There are three key facts about Canada’s system of government: our country is a federal state, a parliamentary democracy and a constitutional monarchy.

FEDERAL STATE
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LIVING IN A DEMOCRACY
Living in a democracy, Canadian citizens have the right and the responsibility to participate in making decisions that affect them. It is important for Canadians aged 18 or more to participate in their democracy by voting in federal, provincial or territorial and municipal elections.

CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY
As a constitutional monarchy, Canada’s Head of State is a hereditary Sovereign (Queen or King), who reigns in accordance with the Constitution: the rule of law. The Sovereign is a part of Parliament, playing an important, non-partisan role as the focus of citizenship and allegiance, most visibly during royal visits to Canada. Her Majesty is a symbol of Canadian sovereignty, a guardian of constitutional freedoms, and a reflection of our history. The Royal Family’s example of lifelong service to the community is an encouragement for citizens to give their best to their country.

As Head of the Commonwealth, the Sovereign links Canada to 53 other nations that cooperate to advance social, economic and cultural progress. Other constitutional monarchies include Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Australia, New Zealand, The Netherlands, Spain, Thailand, Japan, Jordan and Morocco.

There is a clear distinction in Canada between the head of state—the Sovereign—and the head of government—the Prime Minister, who actually directs the governing of the country.

The Sovereign is represented in Canada by the Governor General, who is appointed by the Sovereign. The Governor General advises the Prime Minister on the advice of the Prime Minister, usually for five years. In each of the ten provinces, the Sovereign is represented by the Lieutenant Governor, who is appointed by the Governor General on the advice of the Prime Minister, also normally for five years.

The interplay between the three branches of government—the Executive, Legislative and Judicial—which work together but also sometimes in creative tension, helps to secure the rights and freedoms of Canadians.

Each provincial and territorial government has an elected legislature where provincial and territorial laws are passed. The members of the legislature are called members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), members of the Provincial Parliament (MPPs) or members of the House of Assembly (MHAs), depending on the province or territory.

In each province, the Premier has a role similar to that of the Prime Minister in the federal government, just as the Lieutenant Governor has a role similar to that of the Governor General. In the three territories, the Commissioner represents the federal government and plays a ceremonial role.

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MAKING LAWS
HOW A BILL BECOMES LAW — THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

**STEP 1** First Reading — The bill is considered read for the first time and is printed.

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**Parliament**
- **House of Commons**
- **Senate**

**Executive Branch**
- **Prime Minister and Cabinet**

**Legislative Branch**
- **Parliament**
- **Senate**
- **House of Commons**
- **Government Members**
- **Opposition Members**

**Judiciary**
- **Supreme Court of Canada**
- **Federal Court of Canada**
- **Provincial Courts**
- **Nine judges appointed by the Governor General**
- **Appointed on the Prime Minister’s recommendation**

**MPs**
- **Representatives elected by the Governor General**

**MLAs**
- **Representatives elected by the people**

**MPPs**
- **Representatives elected by the people**

**Constitution Act, 1867**
- **Parliament (MPPs)**
- **House of Commons**
- **Senate**
- **Governor General**
- **Prime Minister**

**Constitution Act, 1982**
- **Parliament (MLAs)**
- **Legislative Assembly**
- **Governor General**
- **Premier**

**Constitution Act, 1982**
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**CANADA’S SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT**

**PARLIAMENT**

- **Senators**: Appointed on the Prime Minister’s recommendation
- **Houses of Parliament**: Appointed by the Governor General

**EXECUTIVE BRANCH**

- **Prime Minister**
- **Cabinet**

**LEGISLATIVE BRANCH**

- **Parliament**: Represented by the Governor General
- **Senate**: Appointed by the Prime Minister on the Governor General’s recommendation
- **House of Commons**: Elected by voters

**JUDICIARY**

- **Supreme Court of Canada**: Nine judges appointed by the Governor General
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