

2

What do governments do for us?

Chapter Focus Questions

- How does government affect you?
- What services do governments provide?
- How do governments pay for services?
- Who are the people of government?

Sometimes Mr. Grundy asked puzzling questions. Today, for example, the class had started to study **government**. He had given the class this question to think over for the next day: What reasons can you give for Grade 6 students to take part in government?

"I just don't understand," Brittany remarked to her dad, as she showed him the question that evening. "Kids can't take part in government."

"Are you sure? What about the time you and your classmates asked the parent council at school to supply new soccer balls for recess?" her dad asked.

"What's that got to do with government?"

"Well, the parent council is part of the way your school is **governed**. When you took your idea to the parent council, you were taking part in government."

Brittany hadn't thought of it like that.

"You know, Brittany, governments are made up of people — people who take action for the good of everyone in a group. Sometimes the group involved is a school. Sometimes it involves a First Nation, or a town or city, or the whole province."

"Hmmm... so government is about people helping people."

"Right — Grade 6 students included."

"But how does government help people? I guess I need to know more about what government does to answer Mr. Grundy's question."

Brittany and her dad are discussing government. Are you part of government?

What are we learning in this chapter?

In the last chapter, you began to explore ways that individuals and groups make choices. You investigated situations that you might encounter in your family, at school and with your friends. This will help you throughout social studies this year, as you learn about how large groups and governments make choices.

But what is government? What does it do? That's the topic of this chapter.

Why are we learning this?

Government is something that affects us every day. It's also something we need every day. So, it's important to understand what government is and what it does.

Mr. Grundy's Challenge

"Let's have a one-minute challenge, class," said Mr. Grundy. "All 23 of you will be pitted against me. Think of a thing you use that the government does not influence. You have one minute to think of examples."

The challenge was on. Everyone was silent as the thinking minute passed. As soon as it was over, a student called out, "Pencils!"

Mr. Grundy replied, "No, the government decides which areas of trees can be cut commercially, and pencils need wood."

"Yogurt!"

"Nope," said Mr. Grundy. "There are controls over manufacturing conditions in yogurt factories to protect your health and safety."

The students tried again. "Air!"

"Got you again!" said Mr. Grundy. "There are government regulations about clean air and even the airspace that airplanes fly in!"

Guess who won? Mr. Grundy did. He asked the students to continue the challenge to see if they could identify things they used that the government did not influence.



Pause

Take the challenge too. See if you can think of something you use that the government does not influence.

Getting Started

What can we learn about governments?

What's important?

At the beginning of this chapter, Brittany discovered that she needed more information about what government does. In this section, find out how an **inquiry** about government can uncover answers.

An Inquiry in Mr. Grundy's Class

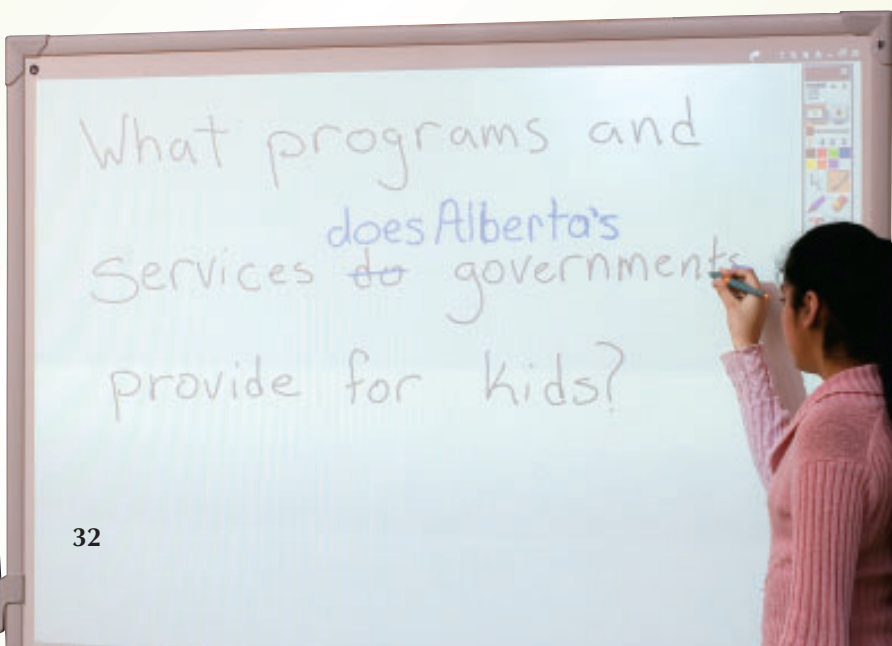
Mr. Grundy turned to his students. "Effective inquiries begin with effective questions. We are learning about governments. So, I want you to think of questions about governments. Base them on what you already know."

Emily put up her hand. "I know some things that governments do for kids. They provide schools. So, here's a question: **What programs and services do governments provide for kids?**"

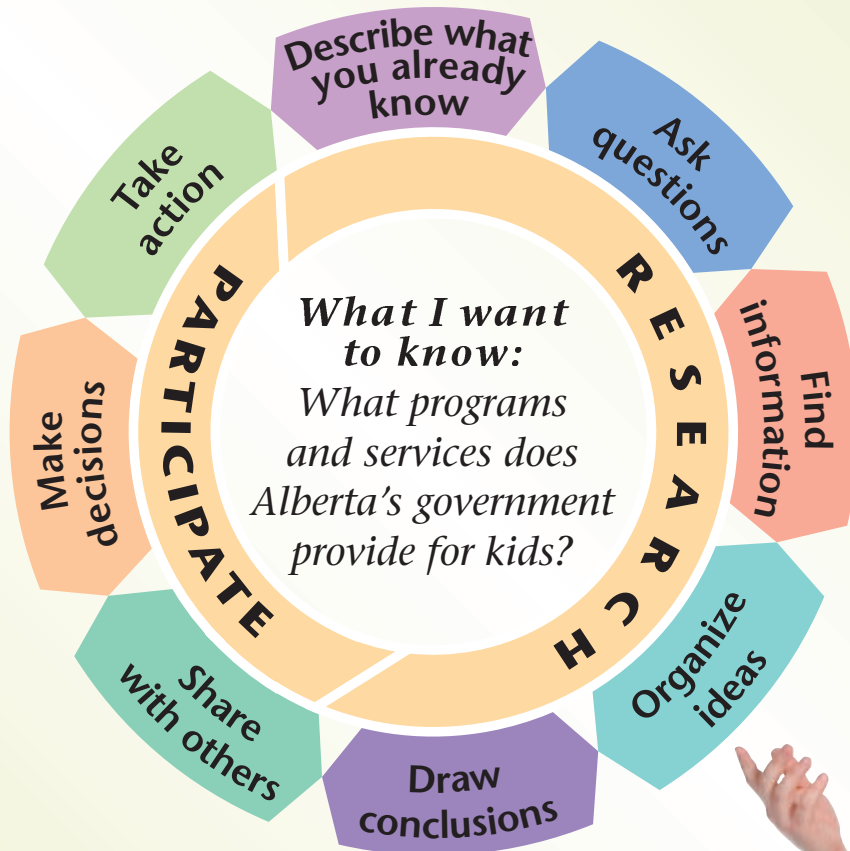
"Okay," said Mr. Grundy. "Here's another question: Can we answer this question effectively or does it need more work?"

Ivan put up his hand. "I think we'd need a month to answer that question. Governments include national government, provincial governments, local governments and First Nations governments."

Sharn said, "Maybe we could narrow the question down." She went to the board and, in a couple of seconds, changed the question.

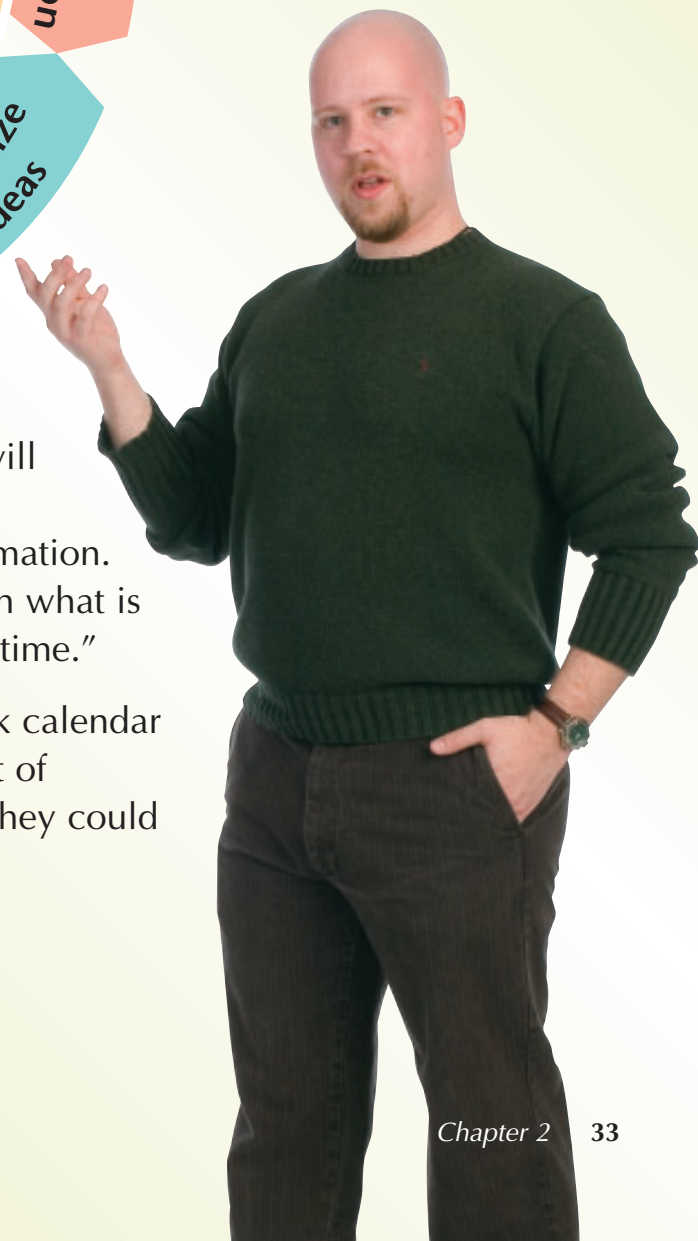


Mr. Grundy asked the class if this was now an effective question. Heads nodded. Alex thought the question was now specific and could be answered easily. So, Mr. Grundy took a laminated “inquiry” poster and copied the question in the middle.



Mr. Grundy continued, “In this inquiry, we will concentrate on making a plan, finding and organizing information, and presenting information. As you go along, I also want you to reflect on what is going well and what you could change next time.”

Mr. Grundy then handed the students a blank calendar to use for their plan. He also gave them a list of expectations and a self-evaluation sheet, so they could rate their own work.



Ivan's research

Ivan worked on his plan. He decided to do a computer presentation. As the week progressed, he found he needed to change his plan to include more time to practise his presentation.

The Schedule

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• make a list of key words for a web search• decide on way to present info.• start research	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• finish web search• make charts for presentation• arrange for presentation equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• organize information• work on presentation details• rehearse presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• early dismissal!• rehearse presentation before leaving for home• tell Mom that I'll be ten minutes late	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• give presentation• complete self-evaluation• hand in plan, self-evaluation



Presentation Visuals

Ivan's web search went well when he used the phrase "Alberta government." On the government home page, he found "Programs and Services." He clicked on this. On the next screen to come up, he clicked on "Students." But he found this site was mainly for university students! So, he tried clicking on "Children." Finally, he found the information he wanted. Ivan remembered to note the website he used. Then he grouped some information under different headings. The following day he made two charts for his presentation.



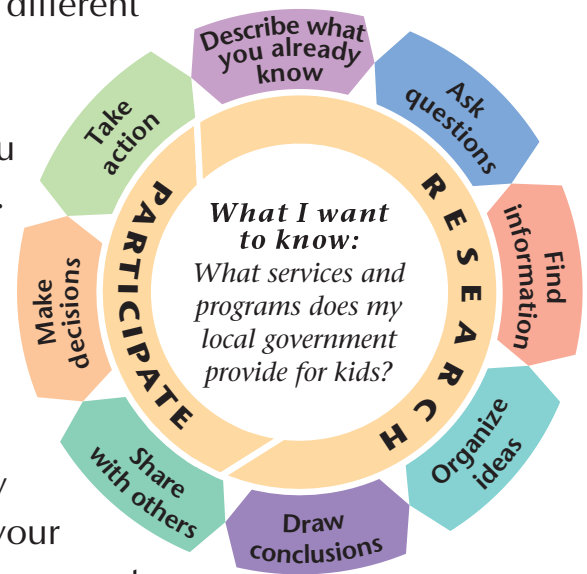
When Ivan did his presentation, he remembered to look at his audience and make his voice sound interesting. He didn't read the information, but talked about how to locate the help line phone number and how to nominate someone for the Great Kids Award. When he finished his presentation, he thought he could have slowed down a bit, but he was quite proud of what he did.

Chapter 2 Inquiry Task

Inquiry: What services and programs does my local government provide for kids?

Introduction

Different governments have different jobs or responsibilities. It's important to know which government to contact if you have a question or problem. Mr. Grundy's class has modelled an inquiry based on a question about Alberta's government. Now it's your turn. Apply what you've learned to an inquiry based on a question about your **local government**. Local government is your city, town or district government.



The task

Your inquiry will follow this procedure:

- Create a plan, with a schedule, for your inquiry.
- Access the Internet, your library, and the blue pages of your phonebook to find information.
- Organize your information so that it will be useful.
- Share your information in an interesting way.

Part of the process of conducting an inquiry is reflecting on how the choices you made affected your project. At the end of this inquiry, you will be asked to reflect on what went well with your project and what you would do differently next time.

Things to think about before starting the inquiry

Your schedule should make time to

- find information
- organize information
- prepare a way to share information



What words could you use to search your library, phonebook or the Internet for programs and services in your district, town or city?

SKILLS at Work

You need to put research skills to work for this inquiry. Check out the Skills Centre at the back of this book for tips on how to

- design a plan and a schedule for answering the research question
- gather and record information
- organize your information
- communicate through an oral, written or technology-based presentation



How does government affect you?

Let's look at a juice box.

What's important?

Discover how government affects our everyday lives.

- Government regulations protect people from buying food products that are out of date.

- Government laws protect French and English language rights.

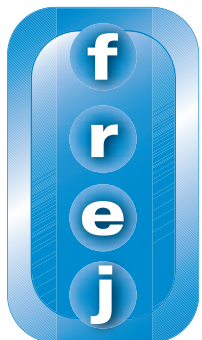
- Government laws require nutrition labels. This promotes healthy choices.

- Recycling information is required by government law to help protect the environment.



Emaeth, Alexandre and Alex have brought juice for lunch. What evidence of government can you find in your lunch today?

- Governments provide inspectors to make sure that laws about weights are followed.

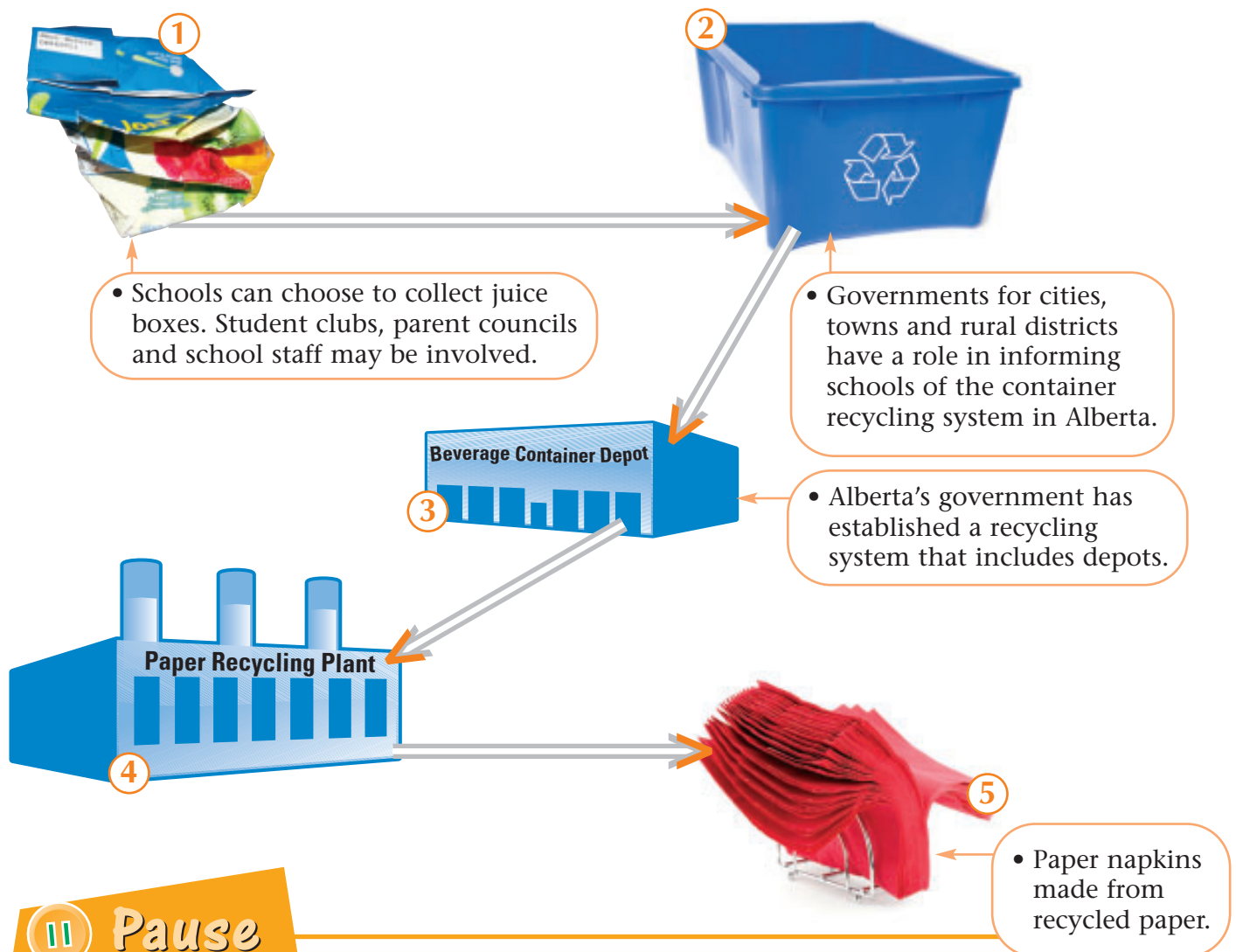


Pause

1. What can you conclude about why governments make laws and **regulations** from the evidence on a juice box?
2. What evidence of government regulations can you find in the gym at your school? In the boiler room? In the playground? On the roads around your school? On a school bus?

What happens to your empty juice box?

In Alberta, you can **recycle** juice boxes and other beverage containers. Juice boxes get turned into new paper products, such as napkins. Some schools collect beverage containers for recycling. Here's how that happens.



Pause

1. Why do you think the beverage container recycling system depends on government? Use evidence from the flow chart to support your conclusions.
2. Think back to what you learned in the last chapter about ways for groups to make choices. You investigated three procedures: consensus, everybody voting, and choosing representatives.
 - How do you think a school might make the choice to recycle beverage containers such as juice boxes?
 - How do you think Alberta might make the choice?

What services do governments provide?

What's important?

Understand the variety of services that governments provide, and that governments provide services that individuals can't provide for themselves.

Stick To It!

Identifying government services

Mr. Grundy handed out sticky notes to each of his students. It was another of his famous one-minute challenges. His students were asked to use the stickies to write a service that the government provides. Then they were to call out the **service** and post their sticky note on the wall. As usual, there were conditions. Every person needed to contribute and students could help each other, but no service could be repeated if it was already posted. If every student had their sticky note on the board before the minute was up, the class won the challenge.

Think About the Inquiry

Which of the government services on the next pages might include special programs for kids? Make a list of ideas. Then, develop key words to research your district, town or city government.

How many government services for children can you identify?

Why do governments provide services?

SKILLS at Work



Do you have a hospital in your community? How important is it to have a hospital?

What would your life be like if governments didn't provide services? Choose a service from this page and the next two pages. Create a **scenario** that demonstrates how that service affects your life.

- critically evaluate ideas, information and positions



Who depends on snowplows?



What would be the **consequences** if there were no firefighters?

Who benefits from recycling?



What if individuals had to provide these services for themselves?



Governments build and maintain roads. Why don't individuals do this? Look for evidence on this sign.

Siksika First Nation worked in partnership with Alberta's and Canada's governments to build the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park near Gleichen, Alberta. Governments often support historic sites and museums. How do people benefit from historic sites and museums?



Governments support schools. The class in this photo is learning in French. Why is education important? Why are **Francophone** schools important? How do governments support education for other groups?

Why are public parks important?



In what way does a public library serve everyone? Does your library provide books in languages other than English and French? Why?



Governments recruit and train police officers. What makes police officers important to everyone in society?

Governments are responsible for public transportation as well as transportation for people with disabilities. Why might people choose to travel by bus over driving, cycling, walking or taxis?



Pause

What evidence can you find that government services reflect fairness and equity?
Review the information presented on pages 25 to 26. Identify three examples of fairness and equity. Explain them to a partner.

freedoms
representation
equity
justice

How do governments pay for services?

What's important?

Understand how governments support their services through collecting **taxes**.

Dollars and Sense

"I want to talk about the **triathlon** club today, class," Mr. Grundy said one day. Everyone expected an announcement about the next event. The class often volunteered at triathlon events, directing participants to the change rooms and tabulating times. Today, though, Mr. Grundy had something else in mind.

"Alex, when you joined the triathlon club, I asked your family for a contribution," Mr. Grundy said. "Do you remember how much it was?"

"Um... I think it was twenty dollars," Alex replied.

"That's right. Why do you think the club needed a contribution?"

"Well, we have club T-shirts and water bottles. Does it help pay for that?"

"Yes, and it also helps pay for snacks like oranges at events."

"That makes sense," said Alex. "The twenty dollars pays for things club members need and want, and that the triathlon club provides."

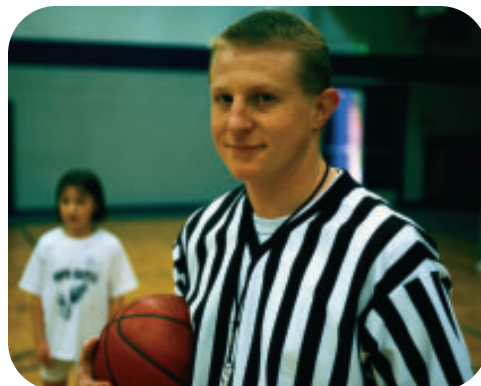
"Right. Now, let's talk about taxes people pay to government. Taxes are like the fees for the triathlon club. Taxes pay for services that people need and want, and that government provides."

What groups do you belong to? Why do they have fees?

Fees to join Guides help pay for camps.

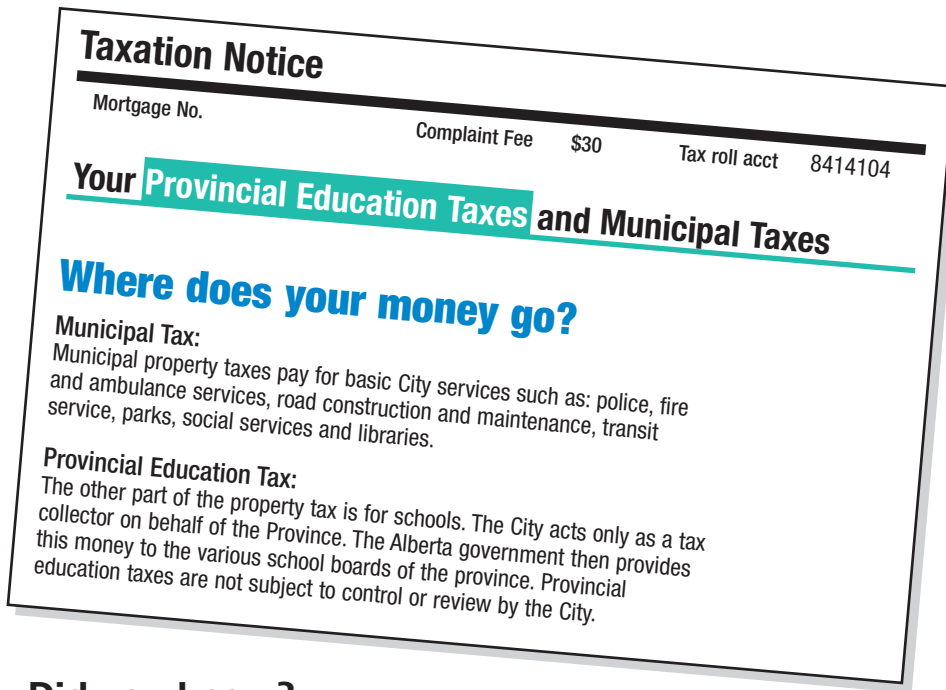


Fees to join sports teams help pay for referees.



What are taxes?

Taxes are fees people pay, so that governments can provide services. Governments collect taxes from individuals and businesses.



What services that government provides can you identify on this tax notice?

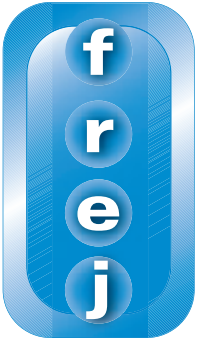
Did you know?



Grade 6 students pay taxes!

When this student pays for her bakery treat, she will pay a few cents to cover the GST — the Goods and Services Tax. The GST is a federal tax, which means it is collected by Canada's government. The government will collect from the bakery the tax this student pays, and the tax will become part of the money the government uses to pay for the services it provides. In Alberta, the GST is the only tax you have to pay when you buy something. In the other provinces of Canada, you would also pay a provincial sales tax.

Who are the people of government?



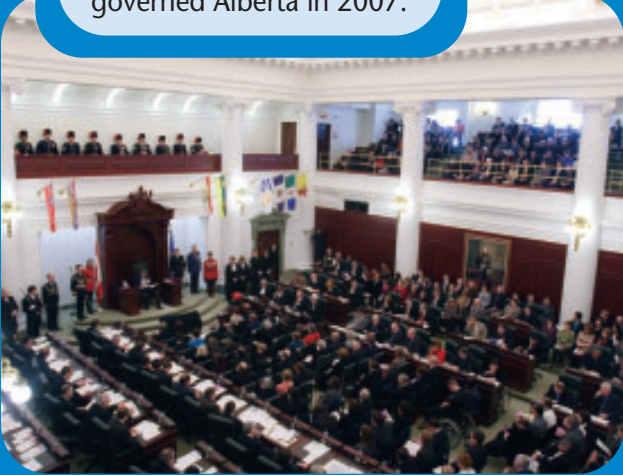
Governments involve groups of people.

In Chapter 1, you investigated different ways for groups of people to make choices.

Examine this page. It shows examples of governments in Alberta that you will encounter in social studies this year. What evidence can you find that governments involve groups of people?

Provincial Government

This photo shows some of the representatives who governed Alberta in 2007.



Government



School Boards

This photo shows two candidates running for election to the Edmonton Public School Board in 2007.



First Nations Governments
This photo shows the Chief and Council of the Siksika Nation in 2007.



City, Town and Rural District Councils
This photo shows Grande Prairie's city council in 2007.



Associations
This photo shows members of l'Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta at a ceremony commemorating the history and identity of Francophones in 2007.

Many people have a role in government.

In social studies this year, you will investigate the roles and responsibilities people have in government – including the roles and responsibilities of Grade 6 students.

Start your investigation now! Which of the ideas on this page might apply to you? As you learn more about government in the coming chapters, keep these ideas in mind.

Students in councils or advisory groups

How can groups of students, like student councils, influence government?



Taking Part in Government



Voters

How does voting allow people to participate?



People attending rallies or support groups

Why do people organize rallies? In what ways do rallies demonstrate rights and freedoms?



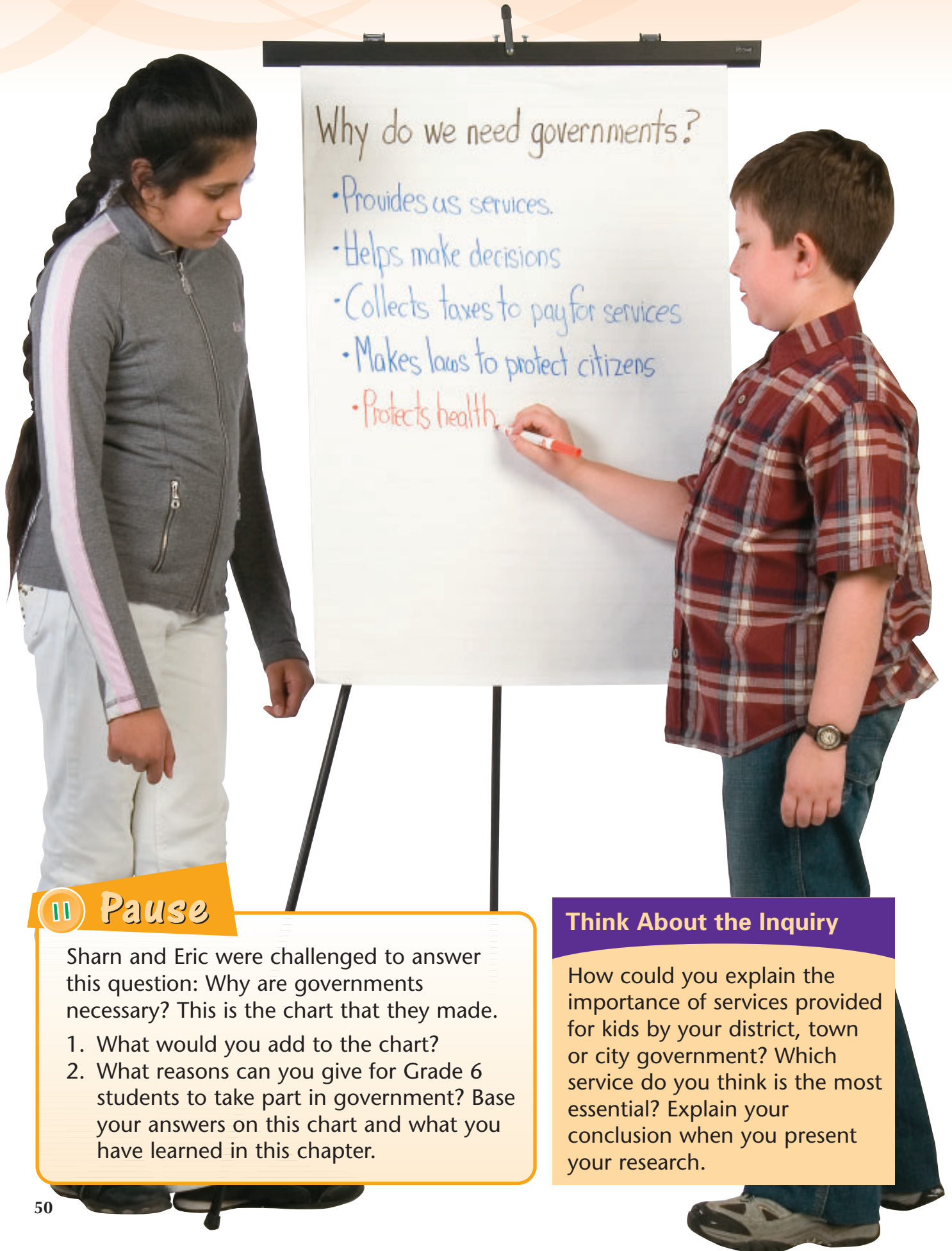
People attending public meetings
How do **public meetings** provide opportunities to participate?



People contacting governments
How can you contact government?
Why would you contact government?

Pause

In Chapter 1, you created a guideline for your own participation in groups. Identify one way your guideline could help you participate in government, using an example on this page.



Why do we need governments?

- Provides us services.
- Helps make decisions
- Collects taxes to pay for services
- Makes laws to protect citizens
- Protects health.

Pause

Sharn and Eric were challenged to answer this question: Why are governments necessary? This is the chart that they made.

1. What would you add to the chart?
2. What reasons can you give for Grade 6 students to take part in government? Base your answers on this chart and what you have learned in this chapter.

Think About the Inquiry

How could you explain the importance of services provided for kids by your district, town or city government? Which service do you think is the most essential? Explain your conclusion when you present your research.

Review! Review!

1. How does the government provide services for people?

Construct a simple **flow chart** to show how governments provide services for people. Choose an example of a service provided by a government. Show what the government does and explain why it collects taxes to pay for the services.

2. How do governments help people?

Make a presentation on one of the following topics. Provide examples of government laws, regulations and services that help people in each case.

- a) students in their schools
- b) consumers in a grocery store

You could do a videotaped presentation, a recorded radio segment or a live presentation.

3. How might you take part in government?

Taking part in government means influencing the choices people in government make. Identify one reason, based on your own experience, for taking part in government.

4. Why is government important?

In a group, use consensus to create a statement of your top three reasons why government is important. Compare your reasons with another group. Why are your conclusions similar or different?

