

## Citizens in a Constitutional Monarchy

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*As for myself, my course is clear. A British subject I was born – a British subject I will die.*

- Sir John A. Macdonald, the first prime minister, on February 7, 1891: he is appealing to the House of Commons to vote for keeping strong ties to Britain. Macdonald was born a subject of the Crown in Scotland, and died a subject of the Crown in Canada shortly after this speech. All residents of the British colonies in Canada were considered to be subjects of the Crown (that is, they owed loyalty to the British monarchy and were bound to follow all of its laws and decisions).

*I speak as a citizen of Canada.*

- Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, on January 3, 1947, as he accepted the first citizenship certificate in Canada at a special ceremony to celebrate the new Canadian Citizenship Act. This Act created the status of "Canadian citizen" while still keeping the status of "British subject." Since the implementation of the new Citizenship Act in 1947, Canadian citizens are no longer considered to be British subjects, but are citizens of Canada and of the British Commonwealth.

### ***Affirmation of Canadian Citizenship***

*From this day forward, I pledge my loyalty and allegiance to Canada and Her Majesty Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada. I promise to respect our country's rights and freedoms, to uphold our democratic values, to faithfully observe our laws and fulfill my duties and obligations as a Canadian citizen.*

Canadian citizens still affirm their loyalty to the reigning monarch of Britain, as the official head of government and the basis of all authority, in keeping with the British parliamentary system. Britain can no longer change or make Canadian laws, nor declare war on the part of Canada. However, Canadian laws are made final only when they are approved by the *Governor General*, the representative of the British monarchy in Canada.

This type of government system is called a constitutional monarchy: "a political system in which the head of state is a king or queen ruling to the extent allowed by a constitution" (as defined at:

<[http://encarta.msn.com/dictionary\\_/Constitutional%20monarchy%20.html](http://encarta.msn.com/dictionary_/Constitutional%20monarchy%20.html)>).