

Québec's Parliament Building: A Tribute to Our History

Heritage treasure, national historic site and home to Québec's 125 elected representatives—the Parliament Building is all of these things.

The Parliament Building: A Monument to History

Built between 1877 and 1886 under the direction of architect Eugène-Étienne Taché, the Parliament Building was inspired by the architecture of the Louvre, model par excellence of the Second Empire style.

The fountain in front of the main entrance pays tribute to Québec's Amerindian peoples; its two sculptures—A Halt in the Forest, representing an Amerindian family, and Fisherman with Spear—are by Louis-Philippe Hébert. The building's facade, with its array of statues representing key political, religious and military figures, commemorates events that marked the history of Québec and Canada up to 1867. Since 1996, the Parliament Building has been enhanced by landscaped grounds, with a wooded garden and statues of men and women who left their mark on Québec politics.

The National Assembly Welcomes You



Photo: Francesco Balloma

Politics in Action

The sittings of the Assembly and its parliamentary committees are open to the public.

The Assembly's regular sitting schedule is divided into 2 sessional periods per year:

- beginning on the second Tuesday in February: 16 weeks of regular sittings followed by 2 weeks of extended sittings
- beginning on the third Tuesday in September: 10 weeks of regular sittings followed by 2 weeks of extended sittings

Guided Tours

Tours of the Parliament Building are offered free of charge in French and English and, by reservation, in Spanish.

Information:

418-643-7239

1-866-337-8837

Email: renseignements@assnat.qc.ca

Fine Dining at *Le Parlementaire*



Photo: Edouard De Blay

Enjoy a delicious meal in the magnificent Beaux Arts setting of *Le Parlementaire*, or stop in at the *Café du Parlement* for a light meal or snack.

La Boutique

Publications, post cards, gift ideas and a wide variety of souvenirs can be found at the National Assembly's gift shop, *La Boutique*.

email: boutique@assnat.qc.ca

Exhibitions to visit



Photo: Marc-André Grenier

Exhibition 1792. *A Parliament is Born*

Located in the Visitor Centre, the exhibition tells the fascinating story of the origins of Québec democracy and follows the major debates in the House of Assembly of Lower Canada from 1792 to 1841. Come and discover this exhibition marking the 225th anniversary of Québec's parliamentary institutions. A virtual tour of the exhibitions can be accessed under Visitors/Exhibitions on the National Assembly website at assnat.qc.ca.

Presidents' Gallery exhibitions

The National Assembly houses a unique collection of paintings. The portraits of most of those who have presided over the Assembly since 1867 hang here in the Presidents' Gallery. Now referred to as "Presidents", these presiding officers were called "Speakers" until 1968.

Visit the Library

Open to the public, the National Assembly Library is located in the Pamphile-Le May Building, named after one of its most illustrious directors. Since the Library's creation in 1802, parliamentarians and their staff have been its main users. Drop by to see its thematic exhibitions or to consult any of the 2.2 million documents on its shelves!

For information: 418-643-4408

Email: bibliotheque@assnat.qc.ca

Parliamentary News

The National Assembly Channel

Almost 3,500 hours of televised broadcasts are presented annually, covering parliamentary proceedings and special events.

assnat.qc.ca

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assnat.qc.ca/mediassociaux



Papier fabriqué au Québec

THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

At the Heart of Our Democracy



NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF QUÉBEC

In addition to being one of the oldest parliaments in the world, the National Assembly of Québec is the only francophone parliament in North America. The laws passed by its 125 elected Members affect all aspects of life in Québec.

The Assembly is the cornerstone of our representative democracy and has given voice, through its elected Members, to the aspirations and values of Quebecers for more than 200 years.



Photo: Christian Chevalier

200 Years of History

December 17, 1792

The first sitting of the first Parliament of Lower Canada is held in the Chapel of the Bishop's Palace, which would serve as seat of Parliament for more than 40 years.

1840: Union of the two Canadas

Under the Act of Union, Upper and Lower Canada are merged into a single Province of Canada; the new Legislative Assembly has 84 Members.

1848: Ministerial responsibility

Ministers must now have the confidence of the Members or resign.

1867: Confederation

Québec, Ontario, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick each have their own legislative assembly and legislative council (senate).

1968: Abolition of the Legislative Council

With this decision, Québec's Legislative Assembly becomes the National Assembly.

The State

In democratic societies such as ours, the State exercises three fundamental powers. Québec's British-inspired parliamentary system is characterized, as are the other parliamentary systems found in Canada, by a "soft" separation between the branches of the State, particularly when it comes to its legislative and executive functions. To ensure the quality of our democratic life, it is essential to maintain a balance between these three powers.



The Three Powers

● The legislative power, exercised by Parliament

The National Assembly examines, discusses, amends and passes the laws of Québec, but it is the Lieutenant-Governor who gives bills their final assent. The Assembly also exercises an oversight role with regard to the executive power (the Government) and debates issues of public interest.

● The executive power, exercised by the Government

The Government sets the policies that guide the actions of the State and administers it according to the laws passed by the legislative power (Parliament).

● The judicial power, exercised by the courts

The courts interpret the laws passed by the legislative power (Parliament) and decide whether, in any given case, a law has been contravened.

To Summarize

The National Assembly makes the laws, the Government administers them and the courts interpret them.

What is the difference between the National Assembly, Parliament and the Government?

The National Assembly consists of Québec's 125 elected representatives; *the Parliament*, of the National Assembly and the Lieutenant-Governor; and *the Government*, of the Premier and his or her ministers.

How Are MNAs Elected?

General elections provide an opportunity for the people of Québec to elect their representatives. In each electoral riding, the candidate who obtains the most votes becomes the MNA (Member of the National Assembly) for that riding during the next Legislature, the interval between elections.

The National Assembly of Québec is made up of all of the elected candidates.

The party having the most elected Members of the National Assembly (MNAs) is the parliamentary group that forms the Government and its leader becomes the Premier. The other MNAs form the opposition. The party having the second largest number of MNAs becomes the Official Opposition. The party having the third largest number of MNAs forms the Second Opposition Group if it has at least 12 elected Members or if it obtained at least 20% of the votes. Members who belong to a party that does not meet one of these criteria sit in the National Assembly as independent MNAs.

MNAs: Their Role and Responsibilities

Legislator

As a member of Parliament, which is the legislative power, each MNA is entitled to participate in the law-making process.

MNAs examine, debate and pass bills; they may also introduce bills in the House.



Photo: Christian Chevalier

Law-making is done partly in the House, where all MNAs participate, and partly in parliamentary committee, where smaller groups of MNAs work on legislation.

President of the National Assembly

The President, elected by his peers (the MNAs), is in charge of keeping order in the House by ensuring that the Standing Orders and other rules of procedure are respected. The President also administers the services of the National Assembly, and represents it, in particular in its relations with other parliaments.

Overseer of Government Action

In their "watch-dog" role, MNAs oversee the actions of the Government (the executive power) through a variety of means, including:

● Debate in Committee

MNAs who sit on parliamentary committees spend much of their time studying proposed legislation, but committees also provide an opportunity for members to hear senior officials account for their management of public agencies and government bodies—another way in which MNAs oversee the actions of the Government.



Photo: Daniel Lessard

Parliamentary committees examine bills in detail. In addition, general or special consultations held as part of committee hearings give the citizenry an opportunity to be heard on matters of public interest.

● Question Period

During this 45-minute period, held every day the House sits, MNAs question government ministers on the issues of the day.

● Examination of the Estimates

This operation takes place after the Budget Speech, when the Government asks the Assembly to authorize its spending for the coming year. After an initial summary examination by the Assembly, each of the nine parliamentary committees examines the Budget Estimates for the departments and permanent bodies in its field of specialization (health, education, the environment, etc.).

Constituency Representatives

Whenever the House is not sitting, MNAs are working in their ridings, preparing to bring the needs of their constituents to the attention of the public administration. Riding work is extremely varied. An MNA may receive a request from a constituent who wishes to gain access to a government program, for example, lodge a complaint about the public administration, or have a law or regulation changed.