

Lesson 3: Levels of Government



GUIDING QUESTIONS

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

OVERVIEW

Governments make decisions and pass legislation that influence our lives.

In Part One, students discuss the need for laws and services in the community. Afterward, they explore the levels of government in Canada through various multimedia tools.

In the second part, students examine the responsibilities of each level and play a card game to build and test their knowledge. In the *Consolidation* activity, students create a visual diary to show how governments influence their daily lives.

LEARNING GOALS

We are learning to:

- 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 us directly.

Tips for Teachers

- Please use and combine the activities in a way that is appropriate for your class.
- The lesson has been divided into two parts (30-35 min each), should you choose to deliver the activities over multiple periods/days.
- 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.
- If you are teaching in an Indigenous community, please reference your local Indigenous governance structures in the discussion and add details to Slide Deck 3.

Supplies/Needs

- “Levels of Government” video
- Slide Deck 3
- Digital access to or copies of Activity 3.1
- Set of cards for each group (Activity 3.2)
- All digital files, videos and slide decks can be found at: studentvote.ca/canada (Classroom Resources)

PART ONE

Starter

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

- What rules and laws are needed for people living in a community? For example: road and traffic laws, safety laws/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 services are needed in a community? For example: education, and schools, health care and hospitals, police and fire protection, drinking water, sewage treatment, libraries.

Essential Learning

1. Create a schema chart with large chart paper or an online tool. It should have three sections: “Existing Knowledge,” “New Learning” and “Misconceptions.” Alternatively, you could use one piece of chart paper for each.

2. Ask students what they already know about governments and political leaders in Canada. Suggested prompts:

- Who is in charge of making laws in Canada?
- How does our government system work?
- What are some of the jobs or responsibilities of people in government?

Write down each student’s statement on a sticky note and put it under “Existing Knowledge.” Make sure to write all their knowledge statements on sticky notes, even if you know the statement is incorrect. Any misconceptions will be addressed during the next learning phase.

3. Watch the “Levels of Government” video and introduce students to the federal, provincial/territorial, and municipal levels of government.
4. Review the structure of governments in Canada using Slide Deck 3. Guiding questions:
 - What is a representative democracy?
 - What are the levels of government in Canada? What other forms of governance exist 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 levels of government?
5. Invite students to summarize what they learned about governments in Canada and make notes on the “New Learning” chart paper or section of the schema chart. Review students’ “Existing Knowledge” statements to identify any information that might be inaccurate or misleading. If a misconception has been discovered, move the sticky note to the “Misconception” section, and explain how it can be corrected or presented more accurately on a different coloured sticky note and attach it to the original note.

TEACHER NOTES:

- Use a different coloured sticky note for the “New Learning” statements (compared to the “Existing Knowledge” statements).
- If students are building on an “Existing Knowledge” statement, move the related sticky note to the “New Learning” section and attach a new sticky note to it with the brand new learning.

PART TWO

Activities

1. Review the idea that each level of government has its own group of responsibilities (i.e., the federal government handles national defence). Emphasize that governments also work together on a number of issues. This includes dividing up different aspects of an issue or providing money to another government, such as public transit.
2. Have students review the division of responsibilities among the three levels of government. This can be done as a class or in pairs. Encourage students to seek clarity about services they may not understand (Handout 3.1).
3. In pairs or small groups, provide each group with a set of playing cards (Activity 3.2). Ask students to divide the cards face down among their group. Have students take turns reading out the responsibility from one of their cards and letting the other student(s) guess the level of government(s) that handles it. The first student who answers correctly gets to keep the card. At the end, count how many cards each person has collected.

Consolidation

Ask students to create a visual diary or comic strip of how governments influence their daily lives. They can use slides, paper or an online app. Guidelines:

- a) Identify four or five activities in your life that are influenced by governments in Canada.
- b) Draw an image or find a photo to represent the action or activity.
- c) Write a caption to identify the related level of government(s) and its area of responsibility from Activity 3.1.

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 or letter.

Questions to Help Guide Assessment

SECTION	GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS
Starter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can students identify services and laws that we need? Can they explain the need for government?
Essential Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are students asking questions about the levels of government? • Can students share their newfound knowledge? Can they identify any previous misconceptions?
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are students asking questions about the various responsibilities? • Can they identify areas of shared responsibilities? • Can students identify the correct level of government for the examples in the card game?
Consolidation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can students identify the level of government and area of responsibility connected to their daily activities?

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 card game in the <i>Activities</i> section 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.

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.

Most 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 individuals with similar views about government and society whose intention is to achieve power, 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). **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.

Most federal and provincial elected representatives belong to a political party. A **political party** is a group of individuals with similar views about government and society whose intention is to achieve power.

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 most 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 called a mayor, reeve or chairperson. The leader is usually 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.