

TEACHER'S KIT



Dear Educator,

The Legislative Assembly of Ontario is pleased to offer curriculum-linked educational resources to help you introduce your students to parliament and government in Ontario.

This kit includes facts on the structure of government, how laws are made, voting and elections, and active citizenship.

Look for more resources and teaching tools on the back of this booklet, and find additional information at our web site by visiting <https://www.ola.org/en/visit-learn>.

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WHAT IS GOVERNMENT?



The Government

After an election, the party with the greatest number of elected members is asked to form the government by the Lieutenant Governor. The leader of the political party with the largest number of elected Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) becomes the leader of the provincial government, called the Premier of Ontario. The government is responsible for setting priorities and administering policies that take care of the day-to-day running of the province.

The Opposition

Opposition parties in parliament serve to keep the government of the day accountable. The opposition may be comprised of one or more political parties, and the leader of the opposition party with the second-most number of elected MPPs after the government party is referred to as the Leader of the Official Opposition. A political party must have at least eight elected Members to be considered a recognized party in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

Branches of Government

There are three branches of government in Ontario:

- The Executive branch is comprised of Ministers of the Cabinet, also called the Executive Council, who are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor on the advice of the Premier.
- The Legislative branch consists of the Legislative Assembly of elected Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) who have the power to pass, amend and repeal laws.
- The Judiciary branch is the system of courts that interprets and applies the law, protecting the rights of citizens.



LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

Federal Government

Located in Ottawa, the nation's capital, the federal government is responsible for issues that affect Canada as a whole country such as international relations, immigration, criminal law, taxes, national defence, and foreign policy. The federal government is made up of Members of Parliament (MPs) elected from every province and territory in Canada. The political party that elects the most MPs forms the federal government. Their leader becomes the head of the federal government, called the Prime Minister.

Provincial Government

Located in Toronto, Ontario's capital, the provincial government is responsible for issues that affect the province as a whole such as education, health care, the environment, agriculture, and highways. The provincial government is made up of Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) elected from within the province. Each MPP represents a geographical area of the province - called an electoral district, a riding or a constituency. The political party with the most MPPs forms the provincial government. Their leader becomes the Premier and he or she is the head of the provincial government.

Municipal Government

The municipal government receives its power from the provincial government. The city or town council decides on by-laws that deal with issues concerning their community such as public parks, libraries, social services, local police and fire services, garbage removal, recycling, and public transportation. Municipal governments are made up of councillors elected locally and are led by mayors in cities and towns and reeves in villages and townships.



WHAT IS PARLIAMENT?



Parliament is made up of all the MPPs/MPs who are responsible for making and repealing laws. It is not the same as the government which runs the country or the province/territory or city/town. The government is made up of members of the political party which has the most seats in the parliament. Parliament's responsibility is to ensure the government is running everything properly, including the passing of laws and debating of major issues. In Ontario, Parliament can also be referred to as the House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario or the Legislature.



What is Responsible Government?

Canada's federal and provincial governments exercise the principle of responsible government. Under this system, the Executive Council, also called the Cabinet, must maintain the confidence of the House. A government can lose power if it loses the confidence of the House. This might occur when a vote on a major government Bill (such as the budget) is lost.



WHAT IS PARLIAMENT?



Constitutional Monarchy

The Queen is the Head of State of Canada. She is represented by the Governor General at the federal level of government and by the Lieutenant Governors in each of the ten provinces. Although all laws in Canada are passed in Her name, the power of governing rests with the Prime Minister or Premier and the Executive Council. The Head of State has no influence over decisions made by the country's elected bodies and does not interfere with the decisions of parliament.



The Lieutenant Governor

The Lieutenant Governor is the representative of The Queen in Ontario. Responsibilities of the position include granting Royal Assent to all bills passed by the Legislature, swearing in the Premier and Cabinet Ministers, welcoming foreign dignitaries and attending and hosting a number of events including the presentation of medals and decorations honouring outstanding Ontarians. The Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell is Ontario's current Lieutenant Governor.

REPRESENTING THE PEOPLE - ONTARIO'S MPPS



Roles and Responsibilities of an MPP

Ontario's 124 MPPs are elected to represent the concerns of their constituents regarding provincial responsibilities at the Legislature and in their ridings.

Becoming an MPP

To be eligible to run for the position of an Ontario MPP, candidates must be 18 years of age or older, a Canadian citizen, and a resident of the province. To become a candidate for a particular political party, individuals must be nominated by the party. Some candidates choose to seek election as independents with no party affiliation.

Roles of an MPP

At the Legislature, MPPs may be assigned different roles by their party leader such as House Leader or Party Whip. They may also be assigned additional responsibilities as Cabinet Ministers, Parliamentary Assistants, Committee Chairs or critics. MPPs from all parties also take part in Legislative Committees. Members that are not assigned special duties are referred to as backbenchers.

MPPs in their Constituencies

When not at the Legislature, MPPs have a number of responsibilities in their ridings such as meeting with constituents to listen to their concerns, helping to resolve matters related to provincial government services, and attending community events such as school openings or local fundraisers.



VOTING IN ONTARIO



Electoral Districts

Ontario is divided into 124 electoral districts, also referred to as constituencies or ridings. An MPP is elected from each riding to represent its constituents at the Legislative Assembly in Toronto.

Political Parties

Among a number of registered political parties in Ontario, three have traditionally held the largest representation in the Legislature: the Liberal Party, the Progressive Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party.

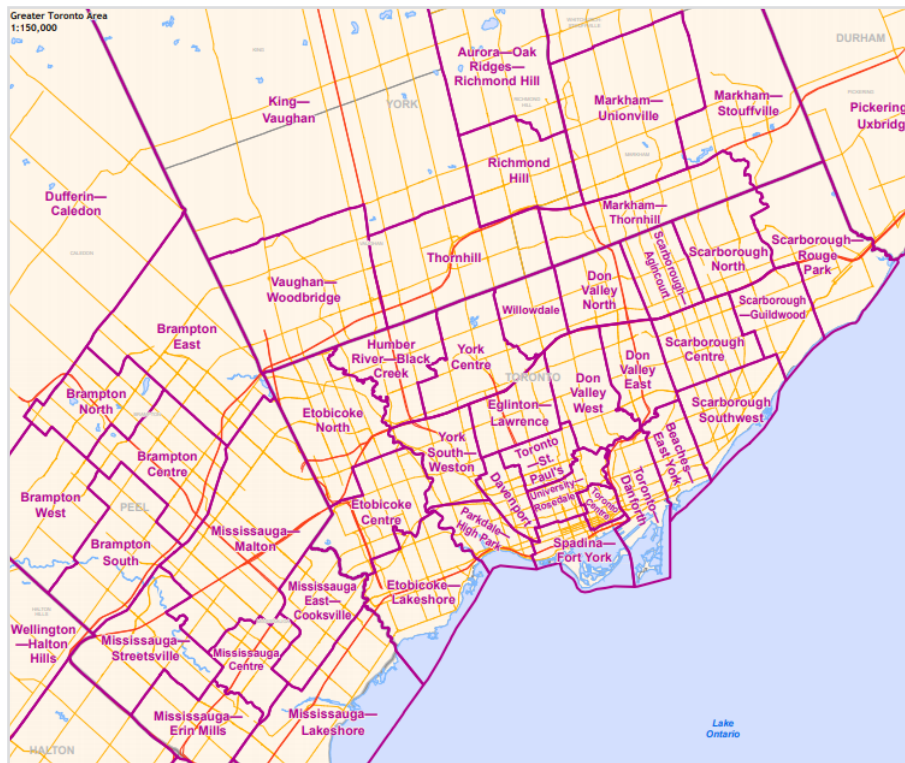
Ontario's Electoral System – First-Past-the-Post

In Canada, all provinces have the first-past-the-post or plurality system, meaning that the candidate winning the most votes in each electoral district is the winner, regardless if this is less than 50 per cent of the votes cast.

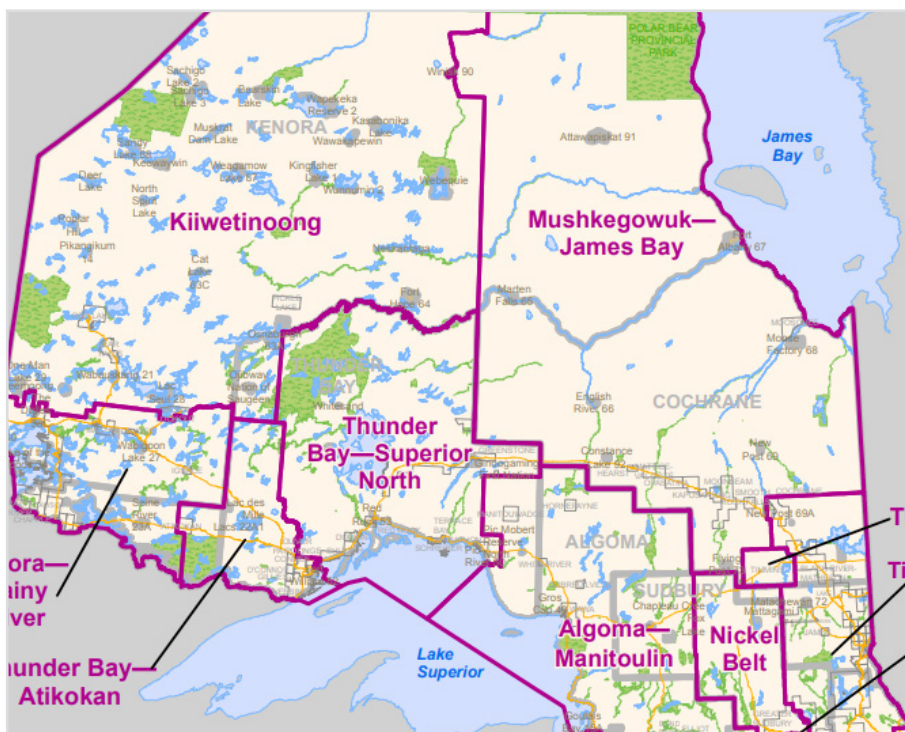


Elections Ontario

Visit the Elections Ontario website at www.elections.on.ca to find your provincial riding.



Some areas of the province are densely populated and therefore have many ridings in a small area. The Toronto riding of Toronto Centre is Ontario's smallest riding in terms of area. It covers only 6 square kilometres.



Northern Ontario is much less densely populated than Southern Ontario. As a result ridings in the area tend to cover a much larger space geographically. Kiiwetinoong is the largest riding in Ontario covering 294,083 square kilometres.

HOW DOES A BILL BECOME A LAW IN ONTARIO?

How a Bill Becomes a Law in Ontario

Before a bill can become a law, it must first go through several stages. These stages give MPPs a chance to study the bill and give their suggestions on how the bill can be improved before it becomes a law.

The Stages of a Bill

Introduction and First Reading

When a bill is introduced in the House, it is called First Reading. At this time, the objectives of the bill are explained and the MPPs decide whether to accept the bill for future debate. Each member receives a copy of the bill and the debate is usually scheduled for several days later, giving MPPs time to study the bill.

Second Reading

During Second Reading, MPPs debate the principles of the bill. They are each allowed to speak only once during this time. After the debate, the MPPs vote on whether to let the bill proceed to the next step. In some cases, the bill may move directly to Third Reading, but often it is first examined by a Standing or Select Committee. After review by the Committee, the bill is reported back to the House. It may be sent to the Committee of the Whole House or directly to final debate.

Share your thoughts and ideas at a committee meeting

A committee is made up of a small group of MPPs from all political parties and is responsible for discussing bills in detail. Committees can consider new bills or revisions to existing laws that have been proposed to the Legislature. Members of the public can share their thoughts and ideas about a bill during committee meetings. Most committee meetings take place in Ontario's Legislative Building, but some committees travel throughout Ontario so that more people can attend the meetings. The public can influence the changes made to a bill by sharing their thoughts and ideas at committee meetings, thus shaping the laws passed in our province. Anyone can have their voice heard at a committee meeting – either in person or through their MPP – regardless of whether they are of voting age.

Third Reading

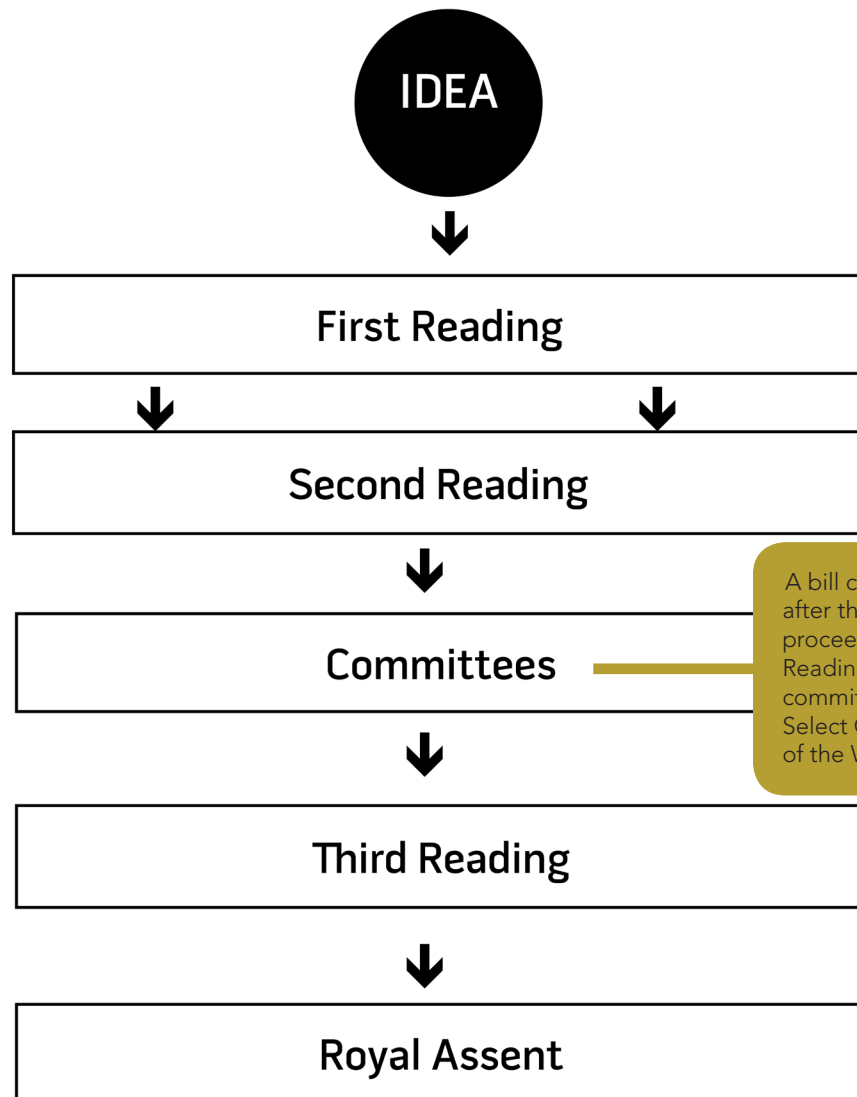
During Third Reading, MPPs debate the bill for the last time. Following the debate, the Speaker calls for a final vote about the proposed law.

Royal Assent

If the majority of MPPs vote to make the bill a law during Third Reading, it is presented to the Lieutenant Governor for Royal Assent. This procedure is called Royal Assent because the Lieutenant Governor is agreeing to the bill on behalf of The Queen. This last step officially makes the bill a law.



How a Bill Becomes a Law



A bill can be sent to a committee after the Second Reading or it can proceed directly to the Third Reading. There are three types of committees: Standing Committees, Select Committees and Committee of the Whole House.

WHAT IS ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP?



Get Informed

All Canadians have a right to be informed, even those who are under 18 and cannot yet vote. No matter what our age, we can familiarize ourselves with the candidates running for election in our ridings, learn about the political parties, and investigate the issues facing our communities. Canadians of voting age can encourage youth to discuss their opinions so they will understand the issues and be ready to vote when they turn 18.

Public Access

All debates of the Ontario Legislature are open to the public, and visitors may obtain a pass to attend a session from the Legislative Protective Services. There are two public galleries in the House and enough seating for up to 250 people. House proceedings and many Committees are televised in English and French on the Ontario Legislature's broadcast channel, ONTPARL, and live-streaming of House debates is also available on the Legislative Assembly's web site at www.ola.org.

As a Canadian, I have
the right to freedom of
belief, opinion, and expression.
And I have a responsibility
to use these rights.



Get Involved

In Canada, we have the right to freedom of belief, opinion, and expression, and we have a responsibility to use these rights. Voting is only a part of our rights as citizens. We can get involved in organizations that we feel are making a difference in our society, to help bring about change.

Connect With Your MPP

In Canada, we have the right and responsibility to be active citizens. One of the ways you can demonstrate active citizenship is by contacting your MPP to discuss issues that the provincial government is responsible for and that affect your communities. Contacting your MPP also allows you to exercise your right to freedom of expression.

MPPs have the responsibility to respect the expression and ideas brought forth by members of the public, and to take these concerns to the Legislative Assembly. When you share your thoughts with your MPP, you can help influence the activities and policies of the provincial government.

There are several ways you can contact your MPP. You can write a letter, send an email, or meet your MPP at his or her office.

Find your MPP

If you know the name of your riding, you can find out who your MPP is by visiting the Legislative Assembly of Ontario website at www.ola.org.

Find your Riding

You can find out which riding you live in by typing in your postal code on the Elections Ontario website at www.elections.on.ca.



My voice counts.
There are many different
ways I can make it heard in
my community.

Vote

All Canadian citizens who are 18 years or older have the right and responsibility to vote. Voting is the most important way that citizens can have our voices heard, whether at the municipal, provincial, or federal level. It is especially important that young Canadians vote so that their needs and concerns can be addressed by our elected officials.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* guarantees the fundamental rights and freedoms of all Canadian citizens. Under the *Charter*, all Canadians have the right to vote; freedom of conscience and religion; freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press; freedom of peaceful assembly; and freedom of association. For more information visit:
<http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/Const/page-15.html>.



TEACHER'S RESOURCES



The Parliamentary Protocol and Public Relations branch provides a wide range of free educational programs based on the Ontario curriculum as well as a selection of educational enrichment opportunities. Programs and resources are designed to support teachers, students and other groups.

Curriculum-linked Programs for Teachers and Students

School programs for grades 5 through 12 are:

- Led by experienced educators
- Tailored to the needs of each group
- Available in English and French, Monday to Friday
- 90 minutes in length
- Free of charge

Program overviews and information on how to prepare your students are available on our website.

Curriculum-Linked Lesson Plans

Our lesson plans are designed to assist educators in introducing provincial parliament and government in the classroom setting.

Grade 5

Linked to the Ontario social studies curriculum, the grade 5 lesson plans highlight the roles and responsibilities of government and citizens:

1. The three Levels of Government
2. Roles in Ontario's Parliament
3. Create a Provincial Bill

Grade 10

Linked to the Ontario civics curriculum, the grade 10 lesson plans highlight aspects such as the legal rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizens; the structures and functions of the municipal, provincial, and federal levels of government:

1. Committees and Public Participation
2. The Press Conference

Teacher's Forum

The Legislative Assembly of Ontario Teacher's Forum is a 2-day professional development opportunity that allows teachers to deepen their understanding of Ontario's Parliament. Teachers will gain knowledge of strategies for teaching parliamentary democracy and active citizenship, meet with MPPs and other parliamentary officials, and learn about the inner workings of the Legislature. Visit the Education Portal on Legislative Assembly website for more information.

Additional Resources

A variety of teaching tools are available on our website to assist educators in the classroom:

- Interactive online games
- Activities and online quizzes for students
- Glossary of parliamentary terms
- English as a Second Language Workbook
- Virtual tour of the Legislative Building and an interactive Chamber

Visit <https://www.ola.org/en/visit-learn> to learn more. For information, to confirm our tour schedule, or to inquire about making a reservation please call tour bookings at (416) 325-0061 or e-mail tourbookings@ola.org.

YOUTH PROGRAMS



We offer a variety of programs at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in Toronto, for youth of all ages. Below is a list of programs that will engage and challenge your students and those interested in civics, and learning more about how parliament and government works.

Legislative Page Program For Students in Grades 7 & 8

This program is designed for outgoing, high-achieving, community-involved students who have demonstrated responsibility and leadership. Legislative Pages experience the provincial legislature in action, meet key parliamentary and political figures, and learn first-hand about Ontario's Parliament and legislative process. Applications are accepted twice a year: from May 15th to June 15th; and September 15th to November 15th.

Legislative Assembly of Ontario Model Parliament For Students in Grades 10 to 12

Our Model Parliament is designed for civic-minded high school students, who are interested in current events and provincial issues. This unique educational experience brings together 124 students, representing each of the province's ridings for a three-day program in Toronto. Students have the opportunity to meet key figures in Ontario's parliamentary process, learn how parliament works and understand the legislative process through workshops and presentations. Online applications are accepted from mid-September to mid-November.

Youth Arts Program For Ages 12 to 18

Each year, youth from across the province are invited to display their works of art from January through March, showcasing their creativity and diverse artistic abilities. Online applications are accepted from the beginning of September to mid-October.

Holiday Concert Series for Schools For All Ages

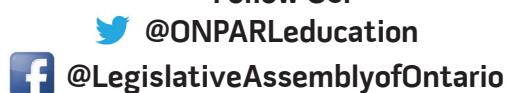
During the month of December, choir groups from schools in Ontario can perform at the Legislative Building for a 30-minute performance. These concerts are open to the public.

March Break Program For Ages 6 to 10

We offer a two-hour interactive and fun program at the Legislative Building. Children accompanied by an adult will explore the historic building through a scavenger hunt, dress-up in traditional black robes worn in Parliament and participate in a craft activity.

Visit the Legislative Assembly web site
<https://www.ola.org/en/visit-learn> for more information about
our programs and resources.

Follow Us:





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