This video is divided into the following sections:

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4. Division of Powers
5. Review I

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2. Parliament
3. The Queen & Governor General
4. The Senate
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6. The Cabinet & Prime Minister
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KEY POINTS

Canada is a Constitutional Monarchy
This means that the monarch (King or Queen) is the official head of state, but her powers are restricted to those granted by the constitution.

Canada is a Parliamentary Democracy.
This means that we hold elections to determine who will become members of parliament. Parliament is where senators and legislators meet to conduct government business.

Canada has a Federal System
This means that Canada is a federation of provincial and territorial governments, all linked to one federal government.

The structure of each provincial and territorial government is basically the same as the federal government.

The federal government, that is, the Government of Canada, has certain powers and responsibilities, as do each of the provincial and territorial governments. Basically, the federal government has jurisdiction over policies that affect Canada as a whole, like national defense, trade & commerce, criminal law, and foreign affairs. The provinces govern only within their borders, and in respect to policies that concern only them; areas like natural resources, hospitals, and education.

The Canadian Federal Government consists of the Queen, the Governor General, the Senate, the House of Commons, the Public Service, and the Judicial System. Provincial governments do not have a Senate, and instead of a Governor General and a Primer Minister, there is a Lieutenant Governor and a Premier.

The Queen, Governor General, Prime Minister, Cabinet and the Public Service, are all considered part of the executive branch of government, because they actively create and execute government policy.

The rest of the House of Commons, along with the Senate, are considered the legislative branch of government.

The courts form a separate branch of government, called the judicial branch.
The Constitution
The Constitution is a collection of documents that outline the rights and responsibilities of governments and citizens in Canada. It’s like an official rule-book for the country.

In 1982, under the government of Pierre Trudeau, a major amendment to the Constitution saw the inclusion of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Charter guarantees to all Canadians the following rights and freedoms:

-Democratic Rights, like the right to vote;
-Fundamental Freedoms, like freedom of speech, and freedom of religion;
-Mobility Rights, like the right to live anywhere in Canada, or to leave and enter Canada freely;
-Legal Rights, like the right to a speedy trial;
-Equality Rights, like the right not to be discriminated against on the basis of race, sex or ethnicity
-Language Rights, like the right to a public education in either French or English.

Parliament
Parliament is where ideas and issues are discussed and debated, and legislation is born. Each province has a parliamentary building in its capital where its legislative assembly meets. Our federal parliament is in the national capital, Ottawa. It includes the Queen, her representative, the Governor General, The House of Commons, and The Senate.

QUEEN
As mentioned before, the Queen is the official head of state in Canada, but in practice her role is mostly symbolic, and her power superficial. Because Canada has severed political ties with England, the Queen doesn’t play any real role in our government.

GOVERNOR GENERAL
The Governor General, who is meant to represent the Queen while she is away from Canada, also plays a role that is largely symbolic. The Governor General conducts ceremonial duties in parliament, and often acts as a representative for Canada during international events. Each province also has a representative for the Queen, called a Lieutenant Governor.

The SENATE and the HOUSE OF COMMONS
At the federal level, the Senate and the House of Commons is where legislation is introduced and passed. The Senate is called the “upper house,” the House of Commons is the “lower house.” The main difference between the Senate and the House of Commons is that Senate members are appointed, whereas House of Commons members are elected. Also, once a Senator is appointed, he or she can remain in the Senate until the age of 75.

The PRIME MINISTER and PREMIERS
The Prime Minister or Premier gets his or her position by being the leader of the party that wins the most seats in the legislature.

The CABINET
The Cabinet is a group of MP’s, hand-picked by the Prime Minister, (or Premier) from within the party. Cabinet members are called ministers, and will usually have a certain department or ministry to oversee, like ministry of finance, or ministry of education. The departments that a minister oversees are referred to as his or her portfolio. A minister acts as a spokesperson in the legislature for their respective department, and plays a key role in proposing new legislation.
The PUBLIC SERVICE
The public service, also known as the civil service, or bureaucracy, refers to the hundreds of thousands of government employees working in the departments and agencies that provide services like health, education and national defense. The Prime Minister and each of the cabinet ministers control these departments through the various ministries they oversee. Under each minister is a deputy minister, who runs the department. Deputy ministers usually remain in their positions for long periods, unlike cabinet ministers, who come and go with each new government.

The JUDICIAL SYSTEM
The Judiciary refers to our system of courts. It is here that disputes are settled, and laws are enforced. The judiciary, or judicial branch of government, is separate from the executive and legislative branches of government.

Although judges are appointed by the provincial and federal governments, rules are in place to protect judges from political pressure or interference from those who appointed them, or from other branches of government.

The ELECTORAL PROCESS
Federal elections occur every three to four years. Each province and territory also has an election every three to four years. For each election, the country or province is divided up into geographical regions called ridings, or "constituencies," and each candidate runs for election within one single constituency. This is known as a "single-member constituency" system. The candidate from each riding that wins the most votes, gets a seat in parliament, and acts as a representative for that riding. We call this "representative government.

The Party System
The party system is vital to the way Canadians govern themselves. Party, or "partisan" politics refers to a tradition inherited from England where people and politicians of common ideological and political values unite together under one party banner. Once in parliament, members of each party band together and function as a team, and the team with the most members is recognized as the new government. The leader of the governing party becomes Prime Minister (or Premier in the case of a provincial government).

The Prime Minister, or Premier, chooses members of his government to form an even more powerful group, the cabinet. Cabinet members oversee the various government departments. The party with the second most seats in the House is called the Official Opposition. The Official Opposition acts as a watchdog and holds the governing party accountable for its actions.
LEGISLATURE SEATING PLAN

MAJORITY GOVERNMENT
- Party with the most seats has at least half of the seats
- Majority Governments can pass legislation easier.

MINORITY GOVERNMENT
- Party with the most seats has less than half of the seats
- Minority Governments need support from other parties to pass legislation

This map shows how many representatives each province has in the House of Commons (top number) and the Senate (in brackets).

In total there are 308 members in the House of Commons, and 105 members in the Senate. (figures are for the year 2008)
Define the following terms as they relate to Canadian government:

- Cabinet Minister
- Constitutional monarchy
- Responsible government
- Representative government
- Official opposition
- Minority government
- Ministerial responsibility

Questions for students:

1. Canada has a federal system. What does this mean?
2. Who is the official head of State in Canada?
3. List at least two differences between the federal and provincial governments.
4. What is the name given to our elected legislative body in Ottawa?
5. How many parliaments are there in Canada?
6. What is a charter challenge?
7. Canada is a massive country with great geographical and cultural diversity. Give examples of how the federal government is designed to address the needs of such a diverse populace.

True or False:

1. Most cases are heard by provincial courts. T / F
2. The Prime Minister gets his or her position by being leader of the party that wins the most seats in the House of Commons. T / F
3. Issues relating to foreign affairs and national defense fall under the jurisdiction of the provincial governments. T / F
4. Candidates running for election do not need to be affiliated with a political party. T / F
5. A bill introduced in the House of Commons needs the approval of the Senate in order for it to become a law. T / F
6. Senators are elected. T / F
7. Federal judges must consult with parliament before handing down rulings. T / F
8. The public service is considered part of the executive branch of government. T / F
9. Elections occur once every year. T / F
10. Territories have greater powers than provinces.

Fill in the blanks:

1. When the governing party has at least half of the seats in the legislature, it is called a _______ government.
2. Hand-picked by the Prime Minister or Premier from within the legislature, the _______ is the group of ministers who oversee the various governmental departments.
3. The public service is also sometimes called the _______.
4. Every Canadian has two elected representatives in parliament. One at the _______ level, and one at the _______ level.
5. The leader of a provincial government is called a _______.
6. Government owned corporations are called _______.
7. The highest court in the country is _______.
8. The Senate is part of the _______ branch of government.
Match each definition in the left column with its corresponding term in the right column.

1. An essential set of documents providing a foundation for law and order in Canada.

2. The public service

3. Provincial equivalent of the Governor General

4. The document that came into existence in 1982 that outlines the constitutional rights of all Canadians.

5. When a major bill fails to get support from the majority of the legislature, forcing the governing party to resign power.

6. A group of politicians and other citizens with common political ideologies

7. The geographical area represented by an elected member of parliament.

8. The Queen's official representative in Canada

- a. vote (motion) of non-confidence
- b. constituency
- c. political party
- d. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- e. civil service or bureaucracy
- f. Lieutenant Governor
- g. Governor General
- h. the Constitution

Beyond the video...

Have a discussion with students about local politics and politicians. Use these questions to stimulate discussion:

- Who is your local member of provincial/federal parliament?

- What party do they belong to?

- Are they part of the governing party? If so, is it a majority or minority government?

- How long have they been in power?

- What were the popular political issues when they were elected, and where did they stand on these issues?

- Did they make any promises to their constituents during their campaigns? Have they kept their promises?

Using the blue pages in the phone book as a reference, pick out government agencies and have students try to guess whether they are part of the provincial or federal government.