

The British North America Act of 1867 was Canada's first constitution. It was passed by the British Parliament on March 29, 1867, and became effective on July 1, 1867. This Act (or Law) defined who made laws and decisions in the country and how these decisions were made. All laws and authority were subject to the approval of the British monarchy (royal power).

Modelled on the British system of Parliament, the Canadian government is defined in the BNA Act as having two parts: an appointed Upper House (Senate) and an elected House of Commons. The BNA Act also defined the power and responsibilities of the federal and provincial governments.

### **Constitutional Monarchy:**

A Constitutional monarchy is a form of government that acknowledges an elected or hereditary monarch (ie: King or Queen). Canada is a constitutional monarchy that formally recognizes Elizabeth II as the "ceremonial" Queen of Canada. Most of the royal constitutional and ceremonial duties in Canada are carried out by the Queen's representative, the Governor General (at present Michaëlle Jean).

### **The British Parliament: Page 205 - Growth (diagram of federal system)**

The British (and thus Canadian) Parliament consists of the Senate and the House of Commons and the Queen as its head. The Canadian parliamentary system depends on political parties. The political party (Liberal, NDP, Conservative, etc..) that wins the majority of seats forms the government, and its leader usually becomes Prime Minister. The second largest party becomes the official opposition with its own leader.

### **Royal Assent:**

When a bill (new law) has completed all its parliamentary stages, it receives Royal Assent from the Queen (Governor General in Canada). It's the final approval of the new law.

## Key Provisions of the BNA Act

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**The BNA Act is called our first constitution. What is a constitution?**

**What was the purpose of the BNA Act?**

**Who's permission did "Canada" need to implement a law? Explain why?**

**Rank the following 5 positions from most "powerful" to least "powerful" for Canada in 1867. a) The Governor General, b) The Senate, c) The Prime Minister, d) The Queen, e) The House of Commons.**

**How is the Prime Minister Chosen in Canada?**

**Who has the responsibility of Royal Assent in Canada?**