

# Appendix B

## Student handout: Ways to make your voice heard

These are some of the many ways government can use to get input from the people it represents.

<b>Elections</b>	Elections happen every four years in Ontario. During this time, candidates announce their ideas and policies and campaign throughout their electoral districts (ridings), trying to get as many people as possible to vote for them. To be eligible to vote in Ontario, voters must be 18 years of age or older on polling day, a Canadian citizen and a resident of the province.
<b>Town Hall Meetings</b>	Politicians meet with their constituents (people they represent) in a big meeting to hear from them about topics that interest or concern them or to discuss new laws and regulations. This is a way for the elected representative to get feedback from many people and to answer questions.
<b>Public Surveys</b>	A government can create a survey to gather feedback from the public. Usually, these surveys are online and open for a specific amount of time. They are used in addition to other public meetings for people who cannot attend in person but still want to share their opinions, which will be used to guide in making new laws or policies or revising existing ones.
<b>Public Hearings/ Meetings</b>	When a legislature, government agency or organization needs to make a decision or take action, it can call a public hearing or meeting to gather public opinions and concerns. Citizens can speak at the hearing/meeting to share their ideas and opinions. It is expected that their ideas and opinions be used to guide the decision-making process.
<b>Band Council Meetings</b>	Historically, First Nations have had their own traditional governing structures. This was disrupted by Canada's early colonial policies which tried to take power away from Indigenous people by establishing government-controlled bands. Today, bands have increasing control and responsibility over their own people's affairs. They are led by band councils made up of an elected chief and councilors. They hold meetings to discuss education, band schools, housing, water and sewage, roads, and community business and services.

<p><b>Métis General Assemblies or Community Council Meetings</b></p>	<p>The Métis Nation of Ontario represents Métis people and communities in Ontario that are part of the Métis nation. It has a governing council elected every four years and an annual general assembly where all the Métis leaders from across the province meet to discuss issues like protecting and preserving Métis culture and heritage and improving the social and economic well-being of Métis communities.</p>
<p><b>Commissions of Inquiry</b></p>	<p>Commissions of Inquiry investigate issues of national importance. They are led by experts or judges who can call witnesses to testify and request evidence at community hearings. The inquiry releases a final report and recommendations to the government to impact government policies. An example is the 2001 Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada to review Canada's health care system and hear from Canadians about how it could be improved.</p>
<p><b>Referendums</b></p>	<p>A referendum is the asking of a political question in a general vote. Usually, voters go to a voting location and select their vote on a ballot. There have been many provincial referendums and some federal. All the provinces except New Brunswick have held referendums dealing with issues like switching to daylight-saving time, votes for women, public health, ownership of electric companies, and changing electoral systems. In Quebec, a referendum was held in 1995 asking voters if they agreed that Quebec should become independent from Canada, with 50.6% voting No and 49.4% voting Yes.</p>
<p><b>Nation-to-Nation discussions with First Nations and/or Inuit governments</b></p>	<p>Indigenous peoples have a special relationship with the Canadian government that is protected by the Constitution. Canada's constitution recognizes the reality that Indigenous peoples' ancestors owned and governed the lands, which now make up Canada and they have the right to self-government. This means that all levels of government must involve Indigenous people in decision-making, especially when government actions will impact them and their rights, including their lands, territories and resources.</p>