



PRE-TOUR LESSON 4

OUR DEMOCRACY

GRADES 9-12



Key Questions

- What is government?
- How is our government structured?
- What is a constitution?
- What is a monarchy?

Students will...

- Understand government's role in citizens' lives.
- Understand what a constitutional monarchy is.
- Understand the three branches of government.

Teacher Primer

Canada and Saskatchewan are constitutional monarchies. The monarch of the United Kingdom is our head of state, while the Premier and Prime Minister are the heads of our provincial and federal governments respectively. These lessons will focus on the provincial government, but much of it is applicable to the federal government as well. There are three branches of our government: the executive branch, the legislative branch, and the judicial branch. Among other things, the executive branch puts laws into action, the legislative branch creates those laws, and the judicial branch resolves conflict between citizens and the laws that rule them. Because we have both a monarch and a constitution that play significant roles in our government, our system of government is called a constitutional monarchy.

Set

Conduct a class-wide conversation on the following questions:

- What do you know about government?
- What are some laws you are aware of?
- What are some things that the government does for you? For us all?

Development

Explain to students that the word "government" actually encompasses several pieces. In this lesson, when we use the word "government," it refers to the institution of government, not the current party in power. Government is broken out into three branches. Do not name them at this point, but instead refer to these pieces (and write them on the board) as:

- Branch #1 - The people and organizations that make the laws
- Branch #2 - The people and organizations that put laws into action
- Branch #3 - The people and organizations that enforce the laws

Hand out one copy of the blank "Three Branches of Government" graphic organizer to each student. Can the students think of any people/places/things that might fall under any of the above? If yes, write them on the board under the branch where they fit. Reveal to students what each of the branches is actually called:

- Branch #1 is the legislative branch
- Branch #2 is the executive branch
- Branch #3 is the judicial branch



Explain that our system of government is called a constitutional monarchy. It is called this because our government follows a constitution (a set of rules and principles to run a country by) and also has a monarch as its head of state. As an aside, the Premier is the head of government (and a part of the executive branch). Set up the PowerPoint presentation called "The Legislative Assembly: A Student's Guide to What it Does" and hand out one copy of "The Legislative Assembly Note Guide."

Development

Read through the slideshow with students. Have them fill in the blanks in the note guide as you go. There might be some good moments to stop along the way for a discussion about what students know. These moments may include discussion around the following:

- What do MLAs do?
- What is a political party?
 - It's a group of people with the same political ideas about how society should function. They represent different values and ways of viewing the world.
- What are cabinet ministers?
 - They are members chosen by the Premier to act as key decision makers. They make up a part of executive government and are responsible for different ministries or areas of government.
- What does it mean to have a bill reading?
 - It's an ancient parliamentary practice from the United Kingdom that dates back to a time when it was too expensive to reproduce a lot of copies of a bill. Instead, the Clerk read the document aloud to the members so they would know the contents of the bill.
- What is royal assent and why does it exist in our modern government system?
 - The Lieutenant Governor, on behalf of the monarch, gives final approval to a bill, enacting it into law. As a former colony of Great Britain, our system is based on the same parliamentary traditions. Today, royal assent is a constitutional duty of the monarch's representative, i.e. the Lieutenant Governor in Saskatchewan.

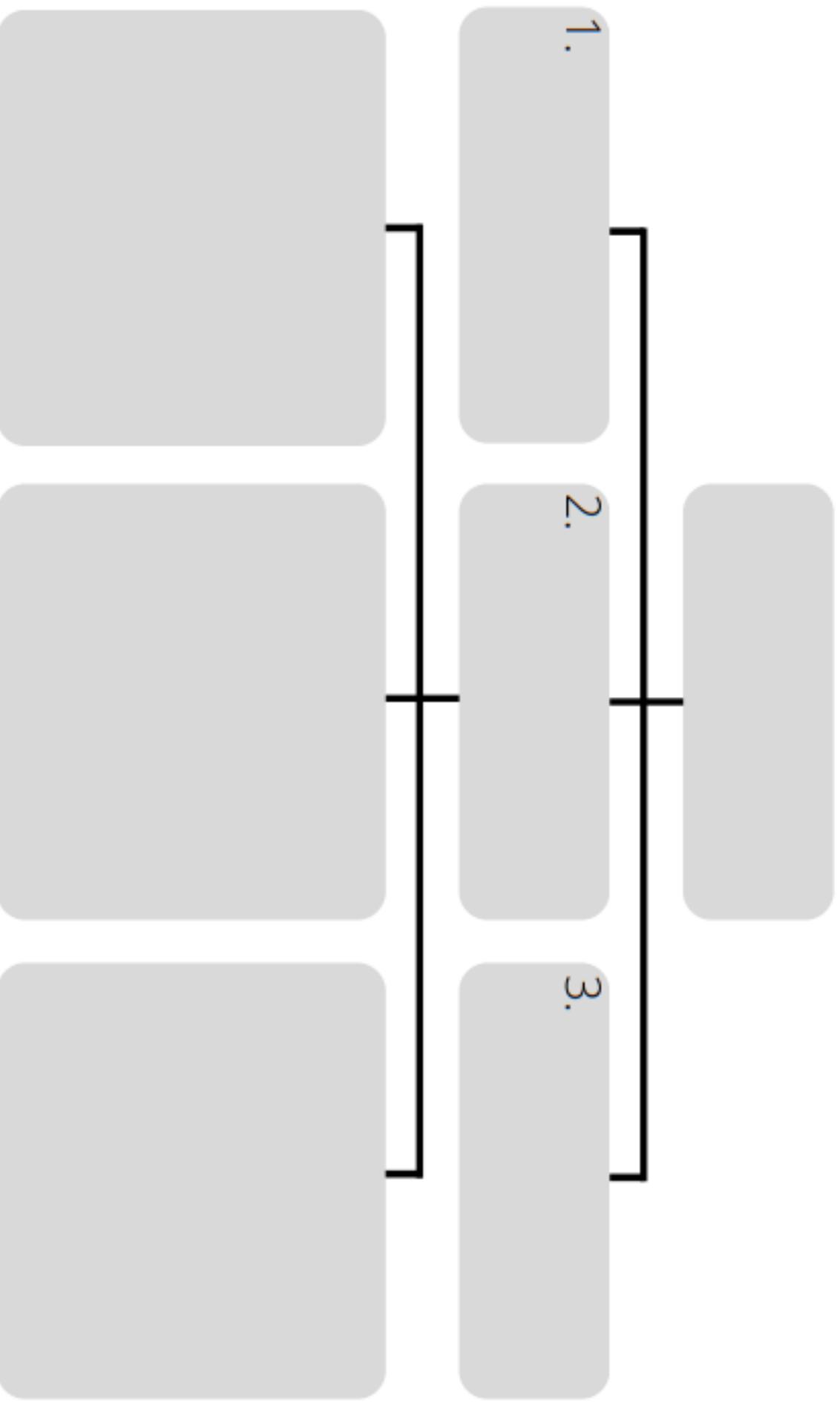
Development

- What is the Crown's role in our system of government?
 - The Crown is separate from party politics. Mainly symbolic, but the role of its representatives in Canada and the provinces is to ensure the principle of responsible government is respected, meaning the executive branch is accountable to elected members in the House. They also ensure that a Premier or Prime Minister resigns after their party loses the majority in an election.

Closure and Assessment

There has been a lot of information covered in this lesson, so thank students for their attention throughout and for their discussion along the way. There is no formal assessment for this level, but it is suggested that you collect the completed "The Legislative Assembly Note Guide" from each student. This can be used for a homework check or just a check-in. Remember to return the notes to them in a timely manner as they are great for keeping handy!

Three Branches of Government



The Legislative Assembly Note Guide

Slide One: Legislative Branch Review

- The legislative branch is responsible for _____ and _____ laws.
- The legislative branch of Saskatchewan assembles in Regina, Saskatchewan. That is why it is called the capital city. The building that houses the Legislative Assembly is called the Legislative Building or nicknamed as “The Leg” (pronounced “Ledge”).
- The Legislative Building is a key part of _____ Park, the area around _____ Lake.

Slide Two: Let’s take a closer look...

- The core part of the legislative branch is what is known as the _____.
- The Legislative Assembly is made up of people who voters choose, through elections, to _____ them.
 - These elected members are called _____ (Members of the Legislative Assembly).
 - MLAs usually belong to a _____. The political party with the most people elected during an election forms government. The party with the second most people elected forms the Official Opposition.
- When a political party holds the most seats, it will be able to pass bills more easily because it has more party members to vote _____.
- There are currently ____ seats in the Legislative Assembly.

Slide Three: So how does it work?

- The Legislative Assembly typically meets for _____ days in the fall and _____ days in the spring.
- MLAs will spend much of their time debating and creating laws during these periods, along with reviewing government spending and debating topics of interest.
- After an election, the MLAs choose one of its members to be the _____ of the _____.
 - The Speaker plays an impartial role, maintaining order in the Assembly and ensuring business is conducted according to its rules.
- In addition to the Speaker, staff of the Legislative Assembly Service also help support the MLAs in the House in an impartial way. They include clerks, pages, and the Sergeant-at-Arms.
- To help you remember what the MLAs do, remember another word we use for the Legislative Assembly: _____. Parliament comes from the French word “parler,” which means “to speak!”
- There is a process for how laws are passed and how debate can happen at each stage in the process. You’ll learn about this next.

Slide Four: A day in the Legislative Assembly...

- A day in the life of the Legislative Assembly includes...
 1. The day begins with a non-denominational _____ .
 2. MLAs introduce guests that are watching in the gallery. This would include visiting classrooms!
 3. Petitions from the _____ are presented asking the Legislative Assembly to take action on certain issues.
 4. MLAs speak on a topic of their choice often highlighting people and events in their constituencies.

Slide Five: A day in the Legislative Assembly continued...

5. Opposition members have a _____ period to ask the _____ questions.
6. Cabinet ministers (MLAs that oversee certain areas of government have a chance to announce new policies or programs).
7. _____ comes next. These are the items of business that government wants to achieve. This is when the work of bills becoming law begins. Think of bills as potential _____ in the making!

Slide Six: First Reading

- First reading of a bill is its _____ to the Assembly and the public.
- After having first given two days' notice, a MLA (usually a cabinet minister) will put forward a motion to introduce their bill.
- If the majority of members agree with the motion, the bill becomes _____. Bills are posted on the Legislative Assembly website for anyone to read!
- There's no _____ at this stage. That will start at second reading after the Assembly and the public have had time to look it over.

Slide Seven: Second Reading

- After first reading, there is a discussion on the _____ of the bill.
- The minister responsible for the bill highlights key sections and discusses why the bill should become law. At the end of their speech, the minister moves a motion for the bill to be read a second time.
- Other _____ then get to speak in _____ or _____ the bill. This can take several days.
- Once everyone who would like to speak to the bill has had their turn, members will vote on the minister's second reading motion.
- If the majority agree, the bill will go to a _____ for review.

Slide Eight: Review by Committee

- Committees are made up of smaller groups of MLAs that look closely at the bill.
- They can ask the minister and officials detailed questions about the bill, and they can even bring forward members of the public to ask what they think about it.
- These meetings also give MLAs a chance to make _____ to the bill, called amendments.
- When the committee is done considering the bill, it reports back to the _____ _____ to update the rest of the MLAs on its work and any amendments it made.

Slide Nine: Third Reading

- Third reading gives MLAs and the public a chance to see the bill in its final form (including any amendments).
- _____ and _____ can happen again at this stage, but usually does not.
- Then another _____ takes place. If the bill passes this vote, it only has one more step before becoming a law!

Slide Ten: Royal Assent

- This is where the _____ gets involved! It's the Queen or King formally agreeing to make the bill a law.
- In Saskatchewan, this is a symbolic ceremony that happens in the Chamber. The _____ arrives to give royal assent on behalf of the monarch.
- When the bill receives royal assent, it can come into effect either immediately or at a specific time set out in the bill.
- Once it is law, it is no longer called a bill but an _____!