

Lesson 3

Governments in Canada



GUIDING QUESTIONS

❶ How does government affect me?

❷ How is government organized in Canada?

OVERVIEW

Governments make decisions and pass legislation that influence the lives of citizens. Canada has several levels of government, each with its own elected representatives and areas of responsibility. The federal government is the only one that affects everyone in Canada.

In this lesson, students explore 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. In the *Consolidation* activity, students create a visual diary to show specific ways that government influences their daily lives.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- explain the importance of government;
- 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 them directly.

Tips For Teachers

- Please use the activities and combine them 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 unit or Student Vote program period.
- Supplies/Needs: “Levels of Government” video, Slide Deck 3A and 3B, digital access to or copies of Activity 3.1.
- All digital files, videos and slide decks can be found at: studentvote.ca/canada (Classroom Resources).

Starter

Using a Turn-and-Talk strategy, discuss the need for laws and services in the community.

- What types of rules and laws are needed for people living in a community (e.g., road and traffic laws, wearing seat belts, wearing helmets while biking or skating, laws against stealing or trespassing, privacy laws, laws against bad business practices, laws against violence or destruction of property)?
- What type of services are needed in a community (e.g., education and schools, health care and hospitals, police and fire protection, drinking water, sewage treatment, libraries)?
- Who is responsible for making laws and managing services in the community?
- What would life be like without government?

Activities

1. Using the images in Slide Deck 3A (“Who am I? What am I?”), gauge student knowledge about government and politics in Canada. Images include current Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, the parliament buildings, 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.

2. Using the “Levels of Government” video and Slide Deck 3B (slides 2-9), review how government is structured in Canada.

Key questions:

- What is a representative democracy?
 - What are the levels of government in Canada (federal, provincial/territorial, municipal/local and First Nations, Inuit and Métis governments)?
 - What is the title of the elected representative at each level?
 - What is the title of the leader at each level?
3. Review the concept that each level of government has its own set of responsibilities. The level closest to the issue usually manages it (i.e., the federal government handles national defence). Review the examples in Slide Deck 3B (slide 10) and ask students to guess which level of government is responsible for it. Review the answers on the next slide.
 4. Using 'Think-Pair-Share,' have students complete Activity 3.1. They should highlight or circle all of the government areas that affect their life, make connections where governments must work together, and analyze which level of government affects them the most. Afterwards, have students share their responses with a partner and then, review it as a class.

Consolidation

Ask students to create a visual diary or comic strip of how government influences their daily life. They can use slides, paper or an online app.

Steps:

- Identify four or five activities in your life that are influenced by government.
- Draw an image or take/find a photo to represent the activity.
- Write a caption to identify the related level of government(s) and its area of responsibility (Activity 3.1).
- In one sentence, explain the impact of the specific government area on your life. Use “I” statements to personalize your summary.
- Write an overall concluding statement to answer the following question: Is government important? Why or why not?

Extended Learning

Ask students to identify an issue that concerns them the most in the community. Ask them to find out which level(s) of government are responsible for this matter and to contact the appropriate elected representative (it could be more than one) expressing their concerns. This could be completed by email.

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Section	Guiding Questions for Teachers
Starter	Can students explain the need for government?
Activities	Can students recognize or name current politicians and institutions? Are students asking questions about the levels of government? Can students make connections between government services and their own lives? Can they identify areas of shared responsibilities?
Consolidation	Can students identify the level of government and area of responsibility connected to their own activities? Can students explain the importance of government?

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"> • Have students gather details and/or visuals for each level of government, such as the government leader, local elected representative and name and location of the parliament/legislature.
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 an Indigenous community relevant to your students.
Accessibility & Accommodations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The trivia game for the Activities could also be conducted through an online platform (e.g., Kahoot, Google Forms). • The artwork/media for the <i>Consolidation</i> activity can be created and shared in a digital format. If physical productions are being created, ensure that enough materials are available to reduce the need for sharing.

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 local governments (provincial/territorial) for 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 include 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, public transit, local parks and recreation.

Some First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities have their own systems of governance. These councils or governments share certain responsibilities with the provincial/territorial or federal government.

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

Each level of government has elected officials to represent the people (constituents) living in their designated areas (e.g., electoral districts/divisions, wards, municipalities at-large). **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 or territorial level are called Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs), Members of the National Assembly (MNAs) or Members of the House of Assembly (MHAs), depending on the province or territory. The elected representative at the municipal level is usually called a councillor or alderman.

Most federal and provincial elected representatives 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. At the territorial level in Northwest Territories and Nunavut and in most municipalities, there are no political parties.

The leader of the federal government is called the **prime minister**, whereas **premier** is the title given to the leader of each 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.

The leader of the municipal government is most often called a mayor, reeve or chairperson. The leader is elected directly by the people.

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/local or territorial 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.