

# 1 Why does democracy need participation?

## Direct or Representative?



Freedom of expression is one of the fundamental rights guaranteed by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Who makes decisions in communities, the province and the country? Everyone has a say about who represents them in every level of government. Canada is a **representative democracy**, in which citizens elect representatives to form a government and make decisions on their behalf. **Residents**, people who live in Canada, have many of the same rights whether or not they are citizens. However, residents who are not citizens cannot vote in elections.

Alberta also has a representative democracy. The provincial government is run by a **legislature**, or a group of people who are elected by citizens to represent them and form the government in the province.

This system of representative democracy is based on **principles**, or important values and ideas, which are hundreds of years old. The representatives elected in provinces govern through the legislature. The government elected for Canada as a whole governs through the **parliament**.

### Pause and Reflect



How do you think people participate in a representative democracy?

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To what extent do you think you participate in democracy?

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Representative democracies are different from direct democracies. In a **direct democracy**, citizens make decisions in person, without going through representatives. This is similar to what happens in a town hall meeting, where anyone from the town can come to the meeting and vote on decisions that are being made. However, for town meetings to work, people have to attend them and participate.



Which of the statements in the margin apply to representative democracy? Which apply to a direct democracy? Which apply to both? Write each statement in the chart where it best applies.

Representative Democracy	Direct Democracy	Both



Work with a small group to create a one-minute role play or create a comic strip using a **Storyboard** graphic organizer.

Your role play or comic strip should show what one of the statements you organized in the chart looks like.

- Everyone is responsible for following the same rules and laws.
- In an election, all eligible voters have the right to vote for a person who will represent them.
- Each class representative meets with the principal to discuss a school-wide decision.
- Everyone votes on a decision to be made for the class.
- People get up and take turns explaining how they will vote on a community issue at a town hall meeting.
- Sometimes, an important decision is made by holding a **referendum**, a vote in which every citizen can participate.  
**Plebiscites** are similar to referendums, but are usually held to determine public opinion on an issue.
- People have the freedom to express their opinions.
- An election is held to vote for representatives who make decisions on behalf of the people who elect them.
- All people can participate directly in decision-making.