

Understanding Ontario's Provincial Government

How Decisions are Made

Policy Development: This process begins in the Ministry, drafted by civil servants. Civil servants are non-political staff who are responsible for the day-to-day administration and the implementation of government policy. Policies can come from a variety of sources. They could respond to the direction of the Premier or a Cabinet minister, or they may be developed internally, based on research and best practices elsewhere. Policy proposals can also be brought to the government by outside stakeholders.

Cabinet: After a policy is drafted, the minister responsible and his or her staff will work to fine-tune the proposal. For major decisions, the Premier's staff will help to prepare a final draft, which is then submitted to a Cabinet Committee made up of government ministers and MPPs. The Cabinet Committee will consider the proposal and may ask for changes. Once the Cabinet Committee has approved the proposal, it will be considered by the full Cabinet, which can also ask for changes.

Legislative Process: Once a proposal has been approved by Cabinet it is introduced as a bill in the Legislative Assembly by a Cabinet minister, usually the minister responsible for the policy area which the bill concerns. To become law, bills must undergo three periods of consideration, or readings, by Parliament.

First Reading

A Bill is introduced in the Legislature and added to the legislative agenda. While the relevant minister may make a statement on the purpose of the bill, there is no debate of the bill at First Reading and it will generally be carried, or invited to move on to the next stage of consideration, without a formal vote. Following a bill's introduction, it is printed and made available to the public on the Legislative Assembly's website



Second Reading

MPPs have an opportunity to debate and vote on the principle of the bill. If a majority of MPPs vote in favour of the bill, it is considered to have been given Second Reading and is usually referred to a legislative committee for consideration.



Committee Stage

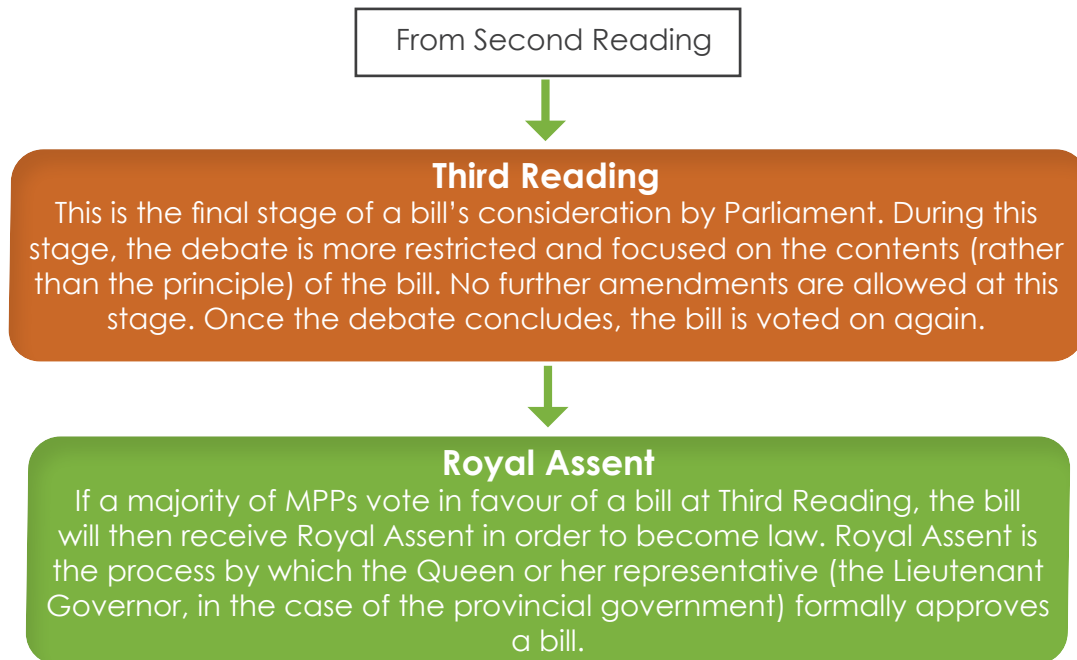
This stage is an opportunity for a legislative committee to consider the bill in a more detailed fashion. The committee is also able to call witnesses and suggest amendments to the bill.



To Third Reading



Understanding Ontario's Provincial Government



Regulations vs. Legislation: While legislation outlines general requirements, regulations are more detailed sets of rules that fall under the authority of existing pieces of legislation. Regulations provide specific directions to ensure that a law is implemented, interpreted and enforced as it was intended when passed by Parliament. The regulations falling under a certain law are written by the government ministry that is responsible for administering the relevant law.

New pieces of legislation, as well as amendments to existing laws, must be considered and debated on by Parliament. Regulations do not need the approval of Parliament.

Legislative Change

Once a bill becomes law, any changes to the legislation must also move through the process of Parliamentary debate and voting, including three readings in the Legislative Assembly. Like all policy development, suggestions for legislative change may originate in a government department, from the Premier or a Cabinet minister, or from an external stakeholder group advocating to the government.

The [Veterinarians Act](#) provides the CVO with the authority to “regulate the practice of veterinary medicine” and to establish standards, regulations and by-laws to govern its members. This Act also only currently recognizes the role of veterinarians and not other veterinary professionals such as RVTs within the field of veterinary medicine. As a result, the CVO's regulation and oversight of the veterinary profession in Ontario applies only to veterinarians. For the OAVT to successfully accomplish its priority of having RVTs recognized in legislation and regulation, amendments to the [Veterinarians Act](#) will be required.

Understanding Ontario's Provincial Government

The OAVT has regulation and oversight over the RVT profession per the [OAVT Act](#), however this is what's known as a Private Bill. (More on Public vs. Private Bills below).

Fundamental to the changes to the Veterinarians Act proposed jointly by the OAVT, the CVO, and the OVMA, is the recognition that the delivery of veterinary medicine is increasingly a team-based system. The field of veterinary medicine has greatly evolved since the introduction of the Veterinarians Act in 1990, including a growth in the number of Registered Veterinary Technicians, a strengthening of the RVT skillset, and standards for the profession upheld by the OAVT. Registered Veterinary Technicians are now well-established as important team members within the delivery model of veterinary medicine in Ontario.

Public vs Private Bills

Public Bills, including all bills introduced by Cabinet ministers, relate to matters of public policy and are usually general in their application. The Veterinarians Act is an example of a Public Bill.

In addition to Public Bills, Parliament also considers **Private Bills**. This category of bill relates to a matter of special benefit to a particular person or group and originates when a person or organization seeking a specific power applies to the legislature for special legislation. Private Bills are not usually debated in the Legislative Assembly, and are instead referred to the Standing Committee on Regulation and Private Bills for debate and consideration.

If a Private Bill is passed, it may provide for something (such as a special power) that can't be obtained under the general law. The OAVT Act is an example of a Private Bill. This Act grants the OAVT permission to govern and discipline its members and protects the RVT title so that only members of the OAVT may legally use it, but as it stands now, RVTs are not regulated under a Public Bill.

Understanding Regulatory Colleges

The College of Veterinarians of Ontario (CVO) is an example of a regulatory college. Regulatory colleges are given power by legislation relevant to their field of practice. For example, the Veterinarians Act designates the CVO as the regulatory college for the veterinary profession. The Veterinarians Act grants the CVO the following powers and abilities:

- Self-governance: The governing Council of the CVO is permitted to manage and administer the College's affairs.
- Regulation: The CVO, through its Council, is ultimately responsible for regulating the practice of veterinary medicine by setting and enforcing standards and guidelines that members must follow.
- Licensing: The CVO is responsible for granting licenses to practice veterinary medicine and for ensuring that training and educational standards are met before a license is issued.

Within its power to regulate the veterinary profession, CVO Council is granted the authority to pass by-laws relating to administrative and domestic affairs of the College.