

Lesson 4

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 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 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. 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;
- identify the roles and responsibilities associated with the different levels of government in Canada;
- analyze how government affects them directly.

Teacher Tips

- 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 lesson or Student Vote program.
- Supplies/Needs: "Levels of Government" video, Slide Deck 4A and 4B, access to or copies of 4.1.
- Online templates for all activities and any videos and slide decks are available on the project website.

Starter

Discuss the concept of government and the need for rules and decisions in society. Guiding questions:

- What types of rules and decisions are needed for people living in a community (e.g., education and schools, roads and traffic laws, health care and hospitals)?
- Who is responsible for making decisions in the community?
- What would life be like without government?

Fundamentals

1. Using the images in Slide Deck 4A (Who am I?), gauge student's current knowledge about government and politics in Canada. Images include current Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Premier Blaine Higgs, parliament buildings and the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick, as well as other non-political figures and places. 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" video and Slide Deck 4B, 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?
 - Why do we have different levels of government?
 - What is the title of the elected representative at each level?
 - What is the title of the leader at each level? How are they chosen?

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). Provide several examples of responsibilities and ask students to guess which level of government is responsible for it (e.g., citizenship, driver's licensing, local parks).
4. Ask students to complete Handout 4.1. 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 with a partner and 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 a social media app.

Steps:

- Identify 5 or 6 regular or daily actions or activities that are influenced by government.
- Draw an image or take/find a photo to represent the action/activity.
- Write a caption to identify the related level of government(s) and its area of responsibility.
- 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?

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Below are some guiding questions for teachers for each section of the lesson.

Starter	Can students explain the need for government?
Fundamentals	<p>Can students recognize or name current politicians and institutions?</p> <p>Are students asking questions about the levels of government?</p> <p>Can students make connections between government services and their own lives?</p> <p>Can they identify shared responsibilities? Are students able to demonstrate an understanding of the interdependent relationships between the different levels of government?</p>
Consolidation	<p>Can students identify the level of government and area of responsibility connected to their action or activity?</p> <p>Can students explain the impact of government on their lives?</p>

ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

Individual Education Plans	<p>Modifications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide examples or images of different responsibilities (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 to 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 English language learners.
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 questions marginalized groups may have for elected representatives. • Discuss specific political issues facing your community. • Review the governance structure of a neighbouring Indigenous community.
Accessibility & Accommodations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The trivia game for the <i>Fundamentals</i> activity 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 an entirely 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 regional governments (provincial/territorial) for regional/local purposes.

The division of powers is based on the principle of **subsidiarity**, in which the 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.

Municipalities or local governments receive their powers from their provincial or territorial governments. These governments are responsible for the planning, growth and safety of their communities. They also handle local matters such as water and sewage treatment, public transit, roads and bridges, local parks and recreational facilities.

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 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.

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

Each level of government has locally elected officials to represent the people (constituents) living in their designated areas. 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 New Brunswick are called **Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs)**. MPs and MLAs are often affiliated with political parties.

In New Brunswick local governments, elected representatives are called **council members** or **councillors**. Local government representatives in New Brunswick 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.

In New Brunswick local governments, the head of council is called a **mayor**. Mayors are elected by the people during a local government election.

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 a five-year term. There is no sovereign representative at the local government level.