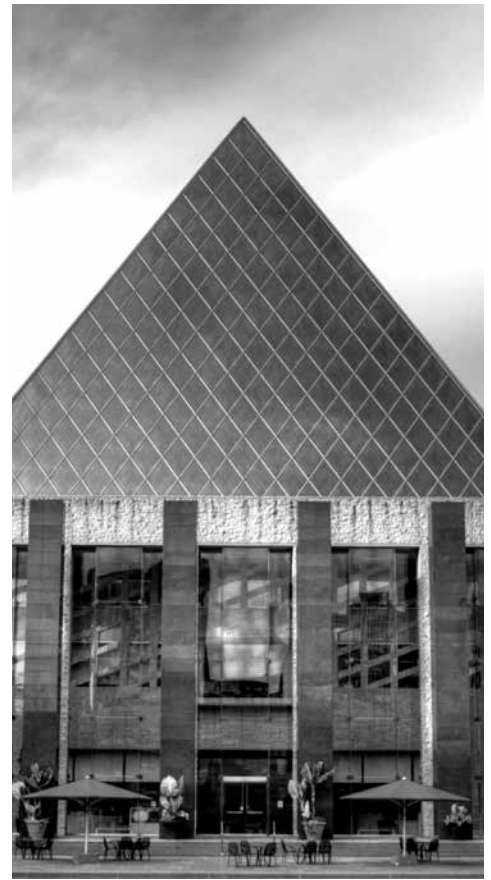


# 7

# LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT



Canada is a federal state, parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy.

A **federal state** brings together a number of different political communities with a central government (federal) for general purposes and separate local governments (provincial/territorial) for local purposes.

The division of powers is based on the principle of **subsidiarity**, in which the level of government closest to the issue governs it. The distribution of responsibilities is found in Sections 91-95 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*.

The federal government takes responsibility for the whole country and matters of national concern, such as the armed forces, international relations and trade, currency, fisheries and oceans, criminal law and public safety.

Provincial and territorial governments are responsible for their own province or territory and issues such as education, health care, social welfare, transportation and highways.

Municipal and local governments receive their powers from their respective provincial or territorial government. These governments handle local matters, such as garbage and recycling, libraries, public transit, local parks and recreation.

For some issues, the different levels of government have to work together and share the responsibility. This is called **concurrency**. For example, federal, provincial and municipal governments are concurrently responsible for the environment. The federal government enforces the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act* and regulates waterways used for fishing and shipping. Provincial governments regulate land use, mining, manufacturing and harmful emissions. Municipal governments are responsible for zoning, garbage disposal, and sewage and water treatment.

There is another level of government found in some Métis and Inuit communities or First Nations reserves. Indigenous governments often share certain responsibilities with the government in their province or territory and the federal government.

## LESSON 7: LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

Each level of government has locally elected officials to represent the people (constituents) living in their designated areas (e.g., electoral divisions, wards). Elected representatives are responsible for proposing, studying, debating and voting on bills (potential laws), and raising issues put forward by their constituents.

Federal representatives are called **Members of Parliament** (MPs), provincial representatives in Alberta are called **Members of the Legislative Assembly** (MLAs), and municipal level representatives are called **councillors** or **aldermen**. MPs and MLAs are often affiliated with political parties. Municipal representatives in Alberta do not have a party affiliation.

The leader of the federal government is called the prime minister, whereas premier is the title given to the leader of the provincial government. In both of these cases, the leader of the party with the greatest number of elected representatives in the legislative body usually assumes the role of the leader of that government.

At the municipal level in Alberta, the head of council is called a **mayor** or **reeve**. A mayor is directly elected by citizens in most cases, whereas a reeve is usually chosen from among and by the elected councillors. Municipalities can either have officials elected at large or from wards, which divide the municipality into smaller geographic sections.

As a **constitutional monarchy**, Canada's head of state is a hereditary sovereign (queen or king) who reigns in accordance with the **Constitution**. The sovereign is represented in Canada by the governor general, who is appointed by the sovereign on the advice of the prime minister. In each of the ten provinces, the sovereign is represented by a lieutenant governor, who is appointed by the governor general on the advice of the prime minister. Usually, the governor general and lieutenant governors serve five-year terms. There is no sovereign representative at the municipal or local level.

### GUIDING QUESTIONS

How does government affect me? How is government organized in Canada?

### PURPOSE

Governments make decisions and pass legislation that impacts the lives of citizens. Canada has several levels of government, each with its own elected representatives and areas of responsibility.

In this lesson, students first explore roles and responsibilities in their school community and then within the levels of government in Canada. Students reflect on all the ways the different levels of government affect their lives and then analyze which level is most important to them. In the *Conclusion* activity, students identify an issue that matters to them and/or write a letter to the most appropriate elected representative.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the lesson, I can...

- identify the roles and responsibilities associated with the different levels of government;
- explain how the levels of government influence society;
- describe how governments work together;
- explain how government affects me directly;
- describe the importance of being engaged in issues and in my community.

### INTRODUCTION

*Who is responsible for what?*

1. Explain the idea that within schools, and any community, there are areas of responsibility (who does what) and that different issues are handled by different people.

2. Ask students who they would go to in the following scenarios.

- If someone stole money from your pockets during gym class
- If a bucket of water spilled in the hallway
- If you had a question about your writing assignment
- If you were feeling sick and wanted to go home
- If you wanted to help with the school dance or musical concert
- If you wanted to try out for the basketball team
- If you were called an inappropriate name on the bus to school
- If a friend posted a picture of you on social media that is embarrassing and you do not want it posted

3. Why is it important to know who is responsible for what in your school or community?

## LESSON 7: LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

### ACTIVITIES

1. Using the images in Slide Deck 7A (*Who am I?*), gauge student's current knowledge about government and politics in Canada. Images include current Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Premier Rachel Notley, Governor General Julie Payette, parliament buildings and the Alberta Legislative Assembly, plus other non-political figures. This can be completed through class discussion, or have students jot down their answers on paper.

Afterwards, invite students to share what they know about how government is organized in Canada.

2. Using the 'Levels of Government in Canada' video and Slide Deck 7B, review how government is structured in Canada. Suggested questions to cover during instruction and discussion:

- What is a representative democracy?
- What are the levels of government in Canada (federal, provincial, municipal and Indigenous governments)?
- What is the name of the elected representative at each level?
- What is the name of the leader at each level? How are they chosen?

*Teacher Note: Write student answers on the board or chart paper and add a printed photo for each leader and representative for future reference.*

3. Review the concept that each level of government has its own set of responsibilities. The federal government is responsible for national matters, such as international trade, fisheries and oceans, and citizenship and immigration. Provincial governments are responsible for provincial issues, such as health care, education, transportation and highways. Municipal governments are responsible for local matters like road maintenance, garbage and recycling. Create a classroom chart as students give ideas and you discuss each responsibility. Alternatively, you can review the chart on Activity 7.1.

4. Using Think-Pair-Share, have students complete Activity 7.1. Give students enough time to answer the questions, share with a partner and then take it up as a class.

- Step 1: Highlight or circle all the government areas that affect your life. Provide specific details for three areas.
- Step 2: Which level of government do you think influences your life the most? Explain your choice. Do you think this will change when you are 30 years old?
- Step 3: Write down three examples of responsibilities where different levels of government have to work together on an issue.

*Teacher Note: Provide an example for Step 3, such as natural resources (federal and provincial).*

#### Alternative Activity

Ask students to keep a 'diary' or create a comic strip of their actions throughout the day. For each activity, ask students to identify the level of government and area of responsibility connected to the activity.

### CONCLUSION

Have a brief closing discussion about government in Canada, or ask students to write a reflection on one or more of the following questions.

- What have you learned about government in Canada?
- Is government important? Why or why not?

### TIPS FOR TEACHERS

- When discussing big concepts like elected representatives and levels of government, create classroom visuals with photos or images to give students a quick reference point throughout the unit or Student Vote process.

### ASSESSMENT FOR STUDENT LEARNING

Ask students to identify an issue that concerns them the most in the community. Ask them to find out which level or levels of government are responsible for this matter and write to the appropriate local representative (it could be more than one) expressing their concerns.