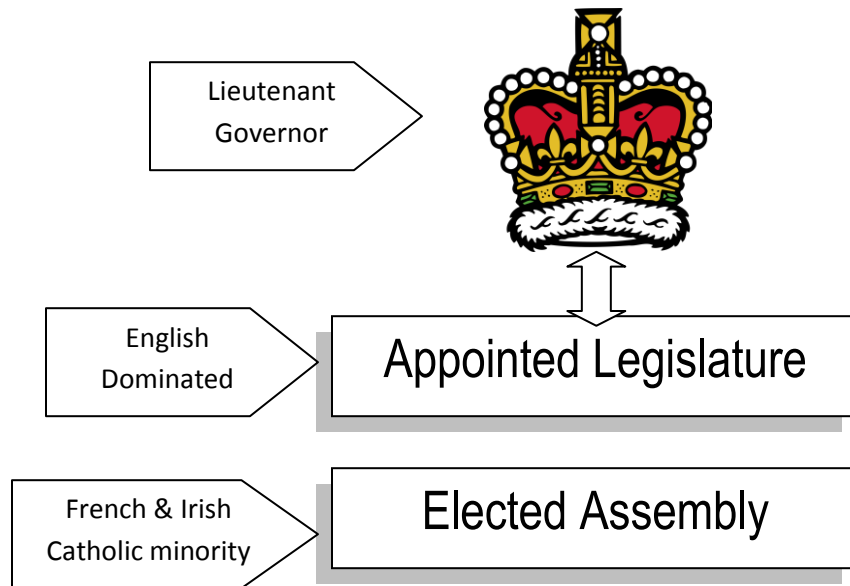


Rebellions in Lower and Upper Canada

Lower Canada

- ❖ The divisions in Lower Canada were complex and revolved around the government:

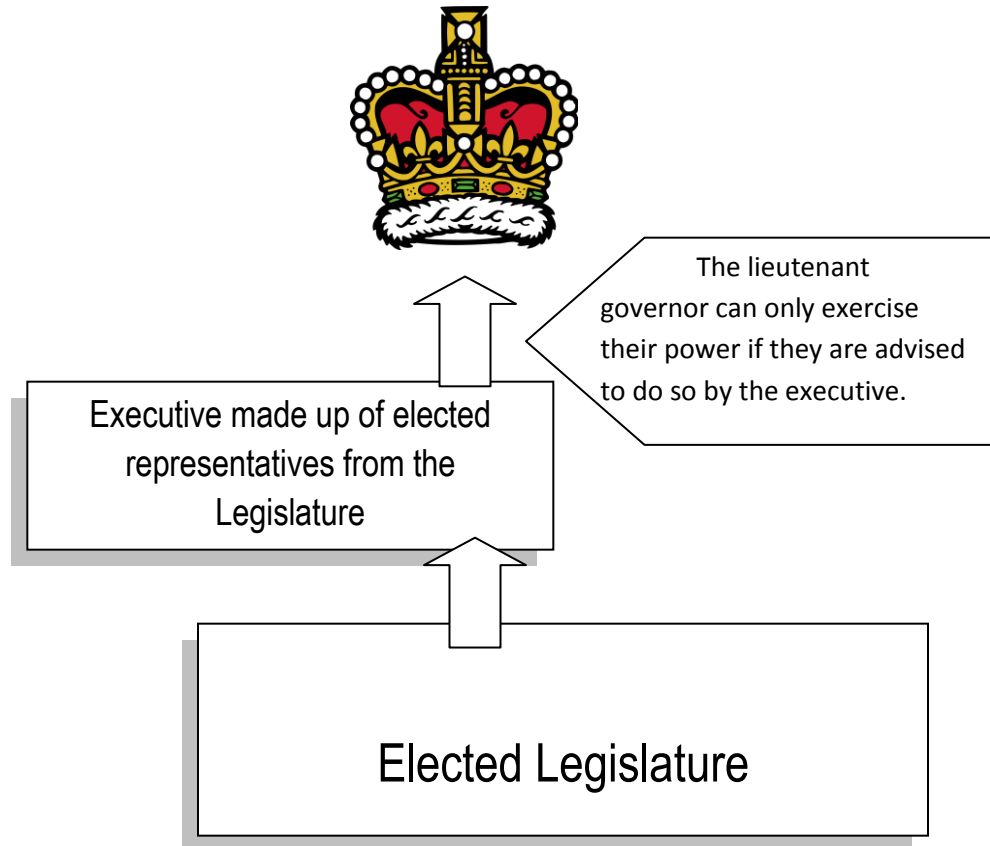


- ❖ There was tension between the English dominated Legislature and the French dominated Assembly (an Irish Catholic minority supported the French against the English).
- ❖ There was also tension between the “Haves” and “Have nots” in the province (“Haves” typically were English).
- ❖ The Assembly wanted more control over the colony’s finances – something the Legislature was not willing to hand over.
- ❖ Constitutionally, only the Assembly could initiate money bills concerning taxes and expenditures, BUT the legislature was getting money from the sale of Crown lands, as well as from the military and the Imperial authorities in London. The Legislature also had the power to kill any bills suggested by the Assembly (the lieutenant governor could also veto any legislation he did not like).

What did the public want? . . .

Responsible Government

The idea of responsible government:



- ❖ People (i.e. the lieutenant governor & unelected Legislature) are not too keen on the idea of responsible government.
- ❖ Pretty soon the French majority (supported by others like the Irish) became radicalized, calling for the overthrowing of the unelected legislature. The rebels announced 92 resolutions that they wanted passed – many of which attacked the unelected legislature. The British would not accept these resolutions.
- ❖ Rebel leaders (notably Joseph Papineau) called for open revolt and the British responded by calling for their arrest.
- ❖ Violence erupted in the countryside as a series of battles were fought between the rebels – calling themselves *patriots* – and the British Crown forces. Eventually, the British were able to suppress the uprising. Many of the rebel leaders escaped south to the United States.

- In November 1838 provisional president of Lower Canada quickly crossed into Lower Canada via the American border and declared Canada's independence from the British Crown. Sir John Colborne, Commander-In-Chief of all British troops, ruthlessly put down the rebellion.
- ❖ As a result of the rebellion, Lower Canada's constitution was suspended and the colony was placed under direct Crown-rule.

Upper Canada Rebellion – the “poor man’s rebellion”

- ❖ Like Lower Canada, Upper Canadians resented the control that the Family Compact had over the colony.
- ❖ The principal “rebels” were Robert Gourlay and William Lyon Mackenzie (who lived in Dundas for some time – his house still stands). Mackenzie was elected into the colony's Assembly in 1828.
- ❖ William Lyon Mackenzie was watching events unfolding in the United States (they were moving to allow more people get involved in the country's democracy) – he even visited the country in 1829, meeting with the American president (Jackson).
- ❖ Mackenzie was becoming increasingly radical and was eventually expelled from the Assembly. Instead of responsible government, Mackenzie wanted a clean break from the Crown (like the Americans).
- ❖ The Assembly became disillusioned with the government when the lieutenant-governor (Sir Francis Bond Head) started ignoring their advice. The Assembly began criticizing the LG and in retaliation Bond Head vetoed all of their money bills.
- ❖ The LG then involved himself in an election (violating the neutrality of the Crown), ensuring that the elected assembly was filled with his supporters. Mackenzie retaliated by issuing the Toronto Declaration (modelled on the American Declaration of Independence).
- ❖ No British soldiers remained in Upper Canada (they had all been transferred to put down the rebels in Lower Canada). Mackenzie saw this as the perfect time to strike, and on December 4th, 1837, 500 poorly armed, inexperienced rebels met at Montgomery's Tavern on Yonge Street. It was a gong-show.
 - The next day Mackenzie led his hung-over army toward downtown where they met a force of 20 government men (militia). Mackenzie's front rank opened fire and then dropped to the ground to re-load. The second rank though the first had all been killed and immediately scattered. The battle was over.

- Mackenzie fled with some rebels back to Montgomery's tavern where a second battle took place. The rebels were defeated within 30 minutes . . . the tavern was burned to the ground.
- Mackenzie fled down Dundas Street (through Waterdown, and hiding in a cave along the escarpment overlooking Dundas) before heading south to the American border. He proclaimed the 'Republic of Canada' on Navy Island in January 1838 – it collapsed the following month and Mackenzie was arrested.