TRACING CANADIAN ACTS FROM THE PRE-INTERNET ERA: CANADIAN BILLS, ACTS AND AMENDMENTS

It is now relatively easy to find information on current and recent federal legislation on the Internet. However, a huge amount of Canadian parliamentary documentation dating from Confederation up to the mid 1990s is not accessible online. This rich source of printed documentation is frequently needed by our users, but techniques for tracing pre-Internet legislation are different from currently used techniques. This guide will help users trace this pre-Internet legislation, examine how an act stood at a particular date in history, even if the act has since been repealed or amended.

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Introduction

This guide is designed to lead you through the labyrinth of Canadian bills, acts, and amendments. It provides you with step-by-step instructions which will enable you to locate federal acts, trace their amendments, determine the dates on which they received Royal Assent, find the relevant regulations, and locate background information by using such sources as the parliamentary Debates and committee proceedings.
Before you begin your search, you must familiarize yourself with the sources listed below. Read the description of each source carefully and then locate each one in the Government Documents stacks by proceeding to the call number. Examine the volumes briefly, noting any special features pointed out in the descriptions.

The instructions in this guide refer primarily to researching older acts. If your act is more recent (mid-to-late 1990s or later), you should concentrate on researching your act using online sources. Pay special attention to the online versions of sources mentioned in the following section, “Sources for Tracing an Act”. Online versions exist for the Canada Gazette, the Debates, the Journals, Consolidated Statutes and Regulations, etc. You will find links to these on the Canadian Federal Government section of the Government Documents website at http://www.library.mcgill.ca/govdocs/SITESCAN.HTM. For more help using online sources, see the “Tutorial on the Records of Parliament Online”, which is produced by the University of Saskatchewan Library and available at http://library.usask.ca/govpub/tutorial/house/index.htm.

I. Sources for Tracing an Act

STATUTES OF CANADA (CA1 YX21 S21)

Issued at the end of every session of Parliament, these volumes include the texts, in English and in French, of all acts passed during the session. They also include amendments to laws passed during previous sessions. Each volume includes an alphabetical index. The sessional volumes are consolidated periodically in the Revised Statutes of Canada.

Abbreviation: S.C.

As of 1995, the Statutes of Canada are available online at http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/ann_stat.html

TABLE OF PUBLIC STATUTES

The Table of Public Statutes is found at the end of each annual Statutes of Canada. Consult the Table of Public Statutes to see whether an act has been amended or repealed since the publication of the latest Revised Statutes. Also available online at http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/publaw/index.html.

REVISED STATUTES OF CANADA, 1985 (CA1 YX41 1985 R27)

This sixteen volume set provides a consolidation, as of 1985, of all Canadian laws in force. It consists of eight volumes of revised statutes, four supplement volumes, one appendix volume, and two alphabetically arranged index volumes (one in English, one in French), a second edition of the index volumes (one in English, one in French) and a table of concordance. Six sets of revised statutes have been issued since Confederation, in the years 1886, 1906, 1927, 1952, 1970 and 1985.

CANADA GAZETTE, PART I (CA1 YX99 G15)

The Canada Gazette is the official organ of the federal government. Part I, issued weekly, covers a variety of subjects including proclamations, orders-in-council and official government notices. Quarterly indexes are issued.

Starting with volume 132 (1998), the Canada Gazette, Part I is available online in both ASCII and PDF files, at http://www.canada.gc.ca/gazette/hompar1_e.html

CANADA GAZETTE, PART II (CA1 YX99 G20)

This part of the Canada Gazette includes the texts of statutory instruments (most of which are regulations). Its index, the "Consolidated Index of Statutory Instruments," is published periodically as a separate issue, and covers the period from January 1, 1955 through the date noted on the title page. The latest index volumes are filed in a separate box at the end of the Canada Gazette, Part II section.

Starting with volume 132 (1998), the Canada Gazette, Part II is available online in both ASCII and PDF files, at http://www.canada.gc.ca/gazette/hompar2_e.html

CANADA GAZETTE, PART III (CA1 YX99 G25)

As soon as a bill receives Royal Assent and becomes a federal law, its full text is published in the Canada Gazette, Part III.

The Government Documents Department keeps the Canada Gazette, Part III only until the Statutes of Canada for that year have been received.

Starting with volume 21 (1998), the Canada Gazette, Part III is available online in PDF format at http://canada.gc.ca/gazette/hompar3_e.html

CONSOLIDATED REGULATIONS OF CANADA 1978 (CA1 YX99 G22)

This set includes those regulations published in the Statutory Orders and Regulations Consolidation, 1955. It also includes those regulations published in the Canada Gazette, Part II since 1955 that were still in force on December 31, 1977. The regulations are grouped according to the short title of the act under which they were authorized.

Abbreviation: C.R.C.

Also see Consolidated Statutes and Regulations, available online at http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/index.html

DEBATES OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS (CA1 X1 D21)

The Debates, also commonly referred to as Hansard, provide verbatim accounts of what is said in the House. The Debates are issued on a daily basis when Parliament is in session and are bound at the end of each session. The index volumes are filed together after the volumes of the Debates. (CA1 X1 D22) Unfortunately, a printed index is no longer issued. The last printed
index is for the first session of the 35th Parliament (1994/96). Use the online index for later sessions.


DEBATES OF THE SENATE (CA1 Y1 D21)

The Debates of the Senate record word for word the speeches given in the Senate. Unlike the Debates of the House of Commons, the index is not filed separately, but is bound within the sessional volumes of the Debates.


JOURNALS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS (CA1 X2 J57)

The Journals present a concise, chronological record of the proceedings of the House of Commons. Whereas the Debates provide word for word accounts, the Journals summarize the proceedings. Journal volumes were previously issued at the end of each session of Parliament with an index in each volume. Since September 1994 the Journals are issued weekly.


JOURNALS OF THE SENATE (CA1 Y1 J57)

The Journals detail the daily transactions of the Senate.


VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS (CA1 X5 V56)

The Votes and Proceedings were issued daily when the House was in session, containing the same information that eventually appeared in the bound volumes of the Journals of the House of Commons. Since 1994 they have been absorbed by the Journals.

MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE SENATE (CA1 Y4 M36)

The Senate counterpart to the Votes and Proceedings of the House of Commons.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

Standing Committees - Both the House of Commons and the Senate appoint Standing Committees at the beginning of each Parliamentary session. These committees cover such areas of major interest as agriculture; external affairs and national defence; finance, trade and economic affairs; Indian affairs and northern development, etc. The committee members examine bills, estimates, or any topics within their subject venue that are referred to them from either the House or Senate for in-depth scrutiny.
An index to committee proceedings is published at the end of each session and is bound with the Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence.

All House of Commons committees have call numbers starting with the letters CA1 XC... Call numbers for Senate committees start with CA1 YC... The number following XC or YC is unique to that committee. Search for the committee in MUSE to find its call number.

**Special Committees** - Special Committees can be set up at any time to study a topic of pressing interest. As opposed to Standing Committees which sit throughout the parliamentary session, Special Committees are dissolved once they have surveyed their topic and issued their report.

Their proceedings are also published as Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence.

Each House of Commons special committee has a call number starting with CA1 XC2. An index is included. To find the exact call number, search for the committee on MUSE.

**Legislative Committees** – Legislative Committees are a relatively new type of committee, first created in 1985. Unlike Special Committees, they can only be set up in the House of Commons and are designed to study a specific bill. There are similarities to Special Committees; a Legislative Committee is dissolved once study is completed and a report has been issued or when the session ends. The last issue of the Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence is a detailed index by speaker and subject. Call number: CA1 XC1 P65. Arranged in order by bill number within each session.

If you have located and studied the above sources, you are now ready to begin tracing an act. Follow the steps listed below which use the Export and Import Permits Act as a model.

**II. Where can I find a copy of the Export and Import Permits Act?**


2. Check the index volume under the name of the act to find the chapter number of the Export and Import Permits Act. The chapter number consists of a letter followed by a number, in this case, chapter E-19.


Note: The official title of the act is An Act Respecting the Export and Import of Strategic and other Goods. However, many acts have a short title by which they are commonly known. The short title of an act is normally set forth in section one.
III. Chapter E-19 presents the Export and Import Permits Act as it stood in 1985. Has the act been amended since 1985?

To find out how an act stood at a particular date in the past (e.g. whether there were amendments), use the Table of Public Statutes for that year (in the last volume of the Statutes of Canada for that year). If you want to find out how it stands at the present time, use the latest Table of Public Statutes, at call number CA1 YX25 T16.

To find out how the Export and Import Permits Acts stood in 2001, follow these steps:

1. Proceed to the 2001 Table of Public Statutes
2. Find the Export and Import Permits Act in the alphabetically arranged listing.

Let’s examine the first entry under this heading in greater detail.

*s.2*, 1988, c. 65, s. 116...

The boldfaced elements indicate which sections of the act have been amended. In this case, section 2 of chapter E-19 has been amended. The next elements indicate exactly where to find the amendment. 1988 refers to Statutes of Canada, 1988; c. 65 refers to chapter 65; and s. 116 to section 116. Therefore, the amendment to section 3 of the Export and Import Permits Act (chapter E-19) is found in the 1988 volume of the Statutes of Canada, chapter 65, section 116.

In fact, section 2 has been amended many times. Here is the complete entry:

*s.2*, 1988, c. 65, s. 116; 1991, c. 28, s. 1; 1993, c. 44, s. 146; 1994, c. 47, s. 100; 1996, c. 33, s. 57; 1997, c. 14, s. 70; 1997, c. 36, s. 207.

Therefore, amendments to section 2 are also found in the Statutes of Canada, 1991, chapter 28, section 1; in the Statutes of Canada, 1993, chapter 44, section 146; in the Statutes of Canada, 1994, chapter 47, section 100; in the Statutes of Canada, 1996, chapter 33, section 57; in the Statutes of Canada, 1997, chapter 14, section 70; and in the Statutes of Canada, 1997, chapter 36, section 207.

**IV. Is there any other way an act can be affected other than by amendments?**

Yes, an act can be affected by proclamation. In some acts, there exists a clause, usually the last clause in the act, which authorizes the issuing of a proclamation by the Governor in Council for a particular purpose.

For example, the proclamation may affect the date on which the act comes into force. Some acts do not come into force on the date they receive Royal Assent, but rather on a date to be proclaimed later. This is the case with chapter 28 of the 1991 Statutes of Canada. Section 14 of chapter 28 reads as follows: "This Act or any provision thereof shall come into force on a day or days to be fixed by order of the Governor in Council."

NOTE: The phrases “a day to be fixed by proclamation” and “a day to be fixed by order of the Governor in Council” are synonymous.
V. Where can a copy of this proclamation be found?

Until 1985, proclamations were listed in the Canada Gazette, Part I. After that date, the listing of proclamations was transferred to parts II and III of the Canada Gazette.

1) If you suspect that the act you are interested in was proclaimed prior to 1986, proceed to the Canada Gazette, Part I.

2) Take note of the date on which your act received Royal Assent, and then check all quarterly indexes after that date under the heading “Proclamations”.

3) If your act was most likely proclaimed after 1985, proceed to the latest Table of Public Statutes under the name of the act.

4) If the proclamation does not appear, proceed to the issues of the Canada Gazette, Part II that postdate the latest Table of Public Statutes.

Scan the Table of Contents in each issue for references to proclamations. They may be phrased in different ways. For example:

“Order fixing April 1, 1990 as the Day on which the Act Comes into Force... Museums Act.”

“Proclamations Declaring the Agreement on Social Security Between Canada and Iceland in Force October 1, 1989.”

Note: Proclamations do not only affect the date an act comes into force. They can affect acts in various ways. If, upon reading an act you find a phrase similar to the following: "The Governor in Council may by proclamation declare...", check the indexes to the Canada Gazette, Part I for further information.

VI. Where can I find the regulations authorized under the Export and Import Permits Act?

Most acts include a section which authorizes either the Governor in Council or a particular Minister to make rules, orders, regulations, etc. which carry the force of law, yet do not have to be passed by Parliament. Such rules, etc. are known as statutory instruments, and with a few exceptions are required by law to be published in the Canada Gazette, Part II.

The listing in the Canada Gazette, Part II distinguishes between two types of statutory instruments: regulations, which bear the prefix SOR, and statutory instruments (other than regulations) and other documents which bear the prefix SI. However, in common practice, the different types of statutory instruments, no matter what prefix they bear, are often all simply referred to under the common rubric “regulations.”

There are two ways of finding regulations, using either printed sources or online sources:
1. The online method of finding regulations is to search the Consolidated Index of Statutory Instruments, available online at http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/index/index.html. Searching by the title of the act, in this case the Export and Import Permits Act, will give you references to the regulations, including the Allocation Methods Order (Beef and Veal), which is SOR/96-186. Next, go the Consolidated Statutes and Regulations at http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/index.html. Change the pull-down menu so that you are searching in Consolidated Regulations, not in Consolidated Statutes. Entering keywords from the regulation title into the title box (e.g. allocation methods order) or entering the code into the text box (e.g. SOR/96-186) will bring you to the full text of the regulation.

2. Proceed to the printed edition of the "Consolidated Index of Statutory Instruments" (CA1 YX99 G20) for the year which interests you, and turn to section II which is entitled "Table of Regulations, Statutory Instruments (other than Regulations) and other Documents Arranged by Statute."

In this alphabetically arranged section, look for the Export and Import Permits Act. The various regulations authorized under the Export and Import Permits Act are listed in alphabetical order.

Let's examine the first entry, "Beef and Veal", under the heading "Allocation Methods Order." The regulation is SOR/96-186. The "96" means that you will find the regulation in one of the issues Canada Gazette, Part II from 1996. You will need to go through the issues from that year until you find the regulation. The "Allocation Methods Order (Beef and Veal)" regulation is in the second volume of the 1996 Canada Gazette, Part II, on page 1255.
VII. When did the Export and Import Permits Act receive Royal Assent?


2. If you find the act listed in the R.S.C. 1985, then look it up in the previous set of revised statutes, i.e. R.S.C. 1970.

3. Continue to look up the Export and Import Permits Act in the index to each set of revised statutes until you no longer find it listed. In the case of the Export and Import Permits Act, it is listed in the index to the R.S.C. 1952 but not in the R.S.C. 1927.

4. You have now established that the Export and Import Permits Act received Royal Assent sometime between 1927 and 1952.

5. Since the latest reference you have found to your act is in the R.S.C. 1952, your next step is to withdraw from the shelves the latest volume of the Statutes of Canada that precedes chronologically the R.S.C. 1952, i.e. the Statutes of Canada 1951.

6. In the Statutes of Canada, 1951 (p. 299 on) turn to the Table of Public Statutes and look up the Export and Import Permits Act. This refers you to chapter 17 of the 1947 Statutes.
7. Upon examining chapter 17 of the 1947 Statutes, you see that the act was assented to on May 14, 1947.
VIII. Has the act been discussed in Parliament?

To find out whether the Export and Import Permits Act has been discussed in Parliament, follow these steps:

1. Proceed to the index volumes of the Debates of the House of Commons.

2. Look up the Export and Import Permits Act in the sessional index volumes. It is often profitable to begin by consulting the index volume for the year the act was passed (i.e. 1947) to review the debate that preceded passage.

In this example, “1r., 204” means that you will find the first reading of the bill on page 204. The discussion surrounding the second reading is on pages 567-74, the bill is referred to the
Standing Committee on Banking and Commerce on page 574, it is discussed by the Committee of the Whole House on pages 2036-39, and the third reading is on page 2039.

3. Check the indexes contained within the sessional volumes of the Debates of the Senate for references to discussions in the Senate.

For a more recent act, use the online Debates rather than the printed ones.

IX. The difference between a bill and an act

The entry in the Debates index is under Export and Import Permits Bill. What is the difference between the Export and Import Permits Bill and the Export and Import Permits Act?

A bill is a draft or a proposal of a law. A bill can only become a law when it receives the approval of both Houses of Parliament.

A bill can be introduced in either the House of Commons or the Senate. It is assigned a bill number, prefaced by the letter C if it is introduced in the House of Commons or by an S if it is introduced in the Senate. The bill, in this case bill C-11, must successfully pass through the following stages before it can be considered a law:

First reading - The bill is read by title only. This is a purely formal stage which introduces the bill and allows it to be printed and distributed. The bill is neither debated at this stage nor put to a vote.

Second reading - The principle of the bill is debated at this point. Details are not discussed, but rather the general desirability of the measure the bill represents. A vote is taken following debate, and if the bill passes second reading it proceeds to the Committee stage.

Committee stage - The bill is examined in detail. The Committee considers the bill clause by clause and line by line if necessary.

Report stage - The Committee reports on its deliberations.

Third reading - The procedure followed is similar to that of second reading. A vote is taken and if the bill passes it proceeds to the Senate.

Senate stage - The bill must pass through the same series of stages in the Senate as it did in the House of Commons, i.e. first reading, second reading, etc. Once it passes third reading in the Senate, the bill only requires Royal Assent to make it an Act of Parliament.

Note: Bills which originate in the Senate are referred to the House of Commons at this stage.

Royal Assent - The Governor General, acting on behalf of the Crown, gives Royal Assent to bills. Once a bill receives Royal Assent, it has the force of law (unless it will be proclaimed at a later date, as discussed earlier). It ceases to be known by its bill number and instead is assigned a chapter number in the Statutes of Canada.
For example, as soon as Royal Assent was granted to the Export and Import Permits Bill (Bill no. C-11), it became known from that time on as the Export and Import Permits Act, chapter 17 in the Statutes of Canada, 1947.

X. Has the act been discussed in committee?

Has the Export and Import Permits Act been discussed in committee?

1. Consult the 1947 volume of the Journals of the House of Commons.

2. Check the index under Export and Import Permits Act.

3. An examination of the paragraph you have located in the index reveals that the Export and Import Permits Bill was referred to the Committee on Banking and Commerce.

4. Turn to page 95 of the Journals of the House of Commons to determine the exact date on which the Export and Import Permits Bill was referred to the Committee.

5. Proceed to the 1947 volume of the Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence of the Standing Committee on Banking and Commerce. The 1947 volume has no index, so you will have to
browse through the volume until you reach the section where the Export and Import Permits Bill is discussed.

Note: Being systematic in your browsing will help you find the proper section quickly. Since you know that the bill was referred to committee on February 18, 1947, start looking through the chronologically arranged volume starting with that date. You will soon discover that the bill was discussed in Committee on March 20, 1947.

6. Not only does the index to the Journals indicate information about Committees, but it also provides a capsule history of the progress of a bill through Parliament. By referring to the pages indicated one can discover, for example, when the bill had first, second and third readings and when it received Royal Assent. One can also determine the number the bill carried before it became an act (Bill C-11) and the chapter number assigned to the act in the Statutes of Canada (c.17).

**XI. How do I cite the Export And Import Permits Act?**

All statute citations must include the following information: short title (if available), name of the series of statutes in abbreviated form, year, chapter, section, etc.

The Export and Import Permits Act would therefore be cited as follows:

**Export and Import Permits Act, S.C. 1947, c.17.**

If you were citing the chapter from the Revised Statutes, the citation would read:

**Export and Import Permits Act, R.S.C. 1985, c.E-19.**

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