

Your Capital

SECTION 5

Citizens elect different people from their communities to different levels of **government** to make **laws**. These lawmakers, or politicians, meet regularly to talk about current laws and to make new ones. They do this in a place called the **capital**. Ottawa, the national capital of Canada, is where federal politicians meet.

WHAT ABOUT ME?

Sometimes, in newspapers or on television news programs, people will say things like: “Ottawa sends soldiers” or “Ottawa makes a decision.” Of course, they do not mean the *city* of Ottawa; they mean the Government of Canada. Ottawa is the country’s capital. It is your capital. Look in a newspaper and notice how the word *Ottawa* is used. Is the article talking about something that affects you or your family?

DID YOU KNOW?

The name *Ottawa* (or *adawe* in Algonquin) means *to trade* and was the name given to the First Nations people who controlled trade along the river.



TALK ABOUT IT!

All Canadian provinces and territories have capitals. Can you name them? (See answers below.) What is the capital of your province or territory? Is it the biggest city?

| CAPITAL | PROVINCE/TERRITORY |
|---------------|-------------------------|
| Edmonton | Alberta |
| Victoria | British Columbia |
| Winnipeg | Manitoba |
| Fredericton | New Brunswick |
| St. John's | Newfoundland & Labrador |
| Yellowknife | Northwest Territories |
| Halifax | Nova Scotia |
| Iqaluit | Nunavut |
| Toronto | Ontario |
| Charlottetown | Prince Edward Island |
| Quebec City | Quebec |
| Regina | Saskatchewan |
| Whitehorse | Yukon Territory |

There is always something going on at the Parliament Buildings, even when the **Senate** and the **House of Commons** are not sitting. Meetings, **committees**, official visits and receptions occur every day, and the work of researchers is constant. About 3,756 people work here!

Why Ottawa?

Choosing a capital city is not easy! Should it be in the centre of the country? Should it be the biggest city? Who decides where a capital should be?

In 1857, there were a few cities competing to be the capital city. To settle it, Queen Victoria chose Ottawa because it was centrally located between the cities of Montreal and Toronto, and was along the border of Ontario and Quebec (the centre of Canada at the time). It was also far from the American border, making it safer from attacks.



W **WORD BUILDER** – Some words have two parts, like *lawmaker* (law + maker). Can you think of other words that use the word *law* or *maker*?

The word *capital* comes from the Latin word *caput*, which means *head*. *Capital* has many different meanings: very serious (capital punishment); money (capital investment); and very important (capital letter, capital city). Here are some other words that come from this same root: to cap something; a baseball or bottle cap; captain; caption.

The English word *citizen* comes from the Latin word *civis*, which means *a person who lives in a city*. Other words in this group include *city*, *civic* or *civilian*. Can you think of other terms that mean the same thing as *citizen*?

On the Hill

The busiest part of downtown Ottawa is Parliament Hill. This is where **Senators** and **Members of Parliament** have their offices, meet to make laws, and have meetings with advisors and citizens. Parliament Hill is a gathering place for Canadians who go there for a variety of reasons: to celebrate, to protest, to go on tours and to enjoy the beautiful scenery. The Hill is on high ground next to the Ottawa River. If you look across the water, you can see the province of Quebec. Government offices and national institutions are located on both sides of the river.



Library of Parliament – Mone Cheng

The Parliament Buildings



Parliament has three main buildings: the East Block, the West Block and the **Centre Block**. The Centre Block you see today is not the first — the first Centre Block of the Parliament Buildings burned down in 1916. The only part of the Centre Block to survive was the Library of Parliament, which had fire-proof iron doors. The East and West Blocks were untouched by the fire.

ORIGINAL CENTRE BLOCK

Before and after the fire of 1916.





LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT

- the research centre for **parliamentarians** and their staff
- over 600,000 items in the collection
- over 350 people work for the Library of Parliament
- statue of a young Queen Victoria



AERIAL VIEW OF PARLIAMENT HILL

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 Centre Block | 7 Victoria Building |
| 2 East Block | 8 National Press Building |
| 3 West Block | 9 The Rideau Canal and Locks |
| 4 Library of Parliament | 10 Centennial Flame |
| 5 National War Memorial | 11 Statues |
| 6 Langevin Building | |





Mike Carroccetto, Ottawa Citizen



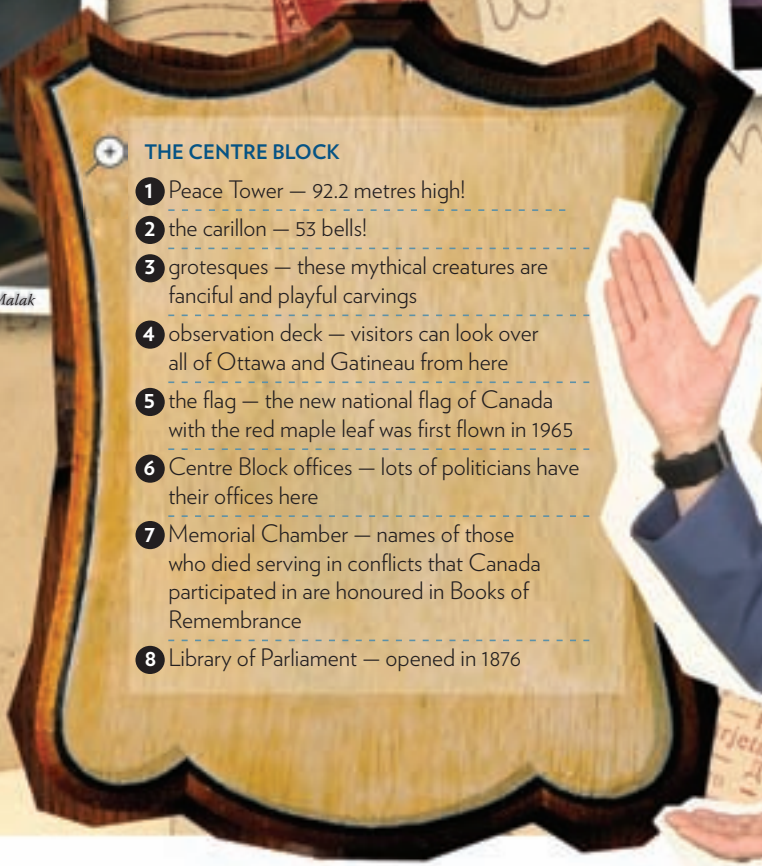
? DID YOU KNOW? – The difference between gargoyles and grotesques is that gargoyles are usually waterspouts, while grotesques are fanciful and playful carvings. The word *gargoyle* comes from the French word *gargouille*, which means *throat* or *pipe*.



Library of Parliament – Malak

VICTORIA TOWER BELL *Joshua Sherurci*

- bell from the original Centre Block tower
- cast in 1875, installed in 1877
- fell from the tower in the 1916 fire
- restored in 1998 and on display on Parliament Hill



- THE CENTRE BLOCK**
- 1 Peace Tower — 92.2 metres high!
 - 2 the carillon — 53 bells!
 - 3 grotesques — these mythical creatures are fanciful and playful carvings
 - 4 observation deck — visitors can look over all of Ottawa and Gatineau from here
 - 5 the flag — the new national flag of Canada with the red maple leaf was first flown in 1965
 - 6 Centre Block offices — lots of politicians have their offices here
 - 7 Memorial Chamber — names of those who died serving in conflicts that Canada participated in are honoured in Books of Remembrance
 - 8 Library of Parliament — opened in 1876

