

# Lesson: What role does government play in my life?

## Big idea

In Canada, there are three levels of government: federal, provincial/territorial and municipal. It can sometimes be hard to figure out which level of government is responsible for things we do in our everyday lives. Sometimes, the different levels of government even share responsibilities! There are many ways government is involved in our daily lives from the water we drink to the streets we live on and the schools we attend. It is important to know about government responsibilities so that we can contact the correct government office or agency when we need assistance or information.

## Curriculum connections

**B3.** Understanding Context: demonstrate an understanding of the roles and key responsibilities of citizens and of the different levels of government in Canada, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit governments (Focus On: Significance).

**B3.2** describe the jurisdiction of different levels of government in Canada, as well as of some other elected bodies (i.e. federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments; band councils; school boards), and some of the services provided by each (e.g. health services, education, policing, defence, social assistance, garbage collection, water services, public transit, libraries).

**B3.3** describe the shared responsibility of various levels of government for providing some services and for dealing with selected social and environmental issues (e.g. services/issues related to transportation, health care, the environment, and/or crime and policing).

## Learning goals

I am learning to:

- distinguish between the different levels of government in Canada and the responsibilities they have
- understand the services and programs governments provide in my life and the lives of all Canadians

## Success criteria

I can:

- identify and label government responsibilities in everyday scenarios
- track my thinking about the role government plays in my life
- identify which level of government to contact when I have a concern

## Inquiry question

What role does government play in my life?

## Required materials

1. Slide deck:  
[Government Responsibilities\\*](#)
2. Appendix A Student handout:  
[My thinking on government responsibilities](#)
3. Appendix B Group handout:  
[Government responsibility cards](#)
4. Appendix C Student handout:  
[Government responsibilities - Who does what?](#)
5. Appendix D Teacher handout:  
[Government responsibility cards - answer key](#)
6. Appendix E Group handout:  
[Master list of government responsibilities](#)
7. Appendix F Group handout:  
[Government responsibilities - Who does what?](#)
8. TVO video:  
[Who Does What?\\*](#)

\*Available online at: [elections.on.ca/learning](https://elections.on.ca/learning)

## Minds on

1. Use the [Government Responsibilities slide deck\\*](#) provided to begin the lesson.
2. Distribute the student handout, [My thinking on government responsibilities](#) (Appendix A) to each student. This is a thinking protocol to help with meta-cognition. Students track how their thinking changes over the course of new learning.
3. Provide an agreed upon amount of time for students to complete the first section, “I used to think”.

4. Use the [Government Responsibilities slide deck](#)\* to provide students with a basic overview of the levels of government and the officials within them.
5. Provide students with time to begin tracking their thinking in the “I am now thinking” section of the handout. Students should record any new thinking.

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## Activity

1. Organize students into small groups. One way to do this is to ask students to partner with one other peer and then pair the partners into groups of 4.
2. Once groups have been established, distribute the group handout, [Government responsibilities - Who does what?](#) (Appendix C) and the stack of [responsibility cards](#) (Appendix B). Make sure to cut the paper into cards for this activity.

**Teacher note:** *There are online tools available that allow for easy dragging and sorting into categories. If you are a paperless classroom, this activity can be done using one of those digital tools.*

3. Students sort the cards into the levels of government. They can move the cards around as they deliberate with each other and make their final decisions. Remind students to think about the slide deck from the Minds On. They can refer to the thinking they recorded on their [My thinking on government responsibilities](#) (Appendix A) handout as well.

**Teacher note:** *A teacher answer key (Appendix D) has been provided for reference.*

4. Ask groups to finalize their categorization of government responsibilities.
5. Show the video, [Who Does What?](#)\* and then ask students to revisit their chart of responsibilities and make any last changes.
6. Provide students with the [master list](#) (Appendix E) showing the correct categories of responsibilities and have them self-assess making any changes. As a class, discuss which ones were confusing or challenging and allow time for any questions.
7. Direct students to the slide “Shared government responsibilities” in the [Government Responsibilities slide deck](#)\* to discuss the areas and matters that both the provinces and the federal government have power over.
8. Pause and ask students to add to their “I am now thinking” part of their handout.

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9. In the same groups, distribute the group handout, **Government responsibilities - Who does what?** (Appendix F).
10. As a group, students will label the various government responsibilities in the illustration. This can be done through colour-coded circling and labeling (e.g. Black pen for federal responsibilities, Blue for provincial, etc.). Students can also use sticky notes to label. Discuss with the class what strategy they will use to complete the activity. Groups can then decide which one they would like to use.
11. As each group completes the activity, have them post the labelled illustration in a spot in the classroom. Each group should choose 2 students from their group to do a walking tour. They can decide if they would like 1 student to walk around first and look at other group's illustrations or if both would like to go together. Their job is to report back to their group whether they need to make any adjustments to their group's illustration.
12. After students have a chance to view each other's thinking, discuss as a class and come to a consensus about the levels of government responsibilities in the illustration.

## Consolidation

Students are now ready to finish the thinking protocol on their handouts. Provide time for them to complete the last section, "I am now thinking" (Appendix A) to capture their learning.

## Extension

Consider going for a neighbourhood walk and taking pictures of things like a streetscape, school playground, an intersection, shops, or buildings in the vicinity. These pictures can be taken by students if possible or the teacher can take the photos on one device. Print the photos and post them around the class. Have students label them with sticky notes to show the government responsibilities.

## Assessment

The teacher can use the **My thinking on government responsibilities** (Appendix A) student handout to do a formative assessment of student understanding of this lesson, providing feedback and gauging whether the extension activity is needed to reinforce lesson content.