

Chapter 3

A Practical View of Canada's Political System

GOALS

We will learn about

- Canada's three levels of government and some of their powers.
- Canada's political system and how it works.
- different jobs in Canada's political system and who does them.

Handout 3.1 Introduction: Questions about Politics

Find someone in the room who can answer these questions. Put the answers into the spaces on the right.

1. Who is the <i>Mayor</i> of Vancouver?	
2. What does <i>MLA</i> mean? (p 45)	
3. Who is the <i>Governor General</i> of Canada?	
4. What <i>peoples</i> were in Canada long before the European colonists? (p 42)	
5. <i>When</i> did Canada become a nation? (p 43)	
6. What is the Canadian <i>Senate</i> ? (p 47)	
7. Who is the <i>Premier</i> of British Columbia?	
8. In talking about elections, what is another word for ' <i>riding</i> '? (p 45)	
9. If one political party elects <i>more than half</i> the members of Parliament, what kind of government do we have? (p 45)	
10. What is it called when members of a political party can <i>vote any way they want</i> ? (p 50)	

Handout 3.2A

Canada's Political System Vocabulary List

1. the Constitution of Canada
(p 43)
2. Canadian governments
 - the federal government
(pp 41, 43, and 44)
 - a provincial government
(pp 41, 43, and 44)
 - a municipal government
(pp 41 and 44)
3. Parliament
(p 45)
4. Legislative Assembly
(p 45)
5. aboriginal peoples
(p 42)
6. treaty
(p 42)
7. cabinet minister
(p 46)
8. civil service
(p 46)
9. riding
(p 45)
10. ward system
(pp 55,56)

Handout 3.2B

Canada's Political System
Vocabulary Resource

1. the Constitution of Canada (p 43)

the most important law in Canada. The *Constitution* sets out the principles and rules that govern Canada. It divides political power between our national and our provincial governments. In the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, the Constitution describes the basic rights and freedoms of Canadian citizens.

2. Canadian governments

- the federal government (pp 41, 43 and 44)

our national government, which meets in Ottawa. It has power over such areas as taxation, immigration, international relations, criminal law, and national defence. (also see Parliament, below)

- a provincial government (pp 41, 43 and 44)

the government of a Canadian province, such as the government of British Columbia. The B.C. government meets in Victoria. It has power over such areas as education, social services, hospitals and motor vehicles. (also see Legislative Assembly, below.)

- a municipal government (pp 41 and 44)

the government of a city (municipality) such as Vancouver, Victoria or Kamloops. Municipal laws, called 'by-laws', cover such areas as land use, building codes, local police and fire protection, garbage collection and recycling, and business licences.

3. Parliament (p 45)

the name of Canada's federal government, which is made up of the House of Commons and the Senate. We elect people to the House of Commons. They are our elected representatives in the government and are called MPs (Members of Parliament). The government itself chooses people to be Senators.

4. Legislative Assembly (p 45)

the group of elected representatives who make up the provincial government. They are called MLAs (Members of the Legislative Assembly).

5. aboriginal peoples (p 42)

the people of Canada's First Nations - the members of different aboriginal communities who were the first people in Canada. They lived here long before the early explorers and colonists arrived.

Handout 3.2B Vocabulary Resource (continued)

6. treaty (p 42)

a formal written agreement, usually between nations or governments. Treaties cover issues such as the control and ownership of land and natural resources. The provincial and federal governments are negotiating treaties with some First Nations in British Columbia.

7. cabinet ministers (p 46)

along with the Prime Minister (or Premier, in the provinces), these are the most powerful elected members of the federal or provincial governments.

8. civil service (p 46)

the government employees who work in federal departments, provincial ministries, and municipal offices. The most important civil servant in any department or ministry is the Deputy Minister, who is second in power after the Cabinet Minister

9. riding (p 45)

a geographic area in a province where citizens vote for and elect an MP or an MLA. A riding is also called an 'electoral district'. Once elected, the MP or MLA for the riding represents the interests of all the people in the riding, who are called his or her 'constituents'.

10. ward system (pp 55 and 56)

a system of voting that is used in some municipal elections. In this system, the city is divided into geographic areas, called 'wards', and the voters in each ward elect their own representative to the municipal or city council.

Handout 3.3

Vocabulary Match-up

fed - er - al

pro - vin - cial

mu - ni - ci - pal

ab - o - ri - gi - nal

trea - ty

par - lia - ment

leg - is - la - tive

as - sem - bly

cab - i - net

min - is - ter

ri - ding

civ - il ser - vice

Handout 3.4

Politics in Canada - Vocabulary Review

Match the numbered words on the left with the definitions on the right. Put the letter of the proper definition in the () after each word. The first one is done for you.

- | | | |
|----------------------------|-------|---|
| 1. federal government | (d) | (a) Minister of Health, for example |
| 2. aboriginal peoples | () | (b) agreement between nations |
| 3. the <i>Constitution</i> | () | (c) electoral district |
| 4. ward system | () | (d) Canada's national government |
| 5. civil service | () | (e) our country's highest law |
| 6. Legislative Assembly | () | (f) First Nations |
| 7. Parliament | () | (g) government employees |
| 8. riding | () | (h) the House of Commons & the Senate |
| 9. cabinet minister | () | (i) B.C.'s elected MLAs |
| 10. treaty | () | (j) Vancouver City Council, for example |
| 11. a municipal government | () | (k) where city council is elected from
different areas of the city |

Handout 3.5 Which Government are We Describing?

Reading for Details

Put an X in the space under the appropriate government(s) after each question.

The first one is done for you.

Page numbers are from the *BCCLA Citizenship Handbook*.

<i>Which government . . .</i>	<i>Municipal</i>	<i>Provincial</i>	<i>Federal</i>
1. has members elected from ridings? (p 45)		X	X
2. may have members elected from wards? (p 55)			
3. has power over immigration, taxation, crime, and customs? (p 44)			
4. may have power over land use, garbage collection, and local policing? (p 44)			
5. has power over education, hospitals, motor vehicles, social services? (p 44)			
6. has cabinet ministers? (p 46)			
7. calls its members MPs? (p 45)			
8. calls its members MLAs? (p 45)			
9. divides its work among departments? (p 46)			
10. divides its work among ministries? (p 46)			
11. has a mayor as its leader? (p 55)			
12. has a premier as its leader? (p 45)			
13. has the prime minister as its leader? (p 45)			
14. makes laws in the Legislative Assembly? (p 45)			
15. makes laws in Parliament? (p 45)			
16. fits between the provincial & municipal governments, and coordinates planning for various regions? (p 54)			

Handout 3.6A**Working in Politics?
Matching Exercise**

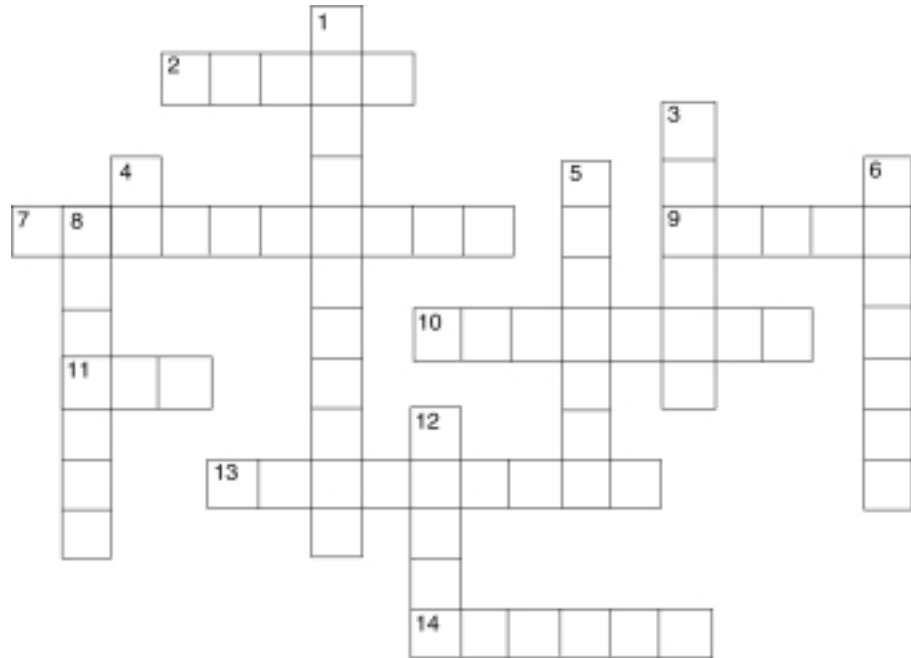
Find the right quote to go with each person on the left. The first one is done for you.

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-------|--|
| cabinet minister | (6) | (1) "I am the leader of the government of Canada." |
| mayor | () | (2) "I live in an MLA's or an MP's riding." |
| constituent | () | (3) "I represent my constituents in the B.C. Legislative Assembly." |
| prime minister | () | (4) "I am a person trying to get elected." |
| deputy minister | () | (5) "I hope I do a good job leading the provincial government." |
| leader of the opposition | () | (6) "I am chosen by the Prime Minister to run a federal department." |
| premier | () | (7) "I represent my Burnaby constituents in Parliament." |
| MP | () | (8) "I am elected to lead the city government." |
| candidate | () | (9) "I help the cabinet minister run our department." |
| MLA | () | (10) "My political party did not form the government because we did not win enough seats in the election." |

Handout 3.6B Working in Politics - Crossword

The 11 people below all belong somewhere in politics. They say who they are in the numbered statements at the bottom of the page. Decide who each speaker is, and put that speaker's name in the proper puzzle space(s).

- prime minister
- constituent
- MLA
- candidate
- premier
- civil servant
- cabinet minister
- MP
- mayor
- deputy minister
- opposition leader



ACROSS

2. "I am elected to lead the city government."
7. (with 14 across) "My political party did not win enough seats in the election to form the government."
9. (with 10 across) "I am the leader of the government of Canada."
10. (with 9 across, and 3 and 5 down) See definition above.
11. "I represent my constituents in the B.C. Legislative Assembly."
13. "I am a person trying to get elected."
14. (with 7 across) See definition above.

DOWN

1. "I live in an MLA's or an MP's riding."
3. (with 10 across) "I help the cabinet minister run our department."]
4. "I represent my Burnaby constituents in Parliament."
5. (with 10 across) "I am chosen by the Prime Minister to run a federal department."
6. (with 12 down) "I work in the offices of the federal or provincial government."
8. "I hope I do a good job leading the provincial government."
12. (with 6 down) See definition above.

Handout 3.6C

Working in Politics

Matching Exercise

Find the right quote to go with each person on the left. The first one is done for you.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| cabinet minister (6) | (1) "Before Parliament meets again, I will make some cabinet changes. I plan to name four new ministers to bring fresh ideas and energy to our departments and to our cabinet discussions." |
| mayor () | (2) "We need a new hospital in our community. It is your job as our MLA to help us get one." |
| constituent () | (3) "You are my constituents and I am very interested in what you have told me about our schools. When I go back to Victoria, I will discuss your concerns with the Minister of Education." |
| prime minister () | (4) "If you elect me, you can be certain that I will try very hard to create more job opportunities in this community." |
| deputy minister () | (5) "Under my leadership, this province has seen a real improvement in environmental protection. If you don't like this, then maybe you should no longer serve in my cabinet." |
| leader of
the opposition () | (6) "Under my direction, the Department of Energy studied the safety of offshore drilling. Surely the cabinet cannot propose laws that ignore the results of those studies." |
| premier () | (7) "One of the difficulties of this job is the constant travelling back and forth between Ottawa and Burnaby, where my constituency is." |
| MP () | (8) "I was pleased to represent our city in the gay pride parade, and hope that under my leadership, this city will strongly support human rights for everyone." |
| candidate () | (9) "The new justice minister met with me to discuss the need for more legal staff. We talked about work she wants to get done, and decided we have enough lawyers in the department now to do it." |
| MLA () | (10) "If my party gets the chance to form a new government, we will change this law. It is bad for the economy of this province and we do not support it. Shame on the government." |

Handout 3.6D Working in Politics Role Plays

1. The Prime Minister (PM) is answering questions at a press conference. Role play the PM and two or three reporters who are asking him/her about future government plans. Use this quote somewhere in the role play:

"Before Parliament meets again, I will make some cabinet changes. I plan to name four new ministers to bring fresh ideas and energy to our departments and our cabinet discussions."

2. Before a provincial election, a candidate visits a local residential neighbourhood, trying to persuade people to vote for him/her. At one house, the candidate talks to a man and woman from Mainland China and their two teenage children. Role play the conversation between the candidate and the family members, using the following quote somewhere in the role play:

"If you elect me, you can be certain that I will try very hard to create more job opportunities in this community."

3. An MLA is holding an 'open house' at a community centre for the people in his riding. Three community members tell him about problems they are having during a teachers' strike. Role play the conversation, using the following quote somewhere during the role play:

"I am very interested in what you have told me about our schools. When I go back to Victoria, I will discuss your concerns with the Minister of Education."

Handout 3.6D Working in Politics (continued)

4. A provincial premier carries on a heated discussion with two industry leaders who are criticizing the government's anti-pollution measures. The Finance Minister, joins the discussion and argues that these measures have made it more costly for certain industries to do business in the province. Role play the discussion, using the following quote somewhere in the role play:

"Under my leadership, this province has seen a real improvement in environmental protections. If you don't like this, then maybe you should no longer serve in my cabinet."

5. The mayor is talking to three political advisors who think his/her recent statements supporting local anti-racist community groups and gay and lesbian activists will distract the public from 'more serious' problems that the city council is working on. Role play this conversation, using the following quote somewhere in the role play:

"I was pleased to represent our city in the gay pride parade, and hope that under my leadership, this city will strongly support human rights for everyone."

Handout 3.7A Understanding the Federal Government

Complete the sentences. Put the proper number in the () in front of each word as you use it.

- (A) Political parties choose (1) _____ to run in an election.
- (B) Each candidate runs for election in a (2) _____.
- (C) Candidates are elected by the (3) _____.
- (D) The candidate with the most votes wins the (4) _____ in the riding.
- (E) In a national election, the person we elect from our riding becomes a (5) _____.
- (F) A federal MP represents his or her (6) _____, who are all the people living in that MP's riding.
- (G) The MP is a member of the (7) _____ of _____.
- (H) When we know how many seats belong to each party, we know whether the House of Commons will have a (8) _____ or a _____ government.
- (I) Parliament includes both the elected House of Commons and the (10) _____.
- (J) The leader of Parliament is the (9) _____.
- (K) The federal (11) _____ makes laws for the whole country.
- (L) The Prime Minister appoints (12) _____, who help him or her guide and direct the government.
- (M) Cabinet ministers are in charge of (13) _____, which provide government programs and services.
- (N) Each federal department has a (14) _____, who works closely with the cabinet minister to run the department.
- (O) The unelected people who work in government offices and agencies are called the (15) _____.

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| () Prime Minister (p 45) | () majority or minority | () House of Commons (p 45) |
| () federal MP (pp 45, 48) | government (pp 49, 50) | () cabinet ministers (p 46) |
| () voters | () candidates (p 45) | () election (p 45) |
| () federal riding (pp 45,48) | () federal | () Parliament (p 45) |
| () Senate (p 47) | departments (p 46) | () civil service (p 46) |
| | () constituents (p 48) | () deputy minister (p 46) |

Handout 3.7B Understanding the Federal Government

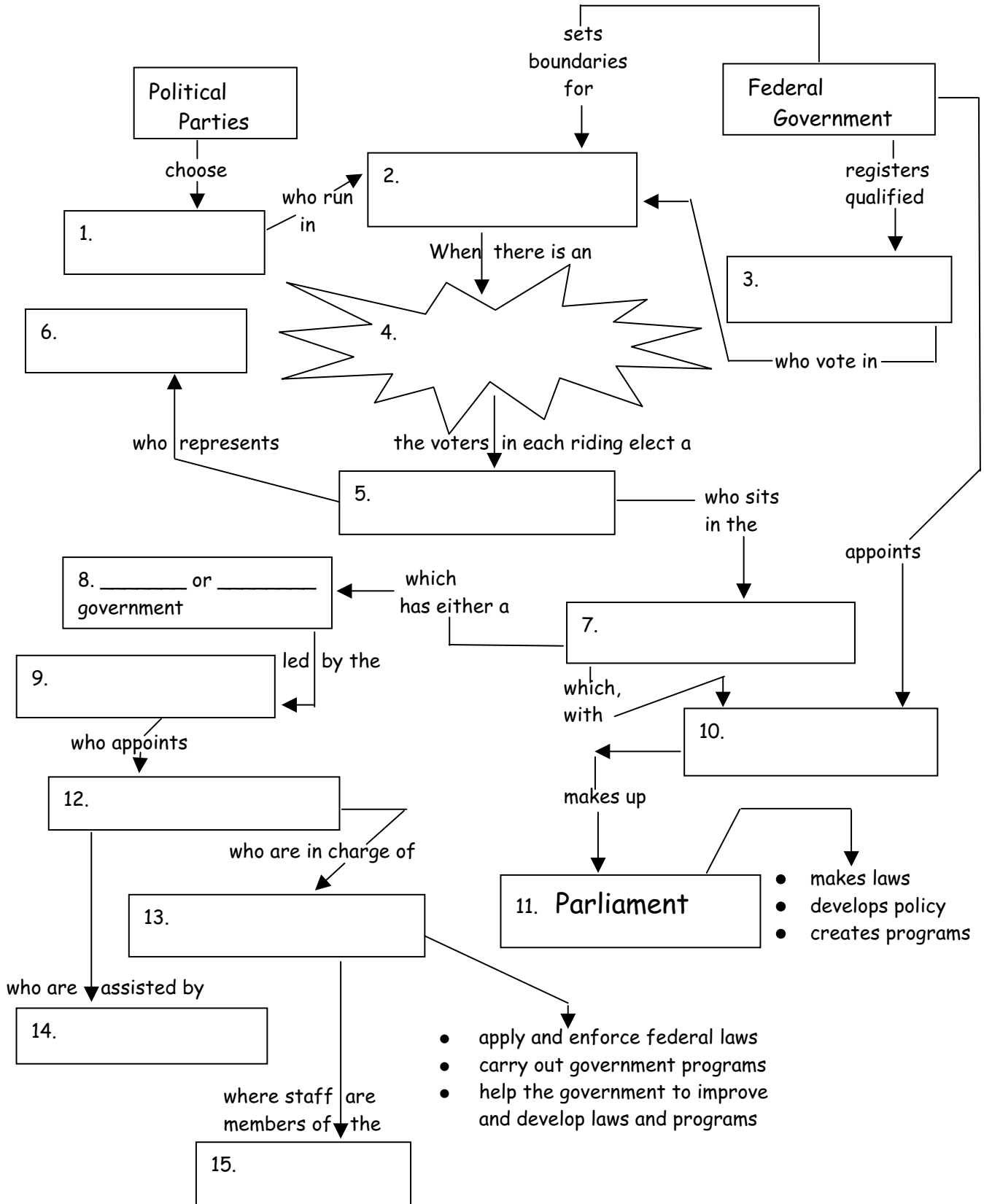
- Complete the sentences. Put the proper number in the () in front of each word as you use it.
- Some of the words are used in more than one sentence.

- (A) Political parties choose (1) _____ to run in elections. In federal elections, they try to have a candidate in each (2) _____ .
- (B) The Federal government sets geographical boundaries for (2) _____ , and registers qualified federal (3) _____ .
- (C) In a national (4) _____ , voters elect a (5) _____ from their own riding, but they do not have a nationwide vote to elect a Prime Minister.
- (D) The (9) _____ is the leader of the political party that has the largest number of (5) _____ s in the (7) _____ of _____ .
- (E) An MP represents his or her (6) _____ , who are all the citizens in the (2) _____ , and not just the ones who voted for that MP.
- (F) The MP is a member of the (7) _____ , which will have either a (8) _____ or a _____ government. To be a majority government, the party in power must have more than 50% of the seats in the Commons.
- (G) Together, the House of Commons and the (10) _____ make up (11) _____ , which makes the laws and creates the government policies and programs for all Canadians.
- (H) The Prime Minister appoints (12) _____ , usually from among the MPs, to lead the various (13) _____ .
- (I) Federal departments do the work necessary to apply and enforce the laws and policies made by (11) _____ .
- (J) (12) _____ are the most important and powerful government officials. In the departments, the next most powerful person is the (14) _____ , who is not elected, but is appointed by the Cabinet.
- (K) A deputy minister is a senior member of the (15) _____ , the government employees who work in federal departments. These are the people we usually meet when we go to government offices.

-
- | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| () Prime Minister (p 45) | () majority or minority government (pp 49, 50) | () House of Commons (p 45) |
| () federal MP (pp 45, 48) | () candidates (p 45) | () cabinet ministers (p 46) |
| () voters | () federal departments (p 46) | () election (p 45) |
| () federal riding (pp 45, 48) | () constituents (p 48) | () Parliament (p 45) |
| () Senate (p 47) | | () civil service (p 46) |
| | | () deputy minister (p 46) |

Activity 3.7C Understanding the Federal Government

Fill in this diagram as directed by your teacher or group leader.



Handout 3.8 Law-Making and Citizens

Reading for Details

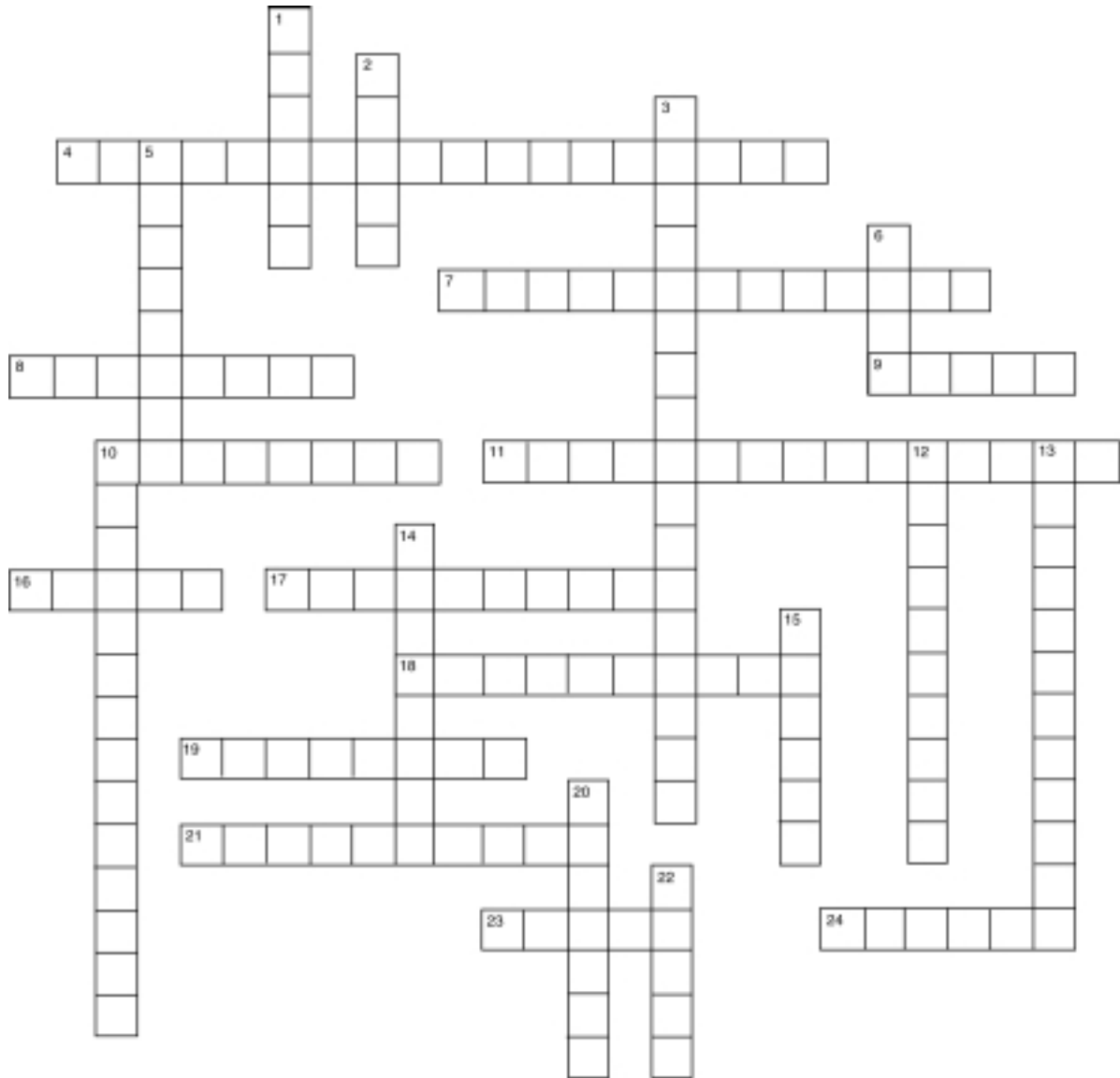
Fill in the blanks with words from the *Citizenship Handbook* pages noted below.

1. Before it is voted on and passed, a law is called a _____. (p 49)
2. Usually a bill is fully debated after its _____ _____ to the elected representatives who will eventually vote on it. (p 49)
3. A bill must get more than _____ "yes" votes to become a law. (p 49)
4. Most bills are introduced by the _____ _____, although on occasion the opposition party gets a chance introduce one. (p 49)
5. In general, elected representatives vote on bills according to the _____ _____ of their _____. (p 49)
6. When MLAs or MPs can vote on a bill without following their political party's position, they have a _____. This doesn't happen very often. (p 50)
7. One way for citizens to suggest changes to a new bill is to give their opinions on the bill to a _____. (p 51)
8. _____ is what people do when they try to convince the government that a law needs to be changed. (p 51)
9. Some citizens want to decide their country's laws more directly than they can by voting in elections. They are interested in _____. (p 52)
10. A direct way to change your MLA between elections is to use _____, and a direct way to vote on a law is to use a process called an _____. (p 52)
11. Provinces give some of their political power to _____ _____ to make by-laws on issues that affect the residents of towns and cities. (p 54)
12. A major advantage of local governments is that citizens can often have a more _____ _____ on local by-laws and programs than they can have on provincial or national laws. (p 56)
13. Many large Canadian cities have a _____ _____ where local candidates compete for election from specific parts of the city called 'wards'. (p 55)

Handout 3.9 Politics and Law-Making Review Puzzle

Work with your partner or partners to complete this puzzle.

The page numbers with the definitions refer to pages in chapter 3 of the BCCLA *Citizenship Handbook* where the correct puzzle word is used, and sometimes defined.



Handout 3.9b

Puzzle Definitions

DOWN

1. electoral district in federal election (pp 45,46)
2. laws made by local governments, such as cities (p 54)
3. committee of MPs who study proposed laws (p 51)
5. a vote when MPs need not follow party policy (p 50)
6. a proposed law (p 49)
10. (with 21 across) a government system in which citizens elect others to represent them (p 52)
12. a citizen who campaigns to be elected (p 45)
13. citizens who live in an MLA's riding (p 48)
14. document signed by citizens to support an 'initiative' in B. C. (p 52)
15. an attempt to replace an MLA before the next an election (p 52)
20. civic elections where the whole city votes for city council candidates and those with the most votes win (p 55)
22. related to a city or town; opposite of 'rural' (p 54)

ACROSS

4. party with second highest number of MPs (p 45)
7. time when a proposed law is fully debated (p 49)
8. (with 21) when one party has more than 50% of all elected representatives (p 49)
9. to try to persuade MLAs to change a law (p 51)
10. mid-level government to coordinate planning (p 54)
11. when citizens directly decide what the law is (p 52)
16. a city 'riding' where a city council member is elected (p 55)
17. a way to vote directly on a proposed law (p 52)
18. a way in BC to propose a new law without having MLAs vote on it. (p 52)
19. and 21. when the governing party has fewer than 50% of all elected MLAs or MPs (p 50)
23. person who leads a school board meeting (p 55)
24. the people who really decide which candidates are elected to be MLAs and MPs (p 53)