

Student Vote



Getting started

How do I use this resource?

This resource was developed for secondary school students, specifically grades 10 and 11. However, these lessons may be applicable to any secondary grade level with your own modifications.

Each lesson includes a broad list of learning outcomes that will correlate with your province or territory's mandated Social Studies curriculum.

Please take note of the Extensions which have been included for the purpose of generating greater in-depth study, cross-curricular applications and engaging families through student driven conversation.

Why is it important to encourage family discussion?

Based on extensive feedback from past programs, we know that students are eager to share their knowledge with family and friends, engaging them in conversation about the election. This family exchange allows students to explore different points of view and further develop habits of informed citizenship. Discuss ideas with your students that may encourage 'democracy at the dinner table' as take home assignments.

Should I extend the program to the entire school?

Yes! Teachers report increased satisfaction when the entire school has the opportunity to vote. Engaging more grades than just your own can be an empowering experience for your students – let them take on the challenge of organizing the campaign and hosting Student Vote Day for their peers.

How does Student Vote Day work?

During National Student Vote Week, October 6th to 10th, hundreds of thousands of students from across Canada will cast a Student Vote ballot. The results of the Student Vote will be shared with media partners for broadcast and publication following the official election.

Please respect the confidentiality of the Student Vote results after submission. We keep them confidential until the close of the official polls on Election Night (October 14th, 2008), so that students experience the same process as adult voters.

Thank you!

As always, the Student Vote Team is here to support you and your students. Please feel free to contact us through www.studentvote.ca or call toll free, 1.866.488.8775 for any assistance.

Acknowledgements

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Linda Gendron
Susanna Haas
Nancy Hamer-Strahl
Heather Leatham
Peter Mackenzie
Brenda McIntyre
Tracey McKinley
Maureen McNamara
Richard McQuade
Ted Mukhar
Ron Munro
Cam Murray
Manfred Natzel
Barbara Odenwald
Greg Pearson
Susan Rab
Megan Seca
Don Sparks
Diana Turner
Paula Waatainen
John Winchester

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Lesson 1: Why an Election?



Learning Outcomes:

- Students will understand the principle behind elections.
- Students will consider and discuss issues and problems facing Canada and propose possible solutions.

Activity Description:

The class will participate in a teacher-led discussion and in a vote that will make clear the dynamics and importance of an election. Groups of students will propose and discuss possible solutions to problems facing Canada. Afterwards, students creatively present their proposals to the rest of the class or for the school community.

Teacher Preparation:

- Poster materials: craft/chart paper, markers and tape (if necessary)
- Arrange for available wall space either within the class or for school display

Background:

In a democratic state, citizens have the freedom to think what they want, make the choices they want and express their values openly. Elections are the foundation of democracy – we can't have it without them. The act of voting provides citizens the opportunity to control the execution of popular power that occurs between election days. The vote is a means for Canadians to determine what problems need to be addressed, what solutions should be implemented and who should implement them. We may agree on what the challenges are, but disagree on the effectiveness or worth of a solution. We may believe the incumbent government should continue to exercise power, or that it is time for a change. Democratic elections allow us to settle our differences without resorting to violence or oppression.

Activity:

1. Ask your class to identify a problem in the school community. Choose something that everyone is aware of, has an opinion of and is somewhat controversial (e.g. quality of cafeteria food, an unpopular rule, dress code, bullying).*
2. Ask your class to come up with three separate proposals to solve the problem. Write these on the board where everyone can see.
3. Choose a student to advocate each proposal and give them two minutes to convince the class that their solution is the best.
4. Through a show of hands, ask your students to vote for the different solutions proposed. Alternatively, you may want to offer a secret vote by ballot, or ask students to close their eyes while you count the raised hands.

5. Discuss the dynamics of the vote. Some students may feel that a proposed solution would not be effective while others may feel a solution infringes on their freedom or does more harm than good. Ask your students if they feel the vote was effective in identifying a solution or course of action? Was it fair? If the vote was secret, ask the students how they would have felt voting publicly. Discuss the differences between private and public voting so they can better appreciate the secret ballot of the real vote.
6. Discuss the election and its relevance to Canada's future. Compare the process they just went through and how Canada will be choosing a course of action by selecting a new government.
7. Invite students to come up to the board and write down what they see as Canada's challenges today. Leave these points on display for the next part of this activity.
8. As a class, review the challenges listed and try to agree on what the key challenges are for the country.
9. Divide students into 4 or 5 groups and ask them to discuss how they would solve the key challenges they identified.
10. Each group will create a presentation of their vision for the class in any form they choose (e.g. a speech, play, song, rap or picture).
11. After the groups have finished**, have them present their vision for Canada's future to the class.
12. Now ask the students how they see the government being a part of these ideas. In what way can or should the government be involved or direct these ideas?
13. Through conversation and reference to the group presentations, help students identify that the election will present an opportunity for students to choose a vision with their vote.

*For a different approach, tell your students that there is a sum of money to be spent for the benefit of the entire school. Ask for proposals on how it should be spent. You can adapt the rest of the exercise to deal with the proposals.

**Students may need more time than one class to complete a creative presentation. If time is not available, have each group discuss the problems and possible solutions and share with the rest of the class.

Extension Activity:

For homework, ask students to talk about their group's vision for Canada's future with someone outside of class. What do they think of the vision? What do they think the government could do to make it a reality? What could they do to help?

Lesson 2: Government and Responsibilities



Learning Outcomes:

- Students will understand the responsibilities of various levels of government
- Students will learn about the different programs and services involved
- Students will understand the impact and relevance of government in their lives
- Students will learn about the meaning and significance of representative democracy

Activity Description:

Through in-class discussion, handouts and homework, students will learn about the various levels of government and their responsibilities. Students will brainstorm how politics is intertwined with their daily lives. Using electoral district maps, teachers will demonstrate how the division of governmental jurisdictions works.

Teacher Preparation:

- Locate the electoral district map of Canada and of your province provided in your Student Vote resource package.
- Make copies of 2.2 – Whose Responsibility is it? for your students.
- Make copies of the 2.4 - Ministry Research Outline for your students.
- Suggested resource: Government of Canada web site – www.canada.gc.ca

Background:

Canada has three levels of government: federal, provincial and municipal. Each level of government has its own elected representatives and areas of responsibility. At the federal level, elected representatives are called Members of Parliament (MPs). The political party with the most elected MPs forms government. Currently, there are 308 MPs in the House of Commons. When the House is sitting, MPs are responsible for studying, debating and voting on bills (proposed laws) and raising issues that concern their constituents. When the house is not sitting, MPs spend their time meeting with their constituents to discuss their concerns and to provide guidance and advice relating to government services.

Activity:

1. Start a conversation about the relevance of government and ask students if or how government directly affects their lives.
2. Explain to students that government impacts everything in their lives. Use everyday examples to highlight this point (e.g. how much their income is taxed, the quality of the environment, how provinces are funded, what music is played on the radio).
3. Explain to students that there are three levels of government in Canada and each level has its own responsibilities. Using 2.1 – List of Government Departments, review the responsibilities of each level of government.

4. Following the overview, have students complete the handout 2.2 – Whose Responsibility is it? Afterwards, take up the answers as a class.
5. Discuss the concept of a representative democracy and how each jurisdiction of government is divided into areas called electoral districts or constituencies (municipally, these are called wards). Each constituency has an elected official (someone elected by the people) to represent the needs of their constituents (the people living in each constituency or area) in government. Use the electoral district map of your province or territory as a tool to illustrate the division of districts across the country and highlight your school's electoral district.
6. Review the terminology associated with elected representatives at each level:
 - Federal level = Members of Parliament (MPs)
 - Provincial/Territorial level = Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs), Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs), Members of the National Assembly (MNAs) and Members of the House Assembly (MHAs)
 - Municipal level = councilor
7. Explain Canada's electoral system. Within an electoral district, the candidate who gets the most votes becomes the elected representative. This system is called first-past-the-post or single member plurality. The political party that elects the most representatives forms government.
8. For homework, assign the following two tasks to prepare students for the remainder of the campaign.
 - a) Have each student select one of the federal ministries and ask them to research the programs and services associated with it. Students should complete the corresponding worksheet 2.4 – Ministry Research Outline.
 - b) Ask them to research their home electoral district. This information can be found at www.elections.ca.
9. The following day, have each student present their findings to the rest of the class.

Extension Activity:

Organize a Jeopardy game, where students would have to guess the Ministry after hearing about the program and services involved.

2.1 - LIST OF GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS/RESPONSIBILITIES

Federal	Provincial/Territorial*	Municipal
Agriculture and Agri-Food	Aboriginal Affairs	Building & Health Inspection
Canada Customs and Revenue Agency	Agriculture	Libraries
Canadian Heritage	Attorney General	Local By-laws
Canadian International Development Agency	Citizenship and Immigration	Parks & Recreation
Citizenship and Immigration	Culture	Planning & Zoning
Environment	Community and Social Services	Policing & Fire Protection
Finance	Consumer and Commercial Relations	Solid Waste management
Fisheries and Oceans	Development and Mines	Transportation
Foreign Affairs and International Trade	Economic Development & Trade	Water & Sewer
Health	Education	
Human Resources Development	Training, Colleges & Universities	
Indian and Northern Affairs Development	Environment	
Industry Canada	Energy	
Justice Canada	Finance	
Labour	Health	
National Defence	Labour	
National Revenue	Municipal Affairs	
Natural Resources	Natural Resources	
Public Works and Government Services Canada	Tourism	
Economic Development Agency	Transportation	
Solicitor General of Canada	Rural Affairs	
Treasury Board Secretariat	*May vary slightly from province to territory	
Veterans Affairs		

2.2 - GOVERNMENT: WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS IT?

Fill in the level of government and Department or Ministry Associated for each responsibility.

Description	Level	Department/Ministry
Responsible for administering the health care system and providing services to the public		
Responsible for administering various social and economic benefit incentive programs delivered through the tax system.		
Works towards a more peaceful and secure world, developing relationships with other countries, and promotes our culture and values internationally		
Administers the system of publicly funded elementary and secondary school education		
Maintenance, and opening and closing of libraries		
Responsible for planting, repairing, pruning and removing trees in parks and open spaces		
Improving the quality and monitoring the safety of foods – from the field to the fork.		
Specializing in the sustainable development and use of natural resources, energy, minerals, metals, forests and earth sciences across the nation		
Responsible for healthy growth and child development, protecting children from abuse and support to children with special needs		
Admitting immigrants, visitors, foreign students and temporary workers who enhance social and economic growth		
Administering the system for issuing drivers' licenses, vehicle licensing, and ensuring road safety through various programs		
Meeting the government's constitutional, treaty, political and legal responsibilities to First Nations, Inuit and Northerners		
Implementing garbage pick-up and recycling programs		
To set, communicate and enforce workplace standards while encouraging greater workplace self-reliance		
Setting and administering national principles for health care; surveillance, prevention, control and research of disease outbreaks across Canada and the world		

2.3 - WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS IT?
Teacher Version

Description	Level	Department/Ministry
Responsible for administering the health care system and providing services to the public	Provincial/ Territorial	Health
Responsible for administering various social and economic benefit incentive programs delivered through the tax system.	Federal	Canada Revenue Agency
Works towards a more peaceful and secure world, developing relationships with other countries, and promotes our culture and values internationally	Federal	Foreign Affairs
Administers the system of publicly funded elementary and secondary school education	Provincial/ Territorial	Education
Maintenance, and opening and closing of libraries	Municipal	Libraries
Responsible for planting, repairing, pruning and removing trees in parks and open spaces	Municipal	Parks & Recreation
Improving the quality and monitoring the safety of foods – from the field to the fork.	Federal	Agriculture
Specializing in the sustainable development and use of natural resources, energy, minerals, metals, forests and earth sciences across the nation	Federal	Natural Resources
Responsible for healthy growth and child development, protecting children from abuse and support to children with special needs	Provincial/ Territorial	Children & Youth
Admitting immigrants, visitors, foreign students and temporary workers who enhance social and economic growth	Provincial/ Territorial and Federal	Provincial: Immigration Federal: Citizenship & Immigration
Administering the system for issuing drivers' licenses, vehicle licensing, and ensuring road safety through various programs	Provincial/ Territorial	Transportation
Meeting the government's constitutional, treaty, political and legal responsibilities to First Nations, Inuit and Northerners	Federal	Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
Implementing garbage pick-up and recycling programs	Municipal	Solid Waste Collection
To set, communicate and enforce workplace standards while encouraging greater workplace self-reliance	Provincial/ Territorial	Labour
Setting and administering national principles for health care; surveillance, prevention, control and research of disease outbreaks across Canada and the world	Federal	Health Canada

2.4 – MINISTRY RESEARCH OUTLINE

Name of Ministry:

About the Ministry:

Programs and Services:

Interesting Facts or News Announcements:

How does this affect me?

Lesson 3: Building your Elections Office



Learning Outcomes:

- Students will learn about the history of the vote in Canada
- Students will learn about the role of Elections Canada
- Students will develop a campaign strategy and build their own elections office in preparation for Student Vote Day

Activity Description:

This lesson empowers students to develop a voice and role in their own student election. After learning about the history of voting in Canada, students will be introduced to Student Vote and its mandate. Students become involved in a particular element of the process (communications, events, voter education) and develop strategies to promote and administer the election.

Teacher Preparation:

- Review the Student Vote Campaign Guide and Election Operations Manual.
- Review the 3.1 History of the Vote. For a more detailed background, please visit: <http://www.elections.ca/content.asp?section=gen&document=index&dir=his&lang=e&textonly=false>
- Make copies of the 3.2 - Understanding the Election Process

Background:

Elections Canada is an independent, non-partisan agency that reports directly to Parliament and must be prepared at all times to conduct a federal general election, by-election or referendum, administer the political financing provisions of the Canada Elections Act, monitor compliance and enforce electoral legislation. Elections Canada is also mandated to conduct voter education and information programs, and provide support to the independent boundaries commissions in charge of adjusting the boundaries of federal electoral districts following each decennial census.

Bill C-16 became law in May 2007, setting scheduled election dates. Under Majority Governments, elections will be held on the third Monday in October in the fourth year after the previous election. The Prime Minister still reserves the right to call an election at his discretion as reserved under the Parliament of Canada Act.

Bill C-31 was passed in June 2007 with a number of reforms to the Elections Act including a requirement for voters to present their identification at the polls.

Activity:

1. Briefly review the History of the Vote in Canada. Emphasize universal suffrage and accessibility for all. Ask students why it is important that all individuals participate.
2. Introduce the role of Elections Canada and discuss the introduction of fixed election dates (Bill C-16). How does this impact the process for political parties and the elections office?
3. Introduce the new requirements for voters to present identification at the polls (Bill C-31). Who might be affected by this requirement (e.g. homeless people)? How can Elections Canada help ensure all voters are informed and able to vote?
4. Explain the process of Student Vote and its history (refer to www.studentvote.ca). Empower your students to take on the responsibility of organizing their school's Student Vote Day.
5. As a class, create a list of shared goals for the campaign. For example:
 - What is your goal for student engagement and voter turnout?
 - What should other students at your school know before they vote?
 - Do you want students to speak to their family about the election?
6. Divide students into groups and assign specific departments to each. Ask each group to develop ideas and strategies related to their department. For example:
 - a. Communications Team – How can you inform students and teachers about Student Vote Day? What methods of communication are available? How can you develop interest in the campaign? How can you advertise the vote?
 - b. Voter Education Team – How can you inform students about the issues? Are there activities you can organize to help educate the rest of the school? Is there literature that you can create and distribute to homeroom classes?
 - c. Event Team – What types of events can you organize for the campaign (e.g. all-candidates meetings, informative presentations, leaders' debate viewing party)?
 - d. Operations Team – How should you organize the in-school vote? Should you use a variety of methods? Should you incorporate advance voting? Who will take on the roles of election officials?
 - e. Media Relations – How can you engage local media in your campaign?
7. Have each group present their ideas, strategies and list of roles to the rest of the class and allow ideas to be further explored by all students.
8. Afterwards, discuss establishing a support network of people who can help implement the strategies (e.g. drama class can make informative announcements, visual arts class can create posters).
9. Create your own election countdown for Student Vote in your school and create an action plan to achieve your goals for the program.
10. Assign 3.2 - Understanding the Election Process for homework and take up answers the following day (This can also be completed as pre-activity to begin the lesson).

Extension Activities:

Continue with the ideas behind #8 and assign each group one of the ideas related to each supportive network that was brainstormed - for example, contacting the drama class and physically recruiting volunteers to make Student Vote posters. Report any meeting results and plans with the class.

3.1 - HISTORY OF THE VOTE

The following provides some highlights regarding the history of voting rights in Canada.

British North America – Only Affluent Men May Vote (1758-1866)

In the colonies that would later form Canada, voting was restricted to a small part of the population, wealthy men. Voting eligibility was generally based on property ownership - an individual had to own property or other assets of a specified value. However, paying a certain amount in annual taxes or rent could also qualify an elector. Women and various religious and ethnic groups were excluded the right to vote. In the case of women, the exclusion was a matter of convention rather than law.

Extending the Right to Vote (1867 – 1919)

After Confederation, convention became law, and women were disqualified from voting. As early as the 1870s, Canadian women began to organize to acquire the right to vote. Women's suffrage was a long and laborious process that started to gain strength in the early 1900's. Women campaigned persistently with petitions, lectures and various demonstrations. Undeterred by hostile public opinion and politicians, they engaged the help of influential organizations and managed to have bills introduced in provincial legislatures to extend voting rights to women. When the bills were defeated, they had them reintroduced over and over until they were successful. In 1916, Manitoba was the first province to extend the vote to women and shortly after many provinces followed. By 1917, women had the same right as men to vote in Ontario provincial elections and by 1918 in federal elections.

Making the Vote Universal (1920-1960)

The modern era in the history of the vote in Canada began with the adoption of the 1920 Dominion Elections Act. In principle the right to vote became universal but discrimination was present due to significant loopholes in the electoral law. As a result, Aboriginal people and people of "Oriental" origin were unable to vote. In particular, Canadian citizens of Japanese origin were at one time denied the right to vote, even when they had served in the Canadian army during the war. Various religious groups were also affected. Aboriginal people could vote since Confederation, but only if they gave up their treaty rights and registered Indian status. The last of these limitations were lifted in 1960, but not without much political debate.

Accessibility for All (1961-1997)

A variety of steps were taken to make voting even more accessible and convenient for all electors, including those with disabilities and those unable to go to their polling station on election day. Over time, several methods have been introduced to ensure that all voters can exercise their franchise.

- Employers were legislated to provide their staff with sufficient time off to vote, if their schedules would not permit them to vote otherwise.
- Voting hours were extended.
- Advance voting (and proxy voting in Ontario) were introduced at first on a limited basis, but ultimately were made available to any voter unable to go to the polling station on election day.
- Level access for people in wheelchairs was provided at polling stations.
- Mobile polls began visiting various institutions to collect the vote.
- Voter information was systematically made available in both official languages, and in some Native and ancestral languages.

Source: History of the Vote - <http://www.elections.ca/content.asp?section=gen&document=index&dir=his&lang=e&textonly=false>

Discussion Questions:

If methods have been introduced to make voting more accessible, why has voter turnout declined?

Do you believe voting is an important responsibility? Will you vote in the future?

3.2 - UNDERSTANDING THE ELECTION PROCESS

Suggested Resource: Elections Canada – www.elections.ca

1. Who is eligible to vote in federal elections?
2. How often do federal elections take place? What is the new legislation regarding election dates?
3. How do electors vote in federal elections? What are the different ways?
4. How do electors know where to vote?
5. Do electors need to show identification before receiving a ballot?

3.3 - UNDERSTANDING THE ELECTION PROCESS

Teacher Copy

1. Who is eligible to vote in federal elections?
 - You are eligible to vote if you:
 - are a Canadian citizen
 - are at least 18 years old on election day

2. How often do federal elections take place?

Every four years. Unless the government loses confidence of the Legislature or when the Prime Minister requests the dissolution of parliament. Bill C-16 became law in May 2007, setting scheduled election dates. Elections will be held on the third Monday in October in the fourth year after the previous election. The Prime Minister still reserves the right to call an election at his discretion as reserved under the Parliament of Canada Act.

3. How do electors vote in federal election? What are the different ways?

You may vote:

 - at the advance poll established for your polling division on Friday, October 3, Saturday, October 4; or Monday, October 6, 2008
 - using a special ballot, whether by mail or at the local Elections Canada office
 - on election day, Tuesday, October 14, 2008, at your polling station
 - If you want to vote by special ballot, your application for a special ballot must be received no later than 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, October 7, 2008. Visit your local Elections Canada office or elections.ca

4. How do electors know where to vote?

When an election is called, most electors are sent a Voter Information Card. Elections Canada sends one to every elector whose name appears on the preliminary list of electors during an electoral event. It tells electors when and where they can cast their ballots on election day or at the advance polls in their polling decision.

If you do not receive a Voter Information Card, you should contact Elections Canada (www.elections.ca or 1-800-463-6868) or a local Returning Office.

5. Do electors need to show identification before receiving a ballot?

Yes. New rules under the Canada Elections Act now require electors to prove their identity and address before being given a ballot at the polling station. Visit elections.ca to review the three options for identification.

6. Can an eligible citizen still vote if they are not on the voters list?

Inclusion in the National Register of Electors is voluntary. You are not required to have your name listed and you are eligible to vote so long as you are a Canadian citizen and are 18 years of age or older on the day of polling. If an elector chooses not to be listed in the National Register of Electors, his or her right to vote is protected. However, at the time of a federal general election, by-election or referendum, such an elector will need to add his or her name to the voters list by registering at the local Elections Canada office during the revision period, at an advance poll, or at an ordinary poll on election day.

Lesson 4: The Political Spectrum



Learning Outcomes:

- Students will understand the concepts and terms associated with the political spectrum
- Students will be able to identify where parties and party policies fit into the political spectrum
- Students will develop a sense of their own political beliefs while observing and learning to respect different points of view

Activity Description:

Students will learn about the philosophy behind the political spectrum, some of the key terminology associated with it, theoretical and practical differences between the different areas on the spectrum, as well as where they fit based on their personal beliefs and priorities.

Teacher Preparation:

- Make copies of the 4.2 Political Statements Worksheet.
- Make an overhead or copies of 4.1 Basic Political Spectrum.
- Optional: Create a 'blind policy' questionnaire. For five to ten federal election issues, list the different party policies without indicating which policy belongs to each party. Refer to media sources for information.

Background:

While there is much debate over the modern meanings and relevance of the terms 'left' and 'right' as associated with the political spectrum, we can still use these terms to describe the general nature of governments and government policies associated with them. Ideas on the left historically promote change and reform, while ideas on the right would support tradition. Ideas close to the centre are moderate, while more extreme ideas are farther from the centre.

The historical origin of the terms refers to the early seating plans of the French legislatures. The left was comprised of the Third Estate, the non-aristocratic class, including peasants, workers and merchants. To the right was the Second estate, French aristocracy who were the highest class and made up less than one percent of the French population. Broken down into simplistic terms, the political spectrum on the next page will provide a base knowledge of the current spectrum in Canadian politics.

Also, acquaint the students with fiscal and social variants of 'left' and 'right' politics. For instance, a party could be socially 'right', or conservative, by supporting tougher penalties for crime, but fiscally 'left' by placing more government regulations on industry.

It is imperative students realize that governments, politicians and citizens are made up of all combinations of socialists, capitalists, conservatives, liberals and everything in between. Visit www.politicalcompass.org to read about where some political parties, prominent leaders and public figures stand on the spectrum.

Activity (The first three steps are optional)

1. Hand out the 'blind policy' questionnaire. For each question, ask students, based on current knowledge and personal opinion, to choose independently which policy among the existing party policies they favour. Have students record their answers on a piece of paper.
2. Once the questionnaire is completed, review each question and reveal to students which policy belongs to which party.
3. Have students analyze their votes. Ask them what factors influenced their votes? Would they still vote the same way if they knew the parties beforehand?
4. Introduce the 4.1 Basic Political Spectrum using an overhead or photocopies. Discuss each column separately and then compare them with each other.
5. Have students fill out the 4.2 Political Statements Worksheet. They should indicate whether the statement is liberal, socialist or conservative (with fiscal / social indicators if appropriate). They should also indicate whether they agree, disagree or are neutral with the statement's views.
6. Take up the worksheet, revealing the political leanings of the statements.
7. For homework, students should write a paragraph reflecting on whether or not their personal opinions on the statements reflect a place on the political spectrum.

Please keep in mind and emphasis to students that there is a difference between liberal, conservative, and socialist political points of view and the views of the Liberal and Conservative (as well as others) political parties.

Extension Activities:

Ask students to look at the Basic Political Spectrum Handout and use the internet to brainstorm concrete historical examples to support the theoretical points under each heading - either a fact, a piece of data or a quote from a Canadian federal politician.

4.1 BASIC POLITICAL SPECTRUM

*These terms are very broad, and are meant as only an outline of historically understood political positions

LEFT

- Social Conditions need to change as quickly as possible.
- Society is not bound by tradition.
- Government has a moral obligation to take care of needy persons directly.
- Everyone should have equality of condition.
- The rights of individuals have the highest priority.
- The government should own key industries, banks, transportation facilities and natural resources.
- Left is generally associated with being socialist

CENTRE

- Change of social conditions should take place, but at a cautious pace.
- Tradition is important, but change must be accepted if it is the will of the majority.
- There are many different approaches to caring for the needy.
- Everyone should have equality of opportunity and condition.
- Law and order is important, but the rights of the individual come first.
- Some form of government management of the economy is necessary.
- Centre is generally associated with being liberal

RIGHT

- The present system should be maintained. Change only when absolutely necessary and do it slowly and carefully.
- Traditions must be respected. They provide society with stability and security.
- Government should not interfere in the lives of individuals (government provides a helping hand, not a handout). Private charity and self-reliance are better.
- Everyone should have equal opportunity.
- Law and order have the highest priority.
- Business and industry should be kept in the hands of private individuals.
- Right is generally associated with being conservative

4.2 POLITICAL STATEMENTS

Worksheet

Read each of the statements below. Try to identify each as “liberal”, “conservative” or “socialist”. Use the terms “fiscally” or “socially” if applicable. Also indicate your level of agreement with the statements by drawing a happy, sad or neutral face.

1. “Rising tuition costs are making post-secondary education inaccessible to many students. It’s time to abolish tuition fees and have the government fully fund all levels of education.”
2. “Our laws are too easy on young offenders. Youth would stay out of trouble more if there were more severe penalties for crime.”
3. “The minimum wage is the highest in Canada. I’m a small business owner and I’m frustrated because it’s killing my business. We should give business owners more flexibility. If a person doesn’t want to work for \$5.50 per hour, they can look for a job with someone else.”
4. “I think it’s time to decriminalize marijuana in this country. Adults should have the right to choose whether or not to use this substance.”
5. “Welfare programs are too rich in this country. People lose their initiative and their drive if it is too easy to go on welfare.”
6. “I’m concerned about the growth of private medical clinics. We have to make sure we protect the universality of the medicare system. All citizens deserve equal access to health care. There shouldn’t be better treatment for those who can afford it.”
7. “I’m relieved that same sex marriages are now legal in Canada. The ability to get married is a fundamental individual right that shouldn’t be denied to same sex couples.”
8. “It’s hard to turn on the television most nights without seeing nudity and violence. There should be more regulations restricting the types of programming that is out there – particularly at times of the day that children are awake.”

4.2 POLITICAL STATEMENTS WORKSHEET

Teacher Copy

1. "Rising tuition costs are making post-secondary education inaccessible to many students. It's time to abolish tuition fees and have the government fully fund all levels of education."

SOCIALISM

2. "Our laws are too easy on young offenders. Youth would stay out of trouble more if there were more severe penalties for crime."

SOCIAL CONSERVATISM

3. "The minimum wage is the highest in Canada. I'm a small business owner and I'm frustrated because it's killing my business. We should give business owners more flexibility. If a person doesn't want to work for \$5.50 per hour they can look for a job with someone else."

FISCAL CONSERVATISM

4. "I think it's time to decriminalize marijuana in this country. Adults should have the right to choose whether or not they want to use this substance."

LIBERALISM (though socialists may concur)

5. "Welfare programs are too rich in this country. People lose their initiative and their drive if it is too easy to go on welfare."

FISCAL CONSERVATISM

6. "I'm concerned about the growth of private medical clinics. We have to make sure that we protect the universality of the Medicare system. All citizens deserve equality of access to healthcare. There shouldn't be better treatment for those who can afford it."

SOCIALISM (many liberals would concur)

7. "I'm relieved that same sex marriages are now legal in Canada. The ability to get married is a fundamental individual right that should not be denied to same sex couples."

LIBERALISM (socialists may concur)

8. "It's hard to turn on the television most nights without seeing nudity and violence. There should be more regulations restricting the types of programming that is out there – particularly at times of the day that children are awake."

SOCIAL CONSERVATISM

Lesson 5: Political Party!



Learning Outcomes:

- Students will be introduced to the concept of political parties and political platforms
- Students will become familiar with the Canadian political parties competing in the federal election
- Students will use oral speaking skills to present details from their own political platforms to their peers

Activity Description:

Students will be introduced to the notion of the political party and participate in a class discussion about their knowledge of Canadian parties, their platforms and their histories. Using their own opinions about what issues are most important in the current election, students will work in groups to develop a theoretical party and creatively present it to the class.

Teacher Preparation:

- Make copies of the list of the registered federal political parties and websites (www.elections.ca or www.studentvote.ca).
- Make copies of 5.1 – Political Party Research Charts.

Background:

A political party is made up of people who share similar political ideals and have similar political goals. For those goals to become law and for changes to be made in parliament, the party must achieve power through election to the House of Commons. Policies are put into practice after the elected parties and politicians have met, discussed and voted on the proposed policies. Joining a political party can be an effective way for you to influence those parties and politicians as your voice will be heard and taken into account when policies are being formed and reviewed.

Activity:

1. Start the lesson by asking students which political parties they are familiar with.
2. Distribute a list of the registered federal political parties and corresponding websites (www.elections.ca)
3. Ask the students why they believe certain parties are better known and receive more votes than other parties (e.g. long history, fundraising, advertising, broad level of support, well known candidates, strong leaders).
4. Introduce students to the concept of political platforms (the aims and principles of a political party).

5. Talk to the students about how political parties are formed and what they need to register.
6. Ask students what issues they believe are important in this election. Divide students into 5 groups based on their preferences.
7. Each group will create their own political party based on the information discussed at the beginning of the lesson and their own personal interests.
8. Each political party will develop the following components:
 - a) Name, tagline, and mission statement
 - b) Logo, colour scheme, and poster
 - c) Political policies based on three issues
 - d) Demographics of the party members: age, interests, region, etc.
 - e) Methods and strategies to encourage people to join their party and engage voters
9. Each group will be required to give a 3 to 5 minute presentation to the rest of the class.
10. Handout to students 5.1 Political Party Research Chart
11. For homework, assign each group one of the registered political parties to research.
12. Using the party websites, each student will be responsible for researching the platforms, priorities, strengths and perceived weaknesses of the party.
13. At the beginning of the next class, form new groups using a jigsaw method, ensuring that each group has a member that has researched a different political party. Ask students to share their findings with their new group members.
14. Following the group activity, generate a discussion of what parties and policies are most intriguing to the students as future voters?

Extension Activities:

Ask students to pick a past Prime Minister and research what party they represented and how their beliefs and policies placed them at a particular point on the spectrum. For example, were they a 'right leaning liberal', or a 'left leaning conservative'. Why were they placed there?

Ask students to identify which of the political parties are 'major players' and which are not. Where do the 'minor players' fit on the spectrum and why? Why are they not considered 'major players'?

Ask students to identify parties that no longer exist (e.g., the Canadian Alliance), and to place them on the spectrum where they think they belonged, citing reasons why. Why do these parties no longer exist?

Lesson 6: Youth Participation



Objectives:

- Students will examine why youth voter turnout is low and the potential reasons behind it
- Students will consider the impact of varying rates of voter turnout
- Students will consider how their actions can influence outcomes

Activity details:

Students will discuss possible reasons for voter apathy and the implications of varying levels of political participation amongst demographic groups. A special emphasis will be placed on youth voter turnout and assessing how responsive political parties are to their concerns. As an assignment, students will develop ways to educate and engage their peers in this Student Vote campaign.

Teacher Preparation:

- Make an overhead or handout of 6.1 - Voting Trends.
- Arrange for Internet access.
- Make copies 6.2 - Youth Parties graphic organizer for each student.
- Review the mechanics of formal letter writing/writing for a purpose

Background:

Voter turnout in federal elections has declined significantly since 1988. From a post-war average of 75%, turnout fell to 60.9% in 2004, before increasing slightly to 64.9% in 2006. Canadian research has shown that the decline is due primarily to an unprecedented drop-off among the youngest electors. In the 2006 federal election, only 43 per cent of young people aged 18-24 voted. Despite showing a near 7 per cent increase from the 2004 election, young people were more than 33 points behind people aged 65-75 in participation.

Since 2000 the use of the internet has grown 130% in North America alone. Political parties have taken notice of this trend and are turning to the internet to reach potential voters. As youth are the largest section of the population using the Internet, political party pages in popular social-networking sites have jumped.

Activity:

1. Begin a conversation about why people do and do not vote, discussing factors such as political protest, feeling uninformed, and general political apathy. Ask the students whether they think they will vote when they are of age. Elaborate on their answers through discussion.
2. Hand out or show the 4.1 - Voting Trends information sheet and discuss the trends. Ask students about the implications of varying turnout rates among different age groups. How does this effect public policy or funding priorities? Some questions to discuss:
 - What is the impact of varying rates of turnout among age groups?
 - How does this influence political campaigning?
 - How does this influence public policy?
3. Speak about the impact to of the internet on political parties and campaigning. Discuss if this makes them more aware of the election and/or the party platforms, and whether this makes them more likely to vote.
4. Engage in a discussion about the different methods organizations are trying to employ to get people to vote. (Educational programs like Student Vote, Rock concerts). Which do your students think are effective?
5. Through a class brainstorming session develop a list of ways that you can engage your school in the election. How can you educate students about the candidates and party platforms? How can you inspire participation? How can you use the internet or social networking sites (Facebook and MySpace) to spur dialogue and participation?
6. Afterwards, divide the class into working groups to execute the ideas.

Extensions:

For homework ask students to interview their parents about their voting habits and encourage them to support their participation in this election.

Resources:

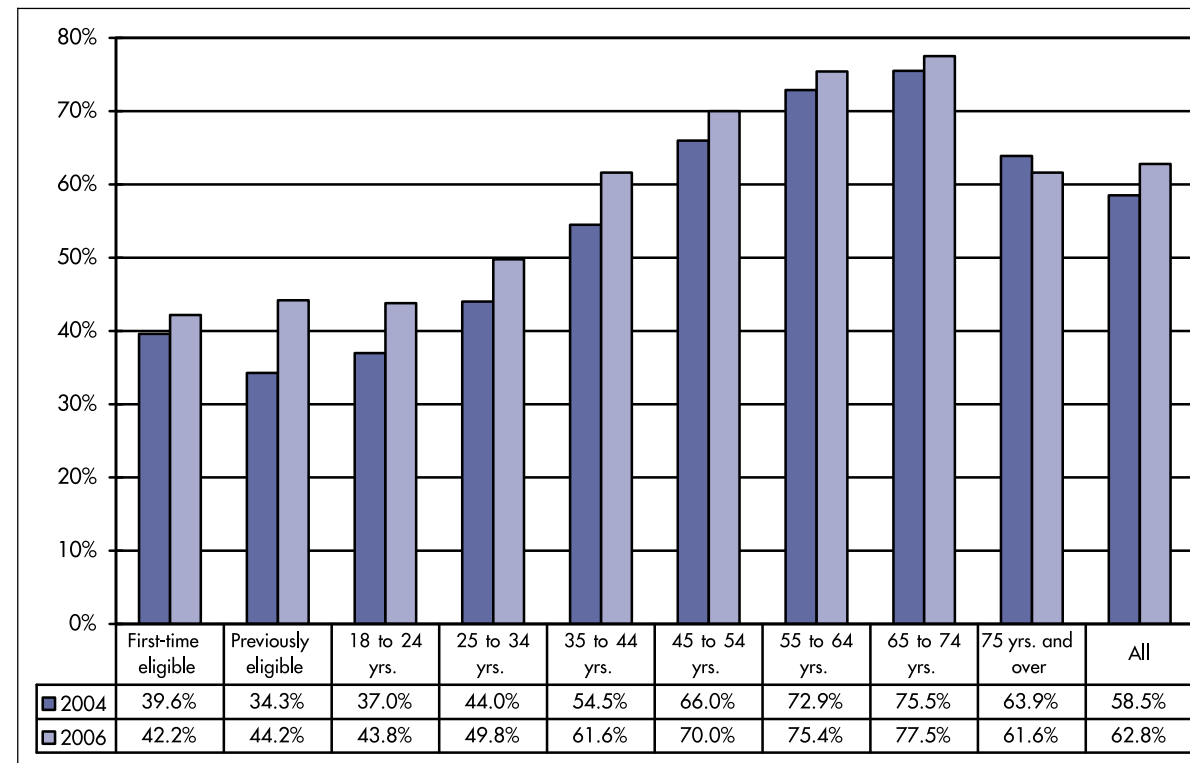
Mertl, Steve. "Canadian parties look south for lessons in web campaigning". *Globe and Mail*, Sept.3, 2008: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20080903.wgtobamatech0903/BNStory/Technology/home>

Youth.gc.ca: <http://youth.gc.ca/yoaux.jsp?&lang=en&flash=0&ta=1&auxpageid=855>
Elections Canada: www.elections.ca

Canadian Council on Learning: <http://www.cclca.ca/CCL/Reports/LessonsInLearning/LiL18Jan2006.htm>

6.1 – RECENT VOTING TRENDS IN CANADA

Turnout by age group in the 2004 and 2006 general elections



Note: "First-time eligible" represents youth who were eligible to vote federally for the first time; "previously eligible" represents those who had been eligible to vote in a previous federal election.

Estimated turnout by province

(Based on the number of citizens in the voting age population [%])

	Youth 18-24		Age groups							Total
	First-time eligible	Previously eligible	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	
Canada	42.2	44.2	43.8	49.8	61.6	70.0	75.4	77.5	61.6	62.8
N.L.	24.5	23.3	23.6	33.2	55.1	65.9	72.5	76.9	56.3	55.4
P.E.I.	53.3	51.6	52.0	58.8	73.9	82.6	82.1	83.9	78.4	74.0
N.S.	48.3	48.1	48.1	46.3	65.4	75.6	77.5	77.4	57.1	65.2
N.B.	44.7	45.8	45.5	52.6	68.2	74.0	82.4	84.5	75.5	69.0
Que.	47.3	51.0	50.2	57.0	62.1	67.2	74.4	79.5	55.4	64.1
Ont.	43.7	47.9	47.0	53.7	64.4	70.4	76.3	72.7	56.8	63.7
Man.	33.6	33.4	33.4	44.8	59.0	69.0	72.7	76.0	69.4	60.4
Sask.	30.2	26.6	27.4	39.1	55.8	69.5	84.7	94.4	87.4	62.8
Alta.	40.5	42.7	42.2	40.1	59.4	74.7	73.6	78.2	70.0	60.5
B.C.	37.2	33.2	34.1	39.2	54.4	69.1	72.9	81.9	69.7	59.3
Y.T.	33.3	30.9	31.4	48.1	57.2	78.8	72.4	69.1	78.3	61.4
N.W.T.	29.4	32.4	31.7	41.0	54.7	71.7	66.8	57.2	48.5	53.1
Nun.	22.1	35.5	32.6	45.8	65.8	56.4	70.7	69.1	59.3	52.7

Source: Estimation of Voter Turnout by Age Group at the 39th Federal General Election, January 23, 2006. Elections Canada. Retrieved from http://www.elections.ca/loi/res/rep39ge/estimation39ge_e.pdf

Lesson 7: Understanding the Issues



Learning Outcomes:

- Students will gain perspective on current election issues
- Students will use oral presentation skills to present research to their peers
- Students will practice using standard citation guidelines
- Students will gain perspective on media bias and filtration

Activity Description:

In Part A, students practice gathering and analyzing media for issues being debated in the current election and discuss how to make informed choices. Students are taught to look for bias in the media. Throughout the election, students will track the various media coverage of selected issues and use this information to develop a sense of a party's position over the course of the campaign.

In Part B, the students may either present their research to other classes throughout the school, or conduct an in-class town hall.

Teacher Preparation:

- Make copies of 7.1 Tracking the Issues assignment for each student
- Contact your local returning office or visit party websites to find out which parties and independent candidates are running in your electoral district
- Find two newspaper articles about the same issue that demonstrate media bias and affiliation
- Arrange for available wall space, preferably in the hallways (if necessary)
- Materials: daily newspapers, glue stick or tape, scissors, cardboard, markers, large envelope or folder for each group
- If you choose to do an in-class town hall, please review "Town Hall Guidelines and Proceedings" on the following page

BACKGROUND:

To be active and informed citizens, students must be able to evaluate different points of view and critically examine information to make decisions on issues that are relevant to their lives.

Activity A:

1. Discuss the importance of understanding the issues and making an informed decision. To begin, use a relevant example to help students understand the importance of being informed.
(For example: Without knowing any background information, ask students to vote

for option A or option B concerning the particulars of an upcoming test. Afterwards, explain that option A meant that students would only have to take a test with one question and option B meant that students would have to take a test with 100 questions.)

2. Discuss the process of tracking issues, candidates, and party policies.
3. Discuss the importance of exploring different media (television, radio, newspapers, and on-line resources) to develop an informed opinion on an issue or candidate.
4. Divide the class into groups. Each group will be responsible for tracking a different party or candidate.
5. Distribute 7.1 - Tracking the Issues handout and explain why the source, location in newspaper, and its length are important.
6. Talk about potential bias and media affiliations. Illustrate an example using two newspaper articles from different media groups about the same campaign issue.
7. Explain tasks involved in this activity:
 - a) Students create a top 5 list of campaign issues they will focus on.
 - b) For 5-10 minutes each day, from now until the end of the campaign, students will meet with their group and discuss articles about their party. Encourage them to bring articles from home and notes from the evening news and/or radio broadcasts.
 - c) Remind students to record when and where they received the information, using a proper bibliography reference.
 - d) Develop summaries of their party's position on issues raised over the course of the campaign.
 - e) Before the election, students will create displays for these articles on classroom walls or hallways. Students decide on the content and layout for their display.

Activity B

In the second part of this activity, you may choose between two options or you may decide to do both.

Option 1: Information Delivery Systems – "Peer to Peer Learning"

1. To help educate the rest of the school, have the same groups travel around to other classrooms and give a presentation about their party's platform.
2. As a class, organize the information on a grid and distribute copies to the entire school before the election. The grid would include each party's position on the selected issues.

Option 2: In-Class Town Hall

1. Within their groups students must nominate a candidate to represent their party in an in-class town hall. The remaining members of the group will select a specific topic/issue. They are responsible for preparing their candidate for the event.
2. Select one student to act as the moderator and select several students to take on the roles of journalists.
3. After preparing each candidate, students will become the citizens attending the town hall. They will be responsible for creating questions based on the current election issues.
4. Clearly explain the rules and proceedings of a debate.

5. Arrange the classroom so that the representatives of each party are facing the rest of the class and have the moderator start the town hall.
6. Each candidate should have one minute to introduce themselves and their party platform.
7. The moderator will select citizens to ask their question. Each candidate should have between 1-2 minutes to respond.
8. Journalists should make notes pertaining to each candidate and their responses.
9. At the end, allow time for you to ask any important questions which the voters may have missed.

Extension Activities:

Ask the students who acted as journalists during the town hall to prepare a short report on the candidates' responses and public reaction. Read the reports to the class to illustrate how the different reporters' perspectives have 'coloured' the news. Why were the reports different? What bias can be observed?

Town Hall Guidelines & Proceedings

Designated Roles:

Party Leader or Candidate Representative (The Panel) - Experts on the issues and platforms of their political party.

Moderator – A non-partisan participant conducts the debate and is responsible for keeping the event organized and fair to all participants. They also select who will ask questions.

Time Keeper – Keeps track of the time so that all candidates get the same amount of time to respond to questions. They should signal when each candidate is nearing the end of their time.

Journalists (one per candidate) – Extracts key points from candidates' responses and records them in an organized manner.

Issues will be categorized under the 5 topics that you and your class will decide on prior to the debate.

Citizens – Responsible for asking questions to the panel. Questions can be posed to any candidate/party leader.

Arrangement:

- Set up the classroom so that the party leaders are facing the voters.
- The voters must be able to see the board and the recorders.
- The moderator sits/stands off to the side.

Extra Notes:

- Citizens raise their hand when they want to ask a question.
- Citizens must address a specific candidate and which category the question falls under.
- Candidate(s) respond to questions while being timed by the moderator. Select specific amount of time, for example, 2 minutes.
- Journalists document answers in their notebook.
- Candidates may also ask rebuttal questions, however they must ask the moderator for permission to speak.

7.1 - TRACKING THE ISSUES ASSIGNMENT

Assignment

Name of Political Party

Campaign Issues (Select 5 issues as a class)

Instructions:

- For each day of the campaign period, you will collect information on your group's political party related to the 5 issue topics you have chosen as a class.
- You are required to have a variety of sources. These may include newspapers, magazines, television, radio, and the Internet. You will record the following:
 - Date
 - Source
 - Author (or person speaking or writing)
 - Location (where in the newspaper, the program, etc.)
 - Length
 - Policy/issue summary
 - Bias/slant (if it exists)
- As a group, you will discuss your findings and choose relevant/important items, which summarize your party's position on the issues.
- Create a display/poster/collage/morning announcement with the chosen items.
- Each group will give a 5 minute presentation on their party.

Lesson 8: The Leaders' Debate



Learning Outcomes:

- Students will be able to identify the leaders of the major parties and what their positions are on major issues debated in the election
- Students will develop a sense of which party they wish to support and be able to communicate why

Activity Description:

Students will talk about what they think are important qualities for the Prime Minister to have. This discussion will prepare students to evaluate the leaders' performances in the televised debate. Having filled out the worksheet provided, the students will share their assessments of the leaders' performance with the class.

Teacher Preparation:

- In preparation for the leaders' debate, clip articles from the newspaper or other media sources that can be shared with students to help them understand the debate and its purpose.
- This activity will be most effective if organized into three parts – an in-class introduction, a take home assignment on the night of the debate and a follow up discussion in class.
- Make copies of 7.1 Evaluating the Leaders' Debate Worksheet.

Background:

The leaders' debate and subsequent media and public interpretation of the leaders' performances can act as a turning point in an election campaign or reinforce already existing assumptions among voters. Traditionally, there are usually two debates within federal election campaigns. In past election campaigns, debate environments have taken on various forms, including prominent members of the media acting as a panel, a live audience asking questions or a mix of both.

Activity:

1. Have a preliminary discussion about leadership, focusing on the qualities that your students believe political party leaders should possess.
2. Introduce the debate process within the context of an election, using media clippings and discussing current issues.
 - Is the debate an effective way for leaders to highlight their platform and message? Or are there better ways to engage electors (e.g. advertising and websites)?

- Who gains the most from a debate – the leaders or the public?
 - Are two debates enough for the public to make their decision? Do too many people use the debate to make their voting decision? Or not enough?
 - Who should be involved in a leaders' debate – all of the parties or just the parties with elected seats in the legislature?
 - Does the leaders' debate distract the voters' attention away from the local candidate? Who do you feel is the important person within the current electoral process – the leader or the local candidate?
3. Distribute copies of the 7.1 Evaluating the Leaders' Debate Worksheet and review as a class.
 4. Explain to your students that they will have to watch the leaders' debate with at least one family member or friend (of voting age) and complete the assignment.
 5. Ensure your students are aware of the time and date of the debate in advance.
 - Make a school wide announcement about the time and date of the leaders' debate and encourage the other students and staff to watch the debate (make this achievable by suggesting only 1/2 hour of viewing time).
 6. Following the debate, review the results of the take home exercise with students. Every student has the right to their own opinion.
 - Is there a general agreement among the results for a clear winner?
 - Does the debate change your views about any of the leaders?
 - Do the opinions of family members differ greatly from the students?
 - Could students create a way to highlight their review of the leaders' debate that could be shared with the rest of the school on morning announcements? Do the students feel that this may relieve the responsibility of the rest of the school in doing their own research on who to vote for?
 7. Using newspapers and other media sources, have students compare their thoughts on the performance of the leaders to the reports by the media.
 - Are there major differences between the students' views, families/friends' views and the media's?
 - Ask students if they are influenced by their parents?
 - Could a different viewpoint in the media change the viewpoint of an elector?
 - What do other students in the school think of the debate?

8.1 – EVALUATING THE LEADERS’ DEBATE WORKSHEET

After watching the Leaders’ Debate, complete an evaluation for each political party leader.

Name	Political Party	Strengths	Weaknesses	Overall Score

The following MAY be used as an evaluation framework.

- a) Key points are stated clearly.
- b) Arguments are appropriate and maintain focus.
- c) Key points are supported by evidence (details, examples, explanations)
- d) Debater displays poise, persuasiveness, and confidence.
- e) Persuasiveness is used with control and consideration for opponent(s).
- f) Rebuttal exposes weaknesses of other arguments (not sarcastic or name-calling).
- g) Final remarks are concise and an effective summary of key points.
- h) Passion, strong character and dedication to political process is evident.

(Source: Classroom Criteria from A to Z – Teacher Resource Book)

Lesson 9: All Candidates Meeting



Learning Outcomes:

- Students will become familiar with their local candidates and have an opportunity to gain a better understanding of their party platforms.

Activity Details

Students organize and participate in an All Candidates' Meeting.

Preparation:

- Consult with your administration regarding the event and review any related board policy.
- Decide on time, date and location of meeting (remain flexible to accommodate candidates).
- In larger communities, consider organizing event with another participating school or videotaping/podcasting/live-streaming the event to share with other schools in your riding.
- Work with the Music Department or AV club to set up microphones for the candidates and questions from the audience.

Invitations/Awareness:

- Schools should invite the candidates of all political parties and all independent candidates to participate in the meeting/debate.
- Inform school staff of the meeting and encourage their students' participation.
- Contact local media to publicize and cover the debate.
- Invite school and community representatives to view the event – but not participate.
- Post notices and information around the school to build excitement and interest.

Format/Questions:*

- Choose a moderator and establish an agenda and guidelines for the meeting. Invite a local community leader/journalist to host the debate.
- Develop a format for the event and determine the length.
 - a) Introduction – moderator introduces candidates and indicates meeting format.
 - b) Opening Statements – candidates are given time to outline their party platform.
 - c) Format – decide on the type of questions, response length for each type and determine how many pre-determined questions there will be and when you will open the floor to the audience.
 - d) Questions – decide what issues will be covered and who will ask the questions.
 - e) Closing Statements – candidates will make concluding statements.
 - f) Thank you – arrange for students to thank the candidates for coming.

- Inform candidates and press about the details, format and duration (not the specific questions!).
- Have students prepare some written questions ahead of time to ask candidates. Encourage other classes to submit questions and have your class pick the top 10 questions.

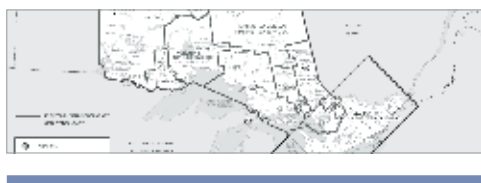
Suggestions for the Debate:

- Include some personal questions – Why did you decide to run? What makes you qualified for the job? What are you passionate about?
- Ensure a respectful, non-partisan environment. Let students know expectations for their behaviour and participation.
- If a candidate cancels or does not show up, respect their campaign schedule and ensure that students are aware that the candidate is running, but is unable to attend.
- Invite parents or members from the community to the event. NOTE: This event is for students. Non-student audience members should NOT be asking questions.
- If possible, provide time for students to talk with candidates after the meeting.
- Students can take notes during the debate to review in class.

*Other Options:

Instead of a formal debate, you may opt to invite the local candidates for a "Political Party". Students would have the opportunity to speak with the candidates over a lunch period, in a more casual atmosphere. It is also suggested that you make arrangements for candidates to set up a table with pamphlets and posters. Always refer to your board policy before planning the event.

Lesson 10: Opinion Polling



Learning Outcomes

- Students will learn about opinion polling and factors affecting their validity
- Students will understand how polls influence opinion and what role they have in elections

Activity Description

Students will examine and discuss polls published before and throughout the election campaign, as well as during previous elections. The class will learn about the importance of polls in the election process, including, how politicians use polls to calculate their campaign strategy, who makes the polls, how they are made and how polling affects a campaign outcome.

Teacher Preparation

- Review a summary of polling information for the current election campaign (please visit national media websites)
- Make copies of an article about a recent opinion poll.

Background

An opinion poll is a question, or a series of questions, asked to a certain group of people, or a sample, in order to find a general pattern in a certain larger population, or a demographic. It is only a single “snapshot” of opinion at a given point in time, which means it can and may change from one day to the next.

There are two main types of polling used in elections. Preference Polls (sometimes called Horse Race Polls) and Issue Polls. Preference Polls report about which leader, party, or candidate is favoured at the time by the general public, while Issue Polls target important issues of the campaign.

A poll can never be 100% accurate, and there are many aspects that affect the validity of the poll. These include methods for selecting respondents, the sample size or number of individuals polled, the wording of a question, the time when respondents are surveyed, and even the attitude of the person asking the questions.

With the advancement of technology, polling has become easier, faster and less expensive over recent years. During a federal election campaign today, it is common to see numerous polls per week by a variety of sources. Traditionally, polls were conducted by telephone, or by sending actual interviewers onto the street to talk to people. With the advent of the internet, polls are just a mouse click away. However, these polls can be hard to judge accurately and are not always entirely representative, as participants tend to self-select.

Activity

1. Begin a discussion about opinion polling in general. Ask students if they have ever participated in a poll and invite them to share their experiences.
2. Introduce the concept of polling in election campaigns and inform students about the two types of polls - preferential or horse race polls and issue polls. Provide examples of each.
3. Have an open conversation about opinion polling in campaigns. Which type of polling is better? Can the results help generate dialogue among citizens? How exact are polls, and how much can they be trusted to provide accurate statistics? Can the results help shape the election? Can the results impact the outcome of the election? If so, how?
4. Distribute copies of the article you have selected and review as a class. Have a discussion about the validity of the poll and answer the following questions:
 - a) When did the poll take place?
 - b) What is the sample size/number of respondents?
 - c) How were respondents selected? Was it on-line or by phone?
 - d) Who was the sponsor (on whose behalf was the poll conducted)?
 - e) Is it a Horse race or Issue poll? What were the results?
 - f) Were there any events or scandals that may have affected the outcome?
 - g) What is the margin of error?
 - h) Based on the results, what are the findings or predictions for the election?
5. During the next week, ask five students per day to select a poll of their choice and answer the same questions above.
6. On a daily basis, compile the information and chart the results for any horse race or voter intention polls. As a class, track the results and analyze how various events or announcements impact the outcome.
7. Following the election, have a round table discussion of poll predictions. How accurate were they? How did the media influence the predictions? Were some polls more consistently accurate than others? Did polls influence the election? How?

Extensions

- A. Arrange internet access for your students during the week of September 29th and have them participate in the Student Vote/Nanos Research Poll for the current election campaign. The results will be shared with media on October 9.
- B. Conduct your own poll within your school on the parties, issues and candidates. Announce the results before your Student Vote Day.

Resources:

Polling Firms

Nanos - www.nanosresearch.com

Ipsos-Reid - www.ipsos.ca

Environics - <http://erg.environics.net>

Ekos - www.ekos.ca/

Strategic Council - www.thestrategiccounsel.com

To find a summary of polls, visit the following sites.

Nodice - www.nodice.ca/elections/canada/polls.php.

The Globe and Mail - www.globeandmail.com

CBC - www.cbc.ca

Lesson 11: Making Your Decision



Learning Outcomes:

- Students use critical thinking to consider what is important when deciding how to vote.
- Students interpret a wide range of information gathered through media, in-class discussions and their own reflections on developments during the campaign period.
- Students understand how their priorities shape their political beliefs.

Activity Description:

Students take home a worksheet to help them to begin to determine who they would like to vote for. In class, they discuss how they will come to their decision and identify the tools they will use. As Student Vote Day approaches, the students review the mechanics of the voting process.

Teacher Preparation:

- Make copies of 11.1 Preparing to Vote.

Background:

Students (and electors) may excuse themselves from voting so as not to make a 'wrong decision' at the ballot box. Many leave the responsibility to those they think 'know what they're doing'. But why should anyone allow someone else to make a decision for them? Would students allow someone else to choose their weekend plans? To choose their clothes?

Prior to the election, it may be helpful to review the variables one needs to consider when casting a vote. When a citizen votes, are they supporting the election of a Prime Minister, political party, local candidate, specific issue, or an entire platform? Or are they voting against any of these? Voters may choose to simplify their decision by thinking of one of the mentioned variables, or by incorporating them all into their vote.

Pre-Activity/Homework:

- A. Prior to the lesson, have students fill out 11.1 - Preparing to Vote. This worksheet will help prepare your students for the lesson and begin their decision making process.
- B. Ask students to read the newspaper or visit media websites to reflect upon the events of the campaign (e.g. events, debates, speeches, controversies, platforms, leaders and local candidates).
- C. Ask students to speak with a family or voting-age friend about how they make their decision.

Activity:

1. Discuss different methods or tools voters use to become informed. Ask students what tools or methods they used and which they feel are most effective?
2. As a class, have a conversation about some of the responses for 11.1 - Preparing to Vote. **STUDENTS DO NOT HAVE TO INFORM THE CLASS OF WHOM THEY WANT TO VOTE FOR.**
3. Teacher note: Inform your students that the secret ballot was introduced in Canada in 1874. How did public voting (raising hands) likely affect the outcome of elections previously?
4. Discuss different variables for making a decision on Election Day (e.g. Prime Minister, political party, specific issue, local candidate, the record of the last governing party).
5. Ask students to thoroughly review their answers on the worksheet and consider how they will vote on Student Vote Day.
 - Are their worksheet answers consistent with one party or scattered across various parties?
 - What contribution has each variable made to their final decision?
6. Students should write a reflection piece about the best ways to become informed about the issues and the methods they thought were useful when deciding whom to vote for.
7. Review the mechanics of voting. What is a properly marked ballot? It is considered valid as long as it is clearly marked for one candidate (you may use an x, checkmark or dash).

11.1 - PREPARING TO VOTE

1. List the name and party of each candidate running in your riding, or independent candidates.
(www.elections.ca or various media web sites)

*Please include extra sheet of paper if more than 5 parties are included.

Name: _____ Party: _____

Name: _____ Party: _____

Name: _____ Party: _____

Name: _____ Party: _____

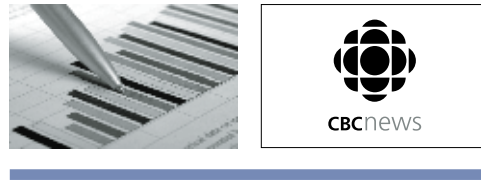
Name: _____ Party: _____

2. Which candidate has impressed you the most and why?
3. Were you able to meet or receive information from all of the candidates in your riding? Has this impacted your decision of who to vote for?
4. Which two issues are most important to you? (Related to federal election campaign)
Issue A:
Issue B:
5. Using newspapers or media web sites, research each party's position on the issues selected in the previous question. Which party's position do I support most for each issue and why?

Issue A:

Issue B:
6. Compare the leaders of the political parties in Canada. Which leader do you feel will make the best Prime Minister? ACTIVITY
7. Which local candidate do you feel will make the best Member of Parliament for your constituency? Why?
8. What is your prediction of the Student Vote results at your school?
9. Which candidate do you think will be elected by the voters in your riding?

Lesson 12: Post-Election Analysis



Learning Outcomes:

- Students reflect on the work they accomplished during the campaign and how their votes would have affected the election had they counted.
- Students analyze the results of the election and learn how the demographics of the House of Commons may affect legislation during the next term.
- Students look critically at what factors were most prevalent in deciding the outcome of the election.

Activity Description:

Students will analyze the results of the election in comparison to the results of the Student Vote and consider demographic and regional trends.

Teacher Preparation:

- Obtain the Student Vote results - federal summary, electoral district results for your region or province, and a breakdown of school results for your district (www.studentvote.ca)
- Obtain the actual election results - federal summary and electoral district results for your region or province (www.elections.ca, newspapers, and media websites)
- Ask students to view television broadcasts of election results and newspaper results

Activity:

1. Review the Student Vote results.
 - What are the seat count, vote count and popular vote percent for each party?
 - How do your school's results compare to the federal summary?
 - How do your school's results compare to your provincial and local electoral district results?
 - How did the other schools vote in your district? Are they the same or different?
2. Display the newspapers' different interpretations of local and federal results of the actual election. Examine the federal summary of the results and the individual riding results.
 - Are the actual election results similar to the Student Vote results?
 - How do the results compare across the province and country?
3. As a class, chart the results for each party or candidate in the actual election and the Student Vote for your riding and nationally.
4. Compare the current results to the 2006 federal election results.
 - How do the results compare overall? Which party gained or lost seats?
 - Did certain regions change dramatically?
 - Were there MPs who lost their seats?

5. If possible, analyze the breakdown of seat winners according to ethnic background, gender, and/or age to see whether or not all Canadians are equally represented demographically.
6. Have students examine the popular vote versus number of seats/representation.
 - How does the popular vote compare to the number of seats?
 - Is it a fair reflection of the voters?
 - Does the winning party have a majority or minority government? Review what these definitions mean and use comparisons with past election results.
7. Discuss the course of the local campaign and outcome of election results.
 - Was there a local issue that affected the outcome? Was the outcome expected?
8. For homework, have students examine newspaper accounts and give their own reasoned opinions for the election results.
 - Ask students to comment on what they learned about politics and the election process from their participation in Student Vote.
 - Ask students about what they thought were the most significant events during the campaign period that affected the outcome. Did the media play a role?

Glossary

Act

A written law passed by Parliament.

Advance polls (advance voting)

Polls held between noon and 8:00 p.m. on Friday, Saturday and Monday, the 10th, 9th and 7th days before election day, for those who want to vote in advance. The ballots are kept in a sealed envelope until election day and are counted at the same time as the other ballots.

Backbencher

A Member of Parliament who is not a Cabinet Minister, a Parliamentary Secretary, a House Leader, a Whip or an Opposition critic.

Ballot

A piece of paper where the names of the candidates are printed, their political parties and a place for the elector to indicate the preferred candidate. (At a referendum, the ballot has a printed question and spaces for the elector to answer "Yes" or "No".) Canada uses the secret ballot, which means no one except the elector knows the choice that was made.

Bellwether riding

Ridings that can often be relied upon to indicate general electoral trends.

Bias

A preconceived opinion, a one-sided view, or a prejudice about something, someone, or an issue formed without evidence or proper reason.

Bill

New legislation, or changes to an existing law that is being proposed to Parliament. Bills must be debated and passed by both the House of Commons and the Senate before they become laws.

Blog

A personal webpage of opinions, comments and discussions.

By-election

An election held in a particular electoral district to fill a vacancy in the House of Commons at any time other than during a general election.

Several by-elections may be held on the same day.

Canada Elections Act

The law governing the conduct of federal elections in Canada.

Cabinet

The executive branch of the Government, consisting of those Members and Senators appointed by the Governor General on the advice of the Prime Minister. Formally a committee of the Privy Council, it is responsible for the administration of the Government and the establishment of its policy.

Cabinet Minister

A member of the executive, appointed by the Governor General on the advice of the Prime Minister. Usually chosen from among existing Members of Parliament and Senators, Ministers are responsible to Parliament for their official actions and those of their departments. Cabinet Ministers are given the title "Honourable" and membership on the Privy Council for life.

Campaign period

The period between when an election is called and the close of General Voting for the election.

Candidate

A person who seeks election to public office. A candidate running in a federal election or by-election is trying to be elected a Member of Parliament. The candidates' signs dot the landscape in each electoral district.

Caucus

A group of representatives from the same political party in Parliament. Some people believe that the word "caucus" comes from the Algonquin word for "advisor."

Central poll supervisor (CPS)

The returning officer's representative at a polling place with four or more polling stations. This person supervises the staff, including the deputy returning officers and poll clerks.

Chief Electoral Officer (CEO)

The independent officer of Parliament responsible for conducting federal elections and referendums.

Coalition government

When two or more political parties join together to form a government, neither of which would be a majority government on their own. This can occur in order to avoid an election and keep Parliament running.

Constituency

See Electoral district.

Democracy

Refers to the belief that governments should be responsive to the wishes of the majority of citizens.

Deputy returning officer (DRO)

The election official who supervises a polling station. The DRO's tasks include making decisions about a person's eligibility, counting the ballots and certifying the results.

Dissolution of parliament

The bringing to an end of a Parliament, either at the conclusion of its five-year term or by proclamation of the Governor General. It is followed by a general election.

Election day

The day most people go to vote. Also known as polling day.

Elections Canada

The non-partisan agency responsible for the running of federal elections, by-elections and referendums. Also known as the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada.

Elector

A person eligible to vote, i.e. a Canadian citizen at least 18 years old.

Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act

The law that outlines the rules for redistribution of federal electoral district boundaries.

Electoral district

A geographical area that has its own Member of Parliament. Also known as a riding. There are 308 federal electoral districts in Canada.

Electoral system

Canada uses a first-past-the-post system. In this system, the candidate who gets more votes than any other candidate in the electoral district wins. It is thus not necessary to obtain an absolute majority of the votes (50 percent plus one) to be elected.

Enfranchise

Receive the right to vote.

Expenses limit

Maximum amount that a candidate or registered political party is authorized to spend during an election period. The limit is calculated on the basis of the number of registered electors in the electoral district in which the candidate is running, or in all the electoral districts in which the registered party is running confirmed candidates. It is indexed every year for inflation.

Federal System of government

A system of government in which powers and responsibilities are divided into national and regional levels to address national and regional needs. Canada is a federation in which powers and responsibilities are divided between the national and provincial governments.

First Past the Post

The system in which the candidate who has more votes than any other single candidate wins the election.

Franchise

The right to vote in a public election for members of Parliament, provincial legislatures, and municipal councils.

General election

An election held simultaneously in every electoral district in Canada.

Government

The sovereign political authority of a State, in which are vested the executive, legislative and judicial powers. In Canada, this authority is of Her Majesty the Queen. Often used to refer to the executive branch of the Government.

Governor General

The representative of the sovereign in Canada, exercises virtually all of the Crown's powers, and is appointed on the advice of the Prime Minister normally for a five-year term.

Horse race polls

Report about which leader or which party is ahead. They are generally more accurate than issue polls.

Independent Member

A Member of Parliament who is not a member of a recognized political party. A Member may be elected as an independent or may leave or be expelled from a party during a Parliament and sit as an independent.

Issue polls

These polls usually target the important issues of the campaign, such as health care.

Judicial recount

Second count of the votes conducted in front of a judge, automatically requested by the returning officer if two candidates are tied or the difference between the two leading candidates is less than 1/1000 of the votes cast. Any other request for a recount by judge must be presented within four days after the results of the vote are validated.

Legislative branch

Branch of government that has the power to make, change, and repeal laws. Also called Parliament.

List of electors

The list of names and addresses of all eligible electors, which is used at the polling station on voting day. Also known as the voters list.

Majority government

A government formed by the party or the coalition of parties holding the majority of seats in the House of Commons.

Member of Parliament (MP)

Person chosen in an election to represent the citizens of an electoral district to debate and vote on public issues in Parliament.

Minority government

A government formed by a party, possibly in a

coalition with one or more parties, which does not hold a majority of the seats in the House of Commons. While a minority government does not hold a majority of seats, it usually does hold more than any other party or coalition and must maintain the confidence of the House to continue in power.

National Register of Electors

A computerized database of Canadians who have the right to vote. It is prepared and maintained by Elections Canada and includes the name, address, date of birth and gender of all eligible Canadian electors.

Nomination papers

Elections Canada form that must be completed by candidates running for office in an electoral district.

Non-confidence motion

A motion, which, if adopted, indicates that the Government has lost the confidence of the House. The Government then either resigns or requests the Governor General to dissolve Parliament and issue election writs.

Office of the returning officer

An office that is set up in each electoral district at the start of each general election, by-election or referendum. It's the place from which the returning officer and his or her staff serve the public during an electoral event.

Official Opposition

The party or coalition of parties holding the second largest number of seats in the House of Commons. It is accorded certain financial and procedural advantages over other parties in opposition.

Opposition party

A political party that is neither the Government party nor part of the coalition of parties forming the Government.

Parliament

The legislative branch of government.

Party platform

A list of principles which a political party supports in order to appeal to the general public for the purpose of having that party's candidates voted into office.

Party strongholds

Ridings that traditionally can be relied upon to support the same party or candidate.

Political spectrum

A political spectrum is a way of comparing or visualizing different political positions, by placing them upon one or more geometric axes.

Poll clerk

The official who assists the deputy returning officer at a polling station by checking to see if a person's name is on the list of electors and dealing with the paperwork.

Polling day

See Election day.

Polling division

A small geographic section of an electoral district, for which a list of electors is prepared and a polling station is set up on election day. Each electoral district has many polling divisions.

Polling station

The place where electors go to vote.

Prime Minister

The leader of the nation, head of the federal government, and leader of the party with the greatest number of seats.

Private Member

A Member who is not a Minister. The rules also specifically exclude the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker and Parliamentary Secretaries from this designation.

Protest Vote

An unmarked ballot, no mark on ballot, or a ballot that has been intentionally spoiled by the voter. Treated as a "rejected ballot" at the vote count.

Redistribution

The periodic adjustment of electoral district boundaries after a census to reflect population changes. Independent electoral boundaries commissions hold hearings and redraw the maps.

Referendum

An electoral event in which electors are asked to answer "Yes" or "No" to a written question.

Referendums are used by governments to consult the people on specific issues. The most recent federal referendum was in 1992 on a proposal to amend the Constitution.

Referendum Act

The law that sets out the rules for holding federal referendums in Canada.

Rejected ballot

A ballot that has been placed in the ballot box, but declared unacceptable for counting by the Deputy Returning Officer. A ballot that has not been marked properly.

Registered party

A political party that runs at least one candidate in a general election or by-election and complies with the requirements of the Canada Elections Act may be registered. Benefits of registering with the Chief Electoral Officer include having the party name appear on the ballot, the right to issue tax receipts for monetary contributions, partial reimbursement of election expenses, and quarterly public funding based on the number of votes received at the previous election. Registered parties must disclose their contributions received, election spending and other financial information.

Responsible government

A system of government in which Cabinet ministers are responsible to the elected members of the House of Commons, who are in turn responsible to the people.

Returning officer (RO)

The election official responsible for organizing the election in an electoral district.

Revising agent

An election official who updates the list of electors during the revision period of an electoral event. They work in pairs and receive applications from electors to have their names added to, corrected on, or deleted from, the list.

Riding

See Constituency.

Scrutineer

A candidate's representative who may be present at the polling station during the voting and counting of the ballots. Also known as Candidate's agent.

Single Member Plurality System

Electoral system based on single member districts, where successful candidates are elected if they win the most votes in their electoral districts. See First Past the Post.

Speaker

The Member elected by the House (by secret ballot) to preside over its proceedings. In particular, he or she is responsible for maintaining order and decorum. As Chair of the Board of Internal Economy, the Speaker oversees the administration of the House. In addition, the Speaker is the spokesperson and representative of the House of Commons in its relations with the Senate, the Crown and other bodies outside the House of Commons.

Special ballot

A ballot that can be sent in by mail, or filled in at the office of the returning officer, for those electors who cannot go to their polling station on election day. The elector must first apply to Elections Canada for registration. The special ballot differs from a regular ballot in that the elector writes in the name of his or her preferred candidate.

Special ballot coordinator

The election official who assists electors to register and vote by special ballot.

Swing Ridings

Ridings that frequently change their support from one party to another and are particularly sensitive to shifts in electoral fortunes.

Third party

Any person or group, other than a candidate, registered party or electoral district association of a registered party that incurs election advertising expenses to support or oppose a registered party or the election of a candidate. Third parties that incur more than \$500 in election advertising expenses must register with the Chief Electoral Officer and disclose their contributions and election spending.

Universal suffrage

The extension of the right to vote to all adult citizens, including the removal of restrictions against women and property ownership requirements. For example, in 1917, Canadian military nurses in France were among the first women to vote in a federal election.

Unmarked ballot

A ballot with no marks. Considered a "rejected ballot" at the vote count.

Voter Information Card

A card which Elections Canada sends to every elector whose name appears on the preliminary list of electors during an electoral event. It tells electors when and where they can cast their ballot on polling day or at the advance polls.

Voters list

See List of electors.

Voting screen

The place at the polling station where electors go to mark their ballot in private.

SUGGESTED ON-LINE RESOURCES

Elections Canada - www.elections.ca

Includes information about voter registration, how to find your electoral district, past election results, list of the registered parties, and the evolution of the federal franchise.

Government of Canada - www.gc.ca

Educational resources for teachers of elementary and secondary students from the Parliament of Canada. Also has information on current members of the Cabinet and Ministry, as well as information on the Prime Minister, Parliamentary Secretaries and women in Cabinet.

Canada's Parliament Web Site - www.parl.gc.ca

Includes information about Parliament, the workings of the Senate and House of Commons, the role of the Speaker, educational resources, and the history of federal electoral ridings.

Nodice Election Website - www.nodice.ca/elections

Includes the current list of federal ridings and nominated candidates, public opinion polls, current party leaders, registered parties.

Prime Ministers Site - www.primeministers.ca

Intimate portraits of the nation's leaders; learn about their lives and their greatest achievements.

Historica - www.historica.ca

Teaching and learning resources related to Canada's History, and Youth Links Section, a collaborative online learning program that connects high school students with their peers to discuss relevant issues.

History of the Vote - http://www.civilization.ca/hist/elections/el_001_e.html

Explore the history of the vote in Canada, read about universal suffrage and accessibility in the past, present and future.

Canada's Political Channel - www.cpac.ca

On-line discussions and news related to Canada's political news. Question Period is now available as a Podcast on this site.

CBC Archives - <http://archives.cbc.ca>

This site has archives with radio and television clips about the history of voting rights and memorable federal election highlights on the campaign trail. (Voting in Canada: How a Privilege Became a Right)

Online Political Cartoons:

Mackay political cartoons: <http://www.mackaycartoons.net/>

Political cartoons of Canada: <http://www.canadafreepress.com/toons/canadianpolitical.htm>

Decoding Political Cartoons: <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/education/008-3050-e.html>



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