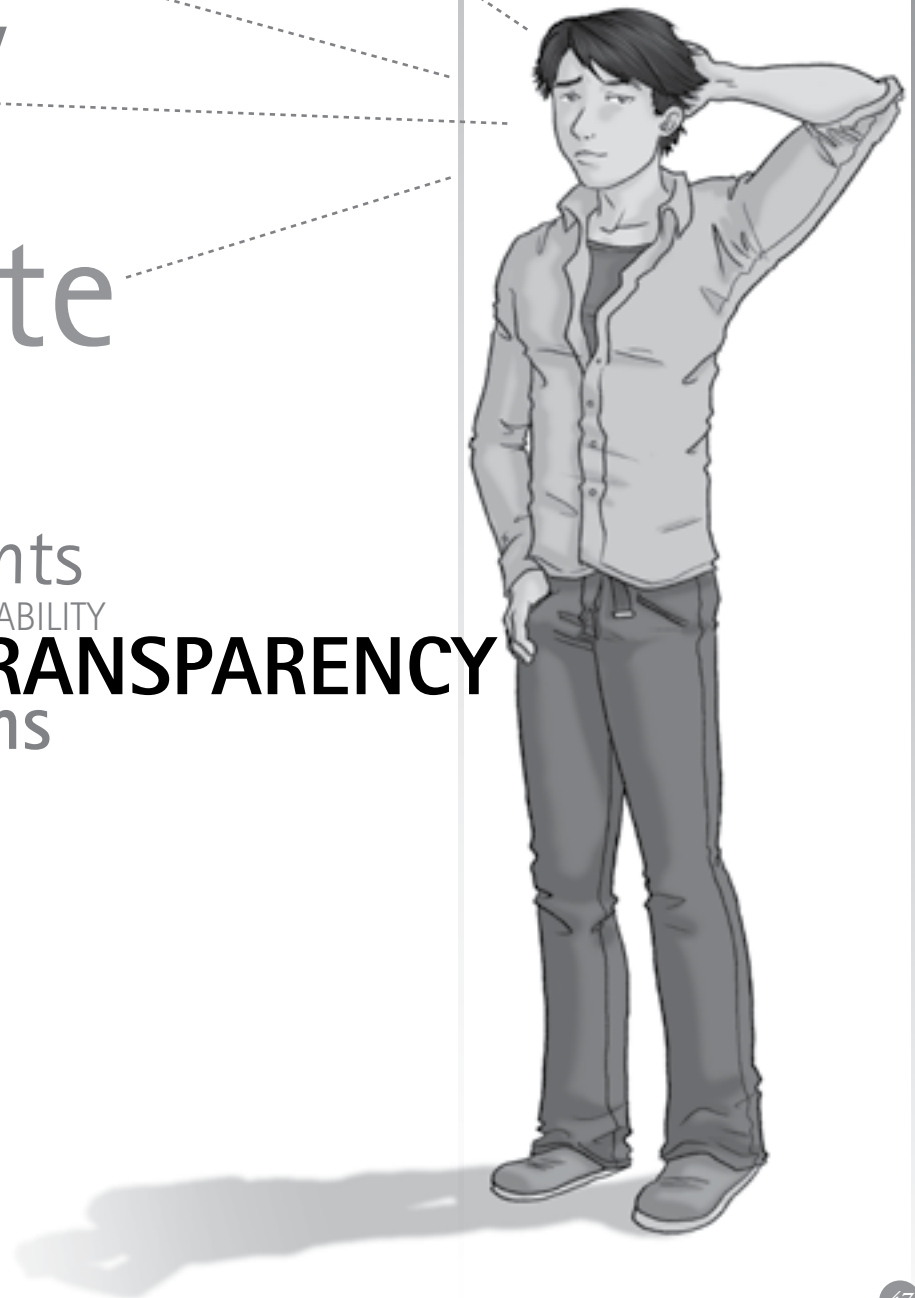


## Democracy Enacted

What do these words mean to you?

GOVERNMENT  
DEMOCRATIC  
Freedoms  
POLITICS  
equity  
Vote  
rights  
ACCOUNTABILITY  
TRANSPARENCY  
Freedoms  
ELECTION  
responsibility  
POLITICS



## ■ Government and Citizenship

### Pause and Reflect



What are your responsibilities at home, at school and in your community? How can responsibilities in the community encourage participation and action? How do they add pressure?

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Do you believe that a country should have expectations of its citizens? What should these expectations be?

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How are expectations like responsibilities? What do you think your responsibilities as a citizen are?

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Some of us may think of our government as something that was developed and put into place long ago. The truth is that our government has changed and grown as our notion of democracy has developed and our values and attitudes have influenced it.

Canada's *Constitution Act*, which was originally called the *British North America Act of 1867*, has been amended a number of times. The *Constitution Act* has also been shaped by how it has been interpreted in the courts, Parliament, provincial legislatures and our communities.

There is no doubt that our understanding of citizenship, laws and the processes of government will continue to change over time and as a result of the decisions of many governments.

The participation of citizens with government and decision-making is considered by many to be a responsibility and expectation of citizenship.

Canada is a constitutional monarchy, a parliamentary democracy and a federal state. Canadians are bound together by a shared commitment to the **rule of law** and to the institutions of **parliamentary government**. Canadians take pride in their identity and have made sacrifices to defend their way of life.

Canadian citizens have rights and responsibilities. These come to us from our history, are secured by Canadian law, and reflect our shared traditions, identity and values. Canadian law has several sources, including laws passed by Parliament and the provincial legislatures, English common law, the civil code of France and the unwritten constitution that we have inherited from Great Britain.

Rights that are protected in Canadian law include:

- Freedom of conscience and religion
- Freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of speech and of the press
- Freedom of peaceful assembly
- Freedom of association

Together, these secure for Canadians an 800-year old tradition of ordered liberty, which dates back to the signing of Magna Carta, also known as the *Great Charter of Freedoms*, in 1215 in England, including:

- Freedom of conscience and religion
- Freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of speech and of the press
- Freedom of peaceful assembly
- Freedom of association

Habeas corpus, the right to challenge unlawful detention by the state, comes from English common law.

The *Constitution of Canada* was amended in 1982 to entrench the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which begins with the words, "Whereas Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law." This phrase underlines the importance of religious traditions to Canadian society and the dignity and worth of the human person.



### Did You Know

When the Person's Case was won in 1929, the *British North America Act of 1867* was described as "a living tree capable of growth and expansion within its natural limits." From this statement, the **living tree doctrine** was established. This means the *Constitution*, including the *Charter*, is not set in stone. How does the living tree doctrine encourage citizens to pursue **injustices** that they see in society?



Find other perspectives and opinions about **Living in a Democracy** on the **Building Future Voters** junior high webpage at [www.buildingfuturevoters.ca](http://www.buildingfuturevoters.ca).

Excerpted from *Discover Canada: The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship Study Guide (2012)*.  
Citizenship and Immigration Canada: pp. 8-9. [www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/pub/discover.pdf](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/pub/discover.pdf)



Write a paragraph, using the terms from the first page, in response to this question: What does government have to do with democracy?

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