

# THE RED CHAMBER

## ON RIDEAU STREET

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The Senate of Canada makes  
its temporary home in an  
Ottawa landmark



SENATE  
SÉNAT  
CANADA

# The Senate breathes new life into a century-old landmark

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Welcome to the Senate of Canada Building, the Senate's temporary home. Originally Ottawa's central train station, this building served until recently as the Government Conference Centre. Extensive renovations have given this historic structure a new lease on life, thanks to the Senate.

The Senate's permanent home, Parliament's Centre Block, is undergoing its first comprehensive rehabilitation since the building's opening in 1920.

There had been a proposal to build an interim Senate Chamber in the courtyard of the East Block building. Instead, senators saw an opportunity to make their home in the neglected Government Conference Centre. That decision accelerated the building's restoration while saving taxpayers approximately \$200 million.



1920



2019

# The evolution of a landmark



**1912**

## Train station

This gateway to Canada's capital became a symbol of Canada's new age of progress. The station was constructed by the Grand Trunk Railway, a Montreal-based company, and became Union Station in 1920.

**1967**

## Centennial visitors centre

Union Station was decommissioned in 1966. A public campaign to save the building caused officials to reconsider their plans to demolish it. With Canada's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday fast approaching, Ottawa was underequipped to handle the thousands of expected tourists. Union Station was converted into a visitors centre for Canada's centennial celebrations.



**1957**

## Elvis Presley's arrival causes a frenzy

Thousands of screaming fans greeted the King as his limousine pulled out of Union Station. More than 500 fans from Montreal crammed aboard a special train, the "Rock 'n' Roll Cannon Ball," to attend his shows in Ottawa.



**1981**

## **Patriation of the Constitution**

Then-prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau invited the 10 provincial premiers to the conference centre. Four days of intense closed-door negotiations led to this historic agreement.

*Courtesy of Diamond Schmitt Architects and KWC Architects in joint venture.  
Tom Arban Photography.*



**1969**

## **Government Conference Centre**

For 45 years, the building hosted high-level government meetings, many of which helped shape Canada. Prime Ministers met with provincial premiers, brought together world leaders and hosted landmark international conferences.

**2019+**

## **The Senate of Canada Building**

A six-year rehabilitation project resulted in this modern facility, now temporary home to the Senate. The original train station's spaces were restored and repurposed. What was the concourse is now the Senate Chamber.



EXPLORING  
THE BUILDING:

# Inside & Out

Classic and contemporary design  
meet in this state-of-the-art facility.

Main entrance block

Senate foyer

Public entrance

*Courtesy of Diamond Schmitt Architects and KWC Architects in joint venture.*

## Polished

Looking at the building, you can still see the grandeur of the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century style. The newly-built east façade, featuring a five-storey colonnade of limestone pillars and glass panels, follows conservation guidelines by remaining identifiable as a 21<sup>st</sup>-century addition. It complements the building's original Beaux-Arts exterior without imitating it.

## Accessible

From barrier-free entrances to tactile signage and universal washrooms with changing tables, the building was renovated in a way that ensures all senators, staff and visitors can easily function in the space. It features a continuous, barrier-free path to provide easy access throughout the building. Visitors watching proceedings from the public galleries are offered wheelchair and adaptable seating.

## Sustainable

Energy-efficient technologies are integrated wherever they do not compromise the building's heritage character. Environmentally-friendly initiatives include a green roof, interior and exterior low-voltage LED lighting and all new plumbing with water-saving fixtures. The Senate of Canada Building has earned three Green Globes, a prestigious, internationally-recognized certification for improving the sustainability of this heritage building.



EXPLORING  
THE BUILDING:

# Senate Foyer

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This monumental hall forms a giant well of light at the centre of the building through which tour groups, visitors and senators pass on their way to the Red Chamber. Restored Beaux-Arts features are visual reminders of the building's history.



### **Historic train station bench returns home**

Take a seat and reflect on more than 100 years of history around, above and even beneath you. One of 12 mahogany benches that originally sat here when the building was a train station has returned. The Canada Science and Technology Museum graciously donated it from its collection to the Senate.

## EXPLORING THE BUILDING:

# Art in the Senate

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Art abounds in the Senate's temporary home. It symbolizes the country that Parliament serves and reflects the diversity of Canadians and regions represented by senators.



### Bronze panoramas of Canada

Monumental bronze landscapes adorn the walls of the foyer. The Canadian creations are perforated with thousands of tiny holes to create images of the country's regions. The east wall depicts Newfoundland and Labrador's east coast, while the west wall gives a view of Alberta's Banff National Park. A third panorama depicts a steam engine pulling a train across a wooden trestle bridge on Vancouver Island, an image that pays tribute to the building's former role as a railway station.



### French heritage

Portraits of French monarchs are displayed in the hallway leading to the Chamber. These portraits were brought over from Centre Block's Salon de la Francophonie. Senator Serge Joyal, P.C. assembled the collection over many years and donated it to the National Capital Commission. The works of art are on loan to the Senate.



## Carved flags

Walnut-wood panels hang on the east wall of the Senate Chamber, where two carved Canada flags form a backdrop to the thrones. The curve and contour of the carvings give a sense of movement, as though the flags are fluttering in the wind.

## Indigenous artwork

The largest of the committee rooms is adorned with a collection of Indigenous art. It formerly hung in the Aboriginal Peoples' Committee Room in Centre Block. The collection includes works by Métis, Inuit and First Nations artists.



*Teasing the Fox*  
Shirley Cheechoo  
Eastman, Quebec, 1952  
c. 1980

## Dominion Sculptor: a unique job

Did you know that Canada's Parliament buildings are evolving works of art? Canada is the only country in the world to have a Dominion Sculptor tasked with portraying the country's history by continually adding to the stone, wood and bronze décor of its buildings. This work continues in the Senate of Canada Building.



**EXPLORING  
THE BUILDING:**

# Senate Chamber

The Senate Chamber, or the “Red Chamber” as it is sometimes called, is where senators representing all of Canada’s regions meet to debate legislation and issues of importance to Canadians.

## Original coffered ceiling

Restored and repainted, featuring a 20-metre-long skylight

## Televised proceedings

For the first time, Canadians across the country can watch senators as they play an essential role in our parliamentary democracy

## Heritage senators’ desks

Moved from the Senate Chamber in Centre Block



**Speaker's dais**

Panels of white marble from Vancouver Island

**Accessible public gallery**

All are welcome to watch proceedings with simultaneous interpretation in Canada's official languages

**New royal thrones**

Each incorporates a piece of English walnut from Windsor Great Park gifted by Queen Elizabeth II

**New Speaker's chair**

Headpiece features the "S" emblem of the Senate, surrounded by a flourish of maple leaves

**Provincial and territorial shields**

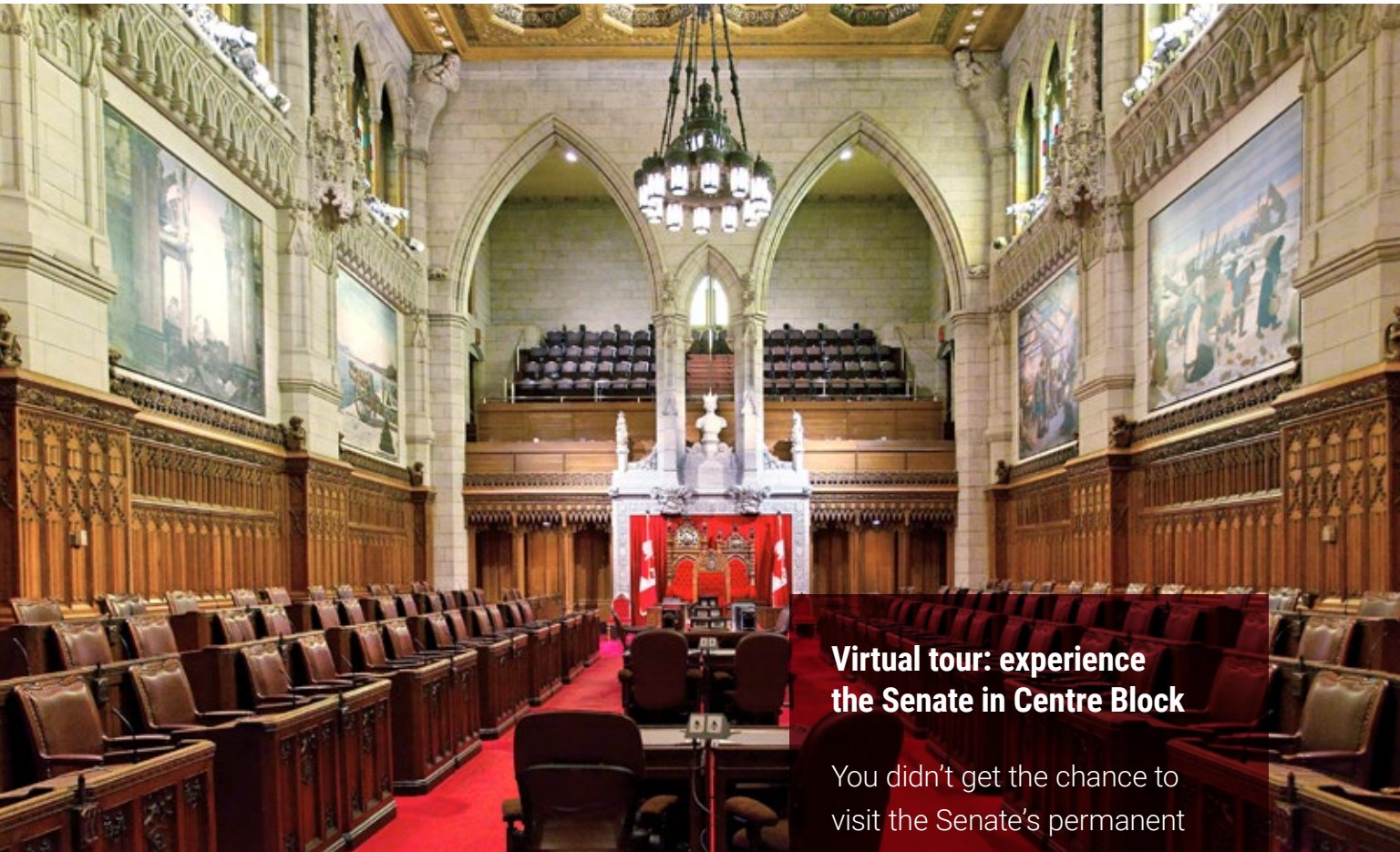
Symbol of the regions that senators represent

**Maple leaf motif**

Symbol of the country that Parliament serves

# Senate Chambers of old and new

Canada's 105 senators examine legislation in the Chamber and in committees. They give voice to regions and underrepresented groups in Parliament.



**Virtual tour: experience the Senate in Centre Block**

You didn't get the chance to visit the Senate's permanent Chamber? While Centre Block is under renovation, visit its Red Chamber and explore the art and architecture through the Senate's virtual tour.

**[SenCanada.ca/About](https://www.senCanada.ca/About)**

## PERMANENT SENATE CHAMBER

- Centre Block (currently under renovation)
- 309 square metres
- 12.5-metre ceiling
- Live audio stream

Did you know that this Senate Chamber has the same floor space as the permanent Chamber located in Centre Block? However, there is a difference in height.



## TEMPORARY SENATE CHAMBER

- The Senate of Canada Building
- 309 square metres
- 10-metre ceiling
- For the first time, video broadcasting is added to live audio stream

# Speaker's Chambers

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When the Speaker is not presiding over sittings of the Senate or representing Parliament at home and abroad, his chambers are the hub of his professional activity.



## **Speaker's office: to conduct parliamentary business**

This is where the Speaker receives briefings, reviews legislation, prepares speeches and deliberates on questions of parliamentary procedure and privilege.

## **Speaker's dining room and salon: to host visiting dignitaries**

The Speaker often welcomes important guests including foreign leaders, diplomats and visiting parliamentarians. The Speaker's chambers include a dining room and salon to host these dignitaries and special events. Both have been designed in keeping with the Beaux-Arts character of this former train station. Many original heritage features were restored, including windows, crown mouldings and a fireplace.



# Rehabilitation on Parliament Hill

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## Centre Block renewal takes centre stage

Built immediately after a fire destroyed the original structure in 1916, Centre Block is one of Canada's most iconic buildings. It is the permanent home of the Senate and House of Commons. The soaring Peace Tower is immediately recognizable and has become an important symbol of Canada. Except for the Library of Parliament, Centre Block has undergone no major renovations since its opening in 1920.

## Renovating the Senate's original home

The restoration and modernization of Centre Block is expected to take at least 10 years, beginning in 2019. This is the largest, most ambitious heritage rehabilitation project ever seen in Canada.



# Connect with the Senate

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## Learn more about the building

For more information about the Senate of Canada Building, visit [info.senCanada.ca/SCB](https://info.senCanada.ca/SCB). You will find articles about the construction process, special features on art and artifacts, and a detailed history of the building.

## Keep informed of the Senate

More brochures about the Senate can be found at [SenCanada.ca](https://SenCanada.ca). Stay current with the work of senators by subscribing to our eNewsletter at [SenCanada.ca/ContactUs](https://SenCanada.ca/ContactUs) and following us on social media.

[sencanada.ca](https://sencanada.ca)

