

## LESSON 3:

# The Levels of Government

### OBJECTIVE

Students will learn about the roles and responsibilities associated with the levels of government in Canada and understand how government policy and services influence their lives directly.

### KEY WORDS

federal, provincial, territorial, municipal, councillor, Member of Parliament (MP), Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), legislative assembly, parliament, prime minister, premier, mayor, reeve, self-government

### QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE DURING THIS LESSON

- How is your life affected by government?
- How is government structured in Canada?
- What roles and responsibilities are associated with each level of government?
- What other types of government exist in Canada?

### SUPPLEMENTARY TOOLS

- PowerPoint 3: The Levels of Government
- Video: The Levels of Government
- Handout 3.1: Government Responsibilities
- Worksheet 3.2: Government All Around
- Worksheet 3.3: Investigating Government
- Worksheet 3.4: In the News
- Handout 3.5: History of Aboriginal Self-Government
- Worksheet 3.6: First Nation Profile
- PowerPoint: 'Who Am I?' Trivia Game (available online)

### TEACHING STRATEGIES

#### Hook: 5-15 min

Test your students' current political knowledge using Option A or B.

Option A — Using the 'Who Am I?' PowerPoint Trivia Game (available online), ask students to identify the people and institutions in the pictures.

Option B — Ask the following questions to your students?

- Who is the current prime minister? Which party does he/she represent?
- Who is the current premier? Which party does he/she represent?
- Who is the current mayor/reeve?
- Who is your local representative at the federal, provincial and municipal government?

#### Discussion: 5 min

Do you think government impacts your life? Why or why not? Explain.

#### Instruction: 15-20 min

1. Canada has three levels of government: federal, provincial/territorial and municipal.

- Each level has its own set of responsibilities. Sometimes, more than one level works together on a particular issue, but there is still a division of roles.
- The federal government takes responsibility for matters of national and international concern, provincial/territorial governments are responsible for their own province and territory and municipal governments manage their community.

2. In Canada, we vote for people to represent us at each level of government.

- The representative at the federal level is called a Member of Parliament (MP). There are currently 338 MPs across the country, each representing a specific area or constituency.
- In Saskatchewan, the representative at the provincial level is called a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA). After the 2016 provincial election, Saskatchewan will have 61 MLAs.

- The representative at the municipal level is usually called a councillor.
3. The representatives gather together to propose, debate and approve laws, discuss concerns facing the country, province or community and represent people living in their communities.
- MPs meet at the House of Commons within the Parliament buildings in Ottawa.
  - MLAs meet at the Saskatchewan Legislature in Regina.
  - Councillors meet at the local city or town hall in their community.
4. Each level of government has a leader. At the federal and provincial levels, this person is usually the leader of the political party that has the most members in the parliament or legislature. At the municipal level, the leader is usually selected by the people through a vote.
- The leader at the federal level is called the prime minister.
  - The leader at the provincial level is called the premier.
  - The leader at the municipal level is called the mayor or reeve.
5. There are also other types of government in some Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal governments can replace or share certain responsibilities with the government of their province/territory or the federal government. An Aboriginal community that has control over its own affairs is known as having self-government.

*Teacher Note: The “Levels of Government” video and PowerPoint 3 can be used to assist with content delivery.*

### Activity: 15-20 min and homework

1. Review the list of responsibilities for each level of government (Handout 3.1).
2. Distribute copies of Worksheet 3.2 and ask students, individually or in pairs, to label or identify all the government services in the picture.
3. Take up the worksheet as a class and have a discussion about all the ways government impacts our lives.
4. Assign Worksheet 3.3 for homework. Provide the following links to support research.
  - The Governor General of Canada — [www.gg.ca](http://www.gg.ca)
  - The Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan — [www.ltgov.sk.ca](http://www.ltgov.sk.ca)
  - The Library of Parliament — [www.parl.gc.ca](http://www.parl.gc.ca)
  - Elections Canada — [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca)
  - Elections Saskatchewan — [www.elections.sk.ca](http://www.elections.sk.ca)
  - Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan — [www.legassembly.sk.ca](http://www.legassembly.sk.ca)

*Teacher Note: This activity could be completed in a computer lab or assigned for homework.*

### Debrief: 5-10 min

Have a brief closing discussion about government in Canada. Alternatively, ask students to write a reflection for their election scrapbook or learning log (see *Assessment Opportunities*).

- What have you learned about the levels of government in Canada?
- How does government affect your life?
- Is government important? Why or why not?
- If you became the premier, what would be your top three goals? What would you want to improve or change?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

A. Review Handout 3.1 and ask students to identify a provincial responsibility they care about. In pairs, groups, or individually, ask students to prepare a creative presentation about why it is important. Students can use any form of presentation they choose — it could be a speech, poster, skit, song or rap.

B. Have students find a story related to government in the local newspaper. Ask them to identify whether the story concerns the municipal, provincial or federal government by highlighting the key words that reveal this information. Using Worksheet 3.4, have students answer the following questions and share their findings with the class: What is this news story/article about? What is the issue being discussed? Which level of government does it involve? What are the arguments or supporting points being made? Who is this story important to?

C. Learn more about Aboriginal self-government in Canada by reviewing Handout 3.5 with your class. Use the First Nations Map of Saskatchewan ([www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca](http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca)) to determine the First Nation(s) whose traditional territory your school is located on (if applicable), or select another Saskatchewan First Nation of your choosing. As a class or in small groups, have students research the First Nation selected by completing Worksheet 3.6.

D. Have students draw a community picture or map and label five government services (e.g., school, park, hospital, roads, cars, police officer). The labels should include the level of government and the responsibility.

E. Invite an elected representative, past politician or public servant (at any level) to visit the school or class to discuss their role and the responsibilities of their level of government.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

*How is government structured in Canada?*

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 matters of national importance, and separate provincial/territorial governments for local purposes.

In Canada's parliamentary democracy, people elect representatives (members) to the federal parliament and to the provincial and territorial legislatures. Representatives at the federal level are called Members of Parliament (MPs). Representatives at the provincial level in Saskatchewan are called Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs).

The party with the most elected representatives in the parliament or legislature usually determines the leader of the government. At the federal level, the leader of the government is called the prime minister. At the provincial level, the leader of the government is called the premier.

With the exception of a few cities in Canada, there are no political parties at the municipal level. The elected local representative is usually called a councillor. The leader of the municipal government is most often called a mayor or reeve. The municipal leader is elected 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 the 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.

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 the governor general, on the recommendation of the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs and represent the federal government in the territories.

#### *How are responsibilities divided among the levels of government?*

Canada has three levels of government: federal, provincial/territorial and municipal. Each level of government has its own structure of elected and appointed representatives as well as a unique set of responsibilities.

The constitutional division of powers is based on the principle of subsidiarity, in which the government closest to the issue governs it. The division of powers is found in Sections 91–95 of the *Constitution Act*.

- The federal government takes responsibility for the whole country and matters of national and international concern, such as our armed forces,

relations with other countries, international trade, money and currency, fisheries and oceans and criminal law and public safety.

- Provincial and territorial governments are responsible for their own province or territory and regional matters including education, health-care, natural resources and transportation/highways.
- Municipal governments take responsibility for their city or town and local matters such as water and sewage treatment, libraries, roads and bridges and local parks and recreation. Municipal and local governments acquire their responsibilities from their province or territory.

Some powers may overlap between jurisdictions. 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.

#### *What are other forms of government in Saskatchewan?*

There are different types of government in Saskatchewan other than the three levels of government. The majority of these are Aboriginal governments and they replace, overlap or share the responsibilities of other levels of government. Comprehensive land claims agreements (modern treaties) between Canadian governments and Aboriginal nations often result in Aboriginal peoples having the autonomy to choose their own method(s) of representation and decision-making. The term that describes an Aboriginal community possessing greater control over its own affairs is self-government.

#### *How is the provincial government structured? What roles exist?*

The Saskatchewan provincial government is divided into three branches: legislative, executive and judicial.

The legislative branch, termed the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, is made up of elected representatives called Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs). The legislative branch creates laws, rules and regulations for areas under provincial jurisdiction. Following the current election, the legislative assembly will consist of 61 MLAs and each will represent a different geographic area, called a constituency.

In the executive branch, the Queen is the head of state and is represented by the lieutenant governor. The leader of the government is called the premier. The executive branch implements and enforces laws, rules and regulations. The premier appoints several MLAs to head ministries of the executive council (cabinet).

Each minister is in charge of one (or more) of the provincial responsibilities and acts as an advisor to the premier and the legislature in their area(s) of expertise.

The judicial branch of government is headed by the Chief Judge of Saskatchewan. The judicial branch interprets the law and punishes those who violate established laws, rules and regulations. In Saskatchewan, the Chief Judge and 48 additional judges are appointed by the provincial government to serve the population of the province. The Saskatchewan court system is responsible for deciding who has broken the law and for dispensing the appropriate punishment for the crime committed.

*Where does the legislative assembly meet? What do they do?*

The legislative assembly meets at the Saskatchewan Legislature in Regina.

When the legislature is sitting, MLAs are responsible for proposing, studying, debating and voting on bills (potential laws), and raising issues put forward by their constituents. When the legislature is not sitting, MLAs meet with their constituents (people living in the constituencies they represent) to discuss the constituents' concerns and to provide guidance and advice relating to government services.

#### EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- "How Canadians Govern Themselves" — [www.parl.gc.ca](http://www.parl.gc.ca)
- "Discover Canada" — [www.cic.gc.ca](http://www.cic.gc.ca)
- Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan — [www.legassembly.sk.ca](http://www.legassembly.sk.ca)
- Government of Saskatchewan — [www.gov.sk.ca](http://www.gov.sk.ca)
- Parliament of Canada — [www.parl.gc.ca](http://www.parl.gc.ca)
- Government of Canada — [www.gc.ca](http://www.gc.ca)
- First Nations Map of Saskatchewan — [www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca](http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca)