

GOVERNMENT

Educational Resource

February 2020

What is Government?

Canadians often use the term “government” to mean everything connected with making laws, collecting taxes, enforcing laws and providing public services. However, in our parliamentary system “government” has a very limited and specific meaning. It is the team of elected representatives with the support of a majority in the Assembly that provides leadership in making laws and is responsible for the government ministries that deliver the programs and services mandated by those laws. In this system government is also referred to as the cabinet.

Tips for a successful school visit

- Review the Confirmation of Visit to ensure that all information is correct.
- Discuss expectations with students and volunteers. Teachers and parents are asked to turn off their cellphones, model good listening, supervise and remain with the students at all times.
- Ensure the bus driver is aware of the current drop off and pick up location (effective September 2018).

What’s Happening at the Legislature in February?

3 – Black History Month Celebration in Rotunda **17** – Family Day Programming (open 11 a.m.— 4 p.m.)
25 – Speech from the Throne



Alberta Legislature

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The Levels of Government

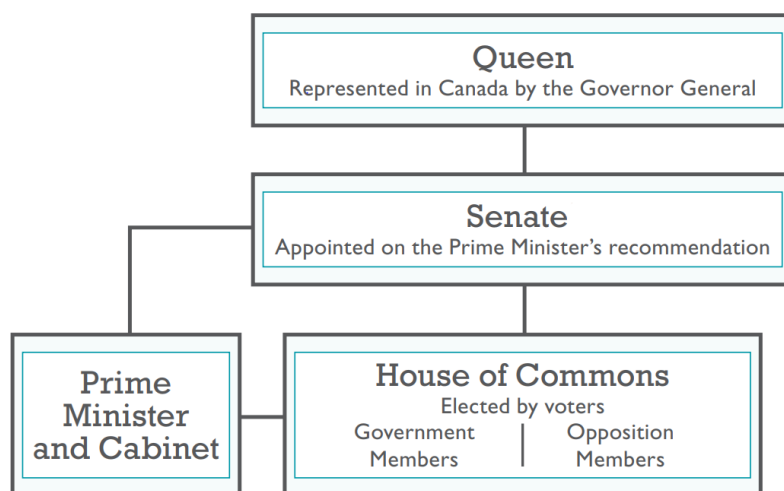
In Canada we elect people to represent us at different levels: federal, provincial or territorial and municipal (local). The Constitution grants different areas of responsibility to the federal Parliament and provincial Legislatures. Under the Constitution, Parliament has authority over the territories, but in practice it has turned much of that authority over to the territories themselves.

The Constitution does not provide for local municipalities, but each province creates its own local elected bodies and gives them certain responsibilities. The Parliament of Canada makes laws for the entire country while each provincial or territorial Legislature makes laws that apply only in that province or territory.



Prime Minister Trudeau with Premier Kenney
(courtesy of the Prime Minister's Office)

Parliament of Canada



Federal Government

Federal

Canada's federal Parliament consists of a bicameral House comprising the House of Commons, the Senate and the Governor General, who represents the Queen.

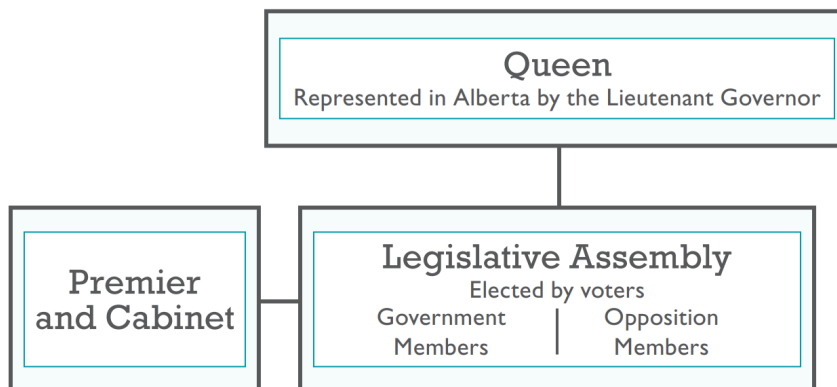
In Canada the elected House of Commons makes laws, approves government expenditures and helps to hold the government accountable, and the appointed Senate gives the Commons' proposed laws "sober second thought." Both Houses actually have the power to initiate Bills, but Bills providing for expenditure of public money or the imposition of taxes cannot be introduced in the Senate.

Federal areas of responsibility under our Constitution include citizenship, foreign policy, national defence, currency, banking and the postal service.

Provincial

The provincial counterpart of Parliament is the Legislature. Alberta's Legislature consists of a unicameral House called the Legislative Assembly and the Lieutenant Governor, representing the Queen. Like their federal counterparts, the Premier and cabinet are from the same political party, the one with the most elected Members in the Assembly.

The provinces' areas of responsibility as defined in the *Constitution Act, 1867* (earlier referred to as the *British North America Act, 1867*) include health, child welfare, municipal government, transportation, labour, property and civil rights and education.



Provincial Government

Did You Know?

Unlike the Prime Minister or Premiers, reeves and mayors are elected directly to their positions.

Senators can also be members of cabinet. Usually the Leader of the Government in the Senate is named to cabinet, but it is not unusual for other Senators to be added.

Territorial

Under Canada's Constitution the territories have no authority to govern, so the official head of a territorial government is the federally appointed Commissioner. However, in recent years the Commissioner has become more like a Lieutenant Governor, giving final approval to legislation passed by the Assembly but leaving the major decision-making up to the elected Members.

A territory's areas of responsibility are similar to those of a province.

In the Northwest Territories all candidates run as independents. Consequently, elections are not won by parties, so party leaders do not automatically become government leaders. Instead, the whole Legislative Assembly elects the government leader, who appoints the cabinet (called the Executive Council) from among all Members of the Legislative Assembly.

As with the Northwest Territories, Nunavut MLAs do not represent political parties. Nunavut is governed by a public government, granting equal representation to all residents. In Nunavut's Legislative Assembly decisions are said to be made by consensus although a simple majority is all that is required to pass legislation. Members of the Assembly who are not Cabinet Ministers act as the opposition.

The Yukon Legislative Assembly is much like a provincial Assembly. Yukon has adopted the party system, under which the government leader is the leader of the party electing the most Members to the Assembly. The government leader appoints Cabinet Ministers from among the elected Members of that party, and together the government leader and Ministers make up the government.

Municipal

Citizens of counties, towns and cities elect representatives to be responsible for municipal, or local, government. Municipal government can mean any of the following:

Counties, improvement districts, etc. (Reeve and Council)

Towns and cities (Mayor and Council)

Council members may belong to political parties, but they do not represent a party when they run for election.

Each provincial Legislature determines the local governments' areas of responsibility such as local fire and police services, libraries, transportation within the municipality or county, pest control and so on. Municipal governments may pass laws, called bylaws, to govern these areas.

Resource Links

[Citizen's Guide](#)

[Ask an Expert](#)

[Mock Legislature Resources](#)

[Level Rule Game](#)

[The Constitutional Distribution of Legislative Powers](#)

[The Institutions of Our Federal Government](#)

[Deputy PM Chrystia Freeland, Alberta Premier Jason Kenney search for common ground](#)

Resource Videos

[Speaker's Corner](#)

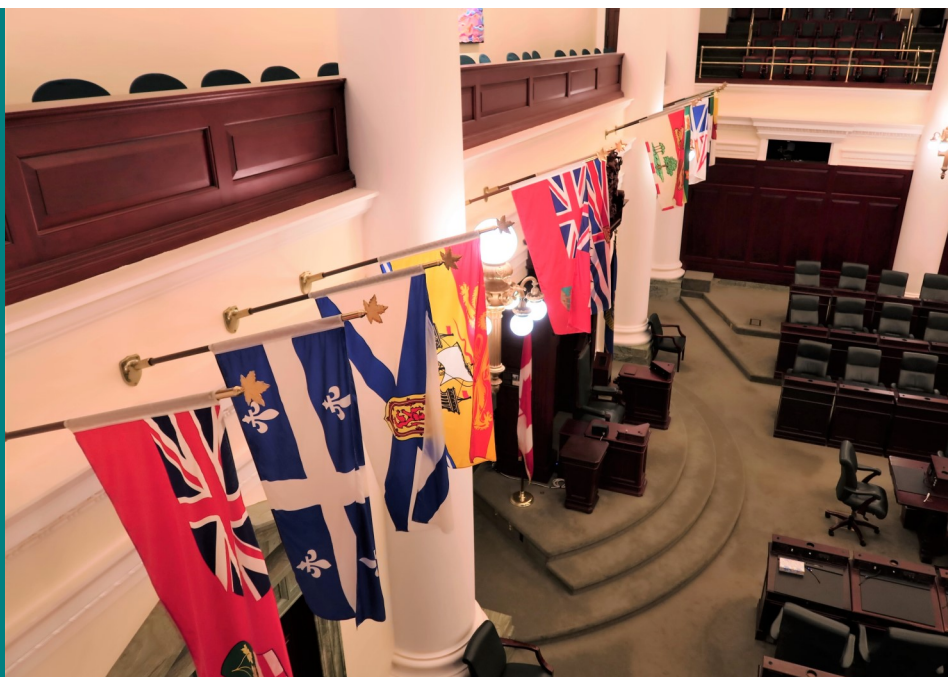
[The Levels of Government \(CIVIX\)](#)

[Who Does What?](#)

[You and Your Government](#)

[What Does Each Level of Government Do?](#)

[Pierre Trudeau, Peter Lougheed attend energy conference](#)



Provincial and territorial flags in the Chamber

Activities

These three suggested activities ask students to consider the role and responsibility of each level of government. Refer to the resource links and videos for more activities and background information.

Categorize

As a class, generate a list of government responsibilities and determine if they are handled at a federal, provincial or municipal level. Are there any that might impact more than one jurisdiction?

Debate

Education is under provincial jurisdiction, which means that each province determines the funding a school receives and the content that is being taught in the classroom. Should each student in Canada receive the same education? Why or why not? Divide into two or more groups to discuss and present your arguments.

Interview

Invite your federal, provincial or local representative into your classroom. How do the different levels of government affect their job and the projects that they choose to focus on?

WHAT IS THE GOVERNMENT'S JOB?

ALBERTA

is one of Canada's provinces, but we have our own unique needs and interests. The provincial government is responsible for matters that affect all Albertans, such as health care, education, public transportation and how we use our resources.

Look at the pictures above. Check off the four that show how provincial government affects you.



Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Understand the commitment required to ensure the vitality and sustainability of their changing communities at the local, provincial, national and global levels (Social Studies, Program Foundations)
- Use skills of informal debate to persuasively express differing viewpoints regarding an issue (Social Studies, 6.S.8)
- Analyze the structure and function of Alberta's provincial government by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues: What are the responsibilities of local governments and the responsibilities of the provincial government (i.e., laws, taxes, services)? (Social Studies, 6.1.4, 6.1.5)
- Appreciate the various effects of government policies on citizenship and on Canadian society (Social Studies, 9.1.2)
- Listen, speak, read, write, view and represent to explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences. (English Language Arts, General Outcome 1)

Alberta Education Program of Studies

Contact Us

Please let us know if you enjoyed this resource and found it helpful, and if there are any other topics you would like to see covered.

Also, if you tried any of the suggested activities, we would love to see pictures or examples of your students' work!

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Unless indicated otherwise, the included information has been taken directly from the Legislative Assembly Office's *The Citizen's Guide to the Alberta Legislature* (9th edition, 2016) or from the Legislative Assembly Office's Agora Interpretive Centre.

