■■ How Canada's Political Institutions Work

Revision sheet — Canadian citizenship test

The 3 key features of Canada's system of government

- **Federal state** — federal government + provincial/territorial governments + municipal governments
- **Parliamentary democracy** — the people elect their representatives
- **Constitutional monarchy** — the Sovereign (King/Queen) is head of state

Parliament (3 parts)

The Sovereign	Head of state, represented in Canada by the Governor General (appointed for ~5 years on the PM's advice)
The Senate	Senators appointed by the GG on the PM's advice — they serve until age 75
House of Commons	Members of Parliament (MPs) elected by the people every 4 years — one per electoral district (riding)

How a bill becomes law

Step 1	**First reading —** the bill is introduced and printed
Step 2	**Second reading —** MPs debate the principle of the bill
Step 3	**Committee stage —** clause-by-clause review
Step 4	**Report stage —** MPs can propose amendments
Step 5	**Third reading —** final debate and vote
Step 6	**Senate —** the same process in the Senate
Step 7	**Royal Assent —** the GG approves the bill on the Sovereign's behalf

Key roles

Prime Minister	Head of government (not head of state). Picks the Cabinet ministers. Accountable to the House.
Governor General	Represents the Sovereign federally. Appointed by the King for ~5 years on the PM's advice.
Lieutenant Governor	Represents the Sovereign in each province. Appointed by the GG on the PM's advice.
Commissioner	Represents the federal government in each of the 3 territories.
Leader of the Opposition	Heads the Official Opposition party (His Majesty's Loyal Opposition).

After an election

- The party with the most seats is invited to form the government
- Majority government = governing party has 50% or more of the seats
- Minority government = fewer than half of the seats
- If the government is defeated on a confidence vote → it must resign

Right to vote — requirements

- Be a Canadian citizen
- Be at least 18 on election day
- Be on the voters list
- Secret ballot — no one can force you to reveal how you voted

Federal vs provincial responsibilities

FEDERAL	Defence, foreign policy, currency, criminal law, citizenship, immigration (shared), interprovincial trade
PROVINCIAL	Education, health, natural resources, highways, property, civil rights, immigration (shared)
MUNICIPAL	Social services, transit, recycling, snow removal, firefighting, emergency services

Other

- Number of federal MPs: 343 (= 343 ridings since the 2025 election; this number has changed since the latest edition of the guide, which says 308)
- Number of senators: 105, appointed by the GG on the PM's advice