



NOTES FOR TEACHERS

INTRODUCTION TO PARLIAMENT PRESENTATION

INTRODUCTION TO PARLIAMENT

This presentation has been designed to help you begin exploring Ontario's Parliament with your students! It covers a variety of subjects including the three levels of government, representation by population, as well as an introduction to electoral districts (ridings) and MPPs, and an overview of major Parliamentary players.

These accompanying teacher's notes will help you guide discussions in class while encouraging students to make connections. Teaching Parliament and Government can seem daunting but we want to make it fun and engaging!

Looking for more in-depth information about Ontario's Parliament? Download our free [Education Kit for Teachers](#)! Want to get your students involved? Try our [Elementary Student Workbook](#)! We also have a variety of lesson plans and interactive games available on our [website](#).

Enjoy!

PARLIAMENTARY PROTOCOL AND PUBLIC RELATIONS
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

PARLIAMENT IN ONTARIO

Ontario is a large province, and depending on where you live, students may be familiar with Ontario's Legislative Building, or it may be something they have never seen before! The first few slides of the presentation are all about helping students make connections...try some of these opening questions:

- What does this building look like?
- Which city is it in?
- Why is it in Toronto? Or, why is it not in Ottawa?



WHAT IS PARLIAMENT?

Students may have heard the word “parliament” before but they may be unfamiliar with what it means or why it is important. Ask your students if they can think of any people, words, or places that might be connected to Parliament. Common answers include:

- Government
- The Prime Minister
- Important people
- Where decisions are made
- Ottawa

Any answer is great! However, try and guide the discussion towards the fact that a parliament is where laws are created – in this case – for all of Ontario. An easy analogy for your students to understand is that classrooms have rules that they must follow, and that the country and the province have rules. Ask your students what word we use for official rules that everyone must follow (laws).



WHAT IS A LAW THAT YOU HAVE TO FOLLOW IN YOUR DAY-TO-DAY-LIFE?

This should be easy for your students, and fun! Most students will easily be able to identify basic traffic laws. Students may get confused between “rules” they might follow at school or at home and official laws. You can mention that getting an education is the law, even homeschooled students have to learn, and that this law ensures children in Canada get a good education!



What is a law that you have to follow in your day-to-day life?

WHAT ARE THE THREE LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT?

Remind students that Canada is a large country; they can even try and guess the population! Since Canada is so large we divide the responsibilities for the country into three separate levels, see if they can identify the names of the three levels: federal, provincial, and municipal.

What are the three levels of government?

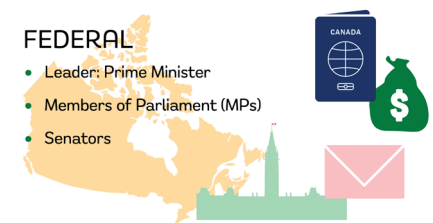


FEDERAL

Go over some basics with your students, such as where the federal government is located and who works at this level (Prime Minister, MPs and Senators). Using the icons on the screen as a guide ask them to think of some federal responsibilities (or things that might be the same for the whole country) such as passports, money, and mail.

FEDERAL

- Leader: Prime Minister
- Members of Parliament (MPs)
- Senators

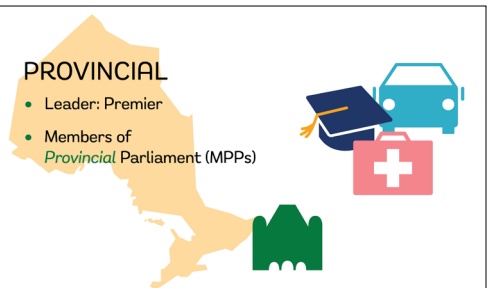


PROVINCIAL

Go over some basics with your students, such as where the provincial government is located and who works at this level (Premier and MPPs). Using the icons on the screen as a guide ask them to think of some provincial responsibilities (or things that might be the same everywhere in the province) such as education, drivers licenses, and healthcare.

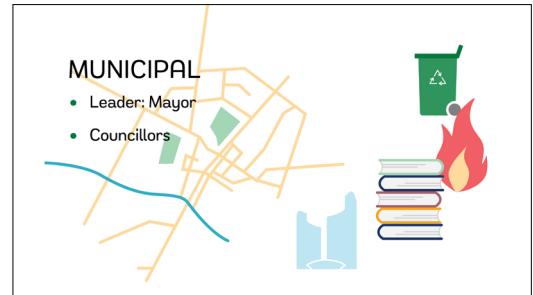
PROVINCIAL

- Leader: Premier
- Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs)



MUNICIPAL

Go over some basics with your students, such as where the municipal government is located and who works at this level (Mayor/Reeve, and Councillors). Using the icons on the screen as a guide ask them to think of some municipal responsibilities (or things that might be different city to city) such as garbage and recycling, public libraries, and emergency services.



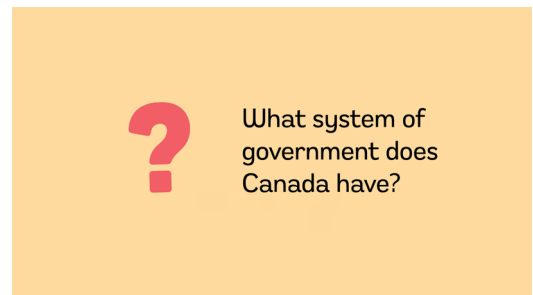
THE 3 LEVELS GAME

To test out your students' understanding of federal, provincial, and municipal responsibilities try the three levels game that is available on our website. Here, students will have to assign different responsibilities to their proper level of government. This can be done individually or as a class. You can also assign the game as a review following the lesson.



WHAT SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT DOES CANADA HAVE?

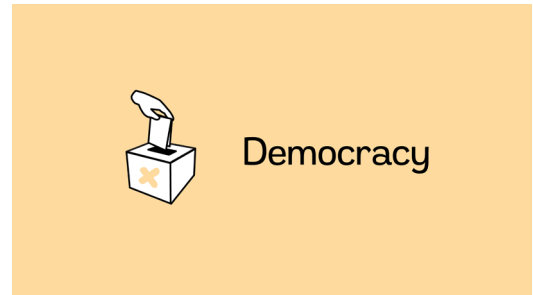
Now that you have introduced the idea of parliament, and the different levels of government you can explore some more complex ideas with your students. Ask your students what type of government we have (democracy), they may already know! If they do not that is okay! Ask how the MPs, MPPs, and Municipal Councillors are selected, what has to happen before they can have those jobs. You are looking to help them connect these roles to the voting process. Once they have made that connection you can see if they can connect voting to the concept of a democracy. Have students reaseach other government systems.



DEMOCRACY

We are fortunate to have a democracy in Canada. Have a brief discussion with your students about what that means, some topics could include:

- How old do you need to be to vote?
- Is every country in the world a democracy?
- What are some other systems of government?
- Are your students excited to vote when they turn 18?



CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY

While Canada is a democratic country, we also have a specific system of government that is used – a constitutional monarchy. If you would like more information about Canada’s constitutional monarchy refer to our Education Kit for Teachers.

This can be a challenging concept for students to understand. In brief, Canada has both a head of state (the Monarch) and a head of government (the Prime Minister, or Premier at the provincial level). While the Monarch does not involve themselves in the political decisions of the country, they are important for our law making process, as all laws passed at both the federal and provincial level require the Monarch’s signature (Royal Assent).

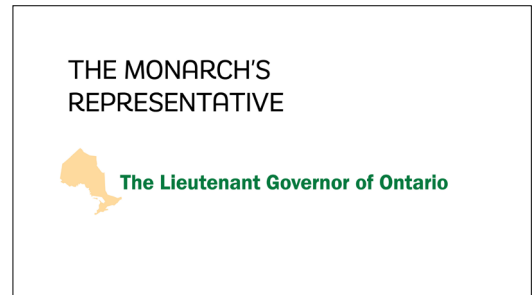
While the Monarch is responsible for this final approval step, they allocate this power to their representatives in Canada. Ask your students where the current Monarch lives, and whether students think they will need to travel to Canada every time we have a new law to approve? They will quickly realize this is impractical!



THE MONARCH'S REPRESENTATIVE

The Monarch has representatives at both the federal and provincial levels. The Governor General will represent them at the federal level, granting Royal Assent to laws passed in Ottawa. The Lieutenant Governors represent the Monarch at the provincial level. There is a Lieutenant Governor for each province, and they will grant Royal Assent to provincial legislation.

Again, Constitutional Monarchy and the Monarch's Representatives can be challenging concepts, so it is useful to use an analogy. Ask your students if they ever ask their parents to double check their homework, maybe to make sure that they followed all the instructions properly, or to make sure they filled out all the sections on their worksheets. This is in essence what the Governor General and Lieutenant Governors are doing; they cannot change the laws created by Parliament, but they have to verify that they were created democratically and that all the proper steps and procedures were followed.



REPRESENTATION BY POPULATION

Representation by population ensures that every Ontarian's vote is treated equally, since our provincial electoral districts, or ridings, are based on population distribution. For more information about electoral districts in Ontario, refer to the Education Kit for Teachers.

Have students consider the size of Ontario, see if they can guess the population! Also, ask if everyone in Ontario lives in the same city? Does everyone live in Toronto? Have them consider where their city or town is located and have them consider how many people live there. Since our population is so unevenly dispersed, we need to determine a way to ensure everyone is equally represented.

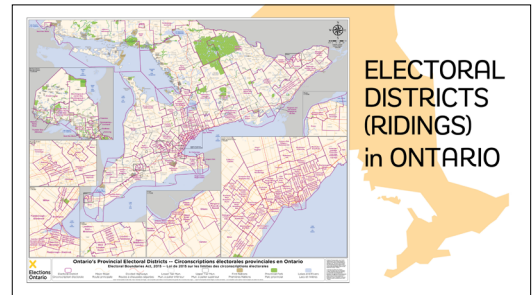


ELECTORAL DISTRICTS (RIDINGS) IN ONTARIO

Point out how Ontario is divided up into multiple pieces; you can compare these pieces to a puzzle. Have your students examine the electoral district map of Ontario, what do they notice? Need to get the discussion started? Consider these questions:

- How many pieces do you think there are on this map?
See if your students can guess that there are 124.
- Are all the pieces the same size?
- Where are there many small pieces?
- Where are the large pieces located?

After examining the map in detail explain that each of these pieces is called an electoral district or riding. Each provincial riding is represented by a Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP).

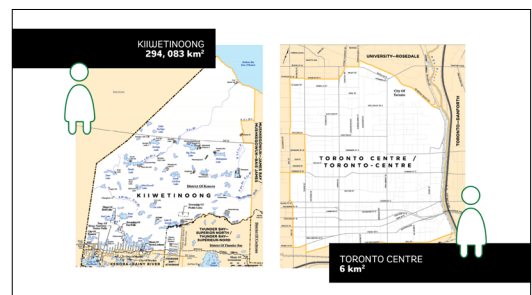


ELECTORAL DISTRICT COMPARISONS

We have included Ontario's largest and smallest electoral districts to help students understand that the physical size of the ridings has no impact – only the population. Each provincial electoral district has a population of roughly 100,000 people. See if your students can make this connection themselves.

Kiiwetinoong is located in Northwestern Ontario and is just over 290,000 km² or roughly the size of Italy. Ontario's smallest riding is located in downtown Toronto, Toronto Centre is just under 6 km² and you can walk across it in under 30 minutes. Each of these areas receives one Member of Provincial Parliament who will represent the people who live there (constituents).

Ask your students why each of these areas receives one MPP, why would this be fair? What do these two electoral districts have in common? If students are having trouble ask them to think about where the pieces are located, one is in a big city, and the other is in the far north of the province.



WHAT ELECTORAL DISTRICT ARE YOU FROM? WHO IS YOUR MPP?

Find out what electoral district your school is located in and who your Member of Provincial Parliament is! Visit www.elections.on.ca and put in your school's postal code and search to find out your provincial riding. Alternatively, students can put in their home postal codes as well. Visit www.ola.org/en/members for a list of Members of Provincial Parliament.



What electoral district are *you* from?
Who is *your* MPP?

Check www.elections.on.ca
and www.ola.org/en/members
to find out!

THE LEGISLATIVE BUILDING

Now that you have discussed the levels of government, the purpose of Parliament (to create laws), and Members of Provincial Parliament, it is time to talk about where that work takes place in Ontario. The Legislative Building located in Toronto is known by many names including the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, Provincial Parliament and Queen's Park. Mention to your students that their MPP will work partially in their community and the rest of the time at the Legislative Building in Toronto.



THE LEGISLATIVE CHAMBER

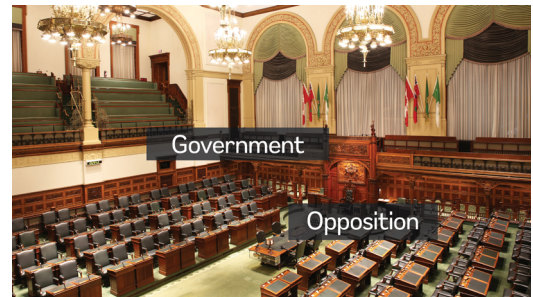
This room, located within the Legislative Building is where MPPs will meet to create new laws for the province of Ontario. Ask your students what they notice about this room, consider these questions:

- How many desks are in the Chamber? (remember there are 124 electoral districts with 1 MPP for each)
- How are the desks organized? (Note: the Chamber is organized into sections)



Government vs. Opposition

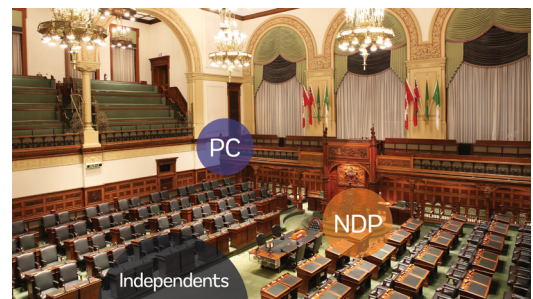
Point out that the Chamber is organized into two sides, with a middle section. On one side sits the Government, this is where the Premier will sit with the rest of their political party (or team). Typically, the party that forms the Government has the largest number of MPPs elected. On the other side of the Chamber is the Opposition (think opposite + position). The Opposition can be made up of one or several political parties (or teams).



Political Parties in Ontario

Ask your students if they can name any political parties in Ontario. They may be familiar with many of the federal political parties, most of which have provincial counterparts. Currently the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has MPPs from several different political parties including:

- Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario (Government)
- New Democratic Party of Ontario (Official Opposition)
- Ontario Liberal Party
- Green Party of Ontario



There can also be Independent Members. Typically, these MPPs are either not affiliated with one of the political parties or else their party does not have “official party status”. Currently in Ontario’s Legislature, a party must have a minimum of 12 elected Members to be considered an officially recognized party in the Chamber.

The Speaker

Once you have discussed the government and opposition sides of the Chamber it is time to turn to the middle section. Everyone who sits in this middle aisle is crucial to the proper function of Parliament. Ask your students who would be in charge in their school? The principal is a good comparison to help them understand the role of the Speaker. The Speaker maintains order in the Chamber; MPPs require the Speaker’s permission to speak.



The Speaker, The Honourable Donna Skelly

Show your students the photo of our current Speaker, the Honourable Donna Skelly, ask them if they notice anything in particular about her uniform? Maybe they can think of someone who wears black and white during a sports game, someone who enforces the rules! While the Speaker is a Member of Provincial Parliament they must remain neutral, or non-partisan, this means they do not participate in debates, and do not vote (unless there is a tie). This ensures that our proceedings are fair; you would not want to see a referee wearing a team jersey during a hockey game and in our Parliament you do not want the Speaker to have a bias toward a particular political party.



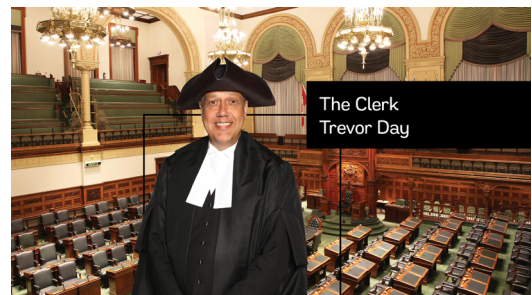
The Clerk

The Clerk is not an MPP and was not elected into their position; they must apply like any other job. Normally however, they will have worked for an extended period at the Legislative Assembly before becoming Clerk. The Clerk advises the Speaker and MPPs on the rules of parliament, and is an expert in parliamentary procedure. The Clerk is also responsible for keeping track of the votes during the debates.



The Clerk, Trevor Day

Your students may notice that the Clerk is also wearing black and white, ask your students what they think this means about the Clerk. Just like the Speaker, the Clerk must be non-partisan and neutral. Our current clerk, Trevor Day, has worked at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for over 25 years, which means he has had a lot of time to become well-versed in the rules of Parliament!



The Sergeant-at-Arms

The Sergeant-at-Arms is responsible for maintaining law and order in the Chamber on behalf of the Speaker; they also are responsible for the safety and security of the whole Legislative Building.



The Sergeant-at-Arms, Tim McGough

Our current Sergeant-at-Arms, Tim McGough, used to be a police officer! He will sit in the Chamber during debates, and is responsible for an important ceremonial object – the Legislative Mace.



The Legislative Mace

The Legislative Mace sits on the Clerk's table, in the middle of the Legislative Chamber. The Sergeant-at-Arms is responsible for bringing the Mace into the Chamber every day.



The Legislative Mace (second slide)

The Legislative Mace was made in 1867 in Ottawa, which makes it over 150 years old! It is made primarily out of copper and is covered in gold. Ask your students what the top of the Mace resembles (a crown). Originally, the Mace symbolised the Monarch granting permission to Parliament to meet. Today the Mace still symbolises the Crown's authority but represents a transfer of power to the elected officials (MPPs). It also represents the Speaker's authority in Parliament.



Hansard Reporters

In the centre of the middle aisle in the Chamber is a desk for the Assembly's Hansard Reporters. They are responsible for the written transcript of the meetings that take place both in the Legislative Chamber and during smaller committee meetings.



Hansard Reporters (second slide)

The Hansard Reporters use laptops to take notes during the debates. It is an important job that helps Ontarians find out what MPPs are discussing. Ask your students if they can think of other ways they could find out what is happening in the Chamber?

- The news: reporters are allowed in the Chamber, they sit in the press gallery which is directly above the Speaker
- TV or online: you can watch the meetings live either on television or on the Assembly's website. The meetings are also re-broadcast throughout the day. This live broadcast is possible thanks to television cameras located in the Chamber (they are a little tricky to see but can be spotted along the wall in two black boxes in the photo here).
- In person: the seats above the Chamber are the public galleries. Whenever a meeting is taking place in the Chamber the public can sit and watch the proceedings.



Legislative Pages

Ask your students how old they think someone has to be to work in Parliament; they will surely think that you need to at least be 18 to work in the Chamber. Actually, our Legislative Pages are our youngest workers; they are grade 7 and 8 students!



Legislative Pages (second slide)

The Legislative Pages are normally found at the front of the Chamber near the Speaker. Our Pages are our messengers in Parliament. They deliver water and important documents to the MPPs and even travel throughout the Legislative Building with important deliveries. Pages will usually participate in this free educational experience for between 2-5 weeks; while they are away from school they will work in the Chamber and learn about the legislative process. Pages must have excellent grades, submit an application online and be selected for the program. Our Pages come from all across the province!



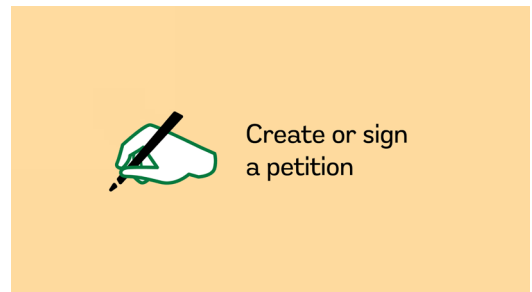
HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED IN PARLIAMENT

Your students may be too young to vote, but that does not mean they can't participate in the parliamentary process!



CREATE OR SIGN A PETITION

Students can create and sign petitions and send them to their Member of Provincial Parliament. A petition is a document that is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and signed by at least one person. It asks the Legislature to act on or change its position on an issue. A petition can be submitted by an individual or a group. More information about submitting a petition can be found on our [website](#).



WATCH A DEBATE IN PERSON OR ON TV

Watching a debate with your students is a great way for them to learn about the legislative process. Proceedings are available live on our [website](#). Some videos are also archived. Watching a video of House proceedings is also a great way to review their knowledge! See if they can determine where the Government and Opposition sits, or if they can remember all the Parliamentary Players discussed previously!



Watch a debate
in person or on TV

EMAIL YOUR MPP

Get in touch with your MPP! Send an email as a class or have your students write individual emails! Alternatively, have them write letters that can be mailed to your MPP's office. Some writing prompts could include:

- What is it like being an MPP?
- What is your favourite part of your job?
- What is the hardest part of your job?
- What is an issue you are currently working on?
- Why did you want to become an MPP?



Email your MPP

THANK YOU!

Thank you for using our resources! There are a variety of additional free activities and resources available on our website including workbooks, lesson plans, games and more.


**THE
LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

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