

Judicial

Canadian courts have two fundamental roles.

1. They rule in disputes of law, trying those accused of breaking the law. And they are the guardian of the *Constitution Act* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.
2. The country's highest court is the Supreme Court of Canada. It can overrule legislation and executive acts of government that violate the federal division of powers, and/or that violate the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens.

Other Contributors To Policy

While our Department has the primary responsibility for Canada's international relations, many others have an impact on decision-making through their roles as official or non-official advisors.

Given the interdependent nature of the world, it would be difficult to find a federal department that is not involved in international affairs of one type or another. For example, Fisheries and Oceans is active internationally in its work in stock protection and guarding against over-fishing. Transport Canada has the responsibility for airports, international safety regulations and bilateral air agreements.

Provincial governments are also key players in the international arena. They participate in numerous activities, both at home and abroad, that make a substantial contribution to Canada's role. And then there are the many private sector groups that have an interest in Canada's foreign affairs: Canadian businesses, development organizations, academic institutions, interest groups, the media. All attempt to influence foreign policy by providing advice and information to decision makers.

In the last section, we'll take a closer look at the Department to see how our structure matches Canada's interests and activities abroad.

But before you go on, test your knowledge of the structure of Canada's government.