

SOCIAL STUDIES 11

LEVELS AND BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT:

Levels:

Canada has three (3) levels of government:

- A. Federal** - makes laws and administers (through ministries) government affairs on a national level
- B. Provincial** - makes laws and administers affairs of a provincial concern
- C. Municipal** - city governments that make laws (by-laws) that regulate people's activities within city boundaries

Examples of the areas of jurisdiction for levels of government:

Federal government:

- A. Finance**
- B. Treasury**
- C. Health**
- D. Agriculture**
- E. Foreign Affairs**
- F. National Defense**
- G. Justice**
- H. Labour**
- I. Natural Resources**
- J. Human Resources**
- K. Fisheries and Oceans**
- L. Environment**
- M. Indian Affairs and Northern Development**
- N. Industry**
- O. Transport, Infrastructure, and Communities**
- P. Public Works and Government Services**
- Q. Immigration**

All departments (or ministries) are headed by "Ministers". Other departments of a lesser importance are headed by a Secretary of State, e.g. Multiculturalism, Small Business, and Sport. Ministers, collectively, are known as the "Cabinet. The Cabinet, under the direction of the Prime Minister (head of government at the national level) wields tremendous power.

Provincial:

- A. Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation**
- B. Advanced Education**
- C. Education**
- D. Children and Family Development**
- E. Economic Development**
- F. Employment**
- G. Energy, Mines, and Petroleum Resources**
- H. Environment**
- I. Finance**
- J. Forests and Range**
- K. Labour**
- L. Public Safety**
- M. Small Business and Revenue**
- N. Tourism, Sport, and Arts**
- O. Transportation**

Ministries (or Departments) are headed by “Ministers” at the Provincial level also. Ministers are the major decision makers and are collectively known as the “Cabinet”. The head of government, at the provincial level, is the Premier.

Municipal:

- A. Public Works**
- B. Business licenses**
- C. Animal control**
- D. Parking**
- E. Building Regulations**
- F. Building Permits**
- G. Zoning**
- H. Water Management and Treatment**
- I. Parks and Recreation**
- J. Libraries**
- K. Taxation**

Municipal governments are headed by a Mayor and the decision making body is the City Council that is staffed with “Councilors”.

Generally, national governments manage affairs of a “national” concern, that is, matters that require a national perspective. For examples, each province is not able to have its own military and the ability to declare war. Provinces do not set their own regulations for immigration. Nor do provinces negotiate trade agreements with foreign countries on their own.

Provincial governments administer matters and have jurisdiction (the right to administer) over affairs within their provincial boundaries. They do share some ministerial concerns with the federal government, e.g agriculture, fishing.

Municipal governments have jurisdiction over matters within the “city” boundaries. Their job is to ensure the necessities and concerns of its residents are addressed.

Branches:

National and provincial governments generally have three (3) branches: legislative, executive, and judicial.

Legislative:

This branch of government is empowered with the responsibility of making laws. At the federal level it involves the House of Commons (made up of Members of Parliament – M.P.s; currently 308), the Senate (made up of Senators; currently 105), and the Governor-General (the representative of the Queen in Canada (currently Michaele Jean).

At the provincial level the Legislative Assembly makes the laws – there is no Senate at the provincial level. Members of the Legislative Assembly are called M.L.A.'s. Like M.P.'s, M.L.A.'s are representatives of the people and represent areas or regions called ridings, constituencies, or electoral districts. M.P.'s and M.L.A.'s have “seats” in their legislative bodies.

Executive:

This branch of government is responsible for administering and monitoring the laws. This responsibility is in the hands of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and is generally performed by Ministries through the Public Service. (20% of Canadians are public servants) They monitor and enforce the adherence to laws. The national police force the R.C.M.P. is part of this branch. They check to ensure people follow the law and cite offenders who have the right to challenge the decision in a court of law.

Judicial:

This branch of government is composed of the system of courts and judges. Its job is to uphold the law. Courts have a hierarchy in their organization. The highest court in Canada is the Supreme Court of Canada which makes decisions about appeals from “lower” courts.

Provinces have Provincial Courts as well as Appeal Courts. Provincial courts have jurisdiction over a number of areas: e.g. family court, criminal court, youth court, small claims.