

# Intergovernmental Relations in Canada

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Mechanisms of Intergovernmental Relations:  
International Experiences and Challenges for Brazil

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# Overview of presentation:

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- What kind of federation is Canada?
- What does this mean for intergovernmental affairs?
- How and why has the intergovernmental business grown?
- Examples of national and regional cooperation.
- Best practices.

... NOT  
Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité

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... NOR  
Life, Liberty & the Pursuit of Happiness



# ... RATHER

## Peace, Order & Good Government

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... the Peace Tower  
in front of  
Parliament  
in Ottawa

# ... Canadians identify with universal public health care

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# Different values when each country was founded:

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USA: 18<sup>th</sup> Century  
individual liberties



John Locke

Canada: 19<sup>th</sup> Century  
social welfare



Robert Owen

# Federalism & Values

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## Liberty

- Power is divided to maximum
- Series of checks and balances
- Separation of Executive and Legislative power
- “State’s rights” vs. central government

## Welfare

- Power is concentrated
- Emphasis on outcomes
- Executive and Legislative closely linked
- Unitary state



# Canada: a vast land



# Modern governance is aided by:

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- Semi-autonomous units
- Decentralized decision-making
- Regional flexibility and responsiveness
- Local innovation

# What drives intergovernmental relations in Canada?

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- Constitution's approach of "watertight compartments" didn't work
- Traditional contest over division of powers
- Current battleground is recognition of roles & responsibilities

# Major changes in intergovernmental affairs over the past 35 years:

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- Growth in the regular “business” of government
- Constitutional development & reform
- Indigenous Canadians demand a seat at the table

# What does intergovernmental relations mean today?

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- 400 – 500 federal-provincial meetings per year
- First Ministers' conference including
  - Prime Minister
  - 10 provincial Premiers
  - 3 Northern Territories' leaders
  - A 2-3 day televised event

# The new Canadian “industry” of intergovernmental relations:

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- Provincial offices or departments of intergovernmental affairs
- Permanent secretariat funded by both levels

# What was happening with constitutional reform?

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- 1968- Prime Minister Trudeau began a full review
- 1976- Election of a separatist government in Quebec
- 1982- New constitution – all provinces except Quebec sign
- 1987- Meech Lake Accord agreed upon, then fails
- 1992- Charlottetown Accord supported by parties, rejected by electorate

# Styles of Federalism

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- 1960s - 1970s: *Cooperative Federalism*
- Mid-1970s – 80s: *Competitive Federalism*
- 2000s: *Reciprocal Federalism*



# Intergovernmental relations: a success story

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## Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment

CCME works to promote the cooperation and coordination of interjurisdictional issues such as waste management, air pollution and toxic chemicals.



# Canadian Council of Ministers for the Environment (CCME)

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- Chairmanship rotates among all fourteen Ministers
- Permanent Secretariat
- Funded on a per capita basis
- Works collaboratively on harmonization of roles and responsibilities

# Interprovincial Cooperation

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- Annual Premiers' Conference since 1964
- New Quebec proposal to formalize a Council of the federation
- Regular meetings of Council of Ministers of Education
- Regional interprovincial cooperation
  - Western Premiers' Conference
  - Council of Atlantic Premiers

# Atlantic Provinces



# Eastern Provinces & New England States

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# Conclusion

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- **Canada was a federation by necessity, not by choice.**
- **Today, federalism offers the most modern approach to government.**
- **Effective intergovernmental machinery is required to make federalism work.**
- **Investment in machinery brings results.**

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