

Levels of Government

Canada is the second largest country in geographic area in the world today, literally spreading across thousands and thousands of kilometres. With a population of approximately 31 million people across thousands of kilometres, it is very difficult for a single government to take care of all the responsibilities that exist throughout the nation. In 1867, because Canada was physically such a large country with so many different needs, we adopted a federal system of government that had three levels: federal, provincial and municipal. This style of government involves dividing the powers into national and various regional levels. This allows the country to address the needs of various areas that may have specific expectations from their government. Canada, possibly more than any other country, benefits from a federal style of government. There are certain aspects of Canadian society that simply could not be addressed by one level of government. For instance, Nunavut (the newest territory) has completely different needs from a government than does Metropolitan Toronto.

Each level of government deals with different areas. The federal government, for example, is responsible for services that affect the entire country, such as money or the armed forces. The provincial government deals with services that affect its particular areas, such as licensing drivers and hospitals. Finally, municipal governments deal with services that are needed by each individual community, such as police, fire, and garbage services.

The chart on the next page shows more specifically what aspects of society each level of government is responsible for. Study it carefully.



Federal



Provincial



Municipal

Levels of Government and Their Assigned Responsibilities

Federal	Provincial	Municipal
Financial	Welfare	Parks and Recreation
Canada Post	Natural Resources	Fire Service
Foreign Affairs	Supervision of Municipalities	Local Police Service
Citizenship	Provincial Taxation	Water Services
Economic Policy	Provincial Prisons	Snow Clearance
Taxation	Health Care	Local Schools
Penitentiaries	Worker's Compensation Plan	Road Maintenance
Sea Coast / Inland Fishing	Education Funding	Libraries
Aboriginal Affairs	O.P.P.	Recycling
Marriage and Divorce	Drivers Licencing	Sewage
Employment Insurance	Highways	Garbage Collection
Government Spending		Public Transit
Shipping and Navigation		
National Defence		
Criminal Laws		
Residual Powers: The Federal Government is responsible for all areas that are not directly referred to in the Constitution.		

In addition, you should become familiar with important political leaders who hold office at each of the levels of government. The Prime Minister (federal leader) of Canada in 2005, the Premier of Ontario (a provincial leader) in the same year and a long standing mayor (a municipal leader) of an Ontario city (Toronto) in 2011 are pictured below.

Prime Minister



Premier



Mayor of Toronto

