

GOVERNMENT IN CANADA

A. THE POWER OF GOVERNMENT

Government is a ruling body that runs the affairs of the country, province, city, town, or district. We can't go through a single day in our lives without coming into contact with government. When you turn on a light, take a shower, toss out the trash, walk on a sidewalk, use an ATM, or fly in an airplane, you are using a government run or regulated service which is supported by taxes. Think about it – everybody from police, doctors, teachers, weather forecasters, border inspectors and librarians are employed to bring all levels of government services to the public.

Read pgs. 136 – 138 in Canada in the Contemporary World and answer the following questions:

1. Identify three important **issues** government has **decision-making power** over.

- i. _____
- ii. _____
- iii. _____

2. How does government **exercise** its **power**?

3. Who gives government its **power**?

4. Explain what a **constitution** is.





5. Our constitution contains a **written** part and an **unwritten** part. Briefly describe the **three** main sections of the **written** part.

- i. _____

- ii. _____

- iii. _____

6. In Canada, the **powers of government** are divided into three branches: **executive**, **legislative**, and **judicial**. **Briefly describe** the power of **each branch**.

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|------------------------------|-------------------|
| EXECUTIVE POWER | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| LEGISLATIVE POWER | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| JUDICIAL POWER | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |

B. PARLIAMENT OF CANADA

Read the following information on **Canada's parliament** and answer the **questions that follow**:

Parliamentary Democracy

Canada's federal system of government is called a parliamentary democracy. It is located in the capital city of Ottawa, Ontario. The term **federal** refers to a central government that makes laws for all people and parts of the nation. The word **democracy** means that at regular intervals there are elections so citizens can vote to elect representatives to govern them according to the terms of a Constitution. The term **parliamentary democracy** refers to a system of government composed of three parts – Head of State, Senate and House of Commons. The term **parliamentary** refers to all three acting together in some way.

Head of State

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II is our Head of State. Whoever is the Monarch of Great Britain becomes the Head of State of Canada. The Governor General, appointed by the Prime Minister, is the Queen's representative in Canada.



Senate

The Senate is composed of 105 Senators who are chosen by the Prime Minister and are appointed by the Governor General.

House of Commons

The House of Commons is composed of **Members of Parliament (MPs)**, who are the elected representatives of the people. Canada is divided into 308 political divisions called ridings. Each riding represents a seat in the House of Commons. Political Parties campaign during an election to get their candidates elected in the ridings and take a seat in the House of Commons. Bills are voted on and either passed or defeated by a simple majority vote (51%) of the MPs.

Political Parties

The political party that wins the most seats in an election forms the next Government. If a party wins a majority of the seats (fifty percent plus one), it forms a **Majority Government**. The leader of the winning party becomes the Prime Minister. The leader of the political party that wins the second most seats in the House of Commons is called the Leader of the **Opposition**. The Prime Minister must call an election within five years of taking office.



Cabinet

The Prime Minister chooses elected members of his own party to form a Cabinet. MPs who are selected to the Cabinet are called **Ministers**, and they are put in charge of specific departments such as Defense, Environment, Justice and Finance. It is the Prime Minister and his Ministers in the Cabinet that propose the bills to the House of Commons that become the laws of Canada. Since the Prime Minister's party has the most votes in the House of Commons, bills proposed by the Cabinet are usually voted on and passed to become laws.

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA

Use information from the reading to complete the statements below.

1. Name the three parts in our federal system of government. _____

2. The name of this system of government. _____
3. A term that refers to the central government. _____
4. The title of Canada's Head of State. _____
5. The title of the Queen's representative in Canada. _____
6. The title of the MP who chooses the Governor General. _____
7. The number of Senators in the Senate. _____
8. The number of seats in the House of Commons. _____
9. What we call the political voting divisions of Canada. _____
10. A term that refers to the number of votes to pass a law. _____
11. What each riding represents in the Commons. _____
12. The title of the MP who leads the party with the most seats. _____
13. The title of the MP whose party has the second most seats. _____
14. The number of years before an election must be called. _____
15. The title of the MP who selects members of the Cabinet. _____
16. The name of the group that proposes laws to Parliament. _____
17. What party members appointed to the Cabinet are called. _____
18. The year when the last federal election was held (not in reading!) _____
19. The name of the political party elected as the government (not in reading!) _____
20. The year when the next federal election must be held (not in reading!) _____

C. LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT IN CANADA

Read the following information on **levels of government** and answer the **questions that follow**:

There are **THREE LEVELS** of government in Canada

Federal

Provincial/Territorial

Municipal (local)

All government operations and services are paid for by tax money raised from the public. Each level of government has its own set of responsibilities plus shares certain responsibilities with other levels of government.

Federal Government

The responsibilities of the federal and provincial governments were first defined in 1867 by the British North America Act. **In general, the federal government takes major responsibilities for things that affect all of Canada such as national defense, foreign trade, immigration, banking and currency, mines and energy, environmental protection, justice system, wildlife conservation and citizenship.**



Structure of the Federal Government

Governor General

Senate (appointed Senators)

House of Commons (elected MPs)



The federal government, located in Ottawa, the nation's capital, consists of the House of Commons or Parliament of elected members, a Senate of appointed members and the Governor General or Queen Elizabeth's representative. A member of the House of Commons or Parliament is known as an MP. They are elected from districts across Canada during federal elections.

To pay for federal government services, most employed citizens in Canada are required to pay income taxes. This is the main way the federal government raises money. Other ways the federal government raises money are a sales tax on purchases known as the GST, royalties, and other fees and licenses.

Provincial/Territorial Government

Provincial or territorial governments are located in the capital cities across Canada. **They look after things like education, police, justice system, health care and highways.** As you can see, they share responsibilities with the federal government in some areas. Each provincial and territorial government has an elected legislature where provincial/territorial laws are passed. The members elected to the legislature are called Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), Members of the Provincial Parliament (MPP), or Members of the House of Assembly depending on the province or territory. In the provinces, Lieutenant Governors represent the Queen. In the territories, Commissioners represent the Queen.



Structure of Provincial/Territorial Government

Lieutenant Governor
Legislative Assembly (elected MLAs)



The money for provincial/territorial government services comes mainly from residents who are required to pay a portion of their federal income taxes to the province or territory. Additional money is raised from a sales tax (PST) in most provinces/territories and various fees and licenses.

Municipal (Local) Government

Municipal (or local) governments in each city or town are responsible for things like policing, fire fighting, snow removal, education and recycling programs.

Municipal governments usually have a Council that passes laws (called by-laws) affecting the local community. The council includes a mayor and elected representatives, often called Councilors.



Structure of Municipal Governments

Mayor (elected)
Councilors (elected)



The main source of money to pay for services provided by municipal government come from taxes on property residents are required to pay. Other money comes from various forms of fees and licenses.

Canadian citizens can vote to elect representatives for all levels of government. The legal age of voting in all elections in Canada is 18 and it is known as the age of majority. Provincial, territorial and municipal elections are held by secret ballot, but other rules are not the same as for federal elections. It is important to find out the rules for voting in provincial, territorial and local elections so that you can exercise your right to vote.

LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT IN CANADA

Find information in the reading that best completes each statement.

1. The number of levels of government in Canada. _____
2. The act that first defined government roles in Canada. _____
3. The structure of the federal government. _____

4. Something an MP is, but a Senator isn't. _____
5. Who the Governor General of Canada represents. _____
6. The main source of money for the federal government. _____
7. The structure of provincial/territorial governments. _____

8. The age of majority in Canada. _____
9. Common feature of voting in all three levels of government. _____
10. Two responsibilities shared by a province and municipality. _____

11. The structure of municipal governments. _____

12. The main source of money for municipal governments. _____