian. How can I make my priorities count?

Canada's federal political system attempts to give all citizens a voice - as individuals and also as members of collectives. What have you discovered from touring the executive, legislative and judicial branches about ways for Canadians to voice their views and perspectives?

Examples of ways to voice views and perspectives:

- *Contact your MP, a senator or a cabinet minister.*
- *Campaign for a candidate during an election.*
- *Organize a petition or rally on an issue that concerns you.*

Stéphane Doucette-Préville, Parliamentary Page



Stéphane Doucette-Préville had just graduated from École Maurice-Lavallée, a Francophone school in Edmonton, when he joined the House of Commons' Page Program in September 2006.

Each year, the Page Program gives forty students from across Canada the chance to learn about the legislative branch in person. In the House of Commons, the pages assist MPs of all political parties with daily tasks, such as photocopying and answering phones. On the floor of the Commons Chamber — during debates and Question Period, for example — they retrieve documents and run messages between members of the assembly.

Stéphane Doucette-Préville spent one year in Ottawa as part of the House of Commons' Page Program. "One of my favourite interests is politics, and when I was going to high school, my favourite class was social studies. I'm very excited to be part of a textbook for my favourite subject."

As a page, I have learned, number one, that there is a lot of cooperation between the different political parties. The confrontation between parties during Question Period often makes the news on television — but Question Period is only forty-five minutes of the day. The rest of the day is spent expressing views on issues that affect Canadians and debating laws. In the end, MPs try to agree. They want to vote on what's good for all Canadian citizens.

I think people are sometimes not aware of the responsibilities of MPs. But I've found that MPs deserve respect. They work under a lot of stress and they work very long hours. On top of attending the proceedings of the House of Commons, they work on committees and they answer questions from their constituents. It's not an easy job. They have to be really committed to do it.

What is the most memorable thing about being a page? Certain things, every day, I find memorable — like being on the floor of the House of Commons during Question Period and, every Wednesday, singing the national anthem. Not every Canadian will have the chance to do that. It is very special.



"I'll also remember special events, like playing a soccer game against the MPs. Seeing the MPs out of the work environment and getting to talk with them — plus for me, soccer is my favourite sport — I thought that was really fun and incredible."



What has Stéphane learned about the role of MPs from his firsthand experience of the House of Commons?

Why do you think people have different views about the job MPs do?



What voice do First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples need?

assimilation: the process of becoming part of a different cultural group (not your own)

Aboriginal peoples were not consulted when Canada was formed at Confederation in 1867, although they were among Canada's founding peoples. The British North America Act (BNA Act) — which was Canada's original constitution and established Canada's system of government — did not acknowledge the rights of Aboriginal peoples. The BNA Act:

- Made First Nations “responsibilities” of the government, along with things like the postal service. It did not acknowledge First Nations as independent, sovereign peoples with their own forms of government.
- Did not mention the Inuit or Métis at all.

Since Confederation, Aboriginal peoples have successfully campaigned for the inclusion of their rights in Canada's constitution, but many continue to feel excluded from Canada's political system.



Anna Hunter is director of the Aboriginal Public Administration Program at the University of Saskatchewan.

Aboriginal people did not play a role in designing the Canadian system of government, and they do not see themselves represented in its institutions... Aboriginal peoples need to see representation and inclusion of their leaders and their ceremonies, symbols and practices in the political processes and institutions of the Canadian state.

— Anna Hunter, “Exploring the Issues of Aboriginal Representation in Federal Elections,” *Electoral Insight*, November 2003.

Anna Hunter studied challenges to the participation of First Nations in Canada's federal political system. Here's what she found:

- First Nations people find it difficult to elect representatives. They make up less than 10 percent of Canada's population and are dispersed across the country.
- Some choose not to vote because Canada's government does not reflect their traditions and values. They consider voting a form of validating Canada's political system over their own systems of government.
- Some associate voting with **assimilation**. For many years, Canada's government required First Nations people to give up their legal identity before they could vote. Canada did not grant First Nations people the right to vote until 1960.



How does the information on this page relate to your chapter task and communicate an important issue about government today?

connect to the big ideas

1. Working alone or with a partner, brainstorm some ideas for a new law. Your law should be practical and logical. It could link to your chapter task, as a way to respond to an issue about government today. Use these questions to help you organize your thoughts:
 - Why is your proposed law needed?
 - How would it improve the quality of life of Canadians?
 - What groups might support it? What groups might oppose it?
2. Create an announcement about your law for radio, TV, the Internet or newspapers. Describe steps you will take to involve citizens in decisions about the law. Your work on this point can help you complete your chapter task.

Bills! Bills! Bills!

In 2007, MPs introduced more than 300 bills, including the bills described below. **How could you find out if these bills became laws? How could you find out what bills MPs have introduced this year?**



Bill C-30 proposed to increase the production of crops for biofuels, as a way to reduce air pollution and greenhouse gases.



What values do you believe each of these bills reflects?

Bill C-19 proposed to make street racing a criminal offence. This means police could charge people for street racing, in addition to charges for reckless driving and speeding.



Bill C-321 proposed to establish a National Hockey Day in recognition that "hockey has served as a unifying force throughout our history, is an important component of our contemporary national identity, and is considered a cornerstone of our unique Canadian culture."

