

4

LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT



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 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 with other countries, 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 infrastructure.

Municipal and local governments receive their powers from their respective provincial or territorial governments. These

governments handle local matters, such as garbage and recycling, public transit, local parks and recreation 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 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.

There are also other forms of government in some Indigenous communities or First Nations reserves. **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.

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Federal representatives are called **Members of Parliament** (MPs), provincial representatives in Ontario are called **Members of Provincial Parliament** (MPPs), and municipal level representatives are called **councillors** or **aldermen**. MPs and MPPs often belong to political parties. Municipal representatives in Ontario 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.

At the municipal level in Ontario, the head of local municipal council is usually called a **mayor** or **reeve**. Mayors and reeves are elected at-large, which means they are elected by all the people in the municipality.

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 (Queen Elizabeth II) appoints on the advice of the prime minister, and is represented in Canada by the **governor general**. 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 municipal or local level.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

Why is it important to know how government is structured in Canada? How does government affect me?

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 unit, students first explore roles and responsibilities in their school community and then within the levels of government in Canada. Students reflect on all the ways the different levels of government affect their lives and then analyze which level is most important to them. In the *Consolidation* activity, students identify an issue that matters to them and write a letter to the most appropriate elected representative.

LEARNING GOALS

We are learning to:

- develop an understanding of how government is structured in Canada (Concepts of Thinking – Significance);
- develop an understanding of how the levels of government work together and influence Canadian society (Concepts of Thinking Interrelationships);
- learn how political institutions affect our lives (Citizenship Education Framework – Structures);
- analyze the short-term and long-term impact of a civic issue (Concepts of Thinking – Significance).

SUCCESS CRITERIA

I CAN...

- identify the roles and responsibilities associated with the different levels of government in Canada (significance);
- describe how governments work together and influence society (interrelationships);
- explain how government affects me directly;
- analyze the short-term and long-term impact of an issue that matters to me (significance).

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CURRICULUM LINKS

	<i>Overall Expectations</i>	<i>Specific Expectations</i>
Social Studies	<p>Grade 5 – B2. Inquiry: use the social studies inquiry process to investigate Canadian social and/or environmental issues from various perspectives, including those of Indigenous peoples as well as of the level (or levels) of government responsible for addressing the issues (FOCUS ON: <i>Perspective</i>)</p> <p>Grade 5 – B3. Understanding Context: demonstrate an understanding of the roles and key responsibilities of citizens and of the different levels of government in Canada, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit governments (FOCUS ON: <i>Significance</i>)</p>	<p>Grade 5 – B2.1 formulate questions to guide investigations into social and/or environmental issues in Canada from various perspectives, including the perspective of Indigenous peoples and of the level (or levels) of government responsible for addressing the issues</p> <p>Grade 5 – B3.2 describe the jurisdiction of different levels of government in Canada, as well as of some other elected bodies (i.e., federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments; band councils; school boards), and some of the services provided by each</p>
Oral Communication	2. use speaking skills and strategies appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes	2.3 communicate orally in a clear, coherent manner, presenting ideas, opinions, and information in a readily understandable form
Writing	1. generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience	<p>1.4 sort and classify ideas and information for their writing in a variety of ways</p> <p>1.5 identify and order main ideas and supporting details and group them into units that could be used to develop several linked paragraphs, using a variety of strategies</p>
Media Literacy	3. create a variety of media texts for different purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions, and techniques	3.2 identify an appropriate form to suit the specific purpose and audience for a media text they plan to create, and explain why it is an appropriate choice

MINDS ON

Who is responsible for what?

1. Explain the idea that within schools, and in any community, there is a division of responsibilities. Different issues are handled by different people.

2. Ask students who they would go to in the following scenarios.

- Someone stole money from your pockets during gym class
- Your cell phone that you left in your locker is now gone
- A bucket of water spilled in the hallway
- You had a question about your writing assignment

- You were feeling sick and wanted to go home
 - You wanted to help with the school dance or musical concert
 - You wanted to try out for the basketball team
 - You were called an inappropriate name on the bus to school
 - A friend posted a picture of you to social media that is embarrassing and you do not want it posted
3. Why is it important to know who is responsible for what in your school or community?

ACTION

1. Using the images in the accompanying slide deck (*Who am I?*), gauge student's current knowledge about government and politics in Canada. Images include current Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Premier Doug Ford, Governor General Julie Payette, parliament buildings and the Ontario Legislative Assembly, plus other non-political figures. 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 accompanying slide deck and/or the 'Levels of Government in Canada' video (2:27 min) review the levels of government in Canada. Suggested questions to cover during instruction and discussion:

- Why is government in Canada divided into different levels?
- What are the levels of government in Canada (federal, provincial, municipal and Indigenous governments)?
- What is the name of the elected representative at each level?
- What is the name of the leader at each level? How are they chosen?

Teacher note: Write student answers on the board or chart paper and add a printed photo for each leader and representative for future reference.

3. Review the concept that each level of government has its own set of responsibilities. Explain the idea that the level of government closest to the issue governs it (i.e., the federal government is responsible for international trade, not municipal governments). Provide some examples of responsibilities and ask students to guess which level of government is responsible for it. You could use examples from Activity 4.1.

4. Using a 'Think-Pair-Share' strategy, have students complete Activity 4.1. Give students enough time to answer the questions, share with a partner and then take it up as a class.

- Step 1: Highlight or circle all the government areas that affect your life. Provide specific details for three areas. For example, transportation: driver licensing, highways.
- Step 2: Which level of government do you think influences your life the most? Explain your choice. Do you think this will change when you are 30 years old?
- Step 3: Write down three examples of responsibilities where different levels of government have to work together on an issue.

Teacher note: Provide an example for Step 3, such as natural resources (federal and provincial).

Alternative Activity:

Ask students to keep a 'diary' or create a comic strip of their actions throughout the day. For each activity, ask students to identify the level of government and area of responsibility connected to the activity.

CONSOLIDATION

Have a brief closing discussion about government in Canada, or ask students to write a reflection on one or more of the following questions:

- Is government important? Why or why not?
- Why is it important to know which level of government is responsible for what?
- What issue in your community concerns you the most? Find out which level or levels of government are responsible for this matter and write to your appropriate local representative (it could be more than one). The letter should identify the short-term and long-term impact of the issue on the community, province or country.

TIPS FOR TEACHERS

- 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 process.

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ASSESSMENT

Type of Assessment	Unit Area	Guiding Questions for Teachers
FOR LEARNING	MINDS ON	Can students identify the different roles and responsibilities within their school community? Can they expand their knowledge to the wider community? Do students understand why it is important to know who is responsible for what?
	ACTION	Can students recognize or name current politicians and institutions?
AS LEARNING	ACTION	Are students asking questions about the levels of government? Can students make connections between government services and their own lives? Can they identify shared responsibilities? Are students able to see why certain responsibilities might be shared?
OF LEARNING	ACTION CONSOLIDATION	Can students explain why government services are important to them? Can students assess the importance of interacting with elected representatives? Can they analyze why they should be an active and engaged citizen?

LEARNING FOR ALL

Individual Education Plans	<p>Modifications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Minds On</i> – Ask questions in reverse: Ask what the various individuals in a school are responsible for (teacher, caretaker, secretary). • Group students together so they are comfortable answering questions. • Provide examples or images of different responsibilities (i.e., defence → soldiers). <p>Enrichment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students develop an action plan for government to deal with the issue they have identified. • Students can complete the <i>Alternative Activity</i> as an enhancement to class discussions.
English 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"> • Discuss specific questions marginalized groups may have for elected representatives. • Discuss specific challenges facing your community. <p>Indigenous Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the governance structure of a neighbouring First Nations community.