

Lesson 1: Government and Elections

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How is government organized in Canada?
- How do we choose our elected representatives at the federal level?
- What was the outcome of the 2021 federal election?

OVERVIEW

Canada has several levels of government, each with its own elected representatives and areas of responsibility. Elected representatives are chosen through elections.

In this lesson, students explore the main levels of government in Canada. After learning about our voting system, students analyze the results of the 2021 federal election. In the *Consolidation* activity, students record what they know about levels of government in Canada and identify current politicians.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- identify the roles and responsibilities associated with the different levels of government;
- explain how representatives are elected at the federal level;
- analyze the 2021 federal election results; and,
- analyze the importance of government in our lives.

STARTER

1. Review the concept that government in Canada is split into different levels: federal, provincial or territorial, and municipal/local. In addition, some First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities have their own systems of governance.
2. Divide students into pairs and distribute Activity 1.1. Have them work together to fill in what they already know about the levels of government in Canada.

ACTIVITIES

1. Using the '[Levels of Government](#)' video, review how government is structured in Canada. The video covers the different areas of responsibility, and the titles given to the elected representatives and the leader of the government at each level.
2. Play the Government in Canada Trivia Game (Slide Deck 1A) to review the key concepts. The content is based on information from the video, along with additional contextual information in the review slides.
3. Explain to students that the levels of government also work together on many issues, such as healthcare. For example, the federal government focuses on providing funding to the provinces and territories (through the Canada Health Transfer), as well as health protection, disease surveillance and prevention, including approving and buying vaccines. The provincial government handles health-care delivery, including hospitals and doctors, health promotion and public health initiatives, such as vaccination campaigns. The municipal

government focuses on paramedic services, sanitation and disease control, including setting up vaccination clinics.

4. Ask students to share what they know about the process of how we elect our representatives. Have students discuss in pairs or small groups and then review responses as a class.

Afterwards, review the election process in Canada using the '[Federal Elections](#)' video and Slide Deck 1B. Key points:

- The country is divided into 338 geographic areas called ridings (or electoral districts). During a federal election, each riding has its own race, where interested individuals compete for the job of Member of Parliament (MP). These individuals are called candidates. Most candidates belong to a political party – a group of people who share similar beliefs about government and society.
- In our voting system, voters can only choose one candidate on their ballot.
- In each riding, the candidate with the most votes wins and becomes the MP.
- The political party with the greatest number of MPs usually forms government and their leader becomes the prime minister.
- The party with the second greatest number of MPs becomes the official opposition and their leader becomes the leader of the official opposition.

5. As a class, analyze the results of the 2021 federal election using Slide Deck 1B (includes both general election and Student Vote results). Discussion questions:

- Which party formed government?
- Which party is the official opposition?
- How did the Student Vote (parallel election) results compare to the general election? How were the results similar/different?
- What is the difference between a minority and majority government?
- What are the challenges and opportunities with a minority government?

CONSOLIDATION

1. Ask students to complete Activity 1.1 using information from the activities and/or online resources. Afterwards, review as a class.

2. Have a brief closing discussion using the following prompts:

- How does government affect your life?
- Is it important to know which level of government is responsible for what? Why?

EXTENDED LEARNING

Ask students to read or watch a news story about a political issue or event related to the Canadian federal government and reflect on the following questions.

- How does this issue or event affect my family, my community or me?
- Do you have any questions related to this issue or event that you might want to ask your MP?

Invite students to share the news story during the next class.

ACTIVITY 1.1: Levels of Government Graphic Organizer

What do you know already? Work with a partner to fill in what you already know first. Afterwards, complete the rest using online resources.

Question	Federal	Provincial/Territorial	Municipal
<p>What is the official title of the leader at this level of government?</p> <p>Who currently holds this position and, if applicable, which political party do they represent?</p>			
<p>What is the official name of the elected members at this level of government?</p> <p>How many members are there?</p> <p>Who currently holds this position for your geographic area? If applicable, which party do they represent?</p>			
<p>Where does this level of government meet (name of the building and city)?</p>			
<p>What are three or more responsibilities at this level of government?</p>			
<p>When is the next election?</p>			