



# The Levels of Government in Canada

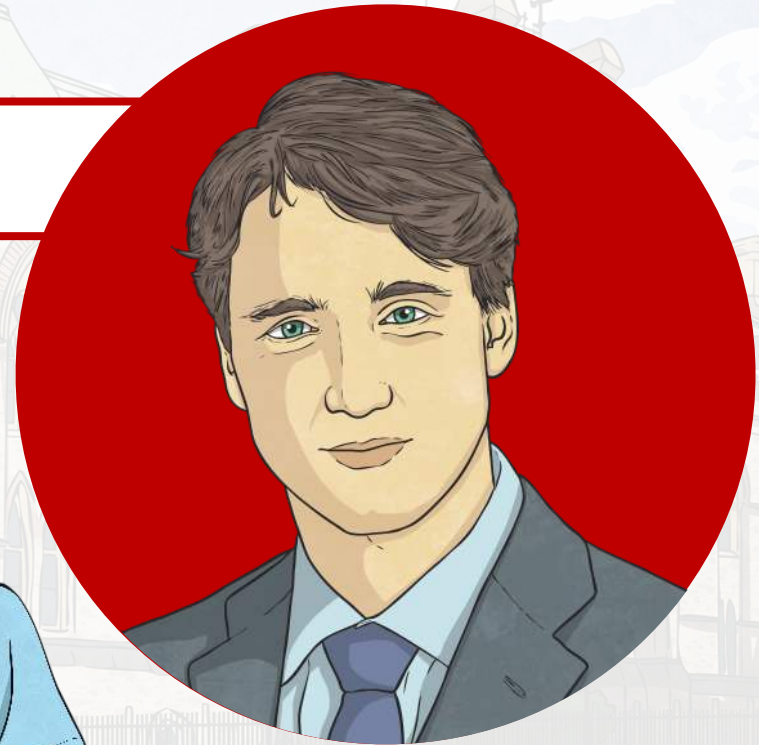


# Government

We hear the word 'government' often mentioned in books, on the news and on the Internet. But what is a government?

**Talk  
about it**

Tell your partner what you know about governments.



# What is a Government?

The word government comes from several words: the Old French words *gouvernement*, meaning control and direction and *gouverner* meaning to steer (like being in command of a ship). These words come from the Latin word *gubernare* which means to rule and guide or to pilot.

When groups of people live together in a country, city, or local community they usually agree to live by rules to keep everyone safe. **Those rules and the people who make and administer the rules are called the government.**

A government is a group of people who rule a country. They decide how a country should be run. In a few cases, it is just one person who rules a country.



# Types of Government

There are different types of government. Some of these include a/an:

- **Democracy** – people, who live in a country, vote in elections for who they want to run that country.
- **Oligarchy** – a country is governed by a small group of unelected people. They are often wealthy or are members of the aristocracy (people who have titles such as ‘Lord’ or ‘Lady’).
- **Autocracy** – one unelected person governs the country. This might be a monarch (a king or queen) or a dictator (someone who has seized power in some way).



# Canada

Canada has a parliamentary democracy system. A parliamentary democracy is a system of government where representatives are elected to a legislative by its citizens. The representatives make laws and decisions for the country. The parliamentary democracy is led by a Prime Minister.

In a parliamentary democracy, a Prime Minister is elected as a member of parliament. That means the people in a country vote for candidates that belong to different political parties. Each party elects a leader. During a federal election, the party that has the most vote wins, with their leader becoming the Prime Minister of the country.

Canada is also a Constitutional Monarchy. This means Canada has a monarch (King or Queen) who makes no political decisions. These decisions are instead made by an elected government.



# What Are the Different Levels of Government in Canada?

Governments can be run in a variety of ways. There are three different levels of government in Canada.

## **The Municipal Government**

The municipal government is also called the local government. It's responsibility is to make laws and provide services for a city, town or district (municipalities).

## **The Provincial Government**

The provincial government makes laws and provides services for each of the 10 Canadian provinces. The three territories have their own governments.

## **The Federal Government**

The federal government makes laws and decisions that affect the entire country.

# Local Governments

- Different local governments provide different services with the taxes they collect.
- There are differences in the services different governments provide because of their size in physical area and population.
- In an urban community, there are ten general services the local government provides. The school board is also one of these services, but is often considered separate.



# The Levels of Government

Click on a circle to find out about the duties of each level of government.

Municipal  
Government

Provincial  
Government

Federal  
Government



# Provincial Government Facts

## Provincial governments...

- provide the curriculum (what you need to learn in school).
- manages resources such as oil and gas.
- Provides healthcare - Canadians do not directly pay for their healthcare like some Americans do. Our healthcare is paid for when we pay our taxes, so you don't have to pay to visit the emergency room, for example.
- The premier is the leader of the provincial government.
- A Cabinet Minister is an elected representative who is in charge of a government department.
- MLAs (Members of the Legislative Assembly) are representatives elected from each political party. They serve the needs of the people in their constituency (voting area) and participate in government committees.
- Make laws.



# How a Bill Becomes Law

- An MLA introduces the **bill** (proposed or suggested law) in the Legislative assembly of each province. This is the first reading.
- Members of the Legislative Assembly and the public can study the bill. They might contact their MLA or Cabinet Minister to give their opinions. They might petition, write letters to an editor of a newspaper or hold public meetings.
- The bill gets a second reading in the Legislative Assembly. MLAs are able to debate the bill and then vote on it. If most MLAs support the bill, it is sent to a committee for further study. If there are any changes to be made, it can be made at this point.
- In the third reading in the Legislative Assembly, members can discuss and ask questions. The MLAs will vote again on the bill.
- If the majority of the MLAs support the bill it is sent to the Lieutenant Governor of their province to be signed. It then becomes an **act** or a **law**.



# Federal Government Facts

## Federal governments...

- Are made up of representatives from all of the provinces and territories in Canada. They are called MPs (Members of Parliament).
- The head of the government is called the Prime Minister.
- The government meets in Parliament, on Parliament Hill, located in Ottawa.
- A cabinet Minister is appointed by the Prime Minister to run government ministries such as the Ministry of Health. The Prime Minister is the head of all of the ministries.
- The parliamentary system is broken into three parts:
  1. **The Head of State** -The Queen of Great Britain, usually represented by the Governor-General in Canada.
  2. **The House of Commons** - A chamber in the Parliament Building where Members of Parliament meet to discuss laws.
  3. **The Senate** - Meets in a chamber in the Parliament Building. Senators are appointed by the Prime Minister. Their job is to vote on bills that have already been approved by the House of Commons.



# How Can you Get Involved?

- When you are old enough, you can vote!
- When you are old enough, you can run for office.
- You can write letters to your representatives of any government.
- You can start petitions.
- You can protest peacefully on the street.
- You can attend town halls or community meetings.
- You can call your local or provincial representative.
- You can attend a local council meeting.
- You can volunteer for candidates during election years.
- When you are old enough, you can participate in a referendum.

## Talk About It

The current voting age is 18. Some have argued the age should be lowered to 16. Do you agree or disagree? Explain your thinking.





