

In the early 1800s, Upper Canada and Lower Canada were growing and changing very rapidly. Citizens of both colonies began to demand more of a voice in how the colonies were governed, calling for government that was responsible to the people instead of the king. In 1837 and 1838, groups of citizens in both Canadas engaged in armed rebellion against the British colonial government. The rebellions were quickly put down and the rebels were punished by exile, prison sentences or, in some cases, death. The English government, concerned about these events, sent Lord Durham to Canada to study the situation in the colonies. He was to report on the problems and suggest some possible solutions. Following is an extract from Lord Durham's report.



...I expected to find a contest between a government and a people: I found two nations warring the bosom of a single state; I found a struggle, not of principles but of races; and I perceived that it would be idle to attempt any amelioration of laws and institutions until we could first succeed in terminating the deadly animosity that now separate the inhabitants of Lower Canada into the hostile divisions of French and English.

...The difference of language produces misconceptions yet more fatal even than those which it occasions with respect to opinions; it aggravates the national animosities by representing all the events of the day in utterly different lights.

Lord Durham's Report



Read Lord Durham's statements aloud with a partner. Discuss what you think he is saying and record in your own words his main points. How does Lord Durham view the problems in the Canadas?

With your partner, try to predict what solutions Lord Durham will propose to the British colonial government. Provide reasons for your predictions.
