

Three Branches, Three Levels of Government

The three branches of government can be thought of as three parts that have equal status. Use the information on pages 226- 227 of Counter Points to fill in the boxes below. Use your own words.

Three Branches of Government

	Executive Branch	Legislative Branch	Judicial Branch
Power			
Examples			

In Canada the people who make up the executive branch are also part of the legislative branch, but the people who make up the judicial branch are not the same people. Why do you think it is important to have a separation of the judicial branch?



Figure 9-7 (Left, top): Commuters in Montreal; **(left, bottom):** a magnetic imaging clinic in Richmond, B.C.; **(below)** artist Peter Ka-Kin Poon beside his design for a new twenty-five-cent coin, one of twelve designs issued in 1999.

Using evidence Which level of government do you think is responsible for each of the activities shown in these pictures? Give reasons for your answers.



ACTIVITIES

1. Brainstorm how government has affected you since you woke up this morning.
2. Create a web diagram showing your connections to groups and organizations in Canadian society, including family, friends, institutions, and government. Explain the connections in terms of what is shared between you and others.
3. What is the difference between direct democracy and representative democracy?
4. What organizations do you belong to that have a constitution? Why is a constitution necessary in a complex organization?
5. Use a two-column chart to summarize the advantages and disadvantages of the monarchy.
6. What forces hold Canada together today? Consider interests or concerns that people across the country share. What forces are pulling us apart? Consider issues that separate provinces or regions.

The Parliamentary System

In Canada, the powers of government are divided into three branches: legislative, executive, and judicial.

The **executive power** of government is the power to make decisions and administer them (through the civil service). For example, at the municipal level, governments may inspect businesses and restaurants. At the provincial level, governments decide on the number of examinations high school students must write. At the federal level, the government may decide to purchase helicopters for national defence.

Legislative power is the power to make laws. All three levels of government—federal, provincial, and municipal—have the power to make and amend laws, many of which have a direct impact on your life. For example, the federal government in Ottawa makes laws in Parliament concerning funding for the armed forces; your provincial government establishes the taxation rate for educa-

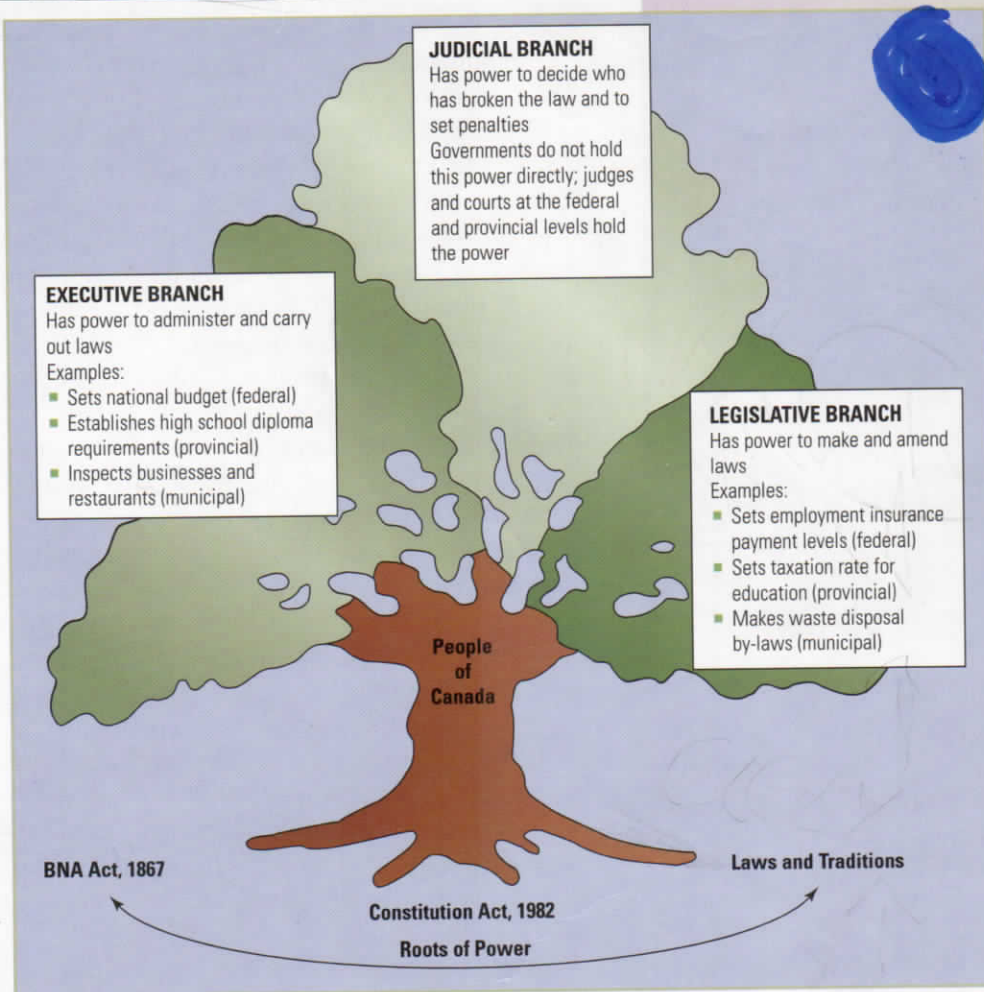


Figure 9-8 The three branches of government and the roots of power.

Developing understanding

Consider the way the federal and provincial governments are organized into three branches. What does this method of organization show about our views of leadership and decision making?

tion; and your town or city council may pass by-laws to determine how to dispose of local garbage.

Judicial power is the power to interpret and administer the law. Governments do not hold this power directly. In democracies such as Canada, the *judiciary* is separate from the other two branches of the government to ensure that the government acts within the boundaries of the Constitution and the laws of the land. Judicial power rests with the courts and judges, who act as both referees of private rights and interpreters of the Constitution. Chapter 11 looks at the justice system in more detail.

The Federal Government

The Legislative Branch

The legislative branch of the federal government is composed of the governor general, the House of Commons, and the Senate. These parts of the legislative branch make up *Parliament*.

Parliament must meet at least once a year in what is called a *session*. In each session, Parliament passes new laws, amends or repeals (removes) others, and debates issues of concern to Canadians. (The process for passing laws is described later in this chapter.) During question period, opposition parties challenge the government's actions and raise issues they feel the government needs to address. Individual members of Parliament may bring