

Lesson 3

Governments in Canada



GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 How is government organized in Canada?
- 2 How does government affect me?

OVERVIEW

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

In this lesson, students explore the roles and responsibilities within the levels of government in Canada through a variety of multi-media tools and activities.

Students analyze how government services affect them and assess the interdependence of different levels of government through a bulletin board activity. In the *Consolidation* activity, students create a postcard to share their learning with family members or caregivers.

LEARNING INTENTIONS

We are learning to:

- understand that governments are made up of elected representatives;
- identify the roles and responsibilities associated with the different levels of government; and,
- analyze how government affects us directly.

Tips for Teachers

- Please use or adapt the activities in a way that is appropriate for your class.
- 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 lesson program period. This idea has also been incorporated into the activities.

Supplies/Needs

- “Levels of Government” video
- Slide Deck 3A and 3B
- Copies of 3.1 for the small group activity, digital access or copies of 3.2 and 3.3 (or index cards)
- Scissors
- All digital files, videos and slide decks can be found on the project website

Starter

Using the images in Slide Deck 3A (“Who am I? What am I?”), gauge student knowledge about government and politics in Canada. Images include Queen Elizabeth, Justin Trudeau, John Horgan, the parliament buildings, the British Columbia legislature, as well as other non-political figures and places. This can be completed through class discussion, or have students jot down their answers.

Afterwards, invite students to share what they know about how government is organized in Canada or any questions they have about the topic. Consider providing each student a couple of sticky notes to write down their statements/questions and post them on a wall or on chart paper.

Activities

1. Review how government is structured in Canada using the “Levels of Government” video, followed by Slide Deck 3B to review the key concepts.

Key questions:

- What is a representative democracy?
- What are the different levels of government in Canada?
- What is the title of the elected representative at each level?
- What is the title of the leader at each level?
- How are responsibilities divided among the different levels of government?

2. Divide students into small groups to play a sorting game based on the levels of government.
 - a) Provide each group with a copy of Activity 3.1 and ask students to cut up the terms into individual pieces.
 - b) Have each group create space for three columns and title each with a heading: federal, provincial, municipal (from Activity 3.1).
 - c) Ask students to sort the terms according to each level. You can choose to present an order (e.g., leader title, representative title, government building title, responsibilities) or read out one category at a time.
 - d) Review the answers as a class.

TEACHER NOTE

There are a few terms/words that do not belong under any level. Inform students of this at the beginning of the activity.

3. Create a class bulletin board where students can identify how government services or decisions influence their lives. Students can contribute by attaching images, news articles, headlines, social media posts, and other related content. Ask each student to make two contributions and label the level of government. Students can use Handout 3.2 as a reference.

Consolidation

Provide students with an index card or postcard template (Activity 3.3). Ask students to write a postcard to their family members or caregivers summarizing one or two main points from the lesson. On the front side of the postcard, they can draw an image based on what they learned about the levels of government in Canada.

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

LESSON SECTION	GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS
Starter	<p>Can students recognize or name current politicians and institutions?</p> <p>Are students able to share their existing knowledge or pose questions about what they want to learn?</p>
Activities	<p>Are students asking questions about the levels of government?</p> <p>Are students able to distinguish between the roles and responsibilities among different levels of government?</p> <p>Can students make connections between government services and their own lives?</p>
Consolidation	<p>Can students summarize their learning to their family members or caregivers?</p>

ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

Individual Education Plans	<p>Modifications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide examples or images of different responsibilities (e.g., defence – soldiers). • Share the "Levels of Government" video before class discussions and activities. <p>Enrichment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask students to identify an issue that concerns them the most in the community. Ask them to contact the appropriate elected representative (it could be more than one) expressing their concerns. This could be completed by email or social media.
Language Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide examples or images for each area of responsibility. • Have strong students describe responsibilities in their own words to Language Learners. • Ensure that subtitles are on during the videos.
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the demographic data of one or more elected bodies and discuss the need for more diversity in politics. • Discuss specific political issues facing your community and make connections to the levels of government. • Review the governance structure of a First Nations community relevant to your students.
Accessibility & Accommodations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The trivia game for the <i>Starter</i> could also be conducted through an online platform (e.g., Kahoot, Google Forms). • If you are in a virtual setting, you can use Google slides for the sorting game and bulletin board activities.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

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 regional governments (provincial/territorial) for regional/local purposes.

The division of powers is based on the idea that 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 delivery, social welfare, transportation and highways.

Municipalities and regional districts, collectively known as **local governments**, receive their powers from their respective provincial or territorial governments. These governments handle local matters, such as water and sewage, garbage and recycling, public transit, local parks and recreation.

There are also other forms of government in some Indigenous communities or First Nations reserves. **Indigenous governments** often share certain responsibilities with the government of their province/territory and the federal government.

The term **self-government** refers to a First Nation, Métis or Inuit community with control over its own affairs. The level of autonomy varies, but federal and provincial laws still apply and the

other levels of government will often work together for the benefit of all community members. Self-governing First Nations have the ability to sign treaties (formal agreements) with the various levels of the Canadian federal government (referred to as Crown). Comprehensive land claims agreements (modern treaties) between Canadian governments and First Nations often result in Indigenous peoples having greater autonomy to choose their own method(s) of representation and decision-making.

For some issues, the different levels of government have to work together and share the responsibility.

For example, federal, provincial and local 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. Local governments are responsible for zoning, garbage disposal, and sewage and water treatment.

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

Representatives at the federal level are called **Members of Parliament** (MPs). Representatives at the provincial level in British Columbia are called **Members of the Legislative Assembly** (MLAs).

At the municipal level in British Columbia, elected representatives are called councillors. In unincorporated areas in British Columbia, elected representatives are called **electoral area directors** and they sit on the regional district board.

Most federal and provincial elected representatives, and some municipal officials belong to a political party. A **political party** is a group of like-minded individuals with a shared vision and political ideology whose intention is to achieve power and create meaningful political change.

The leader of the federal government is called the **prime minister**, whereas **premier** is the title given to the leader of the provincial government. At both levels of government, the leader of the political party with the greatest number of elected representatives in the legislative body usually assumes the role of the leader of that government. Therefore, we do not vote for the position of premier or prime minister directly.

In British Columbia municipalities, the head of council is called a **mayor**. The head of council is elected at large, which means by all the people in the municipality. The head of regional district board is called a chair and they are selected among the members of the regional district board.

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 local level.

In Canada's three territories, territorial commissioners serve a similar role to a lieutenant governor. Commissioners do not represent the sovereign, however. They are appointed by and represent the federal government.