

Government

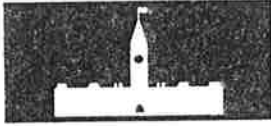
Government is defined as an organization of men and women who represent and act for the people of a country. The main purposes and duties of a government are:

1. To represent and obey the wishes of the people.
2. To provide a framework for peace, law and order, and good government within a country.
3. To create rules and laws.
4. To establish rights and responsibilities.
5. Protect people by providing:
 - Police and judicial services
 - Armed forces and co-operation with the governments of other countries.

There are three levels of government in Canada: federal, provincial and municipal.

1. The federal government serves to govern the entire country of Canada on a national level. Some of its jurisdictions include defense, the criminal code, national transfers, and the social transfer payment program.
2. The provincial government's responsibilities are similar to those of the federal government's except government's, except they are on more of a local level. Such responsibilities include health, education, and highways.
3. The municipal government is the most local of all governments, and therefore looks after things such as parks and recreation, streets and transportation, and local taxes.

Source: <http://timelinks.merlin.mb.ca/ourcommunity/Government/Webpages/over.htm>



The Democratic Process.

A democracy is based on the principle that the majority of the people of the country will decide who rules. In Canada, the people elect representatives who rule on their behalf. The Canadian system of government is based on the British Parliamentary system and, although many countries around the world have a democratic system of government, they are not all like ours. For example, ours is a Parliamentary system in which the Queen, represented by the Governor General, the elected House of Commons and the appointed Senate each has a role to play. The United States, on the other hand, is a republic; it has a President, an elected House of Representatives and an elected Senate.

In Canada, there are three levels of government: municipal, provincial and federal. Each level has specific concerns and is responsible for its own jurisdiction.

Municipal governments are responsible for:

- building regulations
- parks and recreation
- fire regulations

Provincial governments are responsible for:

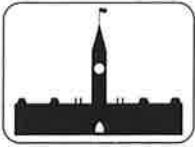
- education
- highways
- health care

The federal government is responsible for:

- foreign policy
- currency
- national economic policies

Elected representatives (MPs) are Canadians' link to government. They speak for people in their electoral district. One of their prime responsibilities is to help the people of their constituencies.

In Canada, individual rights and freedoms are protected. With these rights come responsibilities: Canadians have an obligation to become involved in the democratic process in order to help our country grow; to work together to achieve our democratic goals.

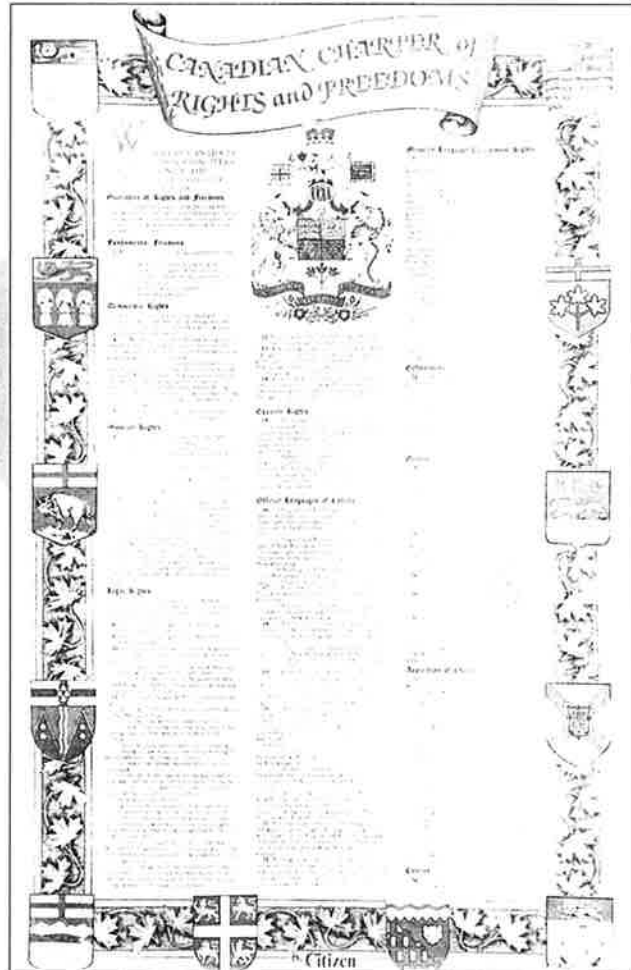


THE CANADIAN CONSTITUTION

The Constitution of Canada consists of rules and customs that control how the Canadian government works.

The Constitution outlines how laws are made and who is responsible for running the country according to those laws. The Constitution also explains who must interpret the meaning of these laws.

In Canada, laws are made for the entire country in Parliament. They are made for each of the provinces in provincial **legislatures**. The federal politicians who are responsible for running the country according to these laws are the members of the Cabinet, led by the Prime Minister. Judges in federal and provincial **courts** must decide what these laws mean and how they are to be applied.



A reproduction of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

The Canadian Constitution has changed over the years. It began with the *Constitution Act, 1867*. The *Constitution Act, 1982* allows Canada to **amend** its own Constitution. It also contains the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which guarantees individual rights.

legislature: a group of individuals entrusted with the power to make laws for the province, state, etc.

court: a place where laws are interpreted and justice is administered accordingly

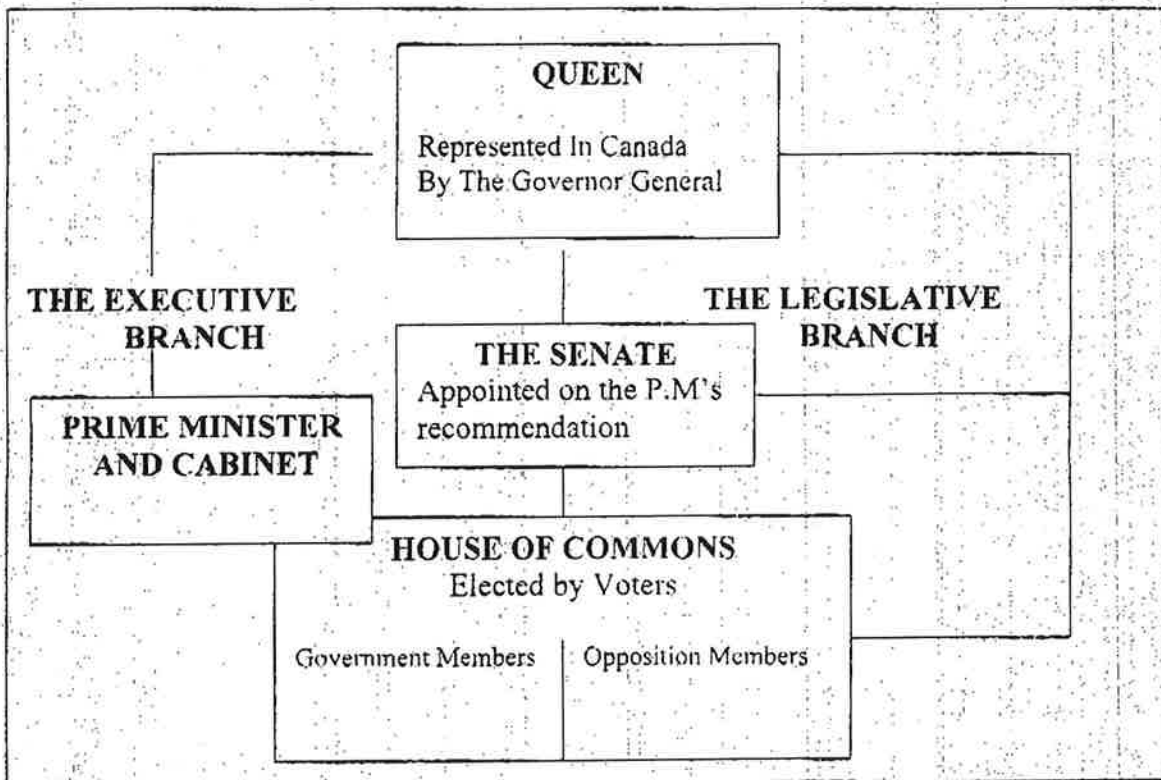
amend: to make a change or alteration

Federal Government

The Federal system looks after matters affecting the entire country. Examples include: the mail system, banks and money, national defense, trade and tariffs.

The federal Member of Parliament (MP), who represents Winnipeg North-St. Paul, is Rey Pagtakhan (Liberal). In the House of Commons, Mr. Pagtakhan is the Parliamentary Secretary to our Prime Minister, Jean-Chrétien. Part of our area is also represented by Bill Blaikie (NDP), an MP for Winnipeg - Transcona. Mr. Blaikie is the House Leader for the NDP in the House of Commons.

Canada's Parliamentary System



Source: <http://timelinks.merlin.mb.ca/ourcommunity/Government/Webpages/jg.htm>



CANADA'S PRIME MINISTERS

The Prime Minister of Canada is the most powerful person in Canadian politics. The leader of the political party with the most representatives in the **House of Commons** becomes the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister has many people to provide assistance. The Prime Minister asks Members of Parliament to manage government departments. These “managers” are called **Cabinet Ministers**. Each Cabinet Minister has a special responsibility.

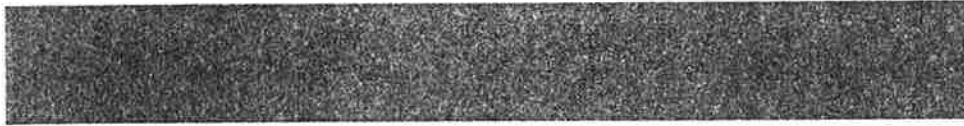
The Prime Minister must call an election at least every 5 years. Usually an election is called after 4 years. There is no limit to the number of times the same person can be Prime Minister.

Canada has had **21** Prime Ministers since 1867. Our first Prime Minister was Sir John A. Macdonald.

View from the Ottawa River of the Prime Minister's official residence at 24 Sussex Drive



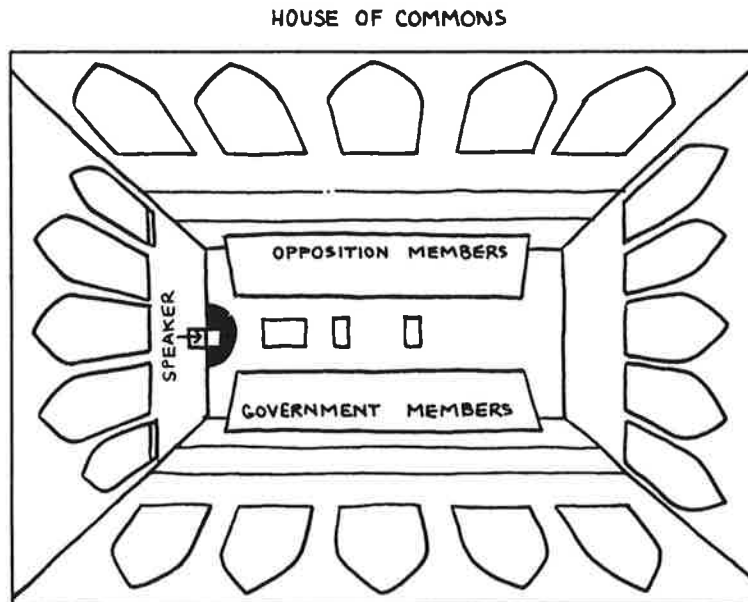
House of Commons: elected chamber of representatives
Cabinet Ministers: leaders of government departments

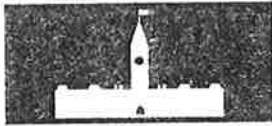


The House of Commons

The Canadian House of Commons is the source of our Parliament's power. In the House, important national and international issues are debated, the nation's business is conducted and transactions are recorded. It is the focal point of parliamentary activity, where the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition are seen in regular confrontation. Cabinet ministers are also present to defend their policies and conduct their ministries or departments. The House of Commons is made up of 301 members elected by Canadian citizens over 18 years of age.

A verbatim or written record of daily debates, known as Hansard, is published in both official languages. Since October 18, 1977, continuous live coverage of the entire proceedings of the House of Commons has been broadcast. As a result, there exists a permanent audio-visual record of the proceedings of the House.





The Members of Parliament

The Prime Minister is an elected member of Parliament and the leader of the party with the largest number of seats in the House of Commons. He is officially appointed Prime Minister by the Governor General.

The members of the Cabinet are chosen by the Prime Minister and appointed by the Governor General. There are 30-40 ministers, each heading a government department or having a special function to perform. The Cabinet must answer to Parliament. It is, however, a very powerful body: it controls government departments and administers many laws and policies, as well as massive economic and social programs.

The role of the Opposition is to scrutinize every action of the government, to criticize its policies and propose alternatives. The aim of the Opposition is also to be constructive and to co-operate with the government. There are days when the Opposition has the right to select the subjects for debate in the House of Commons and they are usually given precedence by the Speaker in the daily Question Period. The leader of the Opposition is a potential Prime Minister, the shadow Cabinet are potential Cabinet Ministers and the Opposition as a whole is seen as the government-in-waiting.

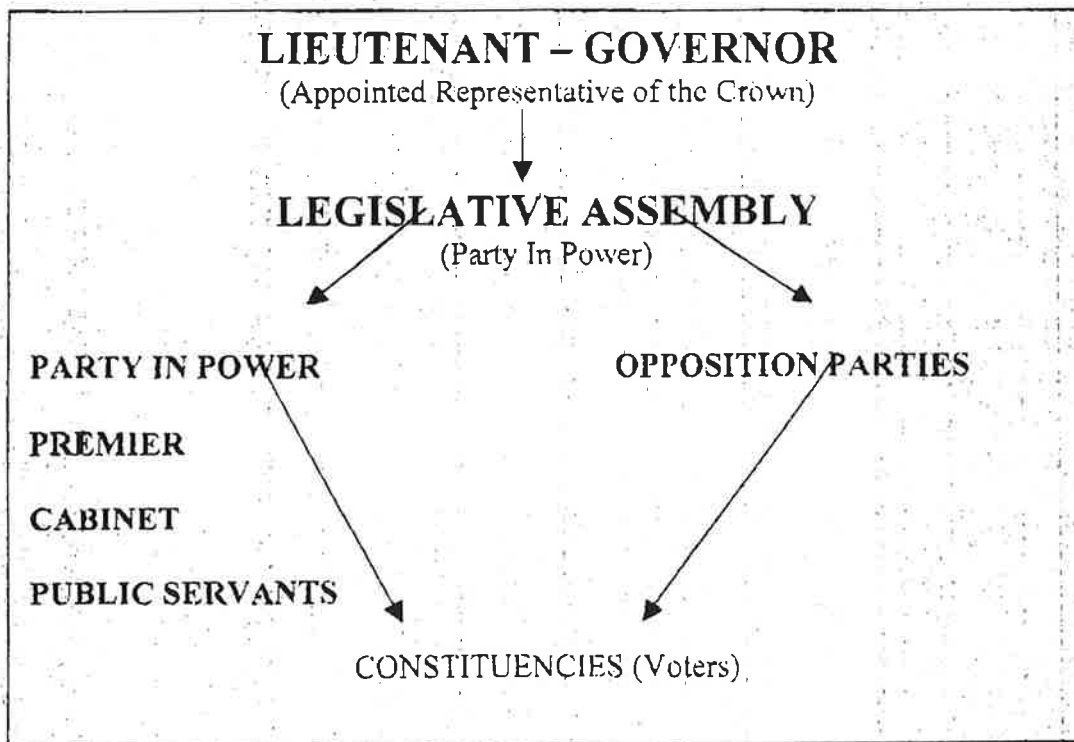
The members of Parliament are elected representatives of the people of Canada. These representatives are expected to look after their constituents' best interests. They are elected because voters approve of their views and their policies. The Member of Parliament has many functions: an ombudsman for the riding, a legislator who must attend the House of Commons and the parliamentary committees and a member of a political party with definite responsibilities.

The Speaker of the House, a representative of the House of Commons, is its presiding officer. The role of the Speaker is to uphold the integrity of Parliament. This person holds fifth place in the official order or precedence after the Governor General, the Prime Minister, the Chief Justice and the Speaker of the Senate. The Speaker presides over the debates in the House of Commons and must show impartiality, maintain order, respect the rules of procedure and protect the rights of all members.

Provincial Government

The Provincial system looks after matters affecting the province on a more local level than that of the Federal government. Some examples are: education, land use policy, health care, and consumer protection. Another responsibility of the provincial government is to regulate the funds and general make-up of our Municipal governments. Our community is represented by three provincial Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA's). The MLA for River East is Bonnie Mitchelson (PC). Mrs. Mitchelson is the Minister of Family Services under our current government, and has served in the Legislative Assembly since 1986. The MLA for Rossmere is Vic Toews (PC). Mr. Toews is the Minister of Justice and Attorney General. He was first elected in 1995. The MLA for Springfield is Glen Findlay (PC). Mr. Findlay is the Minister of Highways, and was first elected in 1990.

Provincial Government



Source: <http://timelinks.merlin.mb.ca/ourcommunity/Government/Webpages/pg.htm>

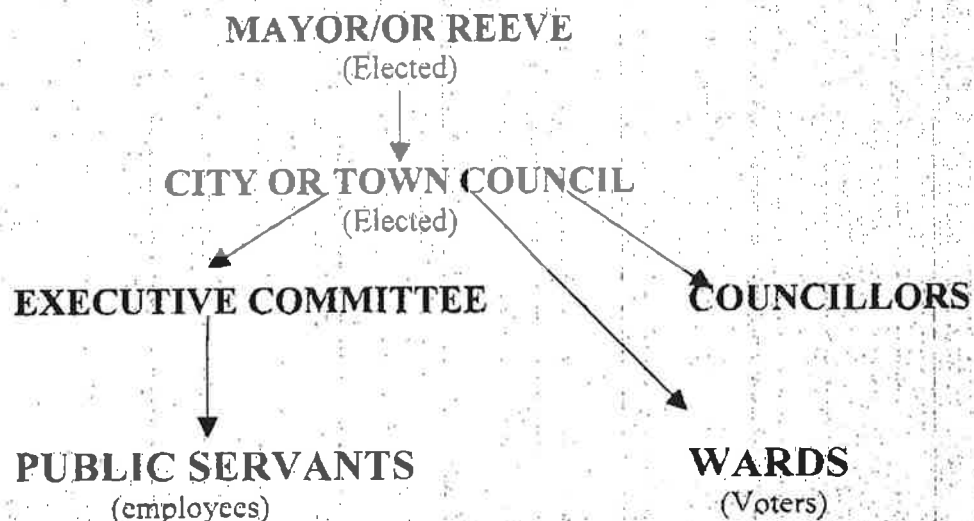
Municipal Government

In Canada, the basic unit of local government is the municipality. The municipalities have only as much power as is vested in them. As a result, powers given to the responsibilities differ from province to province. In our community, the municipality controls local matters through its fifteen councillors and four departments. The municipal system looks after matters of a purely local nature. These are some of the responsibilities of municipal governments:

- 1) Collection of school taxes
- 2) Public libraries
- 3) Police Departments
- 4) Fire Departments
- 5) Water supply
- 6) Sanitation (Sewage disposal and garbage collection)
- 7) Streets and sidewalks
- 8) Street lighting
- 9) Public transportation
- 10) Parks and playgrounds
- 11) Swimming pools and skating rinks.
- 12) Juvenile courts
- 13) Some social services
- 14) Community planning and zoning

Our community has two municipal governments within its boundaries. East Kildonan and North Kildonan are part of the City of Winnipeg, and East St. Paul has its own municipal government. A municipality may be either rural or urban. The larger the population of a municipality, the greater the number of powers it receives from the provincial government.

Typical Municipal Government



School Boards

Schools in Canada are the responsibility of school boards made up of elected trustees.

Some of the responsibilities of school trustees include:

- The school budgets
- School policies and rules
- Administration
- Staffing

Within the school division there are different wards, which are subdivisions of the school district. Breaking the school district down into wards allows for more localized control over the various schools.

Source: Adapted from School Board Information developed by the Province of Manitoba
Website: <http://timelinks.merlin.mb.ca/ourcommunity/Government/Webpages/SB.htm>