

CHAPTER 1

How effectively does Canada's federal political system govern Canada for all Canadians?

govern: to make decisions as a government and put decisions into action

governance: the process of governing

government: the body with power to make decisions for a society

Canada has been a country since 1867, when the Fathers of Confederation in this photograph struck an agreement that brought four colonies of British North America under one government. The politicians in this photograph set down principles that continue to shape governance in Canada today. In many ways, though, Canada is governed differently today than in 1867.

Next time you watch the national news, count how many stories cover decisions made by Canada's **government**.

Government makes the news because, every day, its decisions affect the quality of life of Canadians. Canada has several levels of government, including local and provincial government, and the federal government. This chapter focuses on the federal government — the government of Canada.

So, how does Canada's government make decisions, and who is involved? Canadians have different points of view and perspectives about quality of life. To build a society where all Canadians belong, it's important for Canada's government to acknowledge and respond to the different needs and priorities of its citizens.

This chapter explores **governance** in Canada — the processes and structures that guide how Canada's government goes about **governing**. As you read this chapter, look for challenges and opportunities that governance in Canada creates, as Canadians strive for a society that includes everyone — individuals and groups.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

- What is the structure of Canada's federal political system?
- How do laws become laws?
- How do the media connect Canadians to their government?
- What do lobbyists do?



Based on the photographs on this page and page 16, what evidence can you identify that governance in Canada has changed since 1867?

Nancy Karetak-Lindell is of Inuit ancestry and was first elected as the member of parliament for Nunavut in 1997.



Vivian Barbot, a politician from Montréal, was born in Haiti. She was elected a member of parliament in 2006.



CRITICAL THINKING CHALLENGE

To what extent might the different experiences of the Canadians on this page affect their views or perspectives?



Rahim Jaffer was first elected in 1997 to represent the citizens of Edmonton Strathcona. His family came to Canada as refugees from Uganda.



This is Paul Steckle, a farmer from Zurich, Ontario, who was a member of parliament from 1993 to 2006.



Write a speech persuading others about your views.

Your Role

The Speaker of the House of Commons is holding a contest giving youth the opportunity to be prime minister for a day. The Speaker will select a group of young “next prime ministers” based on their knowledge of how Canada’s political system works and how they would use it to respond to issues that affect Canadians. To enter the contest, prepare a speech that answers the question:

As Canada’s prime minister, how would you respond to what you believe is the most important issue about government today?

Your Presentation

Your speech should include:

- Knowledge of how the three branches of government work to respond to issues that affect Canadians.
- An understanding of how the political system involves citizens in decision making.
- Facts and reasons supporting your judgments.

Part of being an effective prime minister is understanding how the federal political system works and how to use it to respond to issues. Use persuasion in your speech to show how you would “make the system work” for all Canadians. Prove yourself by the thoroughness of your ideas and your compelling presentation.

Canada has had many influential prime ministers.



John A. Macdonald
1867–1873
1878–1891



Wilfrid Laurier
1896–1911

Let's get started!

What are some issues about government that you believe affect Canadians? Work with a small group to brainstorm some ideas. Why are these issues important? Who do these issues affect most?

This chapter introduces you to Canada's federal political system, and to issues it creates for citizenship and identity. Keep track of the issues you read about, and how they can create challenges and opportunities for Canadians. Summarize them using a chart like the one below. Add your ideas to the chart as you work through the chapter. The examples you collect will help you with your speech.



Inquire	Example	Example	Example
What is the issue about Canada's government?			
What challenges and opportunities does the issue create for Canadians?			
How will you use what you know about the political system to respond to the issue?			
<p><i>In my opinion, the most important issue about government today is... BECAUSE...</i></p> <p><i>I would use the system to respond to this issue by...</i></p>			

YOU could be next!



John Diefenbaker
1957–1963



Pierre Trudeau
1968–1979
1980–1984



What is the structure of Canada's federal political system?

WHAT'S IN THIS SECTION

In this section you will read about the structure of Canada's federal political system. You will find:

- A comic-book tour introducing the executive, legislative and judicial branches of Canada's government.
- A description of the roles and responsibilities of government members.
- Interviews with government members who share their views about involving Canadians in the political process.

In this photo from 2006, Prime Minister Stephen Harper, leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, makes a speech in the House of Commons.

What are you looking for?

As you read this section, look for:

- How governance in Canada creates opportunities and challenges for responding to the multiple views and perspectives of Canadians.
- The ways that the federal political structure involves citizens in government decision making.





PM FOR A DAY

Canada's parliament: the place of power.



WELCOME TO YOUR TOUR OF CANADA'S FEDERAL POLITICAL SYSTEM!

Canada's Constitution

Canada's constitution is the law that describes governance in Canada. It sets out the role of the governor general, and the different roles of the three branches of government. It describes how the three branches of government work together to exercise the decision-making authority of government. The constitution also sets out other important institutions in Canada, such as the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

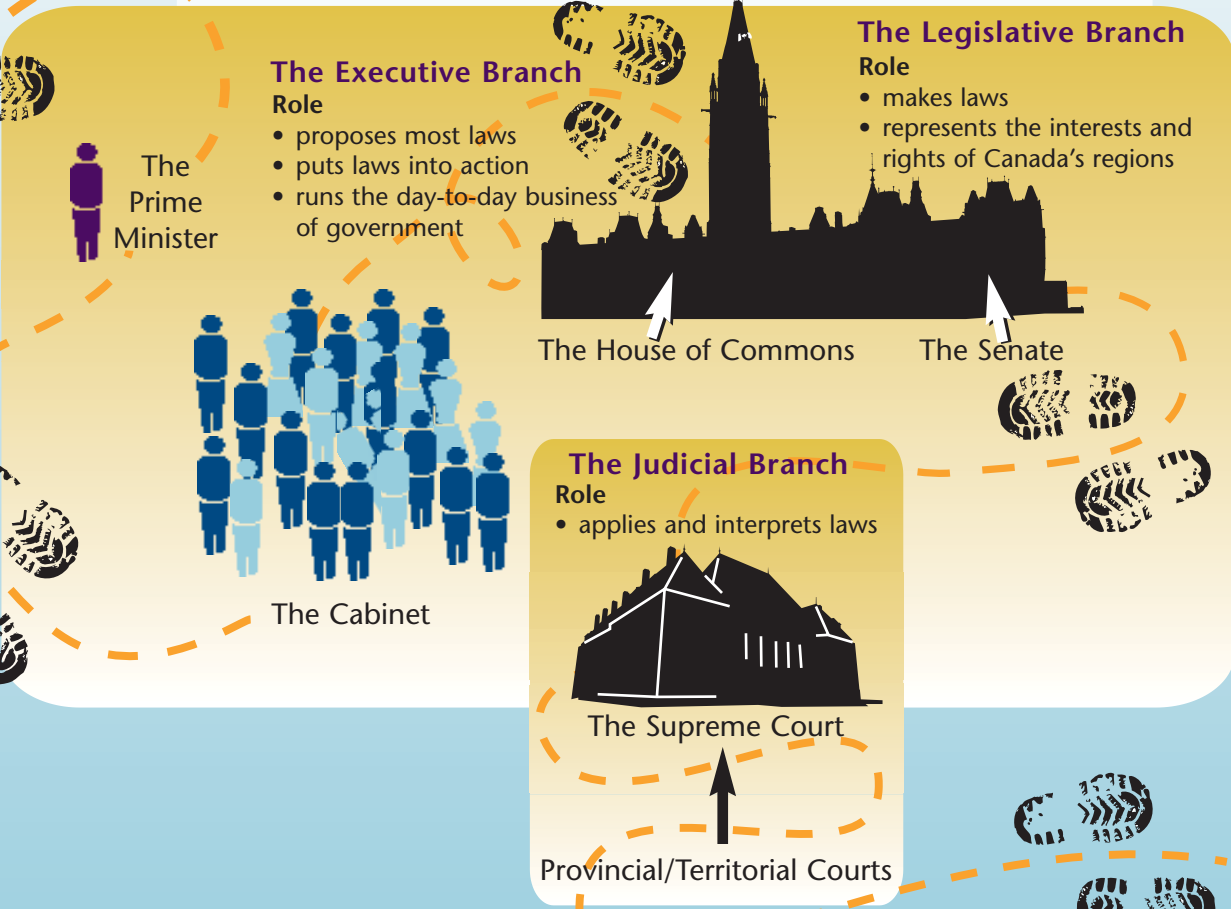


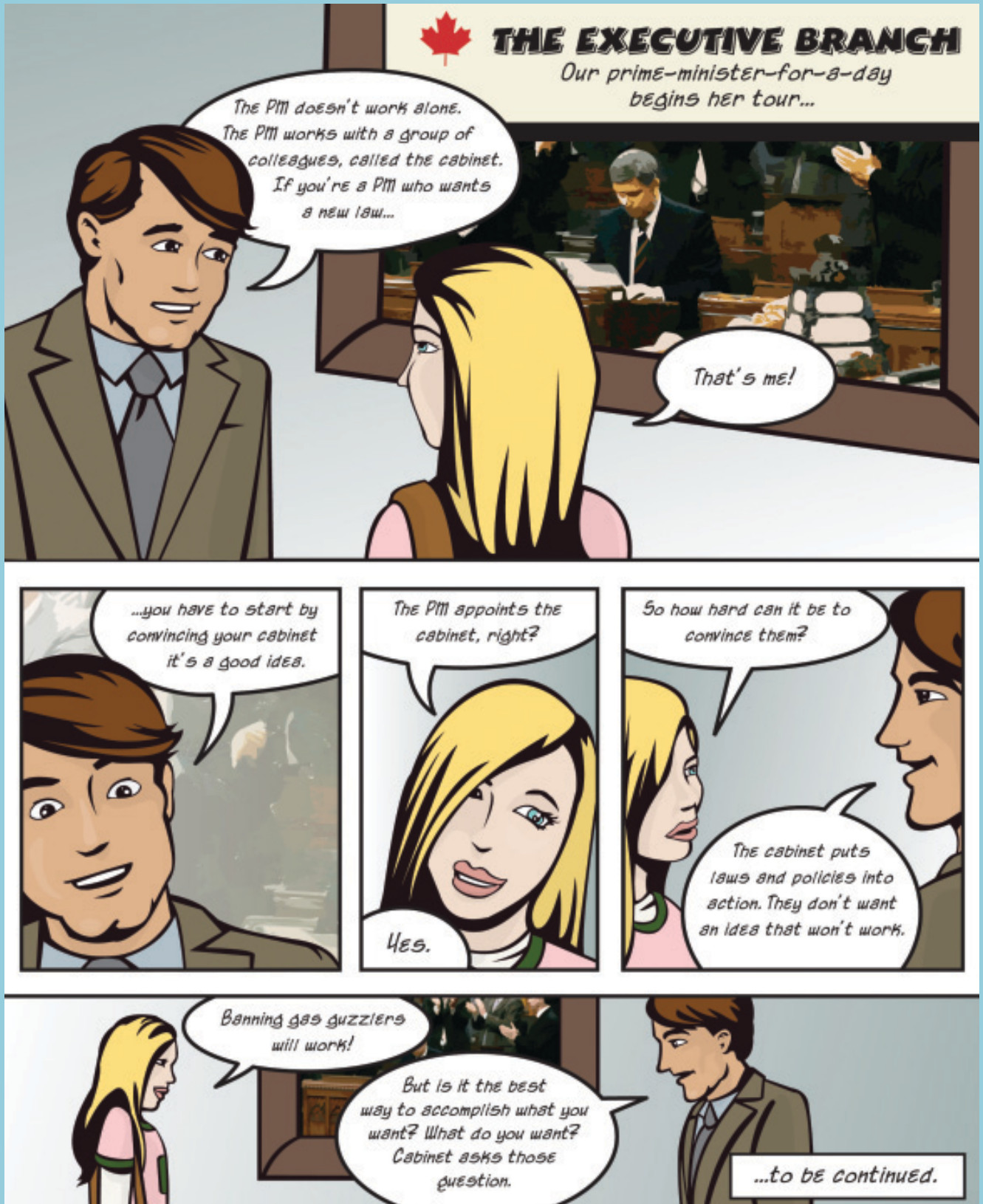
YOUR TOUR STARTS HERE



Monarch of Britain

- represented in Canada by the governor general
- Britain's queen or king is the formal head of state in Canada, but does not play an active role in Canada's government. The governor general represents Britain's monarch in Canada, and is part of both the executive and legislative branches of government.





What does the executive branch do?

The Prime Minister and the Cabinet

executive branch: the part of government responsible for putting laws into action

- The **executive branch** includes the prime minister (PM) and the cabinet.
- The prime minister is the head of Canada's government. To become prime minister, you must be elected as the leader of a political party. Then, you must be elected as a member of parliament, and the party you lead must win the most seats in the House of Commons. You can read more about the House of Commons on page 27.
- The cabinet includes the people with responsibility for different government departments and agencies — or portfolios — such as health, finance and environment. The members of cabinet belong to the leading political party in the House of Commons, and are members of parliament (MPs) or senators.
- The members of cabinet are called cabinet ministers.
- The PM decides what portfolios to include in the cabinet and chooses cabinet ministers.
- The cabinet proposes most of the ideas that become laws.
- The PM and the cabinet run the day-to-day business of government. For example, the Minister of Environment runs the department of the environment, which has staff and equipment to, among other things, keep track of air pollution.



This is Jack Davis, Canada's first Minister of Environment. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau created the environment portfolio in 1971, when problems from pollution and pesticides began to make environmental issues a priority for Canadians. It has been included in every cabinet since. Why might a prime minister create new cabinet positions?



CRITICAL THINKING CHALLENGE What factors do you think the prime minister takes into account when appointing the members of cabinet?

WHAT'S A POLITICAL PARTY?

A political party is a group of people who have similar ideas about how government should respond to issues facing society. Political parties are formally recognized as organizations. They put forward candidates in elections and seek to form the government. Each party develops policies, based on the shared values of its members, to respond to issues. Anyone, including Grade 9 students, can join a political party and have a voice. Canada has a variety of political parties because Canadians have different views and perspectives about what's best for them and for Canada.

What portfolios do cabinet ministers have?

This is the cabinet Prime Minister Stephen Harper appointed in January 2007.

Agriculture Gerry Ritz, Saskatchewan	Canadian Heritage Josée Verner, Québec	Citizenship and Immigration Diane Finley, Ontario
Defence Peter MacKay, Nova Scotia	Democratic Reform Peter Van Loan, Ontario	Environment John Baird, Ontario
Finance Jim Flaherty, Ontario	Fisheries and Oceans Loyola Hearn, Newfoundland and Labrador	Foreign Affairs Maxime Bernier, Québec
Health Tony Clement, Ontario	Human Resources and Social Development Monte Solberg, Alberta	Indian and Northern Affairs Chuck Strahl, B.C.
Industry Jim Prentice, Alberta	Intergovernmental Affairs Rona Ambrose, Alberta	International Cooperation Bev Oda, Ontario
International Trade David Emerson, B.C.	Justice Rob Nicholson, Ontario	Labour Jean-Pierre Blackburn, Québec
Natural Resources Gary Lunn, B.C.	Public Safety Stockwell Day, B.C.	Public Works Senator Michael Fortier, Québec
Revenue Gordon O'Connor, Ontario	Seniors Senator Marjory LeBreton, Ontario	Transport Lawrence Cannon, Québec
Treasury Vic Toews, Manitoba	Veterans Affairs Greg Thompson, New Brunswick	



CRITICAL THINKING CHALLENGE As prime minister, how could you use cabinet positions to respond to issues about government that concern Canadians?

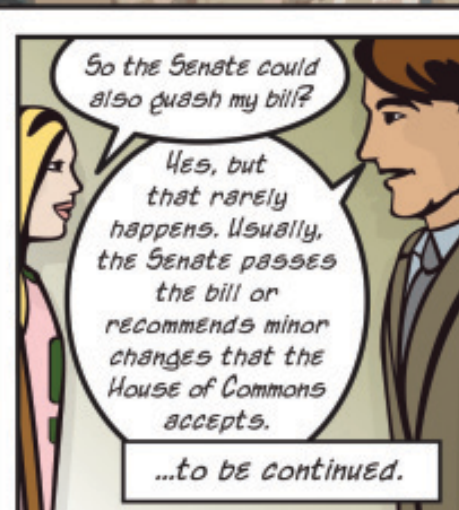
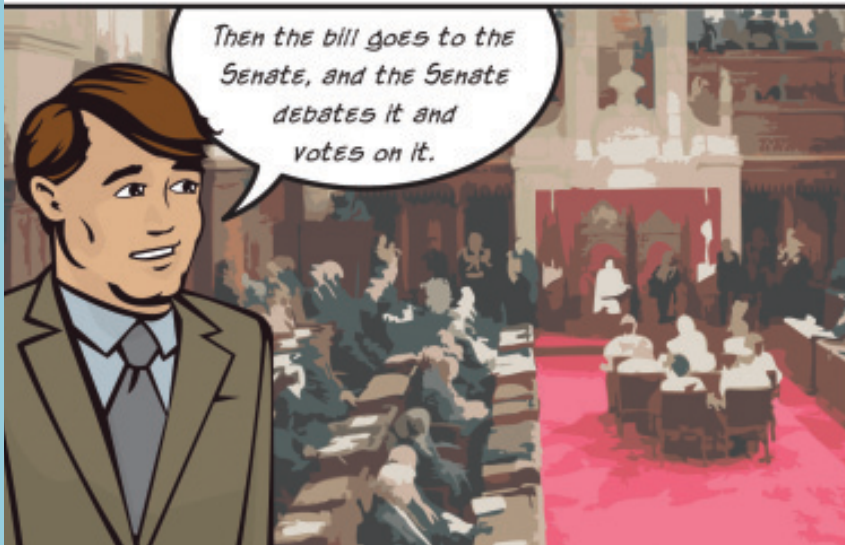
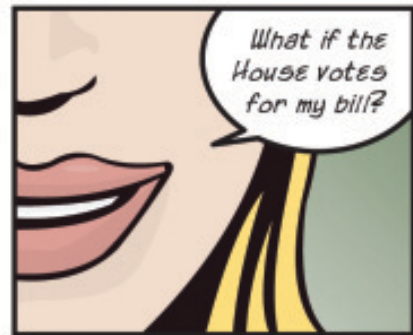
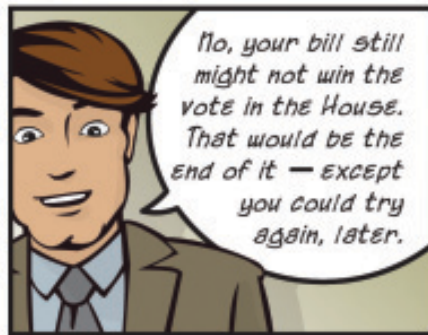
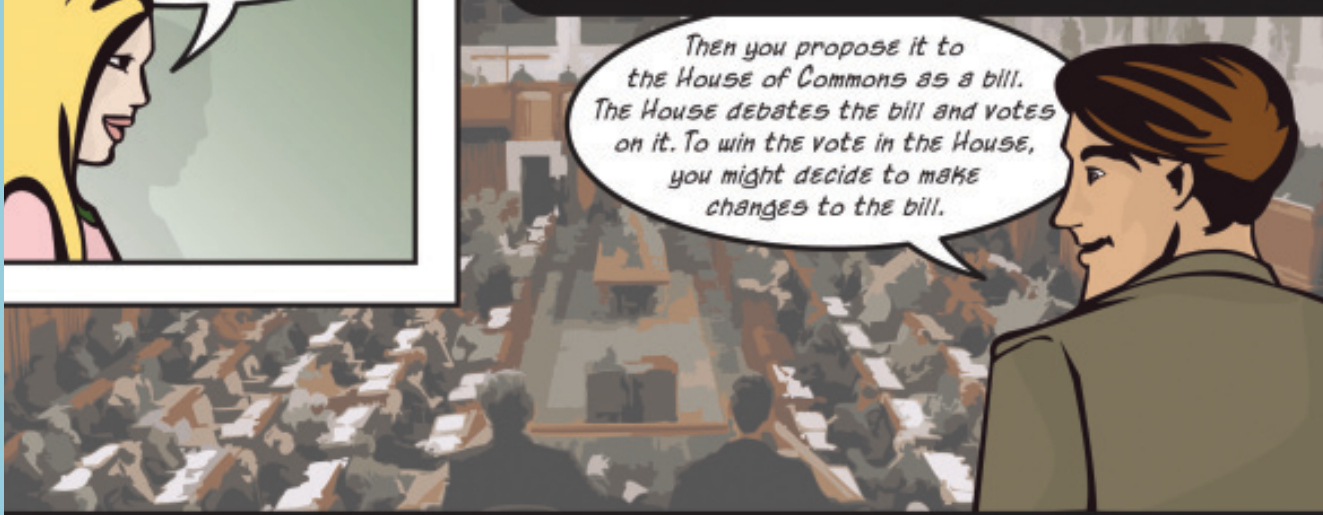
connect to the big ideas

1. Go online and research the cabinet today. How is the cabinet today different than the one on this page? Compare types and number of portfolios, female/male ratios, perspectives or regions represented. Why do you think prime ministers change the structure and people of cabinet?
2. Research in more depth one current cabinet portfolio. Identify the roles and duties of the cabinet minister, and how the portfolio contributes to quality of life for Canadians.



THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

We catch up with our prime-minister-for-a-day, ready to continue her tour...



What does the legislative branch do?

The **legislative branch** includes the House of Commons, the Senate and the governor general. The legislative branch is also called Canada's parliament.

legislative branch: the part of government that makes laws

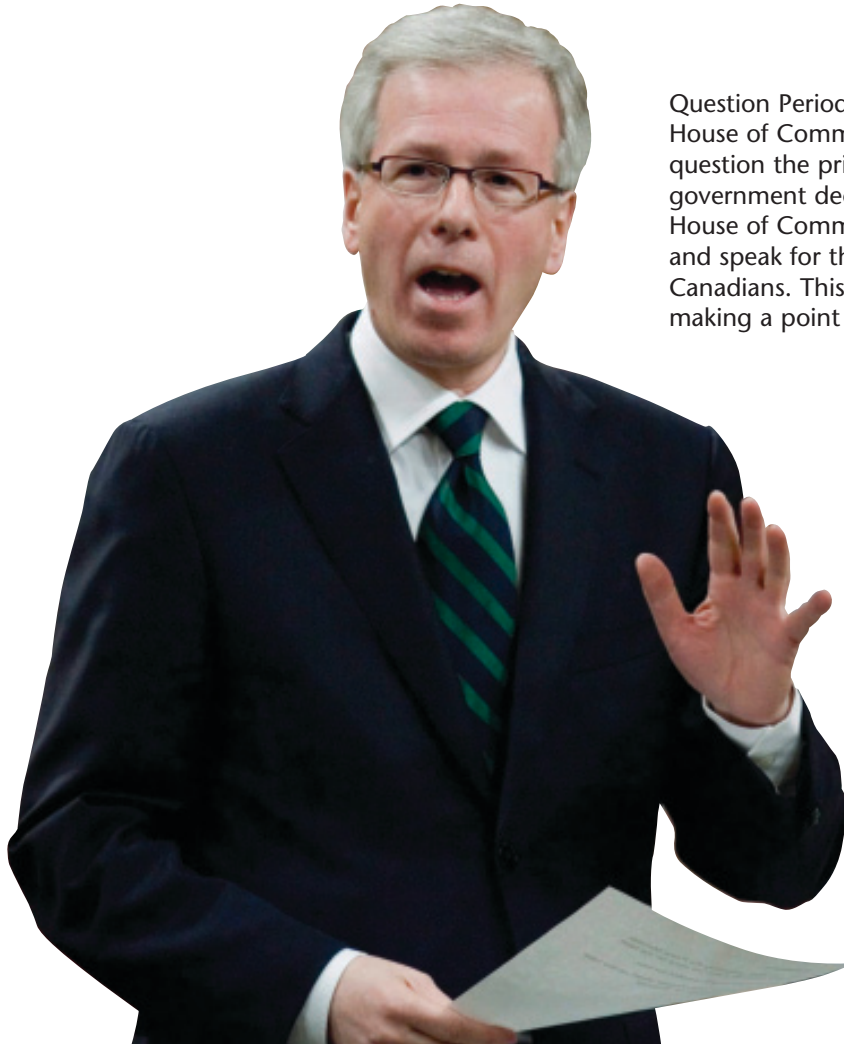
The House of Commons

- The House of Commons is the major law-making body in Canada's federal political system.
- The members of the House of Commons debate, study and vote on laws proposed for Canada, called bills.
- Members of parliament, or MPs, are the members of the House of Commons. Voters elect them.
- Each MP represents the voters of one riding, or district.
- Most MPs belong to political parties. The party with the most MPs usually forms the government. The other parties form the opposition.
- Representation in the House of Commons is by population (see the chart on page 33).
- All proceedings of the legislative branch are in Canada's two official languages: French and English.



**CRITICAL
THINKING
CHALLENGE**

Who are the leaders of political parties in Canada today?

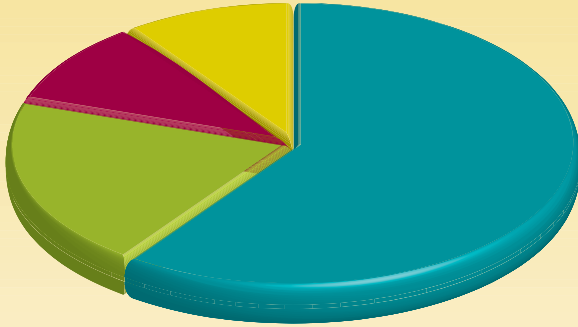


Question Period is often the liveliest part of the day in the House of Commons. Members from the opposition parties question the prime minister and cabinet ministers on government decisions. The role of the opposition in the House of Commons is to create debate, act as a watchdog, and speak for the different views and perspectives of Canadians. This photo shows Liberal leader Stéphane Dion making a point during Question Period.

WHO FORMS THE GOVERNMENT?

Each riding has a “seat” in the House of Commons — literally, a place where its MP sits.

Majority Government

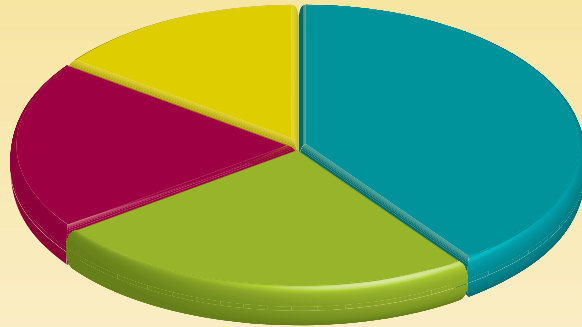


If a political party wins the majority of seats in the House of Commons, it always forms the government. Here, the blue party would form the government.



Refer to page 348 in the Skills Centre for tips on reading graphs and charts.

Minority Government



If a political party wins the most seats in the House of Commons, but not the majority of seats, it usually forms the government. Here, the blue party would still form the government. To stay in power, however, this party would need to negotiate for the support of at least one other party in the House of Commons, to ensure that more than 50 percent of MPs in the House would vote for the government’s proposals.

This is the Commons Chamber, where MPs spend most of their time debating and voting on bills. The chamber is also a place where MPs represent their constituents’ views and needs.



CRITICAL THINKING CHALLENGE

If you were prime minister, to what extent would you work with the opposition? You could use your answer, supported with facts and reasons, as a step towards completing your chapter task.



How do MPs see their role?

MPs have two key responsibilities: to represent their **constituents** and to create legislation for the peace, order and good government of all Canadians.

An MP has many roles — being a legislator, being a voice for your constituents. Working on behalf of my constituents takes up most of my time. As a First Nations MP, a key responsibility is to make sure legislation addresses the issues of the Aboriginal communities out there.

The first responsibility is to the constituents who elected the MP. The MP represents them in formulating policies and by assisting them with services provided by the Government of Canada.

An MP's second responsibility is to the work of parliament. Whether you are in government or opposition, you have an important role to perform.

constituent: someone who lives in a riding and is represented by an elected official from that riding



Gary Merasty belongs to the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation and was elected as an MP from Saskatchewan in 2006.



Deepak Obhrai was first elected as an MP from Calgary in 1997.



What evidence from the comments of these MPs shows their two key responsibilities?

How are MPs elected?

The structure of Canada's electoral system partly determines who represents Canadians in government. Canadians have different views and perspectives on the system. Consider the example below of the election of Deepak Obhrai in 2006.

Results, 2006 Federal Election: Calgary East

To become elected, a candidate must win the most votes, but not necessarily more than 50 percent of the votes.

Candidate	Party	Votes	% of vote
Deepak Obhrai	Conservative Party	26 766	67.10
Dobie To	Liberal Party	5 410	13.56
Patrick Arnell	New Democratic Party	4 338	10.87
John Mark Taylor	Green Party	2 954	7.41
Jason Devine	Communist Party	239	0.60
Ghabzanfar Khan	Canadian Action Party	183	0.46



Federal Riding: Calgary East

Six candidates ran for the 2006 federal election in the riding of Calgary East. The voters in Calgary East all live in the part of Calgary shown on this map.



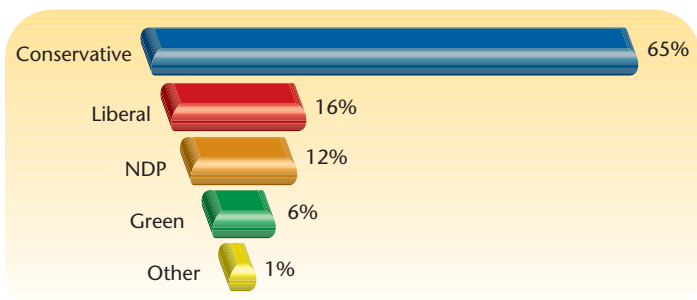
Based on this chart, to what extent do election results reflect voter choice?

What impact does the popular vote have on the results of an election?

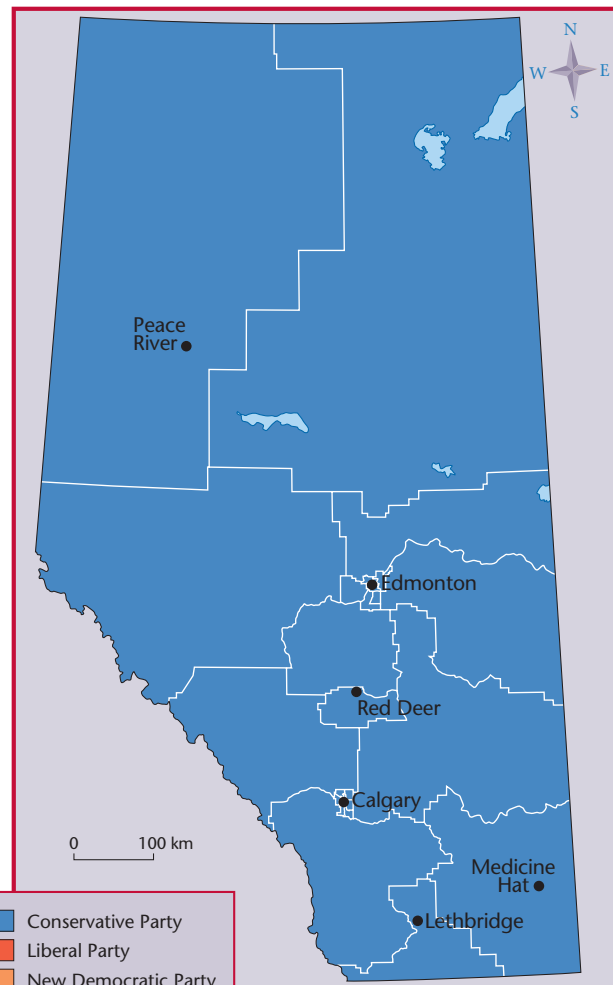
popular vote: the total votes cast in an election, as different from the total seats won in an election

Popular vote means the total support political parties win during an election, regardless of whether they win ridings. The chart and map on this page show the results of the 2006 federal election for Alberta. Compare the chart with the map. **What if the votes in the 2006 election had been counted by popular vote instead of by riding?** How would the way Albertans are represented in the House of Commons be different?

Results by Popular Vote, 2006 Federal Election: Alberta



Results by Riding, 2006 Federal Election: Alberta



DID YOU KNOW?

The number of ridings in a province is based on population. The following chart presents some examples for comparison.

Province	Federal Ridings	Population (2006)
Alberta	28	3.3 million
Saskatchewan	14	1.0 million
B.C.	36	4.1 million

SPOT AND RESPOND TO THE ISSUE

Refer to page 9, which lists criteria for identifying an issue. How can you use the criteria with the information on this page to state an issue that arises from Canada's electoral process? How does the issue connect to the citizenship and identity of Canadians?

This map shows the political parties that won Alberta's 28 federal ridings in the 2006 federal election.

The Senate

- The members of Canada's Senate are called senators.
- Senators are not elected. The prime minister appoints them. They can remain in office until age 75. Prime ministers tend to appoint people who support the PM's political party. Since only a few Senate seats become vacant at a time, however, the Senate includes people from a variety of political parties.
- Senators represent the interests and rights of Canada's regions, and especially Canada's **minorities**. Senators are appointed by "division," or region. At Confederation in 1867, the constitution identified three regions: the Maritimes, Ontario and Québec. The idea was to ensure that these regions had an equal voice in the Senate, and to ensure that Québec's Francophone population — a minority within Canada — had a strong voice within Canada. As provinces and territories joined Canada, new regions were added to the divisions for appointing senators.
- All proceedings of the Senate are in French and English.
- The Senate can propose laws, but usually only considers bills passed first by the House of Commons. The Senate gives "sober second thought" — careful reconsideration — to all legislation proposed for Canada. This means senators provide a second round of study, debate and voting on laws proposed for Canada. Because the Senate provides a voice for regions in Canada, it brings a different perspective to issues that concern everyone.
- The Senate cannot propose laws that create or spend taxes.
- A bill cannot become law until both the House of Commons and Senate pass it.
- The Senate has the power to reject bills from the House of Commons, but rarely uses this power.

minorities: groups in society who do not form the majority of the population

This is the Senate Chamber, where senators meet and conduct business. In this photo, Governor General Michaëlle Jean is giving the Speech from the Throne on April 4, 2006. The Speech from the Throne is written by the government each year and outlines the government's plans for the coming year. The governor general delivers the speech as Canada's head of state.



CRITICAL THINKING CHALLENGE

Why might the role of the Senate to represent minorities be important to governance in Canada?





Dr. Claudette Tardif is Franco-Albertan and a well-known advocate of minority language and culture rights. Prime Minister Paul Martin appointed Dr. Tardif to the Senate in 2005.

How do senators see their role?

My job is to represent my region and to protect the interests of minority groups in Canada.

The Senate makes sure that all voices are heard on the issues. We give a voice to citizens who may not have a voice. We bring a balance. We take our job very seriously.



Why might Canadians have different views and perspectives on the role of the Senate in Canada’s political system? What evidence can you find on this page?



Jean-Robert Gauthier receives the Order of Canada from Governor General Michaëlle Jean in 2007. As a senator, M. Gauthier championed Francophone rights. For example, he spearheaded the action that kept Hôpital Montfort Hospital open in Ottawa (see page 3).



My role as a senator is much different than any other senator before me. I’m the national chairman of a committee that wants to change the Senate to make it elected, with equal representation from the provinces.

Many say the Senate is illegitimate and ineffective. The changes we propose would make it highly respected and useful.

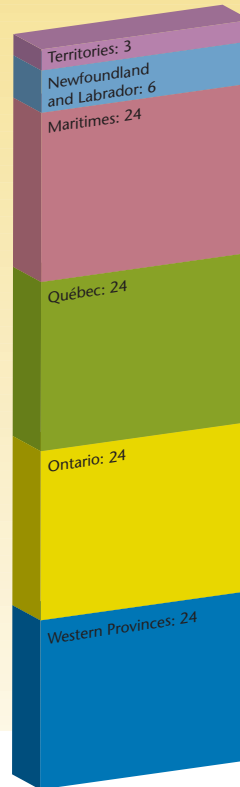
Bert Brown comes from Kathryn, Alberta, and has campaigned to change the structure of the Senate for more than twenty years. Prime Minister Stephen Harper appointed him a senator in 2007, after he won an unofficial election as a senator in Alberta.

REPRESENTATION IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS VERSUS THE SENATE, 2007



House Seats: 208

Regions with higher populations have more seats in the House of Commons.



Senate Seats: 105

Canada's constitution defines "divisions" — or regions — for appointing senators (see page 31). These divisions have a guaranteed number of seats in the Senate.

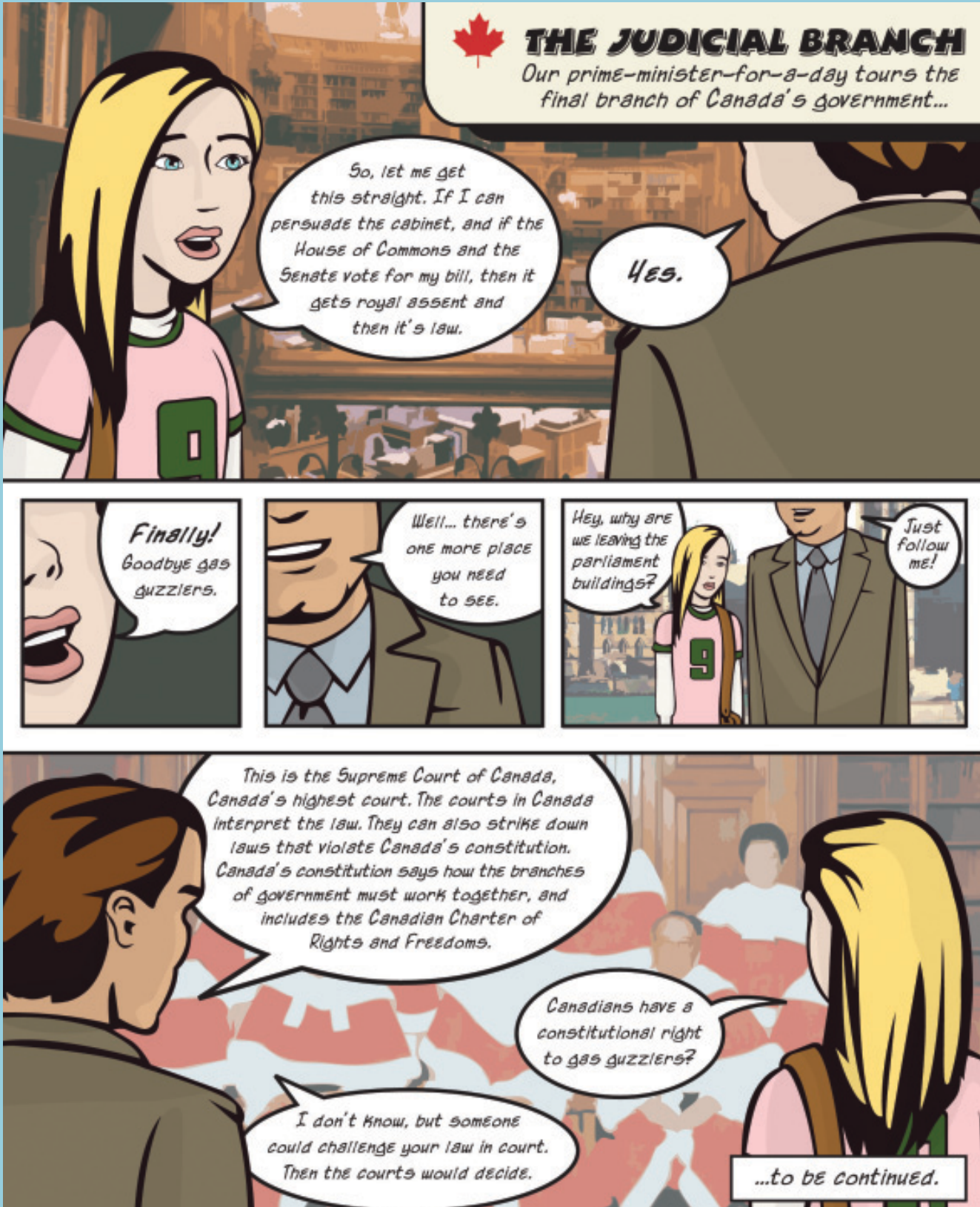


How does the structure of the Senate represent Canadians in a different way than the House of Commons? How does this structure help the Senate act in the interests of regions and minority groups?

connect to the big ideas

1. In your chapter task, you are acting as prime minister. It's important for you to demonstrate how the federal political system works. Describe three ways Canada's House of Commons and Senate provide opportunities for citizens to participate.
2. With the help of your teacher, invite your MP or a senator to your classroom. Develop a list of interview questions to learn more about their role in governing Canada. **Check the Skills Centre on page 369 for tips on conducting interviews.**
3. Work with a small group to find a political cartoon or news article about a proposed or approved law. What does the information tell you about how the law affects Canadians? Is there evidence linked to how effectively Canada's political system builds a society where all Canadians belong?
4. Members of parliament and senators have a responsibility to hear many diverse points of view and perspectives on issues. When you work in a group, how do you include different perspectives and points of view? Work with a group of classmates to identify two strategies. Demonstrate these strategies to your class with a brief role-play.

skills centre



What does the judicial branch do?

- The **judicial branch** includes Canada's courts of law. All members of the judicial branch come from the legal profession.
- The Supreme Court of Canada is the highest court in Canada. It has the final word on all legal questions in the country, including questions about the rules for making and applying laws.
- The judicial branch is separate from the other branches and acts as a check on their powers. It interprets and applies all law in Canada, including the rights of Canadians. This means that the judicial branch has the main responsibility for making sure the rights of Canadians are respected.

judicial branch: the part of government that interprets and applies the law by making legal judgements



How does the judicial branch

connect to peace, order and good government for all Canadians?

How do judges see their role?

The oath of office is to apply and define the law to the best of our ability. We are judges — we are not politicians. Our role is to interpret and apply the law. It is the most important part of what I do.

There are many challenges to the job. First of all, the questions presented are very challenging questions. They are questions of difficulty. To some extent, we deal with many of society's issues. We have examined issues of equality, discrimination, criminal process, social questions, and a whole host of other concerns.



Mr. Justice Frank Iacobucci served as a judge of the Supreme Court of Canada from 1991 to 2004.

WHO BECOMES A SUPREME COURT JUDGE?

The Supreme Court has nine judges from four regions of Canada.



For most of Canada's history, the PM and cabinet have appointed Supreme Court judges when positions became vacant — when a judge retired, for example.

In February 2006, Prime Minister Stephen Harper changed the appointment process. The PM and cabinet now nominate judges, who then go through a review by a committee of MPs. In 2007, the PM still had the power to appoint the judge of his choice.



This photo shows the judges of the Supreme Court in 2005. The court always has an uneven number of judges to prevent tie decisions.



Check for an update on appointing Supreme Court judges. What's the procedure today?



Steps to Persuasive Communication

In this chapter, you are exploring how Canada's federal political structure works. You have investigated the roles and responsibilities that government members have, and how they use the system to respond to issues that affect Canadians. For the chapter task, you will need to persuade others about your ideas on the question, "As Canada's prime minister, how would you respond to what you believe is the most important issue about government today?" What techniques will you use to be most persuasive?



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE PERSUASIVE?

Remember the Nine on 9 team you met on page 14? They have some tips on persuasive communication.

Persuasiveness is the ability to convince someone of something.

In my opinion, persuasiveness means having the power to influence people to act and think in a certain way.

I had to be persuasive when I wanted a new computer. I persuaded my parents to let me buy it by explaining positive points. I told them that a computer would help me learn and study. I did the research into what a good computer could offer me and explained to them the many benefits it would have on my grades and standard of living. I was very effective, and now I have a computer!



Try this!

With a partner, brainstorm some ideas of things you would like to persuade others about. For example, how could you persuade a friend to attend a political debate, or encourage your principal to run a mock federal election in your school? What could you say to be most persuasive?

Think of one of the ideas on your list and use these steps to practise being persuasive. Share your ideas with a small group. Who was most persuasive? Why? How could you have been more persuasive?

1

State your idea.

What do you want to persuade others about? State your idea clearly.

2

Know your audience.

No matter who your audience is, always be friendly and have their best interests in mind. Try to show how your idea connects to them.

3

Support your idea with evidence.

You can't persuade anyone if you can't back it up! Find at least three facts, examples or reasons that show why your idea is a good idea. Make sure your evidence is accurate.

4

Choose formats that fit your evidence.

There are many ways to communicate your idea. Think about which ways would get your evidence across the best. You can use charts, visuals or other tools to help you communicate your idea.

5

Organize your points.

Organize your points in a logical order and present your most powerful point last. You can use charts, visuals or other tools to help you communicate your idea.

MY PLAN

Introduction

- State my idea.

Good point

Better point

Best point

Conclusion

- Restate my idea and summarize my reasons.



How do laws become laws?

WHAT'S IN THIS SECTION

In this section you will read about how the government makes Canada's laws. You will find:

- A backgrounder about a law called the Federal Accountability Act (FAA).
- A flow chart that illustrates how the FAA was proposed, debated and passed as a law in the House of Commons and the Senate.
- A First Nations perspective on law making in Canada.

What are you looking for?

As you read this section, look for:

- How a law becomes a law.
- How well the process for creating legislation involves Canadians and their multiple views and perspectives on issues.

John Baird was Minister of the Treasury when he introduced the Federal Accountability Act in 2006. In this photo, he is holding a news conference about the act. **Think critically:** Why might John Baird have used the visual backdrop in this photo to help communicate his message and persuade his audience?



CASE STUDY

The Federal Accountability Act

Canada's government passed the Federal Accountability Act in December 2006 in response to issues raised by the "sponsorship scandal." These issues included:

- Responsible and **accountable** spending by government.
- Protection for government employees who "blow the whistle" on wrongdoing within Canada's **civil service**.
- More information about the activities of lobbyists. Lobbyists are people paid to represent the interests of particular groups in society. You can read more about them on pages 51 to 53.

Take a look at the news article below. Why did the sponsorship scandal raise issues?

Scandalous! Appalling! Watchdog slams government in sponsorship scandal

February 10, 2004

A report by Canada's auditor general today slammed the government for creating a secret fund and using it for its own interests, instead of the interests of all Canadians.

The auditor general is the "watchdog" on government spending for parliament and the people of Canada. Her report came from her investigation into the sponsorship scandal — an investigation launched by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, leader of the Liberal Party of Canada.

The investigation concerned a federal fund in Québec that was supposed to pay for cultural events and programs. The investigation found that there was no process for handing the money out, and no accountability for how the money was spent.

The money, it turns out, wasn't being used for cultural events at all. Members of the Liberal party were using it to reward their political friends.

The scandal became public when the *Globe and Mail* newspaper tried to find a copy of a document for which the government had paid more than \$500,000. The newspaper discovered that the document didn't exist.

— Based on research into events, views and perspectives.

accountable: answerable to someone for your actions; observable, transparent

civil service: the people who serve Canadians as employees of government



CRITICAL THINKING CHALLENGE

How might making Canada's government more accountable contribute to good government for all Canadians? What other measures might contribute to good government?

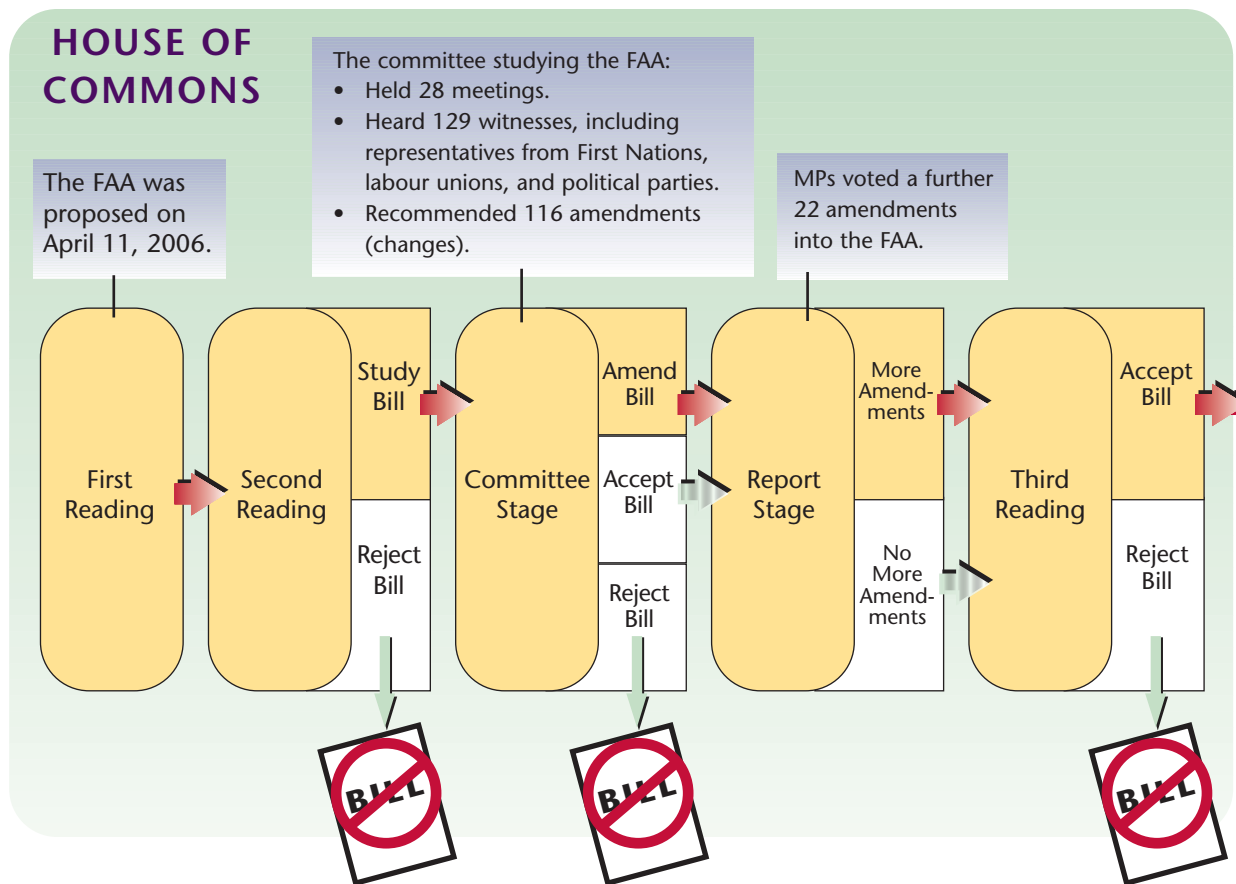
This is Sheila Fraser, the auditor general of Canada at the time of the sponsorship scandal. The auditor general monitors government spending on behalf of parliament and all Canadians. Her report led to a public inquiry, followed by criminal charges against several officials. Three were convicted. No elected officials were found guilty. Because of the scandal, the Liberal party lost seats in the federal election of 2004.



What steps did the Federal Accountability Act go through?

You have already learned about the role of the legislative branch in making laws for Canada.

Within the legislative branch, bills go through several steps to become law. The flow chart below and on the next page shows the path of the Federal Accountability Act through these law-making steps.



LAW-MAKING STEPS IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS AND THE SENATE

First Reading

Printed copies of the bill are made available for the first time. There is no debate or vote.

Second Reading

Debate and vote on the principle of the bill. Does the bill serve the interests of Canadians?

Committee Stage

Detailed study of the bill. A committee of MPs or senators reviews the bill with the help of witnesses, including experts and citizens. The committee issues a report with a recommendation that the House or Senate usually accepts.

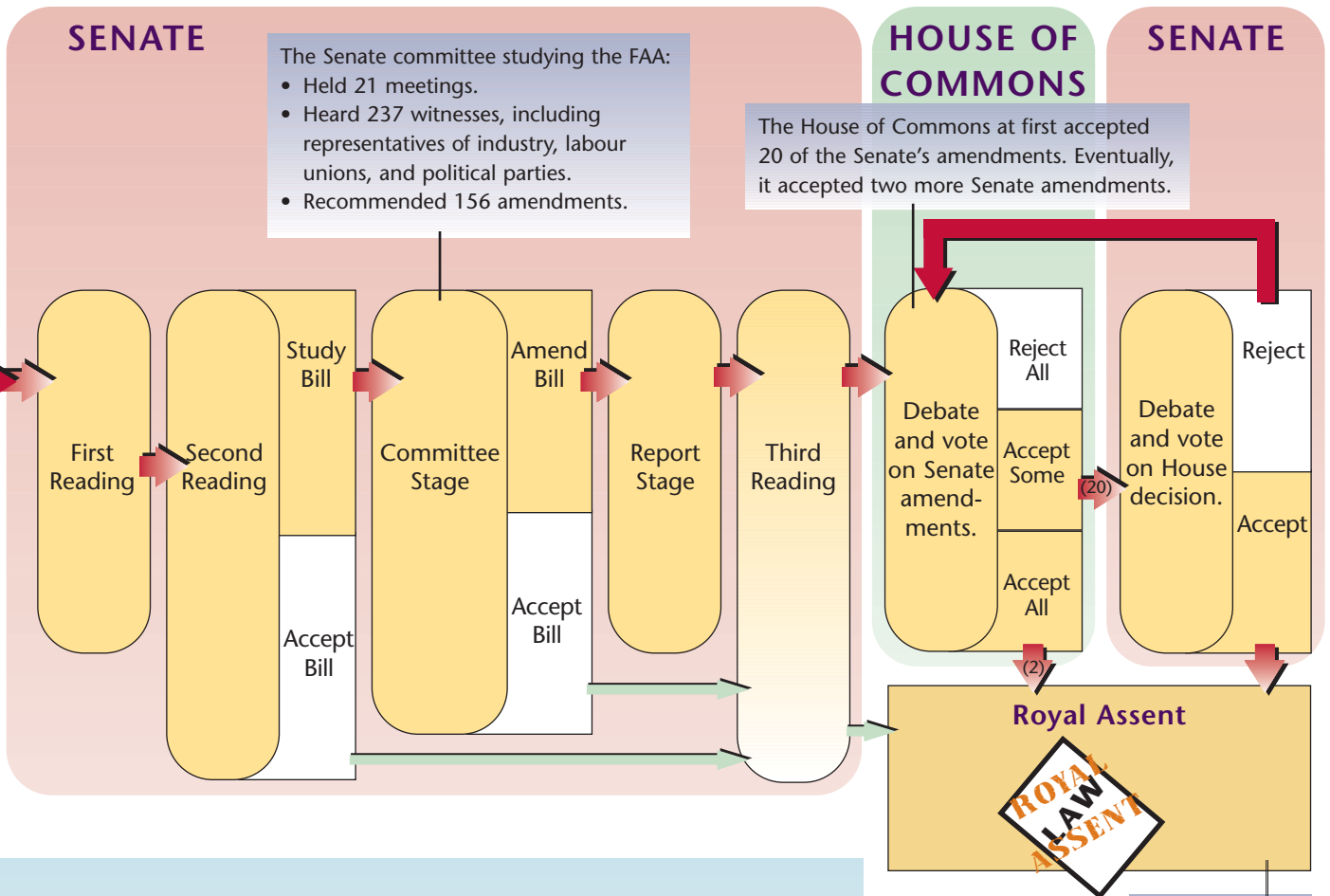
Report Stage

Debate and vote on amendments (changes) to the bill.

Third Reading

Debate and vote on the final form of the bill.

How does the process of passing a law create opportunities to build Canada as a society where people of many perspectives and views belong? What challenges does this process create for Canadians, in your opinion?



DID YOU KNOW?

The usual, basic path of law making in Canada is:

House of Commons ➡ Senate ➡ Royal Assent

The FAA went through an additional loop through the House of Commons and Senate, as these two bodies sought agreement on the final form of the FAA. This took time, but it also allowed a fuller debate of the issues involved.

Royal Assent

Bill becomes law after the Governor General gives Royal assent. This is a formality.

The FAA became law on December 12, 2006.



PASSING A LAW

Our prime-minister-for-a-day becomes impatient..



Why is making laws so difficult? You're my assistant - can't you speed this up?



It's not supposed to be easy to make laws. Canada is a diverse country. Canadians have different identities, perspectives and needs - different priorities.



I'm a Canadian. How can I make my priorities count?



Canada's federal political system attempts to give all citizens a voice - as individuals and also as members of collectives. What have you discovered from touring the executive, legislative and judicial branches about ways for Canadians to voice their views and perspectives?

- Examples of ways to voice views and perspectives:**
- *Contact your MP, a senator or a cabinet minister.*
 - *Campaign for a candidate during an election.*
 - *Organize a petition or rally on an issue that concerns you.*

Stéphane Doucette-Préville, Parliamentary Page



Stéphane Doucette-Préville had just graduated from École Maurice-Lavallée, a Francophone school in Edmonton, when he joined the House of Commons' Page Program in September 2006.

Each year, the Page Program gives forty students from across Canada the chance to learn about the legislative branch in person. In the House of Commons, the pages assist MPs of all political parties with daily tasks, such as photocopying and answering phones. On the floor of the Commons Chamber — during debates and Question Period, for example — they retrieve documents and run messages between members of the assembly.

As a page, I have learned, number one, that there is a lot of cooperation between the different political parties. The confrontation between parties during Question Period often makes the news on television — but Question Period is only forty-five minutes of the day. The rest of the day is spent expressing views on issues that affect Canadians and debating laws. In the end, MPs try to agree. They want to vote on what's good for all Canadian citizens.

I think people are sometimes not aware of the responsibilities of MPs. But I've found that MPs deserve respect. They work under a lot of stress and they work very long hours. On top of attending the proceedings of the House of Commons, they work on committees and they answer questions from their constituents. It's not an easy job. They have to be really committed to do it.

What is the most memorable thing about being a page? Certain things, every day, I find memorable — like being on the floor of the House of Commons during Question Period and, every Wednesday, singing the national anthem. Not every Canadian will have the chance to do that. It is very special.

Stéphane Doucette-Préville spent one year in Ottawa as part of the House of Commons' Page Program. "One of my favourite interests is politics, and when I was going to high school, my favourite class was social studies. I'm very excited to be part of a textbook for my favourite subject."



"I'll also remember special events, like playing a soccer game against the MPs. Seeing the MPs out of the work environment and getting to talk with them — plus for me, soccer is my favourite sport — I thought that was really fun and incredible."



What has Stéphane learned about the role of MPs from his firsthand experience of the House of Commons?

Why do you think people have different views about the job MPs do?



What voice do First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples need?

assimilation: the process of becoming part of a different cultural group (not your own)

Aboriginal peoples were not consulted when Canada was formed at Confederation in 1867, although they were among Canada's founding peoples. The British North America Act (BNA Act) — which was Canada's original constitution and established Canada's system of government — did not acknowledge the rights of Aboriginal peoples. The BNA Act:

- Made First Nations “responsibilities” of the government, along with things like the postal service. It did not acknowledge First Nations as independent, sovereign peoples with their own forms of government.
- Did not mention the Inuit or Métis at all.

Since Confederation, Aboriginal peoples have successfully campaigned for the inclusion of their rights in Canada's constitution, but many continue to feel excluded from Canada's political system.



Anna Hunter is director of the Aboriginal Public Administration Program at the University of Saskatchewan.

Aboriginal people did not play a role in designing the Canadian system of government, and they do not see themselves represented in its institutions... Aboriginal peoples need to see representation and inclusion of their leaders and their ceremonies, symbols and practices in the political processes and institutions of the Canadian state.

— Anna Hunter, “Exploring the Issues of Aboriginal Representation in Federal Elections,” *Electoral Insight*, November 2003.

Anna Hunter studied challenges to the participation of First Nations in Canada's federal political system. Here's what she found:

- First Nations people find it difficult to elect representatives. They make up less than 10 percent of Canada's population and are dispersed across the country.
- Some choose not to vote because Canada's government does not reflect their traditions and values. They consider voting a form of validating Canada's political system over their own systems of government.
- Some associate voting with **assimilation**. For many years, Canada's government required First Nations people to give up their legal identity before they could vote. Canada did not grant First Nations people the right to vote until 1960.



How does the information on this page relate to your chapter task and communicate an important issue about government today?

connect to the big ideas

1. Working alone or with a partner, brainstorm some ideas for a new law. Your law should be practical and logical. It could link to your chapter task, as a way to respond to an issue about government today. Use these questions to help you organize your thoughts:
 - Why is your proposed law needed?
 - How would it improve the quality of life of Canadians?
 - What groups might support it? What groups might oppose it?
2. Create an announcement about your law for radio, TV, the Internet or newspapers. Describe steps you will take to involve citizens in decisions about the law. Your work on this point can help you complete your chapter task.

Bills! Bills! Bills!

In 2007, MPs introduced more than 300 bills, including the bills described below. **How could you find out if these bills became laws? How could you find out what bills MPs have introduced this year?**



Bill C-30 proposed to increase the production of crops for biofuels, as a way to reduce air pollution and greenhouse gases.



What values do you believe each of these bills reflects?

Bill C-19 proposed to make street racing a criminal offence. This means police could charge people for street racing, in addition to charges for reckless driving and speeding.



Bill C-321 proposed to establish a National Hockey Day in recognition that "hockey has served as a unifying force throughout our history, is an important component of our contemporary national identity, and is considered a cornerstone of our unique Canadian culture."



How do the media connect Canadians to their government?

WHAT'S IN THIS SECTION

In this section you will read about the role of the media in communicating information about government actions.

You will find:

- Information on how the media affects current affairs and issues.
- Comments from a reporter describing the challenges of reporting political issues.
- Examples of news groups that communicate the diverse needs and perspectives of Canada's peoples.

What are you looking for?

As you read this section, look for:

- How the media provides citizens opportunities to communicate their needs and concerns about political issues.

THINK CRITICALLY: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR NEWS?

How does the source of your news affect the information you get?

Do some formats communicate more effectively than others?

How do you know if you have access to reliable, balanced information?



How do reporters see their role?

The media include newspapers, magazines, film, radio, television, the Internet, books and billboards. They deliver information and messages quickly to very large audiences.

The media don't just report the news. They influence our personal understanding of the world and how it works. All media messages are created by people who interpret the facts and make choices about how to tell the story. When a story is repeated in the media, it begins to affect what happens next.

Politicians develop key messages for the media, to control how the media present them, and to communicate what they want Canadians to know. Usually these are memorable quotes or phrases, almost like **slogans**.

Journalists make decisions about what news stories to cover and whose perspectives to include.

slogan: a phrase repeatedly used by politicians or marketers to present an idea

Our role is to inform people about the impact government is having on their lives. Because that's the essence of government: to try to change our society for the better. If they're not doing that, you vote them out and try someone else.

The big challenge for us is to get the truth. The truth is sometimes not very easy to find. You learn very quickly that the truth is not always what's on the government website. It's not in the first press release you pick up. You have to dig around. You have to find credible sources with credible information. You have to sort through the "spin" and the noise of Question Period to find those rare kernels of truth that people want to read about.



Don Martin is the national affairs columnist for the *Calgary Herald* and the *National Post*.



According to Mr. Martin, what is the main role of government? Do you agree or disagree? Why?



CRITICAL THINKING CHALLENGE How do different types of media cover government decision making? How do journalists get information? What is the relationship between politicians and the media?



Why do you think groups in Canada want media outlets that serve their communities?

What's the Parliamentary Press Gallery?

Don Martin is a member of the Parliamentary Press Gallery, an association of reporters who cover the decisions and actions of Canada's government. The Press Gallery includes about 350 reporters from media outlets across Canada. For example, the Press Gallery includes:



Aboriginal Peoples Television Network

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES TELEVISION NETWORK

APTN provides First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples "the opportunity to share their stories with all of Canada through a national television network dedicated to Aboriginal programming." APTN broadcasts in English, French and several Aboriginal languages.

ASSOCIATION DE LA PRESSE FRANCOPHONE

This news organization serves Francophone communities outside of Québec. Its membership includes *Le Franco*, based in Edmonton. Why do you think Francophone communities in Alberta might have different perspectives on issues than Francophones living in Québec?



Radio-Canada

CBC/RADIO-CANADA

CBC/Radio-Canada, Canada's public broadcaster, provides radio, television, Internet and satellite-based services in English, French and eight Aboriginal languages to all Canadians. It also broadcasts in nine languages to Canadians and international listeners abroad, and in eight languages to new and aspiring Canadians.

LE DEVOIR

LE DEVOIR

This French-language newspaper, based in Montréal, is distributed in Québec.



How do you think the variety of Canada's media affect the way Canadians deal with issues?

MING PAO NEWS

This Chinese-language newspaper, based in Hong Kong, has Canadian editions in Toronto and Vancouver.

OMNI TELEVISION

This television broadcaster aims to "reflect Canada's diversity through... multicultural, multilingual and multi-faith programming." It broadcasts in several languages and targets many cultural groups in Canada, including South Asian, Italian, Portuguese, Chinese, and Caribbean communities.

In this photo, NDP leader and MP Jack Layton answers reporters. Politicians answer reporters' questions as one way to connect to the public. They sometimes hold press conferences to communicate their ideas, concerns and positions on issues to citizens.



HOW TO DETECT BIAS

The news media are one way we can explore perspectives on issues. You need a way to tell whether the news you read, watch and hear is accurate, and whether it reflects a balance of views and perspectives. You need to be on the alert for bias.

Bias is a type of thinking rooted in a person's point of view. Sometimes a bias towards one subject or another creates unbalanced information in the news. The key is to be open-minded when presenting and analyzing the issues.

Practise your skills of detecting bias using the article on this page. The following questions will help you pull apart and evaluate the article for bias.

- Who is the writer(s) or speaker(s)?
- Do they have authority to speak about the subject?
- Does the information provide facts and evidence?
- Does it use stereotyping, or appeal to fear or emotion?
- Does it ignore any people or groups?
- How does the information fit with what you already know?
- How could you verify the information for accuracy?

bias: an opinion based on unchallenged assumptions



Scan news sources and collect three or four pieces of information on a current issue. Analyze each item for bias.

Summarize and share your findings. Describe how the articles are similar and different. Identify and describe any examples of bias.

Create a visual of the items you found. Include a title, subtitles and an explanation of how bias can be found in media reports. Share your visual with the class.

Law to Fix Election Dates

November 7, 2006

OTTAWA — The Conservative government has proposed a law to set, or “fix,” federal election dates every four years. The proposed law received third reading in the House of Commons yesterday.

Under the current system, the prime minister of a majority government can call an election at any time within five years of taking power. “The prime minister is able to choose the date of an election, not based on what is in the best interest of the country, but what is in the interest of his or her party,” says Minister of Justice Rob Nicholson, who introduced the legislation last May.

With fixed election dates, the timing of general elections would be known by all citizens and political parties four years in advance. “Fixed election dates stop leaders from trying to manipulate the calendar,” Prime Minister Stephen Harper says. “They level the playing field for all political parties.”

Liberals have questioned the wisdom of changing the current system, which they say has served Canada well for 130 years. They say fixed election dates would make the ruling party less accountable to voters, since the government could do whatever it wanted without facing an unexpected election.

— Based on research into events, views and perspectives.

The logo features the word "connect" in a light blue font, with "to" and "the" in smaller text inside a blue circle. To the right, "big ideas" is written in a larger, bold blue font. A thick blue horizontal bar is positioned below the text.

connect to the big ideas

1. Choose an issue about government currently in the news. Then, try one or two of the following activities over a two- or three-week period to find out how much the media affects the issue. After, describe how this exercise will affect the way you read and listen to the news in the future.
 - Each day, record the number of times you encounter the issue in the newspaper, on television or the Internet. Is the issue reported more or less as the days go by? Why do you think this is happening? When was the issue dropped by the media?
 - Each day, record one or two key messages that were common to the stories. Notice how the story changes over time. What appears to be influencing the story and causing these changes?
 - How are the media reporting people's reaction to the issue? Are people writing letters to the editor? Are politicians and influential people being interviewed? What are their ideas and concerns?
 - What groups of people have expressed viewpoints on the issue? Are the media reporting all sides of the issue equally and fairly, or is there evidence of bias? What evidence is there that the media has remained neutral or that it has taken a position on the issue?
 - Each day, predict how the issue might be resolved based upon what you know about it from the media. Explain your reasoning.
 - List actions or decisions that aimed to resolve the issue. Who was involved? What role did the media play?
 - Make a visual, create a graph or use an organizer to show how the issue evolved as a news story over the period. Show when interest in the story was at its peak and when interest began to fade. Why might this happen?
2. Invite a local reporter to your class to talk about their role in communicating political issues. Write a news article about what you heard for your school newsletter or community newspaper. Include a balance of opinions and views about what the reporter said and the reaction of the students. **Refer to the Skills Centre on page 371 for ideas on how to write a news story.**
3. In your opinion, who should have more responsibility for communicating issues: government, the media, or citizens? Why? Explain your reasons.

A small blue arrow pointing to the right with the words "skills centre" written inside it in white.

skills
centre

What do lobbyists do?

WHAT'S IN THIS SECTION

In this section you will read about the role of lobbyists in the political process. You will find:

- Information about lobbyists.
- Two interviews with lobbyists sharing their views about representing Canadians.

What are you looking for?

As you read this section, look for:

- What lobbyists do.
- The extent to which lobbyists represent Canadians in the political process.
- How lobbyists can influence government decision making.

CRITICAL THINKING CHALLENGE
How might lobbyists affect political decision making and the lives of Canadians?

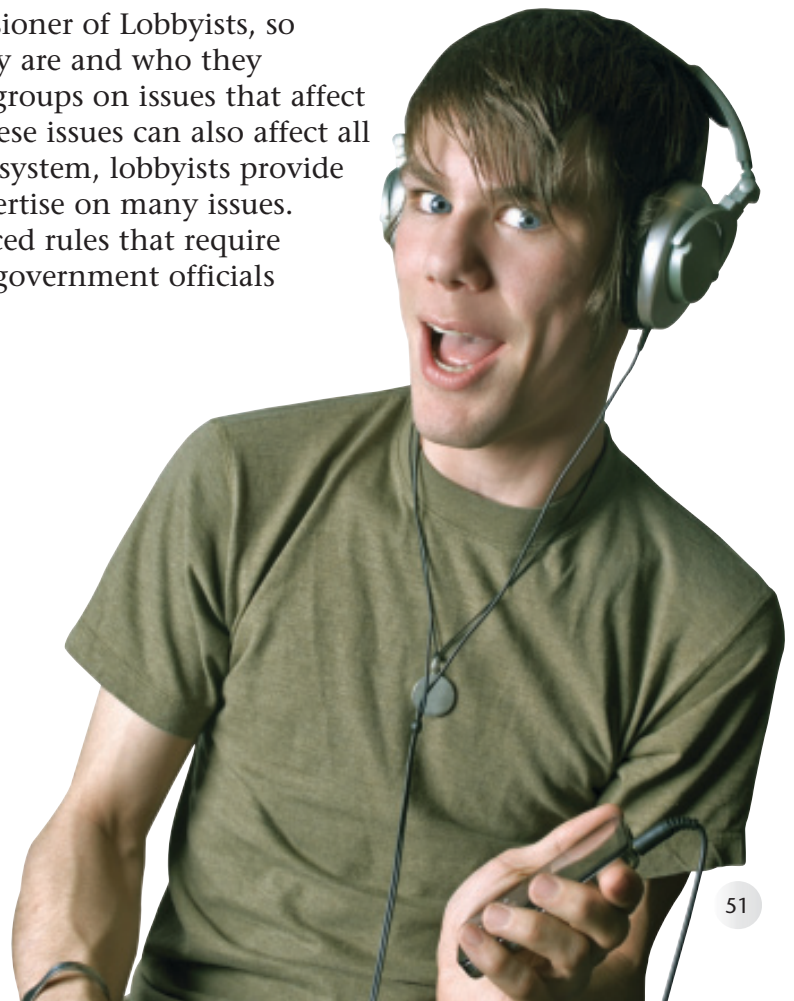
Who are lobbyists?

- A lobbyist is someone hired by a group to influence MPs and government officials.
- Lobbyists must register with a Commissioner of Lobbyists, so everyone in Canada can know who they are and who they represent. Lobbyists voice the views of groups on issues that affect their members, products or services. These issues can also affect all Canadians. Within the federal political system, lobbyists provide different perspectives and in-depth expertise on many issues.
- The Federal Accountability Act introduced rules that require lobbyists to document which MPs and government officials they meet with.

The entertainment industry has lobbyists who work to influence laws about downloading music, movies and TV shows.



Lobbying by groups such as the Non-Smokers' Rights Association has resulted in tougher controls on smoking, including government warnings on cigarette packages and bans on smoking in public places.



How do lobbyists see their role?

Lobbyists represent the views and perspectives of different groups on issues that affect Canadians. For example, lobbyists are part of a debate about the development of the oil sands in Alberta.

Pierre Alvarez is president of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP), based in Calgary, Alberta. CAPP represents 150 companies that explore for, develop and produce more than 95 percent of Canada's natural gas, crude oil, oil sands and elemental sulphur.



I have a son in Grade 9, and a son and a daughter in Grade 7. I tell them that business and government have become complex and so have the issues — climate change, for example. Government doesn't have a monopoly on good ideas or right answers. The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers brings technical expertise that helps make better decisions. And I think we are just as important to good decision making as lobbyists for the environment movement.

Many times, the best work we do comes from processes where government, ourselves and the environmental community are all around the table, all bringing our expertise, and challenging each other to find a better solution.

This photo shows an oil sands upgrader near Fort McMurray, Alberta. **Think critically:** Why might the oil sands have become a focus of lobbying by different groups?



CRITICAL THINKING CHALLENGE

To what extent do lobbyists represent Canadians? In what ways do they help or hinder effective government decision making around issues?



Many different organizations speak directly to government decision makers. We're one of them. But, unlike the oil industry or other corporate groups, we have nothing to gain financially from what we do.

We deal with the environmental implications of energy development. We put forward solutions, identify priorities and build a case for change. With the oil sands, for example, we have raised awareness with the media and the public about the key environmental consequences of oil sands development. It's put more pressure on the government to take action.

We clash with industry sometimes, like when we seek more controls on the oil sands industry. We also work with industry. We're involved in a number of organizations that seek consensus on issues. People bring their interests to the table, including industry people, and we all try to come up with a way to work together and move ahead.



Chris Severson-Baker is the director of Energy Watch with the Pembina Institute. The Pembina Institute is based in Alberta and works to advance green sources of energy.

connect to the big ideas

1. How does each of the lobbyists see their role in representing Canadians? In what areas do they agree or disagree? How different are their points of view? Draw an organizer like the one below to help you summarize their comments. Which point of view do you agree with most? Why? What might some other views be? Add these to your organizer.



2. To play a part in Canada's federal political system, people take on many roles. With a small group, list all the roles you have learned about in this chapter. How involved in the federal political system are people in each role? Use a continuum like the one below to rank each role. Consider where you would rank your own level of involvement on the continuum.



3. In your chapter task, you are acting as prime minister. Describe how a lobbyist might influence your decisions as prime minister.



Wrap Up Your Task

Remember, you need to create a speech that answers the question:
As Canada’s prime minister, how would you respond to what you believe is the most important issue about government today?

Summarize Your Ideas

Review the chart you began on page 19. Summarize the information in your chart and select one issue that you will present in your speech. Remember: you will need to be persuasive to be selected as prime minister for a day. Consider the “Steps to Persuasive Communication” that you learned about on pages 36 and 37.

Prepare Your Speech

For a speech, speak clearly. State strong facts and reasons. Use effective and convincing words that will make the audience want to listen.

When you can convey your thoughts along with facial expressions and tone of voice, the audience gets a better sense of what you are talking about.

Tone is everything. If you want to persuade your audience, you must be friendly.

Tips for Making a Powerful, Persuasive Speech

- ✓ Organize your ideas.
- ✓ Use visuals to reinforce your points.
- ✓ Establish eye contact with everyone in the room.
- ✓ Speak clearly and loudly enough to be heard.



Introduction
 The most important issue about government today is the way MPs are elected and I have suggestions for how I would use the system to change it. The current system does not represent Canadians well, in my opinion. I will present three reasons supporting my position: not everyone votes for the MP that “represents” them, MPs usually vote with their party, and minority groups in society have difficulty electing MPs.

First Point
 I would like to present a graph showing how people voted in this riding during the last federal election... I would use the system to ensure that...

Chapter 1 Review

WHAT DID CHAPTER 1 EXPLORE?

- What is the structure of Canada's federal political system?
- How do laws become laws?
- How do the media connect Canadians to their government?
- What do lobbyists do?

Revisit the Chapter Issue

Use the directions below to develop your own informed position on the chapter issue:

How effectively does Canada's federal political system govern Canada for all Canadians?

DEMONSTRATING YOUR LEARNING

Steps 4 to 6, Spot and Respond to the Issue (page 13)

Step 4 Describe your research.

- Identify and describe key perspectives.
- Describe how the issue connects to citizenship, identity and quality of life.
- Describe one step you could take to become better informed on the issue.

Step 5 Describe your current position.

- Support your position with evidence.

Step 6 Describe a way to take action.

- Show how you could make a difference on this issue.

Share What You Know

Create a mural that illustrates how Canada's federal political system works. Use graphics, pictures, headings and descriptions to make your points. Present your mural to other students to help them learn about Canada's political system.

Links with Technology

Using an electronic mind-mapping tool, organize the three branches of government to demonstrate how they work together to respond to issues that affect Canadians. Use visuals from clip art, the Internet or a shared file folder to represent the data. Add your own graphics by using the drawing tools to create symbols and relationships between different aspects of the federal system for your mind map.

Take Action

Raise awareness about a current issue in your community, such as vandalism, recycling or voter turnout. Research the issue and develop a key message about why the issue is important. Use your skills of persuasive communication. Choose a format for getting your message across and present it to your school or community.

Reflect Before You Forget

Reflect on what you learned about Canada's federal political system in this chapter. Complete these thoughts:

- I used to think... but now I think...
- The most important thing I learned in this chapter is that citizens...
- In the way Canada's government represents Canadians, one thing I'd like to know more about is...