**What Other Goals do Laws Achieve?**

In Canada, laws not only govern our conduct; they are also intended to carry out social policies. For example, laws provide for benefits when workers are injured on the job, for insurance when workers are unemployed, for health care, and for loans to students.

Laws are also aimed at ensuring fairness. By recognizing and protecting basic individual rights and freedoms, such as liberty and equality, our laws ensure that stronger groups and individuals do not use their powerful positions to take unfair advantage of weaker groups or people.

Our legal system, based on a tradition of law and justice, gives Canadian society a valuable framework. The rule of law, freedom under the law, democratic principles, and respect for others form the foundations of this important heritage.

**Public Law and Private Law:**

Laws can be divided into public and private law. **Public law** is concerned with matters that affect society as a whole. It includes criminal, constitutional and administrative law. Public laws set the rules for the relationship between the individual and society or for the roles of different governments. For example, if someone breaks a criminal law, it is regarded as a wrong against society as a whole. **Private law, also called "civil law,"** deals with the relationships between individuals. Civil laws set the rules for contracts, property ownership, the rights and obligations of family members, damage to someone or to their property caused by others and so on. A civil case is an action between private parties, primarily to settle private disputes.