

## Lesson 1: Governments in Canada

### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How is government structured across different levels in Canada?
- What are the key roles and responsibilities of each level of government?
- In what ways do governments collaborate to address shared challenges?

### OVERVIEW

In Canada, we have different levels of government — municipal, provincial or territorial, and federal — and each one has its own elected leaders and responsibilities. For many issues, these governments need to work together to make decisions, create laws, and deliver services that affect our daily lives.

In this lesson, students explore the roles and responsibilities within municipal, provincial and federal governments through a variety of multimedia tools. Afterward, they work in groups to analyze different scenarios where governments interact and identify any challenges that could arise. In the *Consolidation* activity, students reflect on what they learned and how it can help them become more informed citizens.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- Identify the roles and responsibilities associated with the different governments;
- apply knowledge of governmental roles to real-world policy scenarios;
- develop civic reasoning skills by exploring jurisdictional complexity.

### STARTER

*This activity activates prior knowledge, introduces the concept of levels of government, and emphasizes why why it's important to understand the differences between them.*

1. Briefly introduce the idea that there are different governments in Canada. Write down the different governments in Canada: federal, provincial/territorial and municipal. Explain that each government manages its own set of responsibilities.
2. Give students 5-6 everyday scenarios and ask: Which level of government is responsible?

Example scenarios:

- Your local library is closing on weekends.
- A new law bans single-use plastics across Canada.
- A teacher strike affects public high schools in your province.
- A new bike lane has been planned for a major road in the downtown.
- New immigration targets/numbers have been announced.

Present the scenarios on the board or share them verbally. Students can vote by raising hands. Then, discuss answers and clarify which level is responsible.

3. As a class, discuss: Why is it important to know who is responsible for what?

## ESSENTIAL LEARNING

*These activities are intended to teach students about the levels of government and deepen their understanding of how governments must work together.*

1. **Instruction:** Using “[The Levels of Government](#)” video and/or Slide Deck 1, review how Canada’s government is structured in Canada. The video covers the different areas of responsibility for each government, and the titles of the elected representatives and leader at each level.

*Note: First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities can also have their own governments. These councils or governments may share specific responsibilities with the provincial/territorial or federal government.*

2. Distribute copies of Handout 1.1 and review it as a class. Emphasize that for many issues, these governments must work together to make decisions, create laws, and deliver services.

3. **Group Activity:** Divide students into small groups and assign each a few scenarios from Handout 1.2.

**Instructions:** For each scenario, groups will respond to the questions and complete Activity 1.3.

- a) Identify which level(s) of government is/are involved
- b) Explain why (refer to their roles)
- c) Identify any challenges that could arise (e.g., funding disputes, delays, unclear accountability)

4. **Group presentations:** Ask each group to present one of their scenarios to the class. Each group briefly shares:

- A quick summary of their scenario
- The level(s) of government they identified
- A key point about responsibility or collaboration
- One possible challenge or point of confusion

Encourage other students to ask follow-up questions or share quick reactions after each group presents.

5. **Whole-Class Reflection:** Use the following prompts to guide a short discussion:

- Which scenarios seemed straightforward? Which were more complicated or involved multiple levels?
- Why might shared responsibility cause confusion or delays?
- In real life, how do governments coordinate or handle disagreements about who should act?
- If you were affected by one of these issues, which level of government would you contact — and why?
- How does understanding these responsibilities help you become a more informed or active citizen?

## CONSOLIDATION

*To conclude the lesson, highlight that understanding the levels of government helps us see how decisions get made, who's responsible for what, and how we can make our voices heard. In the real world, responsibilities are often shared — and that means cooperation, coordination, and clarity matter more than ever.*

Have students complete one of the following prompts in 3–4 sentences:

- “I used to think \_\_\_\_\_, but now I understand that \_\_\_\_\_.”
- “When governments share responsibility for an issue, it can be challenging because \_\_\_\_\_.”
- “One way I could use this knowledge as a citizen is \_\_\_\_\_.”

Collect responses as an exit ticket or use them to spark discussion in the next class.



*This is the result of a pilot program developed through a partnership between CIVIX and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) to offer elementary and secondary school students an opportunity to connect with their local government. The mandate of AMO is to support and enhance strong and effective municipal government in Ontario. It promotes the value of the municipal order of government as a vital and essential component of Ontario and Canada's political system. Through AMO, Ontario's 444 municipalities work together to achieve shared goals and meet common challenges.*

*As this is a pilot program, if you have feedback on how CIVIX and AMO could improve these resources, please contact: [hello@civix.ca](mailto:hello@civix.ca)*