

The Interim PLUS + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + +

Curriculum Supplement For Schools

The Interim Plus is a periodical dedicated to educational matters and specifically designed to assist teachers in integrating relevant life issues in their lesson planning.

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Contents:

Elections	p. 1
Fr. Ted Scholarship	p. 13
Elections Crossword	p. 14

For better or worse governments play a large role in the lives of people. This has been the case in the past but even more so in today's society. Political life is an important aspect of any civilization or general culture of a people. The institutions and processes by which people govern themselves are determined by many factors. In this issue of *The Interim Plus* we present material that we hope will help teachers and students to understand and better appreciate the political system of Canada, the democratic principles espoused and expressed in a parliamentary tradition.

The content of this edition is designed to help teachers of various social science courses to integrate the federal election campaign into their lesson planning. The current election campaign began on Sunday, August 2. It does not conclude until voting day, October 19, making it the longest such campaign in modern Canadian history.

The curriculum ideas presented herein are flexible and lend themselves to use in a series of classes, as circumstances permit.

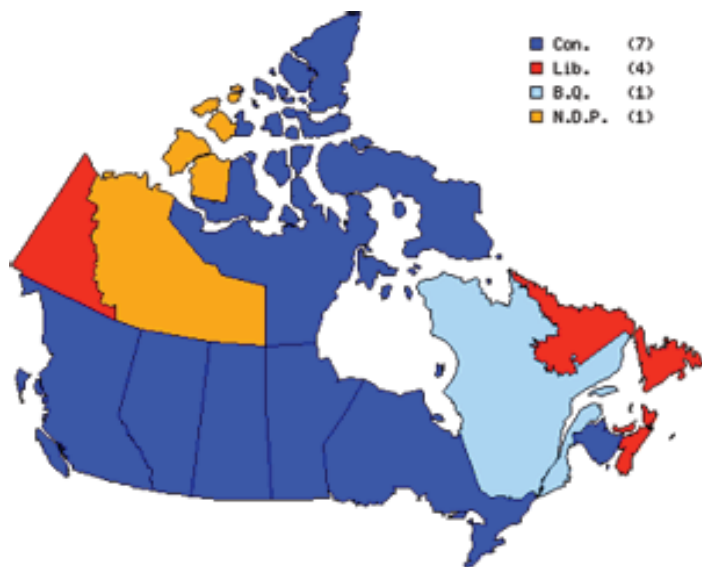
The study of the nature of Canada's election system and the issues that are brought forth by the public, media and

political parties can be an exciting introduction for young people to the electoral process in a modern democracy. During the course of the campaign we have an opportunity to observe and reflect on some of the foundational or core beliefs about the Canadian system of government. As participants in the system Canadian citizens enjoy certain freedoms, rights and responsibilities, and elections are one important way whereby they can help shape the general conduct of public business. Sadly, the voter turnout in Canadian federal elections is low, with almost 4 out of 10 people not bothering to exercise their voting rights. This phenomenon deserves attention for its own sake, suggesting that the democratic system is losing steam in the modern world for a variety of reasons.

Before exploring specific components of the political process the teacher might review the core principles and lead a discussion on how participatory Canadians are or can be in their system of government.

CORE PRINCIPLES

- *citizens should enjoy political equality*
- *the will of the majority should be respected*
- *the rights of the minority rights must be respected*
- *the government must be responsible and should be held accountable for its actions and decisions*
- *government ought to make decisions for the common good*
- *people will respect the rule of law and work within the system to effect changes desired*
- *each citizen enjoys some innate human rights, freedoms, and responsibilities, as reflected in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms*
- *citizens are free to organize and to participate in governmental and non-governmental political decision making at the various levels of the general community, whether local, provincial, federal, or international levels*



- *the participation may take many forms including elections, lobbying efforts, public demonstrations, gathering and presentation of petitions, public consultation on proposed changes in the laws, organizing into new political parties*

Questions for classroom discussion

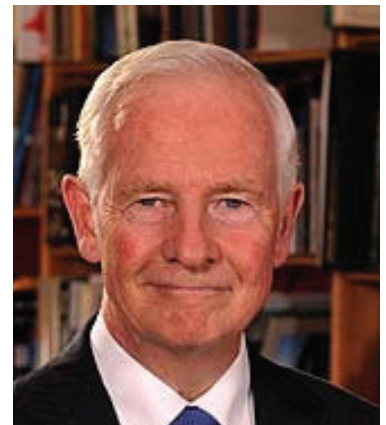
1. Why are such core concepts important? Are any of them in opposition to one another?
2. Is there a strong relationship between rights, freedoms, and responsibilities?
3. What are some of your rights and responsibilities as a citizen? If you are not yet 18, how will they change when you reach the age of majority?
4. Explain how political participation benefits individuals, groups, communities, and societies, or how it fails to do so.
5. Are there any groups whose rights and freedoms are not respected in Canadian society today? What is their relationship to the political process?
6. Does parliament still govern Canada? Does the Supreme Court of Canada thwart the will of Parliament, even the majority will of the people?
7. Apply the techniques of democratic participation (signing petitions, creating posters or newsletters, lobbying, writing letters to the editor, singing songs, and other forms of artistic expression) to the current election campaign.
8. Analyse the extent to which various segments of Canadian society (women, the disabled, First Nation peoples, racial minorities, rural and northern communities, new immigrants to Canada) participate in formal political processes whether local, provincial, and national. What factors influence the level of their participation? Are any groups discouraged unfairly?
9. In every election cycle there appears to be criticism of our political process, and the resulting call for reforms. Read this article from the August 8 edition of the National Post. Then answer these questions based on Joseph Heath's analysis of current parliamentary and electoral practices.
<http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/canadian-politics/emergence-of-the-forever-campaign-evidence-our-democracy-is-becoming-a-competition-run-amok>
 - a) What is the main point of the Heath article?

- b) According to Heath what should be the main purpose of a democratic system of competition?
- c) "I worry that it is going the way of football, a game where the need to win has overcome all other imperatives". What does he mean by this?
- d) What has caused this state of affairs?
- e) What examples does he give from the American and Canadian political systems to illustrate his points?
- f) Is there any evidence to support his main contention if one looks at the current election campaign – how it was called, why it was called, the length of the campaign, the money being spent, the legislation passed by the existing government.
- g) On balance, does Heath prove his main thesis or does he fail to see the same pattern in operation by previous governments, whether federal or provincial?

Our System of Government and Why We Have Elections

Canada is legally a constitutional monarchy with a monarch as titular Head of State. This means that in a **ceremonial sense the Queen, Elizabeth II, is the reigning monarch**, but she rules through her representative in Canada, the **Governor-General**. As such Canada enjoys a parliamentary, representative government with a **Prime Minister who rules and exercises power**. Because of history and geography **Canada is a confederation**, meaning that it has **two major levels of government** according to the British North America Act (now The Constitution Act, 1982).

There is a **national government** with its headquarters in Ottawa and there are **provincial and territorial governments**. Each level of government has its own distinct powers and responsibilities. There is one Parliament for the whole country.



The actual or practical ruler in Canada is a Prime Minister who functions as the monarch's chief minister and whose advice she and her representative (the Governor-General) must accept according to long established parliamentary traditions. Canada's Parliamentary System boasts **three branches of government**: the **executive** consisting of the Prime Minister and his Cabinet and the Prime Minister's Office; the **legislative** branch which introduces and passes the laws (two chambers, **the House of Commons** whose **338** members are **elected by the people** in various ridings or designated representative districts) from across the country, based on population and according to allotment by province, and **the Senate**, having **104** members who are **appointed** by the Governor-General upon the recommendation of the Prime Minister; and the **judicial branch**, consisting of the Supreme Court of Canada and corresponding provincial Superior Courts. It is their responsibility to interpret the constitutionality of laws passed by the legislative branch in light of the **Charter of Rights and Freedoms** passed in 1982. **The Prime Minister is a member of House of Commons and is the leader of the political party that obtains the majority of the parliamentary seats or ridings as a result of a national election.** The leader of that winning party is invited to form a "government", that is, to choose a **Cabinet** to run the affairs of state and to be held responsible by the House of Commons. The Prime Minister governs through a Cabinet, a group of elected officials who head up various departments of government like defense, health & welfare, justice, transport, finance, immigration, etc. **Political parties** compete in elections for the privilege of governing. **The party that wins the greatest number of seats gets to form that government.** A change in government occurs either as a result of a **national election** or as the result of a **vote of confidence** in the House of Commons.

If there is no clear majority following an election there are two choices possible: the original Cabinet can resign and the leader of the largest opposition party can be asked to form another Cabinet that would enjoy the confidence of the majority of the members of the House of Commons. Or, the original Cabinet can stay in office and meet the newly elected House hoping to enjoy its confidence. **If the majority of the members in the House of Com-**

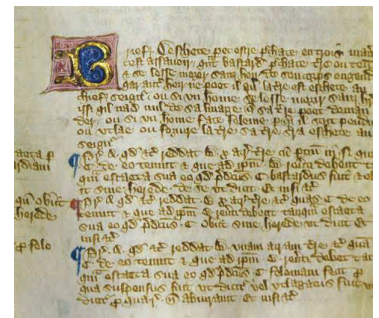
mons vote "no confidence" then the "government" is deemed to have been defeated, thus triggering an election prematurely. Since an election would have just been held, in this case the Governor-General would ask the leader of the next largest party to attempt forming a government. This is the scenario that could result in a **coalition government**, where there is power sharing among the parties forming the coalition. **Traditionally a Member of Parliament is elected for a 5-year term of office but this has become a 4 year term in practice since election dates are now fixed for every 4 years.** Members of the Cabinet (whether federal or provincial) have no fixed "term". **Instead every federal cabinet minister serves at**

the pleasure of the Prime Minister and all of them must be or become members of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada. The Cabinet has sole power to prepare and introduce bills providing for the expenditure of public money or imposing taxes on the population. If one or more cabinet ministers do

not agree with a policy or action of the Government they must either resign, or accept it and defend the policy. This is known as the principle of **"cabinet solidarity"**.

There has been growing cynicism and criticism of our political system in the past two decades. Many pundits bemoan the lack of public interest in politics and the lack of substantive discussion in the House of Commons itself. These critics can point to worrisome trends in political participation by the masses and stringent control exercised by all the party leaders over their **caucus** members. The party leaders also control the local nomination process for their parties. In one case, the leader, Justin Trudeau has gone so far as to insist that candidates wishing to run for the Liberal Party must be pro-abortion and must vote accordingly on such issues if elected.

Despite these deficits there are a considerable number of journalists who praise the enduring qualities of our parliamentary system, as being respectful of the core principles that have evolved over the centuries since the signing of the **Magna Carta** at Runnymede.



General information about our system of government can be found at these sites, with the last two listed being videos explaining the government system. A humorous rendition is the dated, but still entertaining explanation, by Rick Mercer.

<http://www.canada.ca/en/gov/system/index.html> <http://www.parl.gc.ca/MarleauMontpetit/DocumentViewer.aspx?Sec=Ch01&Seq=2>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yi1yhp-x7A>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nTLaQua1LiQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=erP9-gjRoTYY>

[\(http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/trudeau-says-all-liberals-mp-will-have-to-vote-pro-choice/article19218815/](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/trudeau-says-all-liberals-mp-will-have-to-vote-pro-choice/article19218815/)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6WNrsnRjbxQ>

Questions

1. What was the Magna Carta?
2. Are there internal checks and balances within the Canadian system of government?
3. Which branch seems to have become more powerful in the last three decades? Why?
4. Do Members of Parliament represent the constituents in the House of Commons or do they represent their party in their constituency? What is the difference in role? Why has the role changed in practice?
5. What are the strength and weaknesses of the Parliamentary system?
6. Do unelected key players (PMO, political party strategists, senators, judiciary, senior bureaucrats) have too much power or influence?
7. What factors likely play important roles in how and whom the Prime Minister chooses for the Cabinet?
8. What factors tend to limit the independent voice of MPs?
9. What changes/developments have worked to erode the importance of Parliament and contribute to the creation of a “democratic deficit”?
10. Explain the intended function of the parliamentary opposition parties. Have they been effective in fulfilling that function?
11. Investigate the nomination process for each of the political parties. Are the processes equally free or undemocratic?

12. Are there any good arguments in favour of the party leader having a certain discretionary power over the process?
13. Are there special interest groups wielding power or influence beyond their numbers or official status but rather based on such concepts as gender, lifestyle, ethnicity, professional association, labour organization, socio-economic status? Is this a problem in a democracy?
14. Watch the video “How do political parties work?” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-XlUICruITE> Was there anything you did not know before watching it? What do you think of the “trained seals” remark? When might strict party discipline be a good/bad thing? (Hint: Woodworth’s Motion 312, Warawa’s Motion 408)

The Election Campaign

In order for the electorate to make intelligent choices when voting, they need to be informed about the issues at stake and what the various major and minor political parties have to say about those issues. There is a formal period for a “**campaign**” whereby the parties are allowed to **spend money to convince the voters** to vote for their candidates. There are laws governing the **time period** of the election campaign and the **amount of money** that parties and individual candidates can spend during the election writ period. Failure to abide by the rules can result in **financial penalties** for the parties and the individual candidates and even **jail terms if found guilty** of contravening the election laws.

If issues are supposed to decide the outcome of elections, who determines what constitutes **the key issues**? **Political parties** build political **platforms** that ostensibly reflect **party philosophy and principles** as shaped and approved by party leaders, local party associations at national party conventions. Parties also **conduct internal polling and use focus groups** to help identify those issues that they feel will gather maximum support from the electorate. **Advertising** is a huge expenditure for parties preceding the election writ and during the campaign season itself. It is a principal means by which parties get their positive message out (what they promise to the electorate) and what is bad about the opposition parties and their leaders (negative or **attack ads**).



Parties may rely partially on the media to promote their messages. The **media** in turn plays an important role by giving some issues prominence and ignoring some issues altogether. (An interesting exercise would be to track the amount of coverage given to

any life and family issues like abortion, euthanasia, pornography, embryonic stem cell research, dementia, palliative care). As an election campaign unfolds there is a frenetic competition among the parties, through their **spin doctors** and media talking heads, trying to turn certain topics/problems/developments/gaffes into hot issues. The public can be swayed by the presentation of “the issues” and the debate of those “issues”. Given the complexity of some of the issues and the opposing points of views it is a challenge to exercise one’s franchise intelligently. The media will host **debates** among the leaders as a means of informing the electorate and playing an active part in the election process. Then there is the **role of polls** and the influence that the release of such information may have on the election process. Many people never stop to take stock of what is being debated or reported. They either find it too confusing or they simply lose interest in the entire process.

Classroom Election Activities

As mentioned above voter apathy prevails among all sectors of the population. But since youth is relatively the most inactive segment, perhaps teachers can consider classroom activities that might make the whole election experience more meaningful for the students. How can they keep track of what parties and candidates say about the issues? If they qualify for voting, how can they make an intelligent decision in casting a ballot? Here are some activities that might get them excited and informed, whether to cast a vote in the real election, or in a mock school-based election.

They can also be directed to check out Samara Canada’s political participation list for high school students. (<http://www.samaracanada.com/docs/default-source/default-document-library/political-participation-activities-blank-checklist2dca589a50cd6a04a19bff0000c565b1.pdf?sfvrsn=2>)

The list could serve a variety of purposes, for example it could be used: as a check-in at the beginning of lessons on the political process (students will realize that they’ve probably already performed some activities and are already on their way to active citizenship); as a challenge to see how many activities your students can do during the rest of the semester. The teacher could ask the students to complete a certain number of the activities (5 to 7 is manageable in a semester) and write up a page on their experiences (what they enjoyed, what they found challenging and any barriers they found to accomplishing the activity).

Another excellent website to consult regarding the election process and the rules governing the various aspects of electioneering is <http://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=vot&dir=bkg&document=index&lang=e>, the official site of Elections Canada. It has information on

Activity I

1. Divide the class into 5 groups and have each group track the Canadian election campaign. The groups create a chart (or use the one below) on which they record the positions of the major Canadian leaders and parties. To persuade voters, parties usually try to come up with a short statement or slogan. Note those as well.
2. Have students research the issues as reported in news-magazines, newspapers, television, radio, internet sites and blogs run by various organizations with distinctly partisan views. Have students also consider other issues that do not make it onto the main radar screen and inquire as to why that may be.
3. Groups can divide the task further by getting each member to concentrate on 2 issues each and become class experts/authorities on those issues.
4. Each group presents its summary. Each group should

note whether their particular summary includes or excludes issues found in that of the other groups, and if so let the group explain what may account for the differences.

5. On an individual basis a student may want to explore the relationship between lobbying/petitions/letters to the editor and political issues. How important is the ability to be courteous and persuasive? They may research an issue that is important in the federal election and make their own voice heard using one of these methods – or contact a lobbying organization like Campaign Life Coalition and ask how they can assist them in their work of lobbying for just laws protecting the vulnerable unborn and seniors alike.
6. Each group should also find an issue that is not national in scope but rather particular to a region, a province, or even just a single riding. How does that “more local” issue affect the outcome of the election locally?

Election Issues						
Campaign Slogan						
General Economy						
Health Care						
Trade Agreements						
Demographics Immigration, Refugees						
Taxation Policies						
National Security						
Crime And Punishment						
Euthanasia, Dementia, Abortion						
Climate Change						
Energy Prices Costs						
National Unity						
Budget Deficit						
Senate Reform						
Employment						
Job Creation						
External Affairs						
National Day- Care Program						
Civil Liberties						
Tax Credits For Renovation						
Electoral Reform						

Activity II

As mentioned above, political apathy abounds in Canada as only 60% of the electorate bother to vote in general elections. Schools can help to elevate political intelligence among youth by encouraging students to become involved. Consider these suggestions and incorporate one of them into a lesson plan or individual assignment.

A) Video Recording the Candidates During the Election Cycle

Democracy cannot function properly without an informed and active citizenry. People must be free to express their political preferences. But people should also take their responsibilities seriously, becoming sufficiently informed so as to cast an informed vote at elections. The reality is that votes are cast on a variety of issues and for a variety of motives. But even the most interested and well-informed citizen cannot always make it to an all-candidates' meeting where voters have the personal opportunity to interact with and ask questions of the local candidates. Young people can help these voters become informed and at the same time contribute to the democratic process by:

1. video recording 'all-candidates' meetings
2. then posting the video on You Tube or
3. sending it to an organization like Campaign Life Coalition (jack@campaignlifecoalition.com) that has the capacity to collect and disseminate such videos as part of their efforts to educate the public on life issues in particular.

In fact, students can become citizen-reporters by engaging in this exercise. The activity could be done through **groups** of three to four students or by individuals. It could be an **independent study unit** for the individual student. Considerations should include: equipment needed; obtain dates of all-candidates' meetings; prepare questions; decide on who will ask the questions; form of evaluation for the activity.

B) Tracking the Media's Role in Elections: How They Tell the People "What's Going On"

As stated, media coverage can influence election campaigns. The public needs to understand how much the **media affects their opinions** and be able to screen the

MARKHAM ECONOMIST & SUN

media and look at the issues more objectively. In Canada the **media bias** may be somewhat subtle. Although radio and television stations claim to be neutral they often exhibit a certain bias. The students may wish to search for that bias and identify it according to the stances taken editorially by the main newspapers or by the way that a television network or local independent station's election covers the election campaign. The media also serve as conduits for delivering a message to the voters through **campaign ads**. Political advertisements on TV are a huge source of revenue during elections, even if some of the reporters decry the vast amount of money spent on the campaign trail. Television is one of the most influential forms of media and the candidates make use of this, blasting a **single message to a mass audience**, or tailoring appeals to **local communities**.

Media can help turn the fortunes of a party during the campaign by highlighting the results of opinion polls. One has to be aware of the fact that **media are often partners with the polling companies**, either as sponsors of the poll or as exclusive release outlets for the poll results and subsequent interpretation of its meaning. Some claim that they do not heed the polls since they are constantly

GEORGINA ADVOCATE

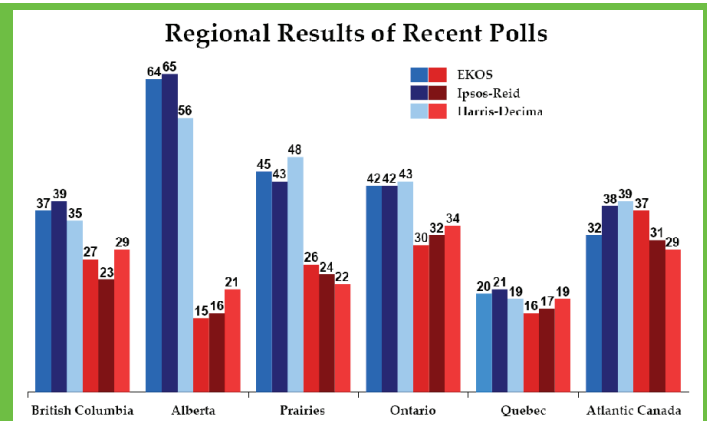
changing, on the other hand some political operatives depend on these poll findings to shape their campaigns and to change tactics according to these polls. There continues to be great controversy over the use of polls, their veracity or reliability, and their general influence on the electorate.

A good exercise for the duration of the election to create and maintain ongoing student interest, especially in their own community, have 3 students per group collaborate by choosing a major or local paper in their community/city and keep track of its campaign coverage as per this chart: (See next page)

Item	Frequency of mention	Location in paper	Amount of coverage	Comment favorable/unfavorable	Other aspects
National leaders					
Local candidates					
Political cartoons					
Photos of events					
Political advertising					
National tv debates					
All-candidate debate					
Letters to editor					
Editorial columns					
Polling results					

Questions for Class Discussion of the Election Process

1. What do you think is the most important function of the media during an election?
2. Do you think that the internet has changed the election coverage of the established media? If so, how?
3. Has it changed the way that the political parties have structured their campaigns?
4. Compare and contrast the daily reporting of the major networks as to their coverage of the Canadian election campaign respectively for any one-week period (CBC, CTV, GLOBAL NEWS). Consider the objectivity, bias, tone, amount of

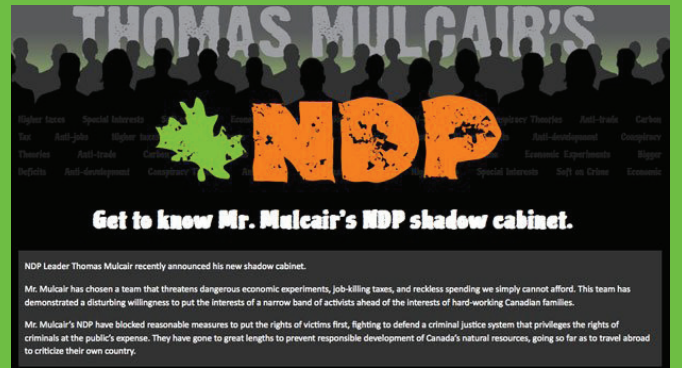


coverage, length of time, frequency, placement in the broadcast, etc.)

5. If one were to judge coverage and presentations on the basis of civility, respect, honesty and a certain

idealism – which media has been doing the best job in delivering news and commentary about the election? Which did the worst? Explain your opinion by citing examples.

6. What is the role of public opinion polls? Are they just reporting opinions, or are they shaping peoples' minds? Should polling be banned at some point during the election campaign? Should they be allowed only for internal party purposes? Is the polling process manipulated?
7. What are attack ads? Why do parties use them? Are they effective?
8. Observe the political ads run by the different parties on television, the internet and in newspapers. What is the nature of the ads run by each party? Positive? Negative? Are they effective or a waste of money?
9. What makes a television political ad powerful and effective? Give examples.
10. Read the article "The web's 'echo chamber' leaves us none the wiser" by Alan Martin. <http://www.wired.co.uk/news/archive/2013-05/1/online-stubbornness>
11. Do you think "echo chambers" exist in social media? What about your own personal use – do you tend to follow news with one particular point of view on an issue?
12. Discuss the effects they can have on users/poten-



- tial voters. If there is a deep division among classmates – some say they make little difference to users, and some say they are highly influential – organize a class debate on the issue.
13. Why are websites, blogs, and social media services like Twitter increasingly important in an election season? Do you think politicians are likely to pay attention? What biases might users face, and how can they be countered?
 14. Check out Campaign Life Coalition Youth's "We Support Rona Ambrose" or "No 2 Niki" campaigns. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UeWVBmiPTI&list=PLpBLGy_P8vVgrlc0LumGP9NwS7NelT5g / <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZrdV3wthfno>) Are video campaigns like this effective? Do they trivialize important political issues? Consider launching a similar campaign for a social cause you support, by making an individual video or one with your class.

Activity III

Students can catch the political bug by volunteering to do some campaign work for the candidate of their choice. This can take many forms: telephoning, mailing out literature, delivering brochures, stuffing envelopes, putting up lawn signs, participating in social media campaigns, etc.

1. The student chooses one of the above and then writes a report on their experience.
2. The student might do an interview with a candidate's campaign manager or other available staffer.
3. The student could role-play a local television or newspaper interviewer to prepare a typical election report. They could make use of the video taping capabilities of the communications department in the school or use their own cell phones as most interviewers do today. This is a little different from the all-candidates' meeting reporting and sending raw footage to an organiza-

tion like Camapign Life Coalition or to LifeSiteNews. Prepare interview questions for the local candidate or the national leader based on research of the candidate's background and stand on important issues. Prior to the role-playing, brainstorm and discuss what makes a good interview question. Point out that open-ended questions elicit more information than closed-ended questions (questions that require a yes/no or one-word answer). For example, if a reporter only has time to ask one question, which question would be more effective? Do you care about national defense? or If you were elected, would you vote to end Canadian involvement in Syria immediately? What is your view on abortion? or Are there any circumstances under which you believe a woman should have access to abortion? How is your campaign going? or What is your stand on a national day care program?

Costs of Election Campaigns

Much is made of the ever-spiraling costs of holding elections and running for political office. See for example Jeffrey Simpson's article in August 2 edition of Globe & Mail (If the election can be bought, the Tories will win easily, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/if-the-election-can-be-bought-the-tories-will-win-easily/article25812151/>).

All the major parties have raised more funds than ever before. They also receive tax payer support, so much money per vote received in last election. Both these factors tend to favor the Conservative Party. But in addition to the political parties other public groups (like unions, tax payers, lobby groups, etc.) also participate in the election process and spend large amounts of money to support their cause or to help defeat a particular party. Some observers fear that the future of democratic government is doomed since only the extremely wealthy can participate, or only people with huge financial backing of special interest groups or companies. The whole system stands to be corrupted by the influx of big sums of money. Others maintain with some justification that the internet has leveled the playing field somewhat, making it a more democratic source of numerous political donations. The internet makes it possible to reach millions of people who can contribute small amounts and thus affect the outcome of elections by their sheer numbers. And the internet through the social media offers even the less financially endowed parties and candidates the opportunity to reach huge numbers of citizen-voters.

More Questions to Consider Regarding Election Finances

1. How much do parties raise for election purposes? Which parties raise the most? Which parties spend the most? Try to get hold of a party letter in which the party asks for a donation. Note the tone of the letter. Is it emphasizing fear, hate, concern, partisanship?
2. What are the major sources of election finances?
3. Who are the biggest individual donors? Which are the largest corporate donors?
4. Why do some companies donate to more than one candidate or more than one party?

5. Are there any controls on the amount of money that can be raised or the amount that can be spent, nationally or riding by riding?
6. What incentives would there be for individuals and companies to donate to political candidates or to political parties?
7. Is public tax money available to candidates running for office? Should it be?
8. Why treat political donations more generously than charitable donations?
9. Is there need to reform Canadian election expenses laws?
10. What important changes were introduced by the Conservatives since the last election in terms of election finances?

Governments Success:How to Judge their Efforts

Not every piece of legislation passed by governments are welcomed by all sectors of society. There are always a few bills accompanied by controversy and much hostility. The fact is that different groups have different philosophies of life and different values, hence governments try to compromise and do what in their political judgment is both possible and in the best interests of the majority. But sometimes the laws are expedient, even popular, with the majority but not necessarily morally just or correct. The laws or political decisions may undermine the existing rights and freedoms of some people or class of people; others may deny rights to formerly protected individuals. The problem can be seen in these examples: non-smoking legislation; legislation against drunk driving; gun control; the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act; anti-hate crime legislation; employment and pay equity; anti-discrimination legislation; measures for workplace safety; proportional representation; election campaign finance reform; defunding of abortion; funding for sex-change operations; immigration laws; anti-poverty measures; minimum wage rate; length of prison sentences; marijuana control; conscience rights for doctors; euthanasia and assisted suicide; palliative care; college tuition; day care.

Questions and Other Activities for Follow-up

1. Evaluate a law that exists or is being contemplated to address a perceived shortcoming.
2. Who is in favor of the law? Why?
3. Who is opposed to the law? Why?
4. Where do these groups or individuals fall on the political spectrum? Right, left, centre-right, centre-left, extreme left, extreme right?
5. What is the political spectrum? How did it derive its names of left and right?
6. What about churches, media, unions, elitist intelligentsia? Manufacturers/ Farmers? Quebecers? Atlantic province/maritime? Middle-class person? Women? Men? Students? How would these groups or sectors view the law under discussion?
7. How many of these problem areas listed above are actually in play during this election campaign? Why is that?
8. Conduct a mock election in one grade level using the actual structure of Elections Canada as a model to follow (ballots, scrutineers, polling places, etc.)

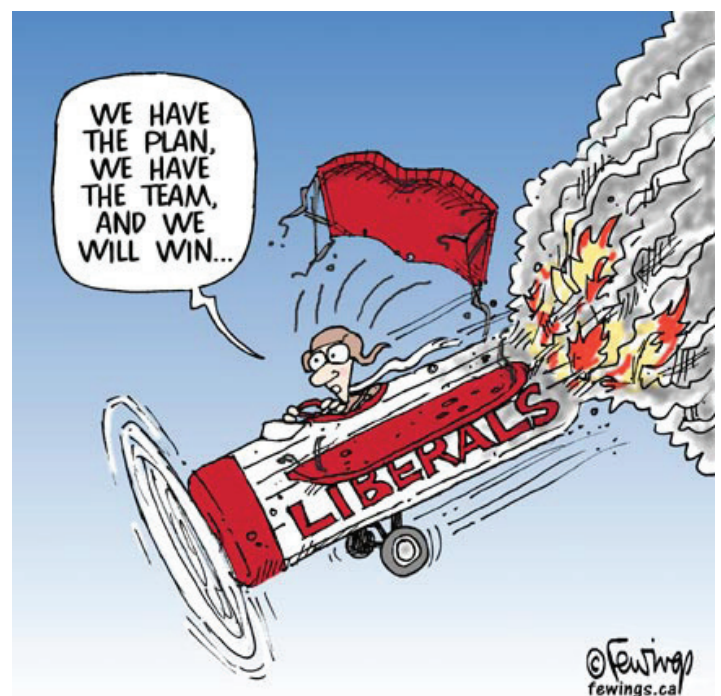
larger Canadian community. Why do people participate in this group? What benefits do they receive?

7. How could students increase the social capital of such an organization in their school or community?
8. Humour is often used as a means of making light of a situation or poking fun at some person or general situation. Political cartoons can be used in this way. Have groups of students (3 to a group) collect a series of cartoons, one per week during the election cycle. Then have them analyze the cartoons as to their a) **theme** [who is the person, political party, or issue being portrayed, etc] b) **purpose** [educate, shock, satirize, mock, criticize, etc. Are principals in the cartoons shown in a favorable or unfavorable light?] c) clarity [topic and meaning of the cartoon are quite apparent, or does one have to have much prior knowledge to get the meaning?] d) the group's own assessment as to the cartoon's effectiveness [use of irony, exaggeration, analogies, comparisons, diction, symbolism]. Finally, have the group include in their written report which cartoon they thought was the best and explaining their reasons for their choice.

More ideas to discuss

1. Have students compare the minimum voting age in a few democracies, choosing a nation from each of these geographic areas, Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia as comparisons.
2. Is 18 years of age a good age for allowing the vote? Why not 17 years of age?
3. If democracy is a truly demanding form of government in terms of the energy, commitment and public awareness of the issue by the voters should non-voters be considered free-riders in the system? Should such citizens be fined for failing to participate?
4. In order to cultivate a sense of active citizenship should young people be mandated to participate in election campaigns as part of their graduation requirements?
5. What is "social capital"? How important is it for communities? For individuals? For political electioneering?
6. Have students create a profile of Campaign Life Coalition or Life Canada and investigate how the selected organization works to initiate change in the

Here are three examples of political cartoons from previous election periods, both Canadian and American.





POLITICAL PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES

samara

1. THE TWITTERING CLASSES: ONLINE DISCUSSION

- ☐ I circulated or reposted political information on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter
- ☐ I used email or instant messaging to discuss societal/political issues
- ☐ I blogged about a political issue
- ☐ I participated in an online group about a societal/political issue

2. SOMETHIN' TO TALK ABOUT: OFF-LINE DISCUSSION

- ☐ I discussed a societal/political issue face to face or on the phone
- ☐ I wrote a letter to the editor about a political issue
- ☐ I made a public speech on a political issue
- ☐ I organized a public event or meeting about politics

If we missed a political activity that you think we should track, please let us know. Samara will use these questions to take the pulse of Canadian political life in a forthcoming Samara Index, which measures the connection between citizens and politics, including how citizens participate.

3. TAKING IT TO THE STREETS: ACTIVISM

- ☐ I signed a petition
- ☐ I boycotted/"boycotted" a product
- ☐ I was part of a protest

4. COMMUNITY REVIVAL: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

- ☐ I worked with others on an issue in my community
- ☐ I was active in a group or organization
- ☐ I donated to a political/societal cause
- ☐ I did voluntary work

5. IN THE SYSTEM: FORMAL ENGAGEMENT

- ☐ I contacted an elected official about an issue that concerns me
- ☐ I attended a political meeting
- ☐ I volunteered in an election
- ☐ I donated to a political party or candidate
- ☐ I am or have been a member of a political party

The Father Ted Colleton Scholarship Program



Once again, *The Interim* newspaper and Niagara Region Right to Life are co-sponsoring a program designed to encourage senior high school students to learn more about life and family issues through their participation in an essay writing contest on a chosen theme. The awards are \$1500 for 1st prize, \$800 for 2nd prize and \$500 for 3rd prize. Applications and details concerning the scholarship program may be accessed at

www.theinterim.com/category/fr-ted-colleton-scholarship/ by the third week of this 2015-2016 academic year. This year's version will be the 14th edition of the scholarship program. Please bring the scholarship contest to the attention of your senior students (grades 11 and 12). The date for submission of their application and essay is Tuesday, December 1, 2015.

The theme for this year's essay contest is as follows:

The family has been described as the "Engine of the world and of history. Everyone builds their own personality in the family, growing up with a mom and dad, brothers and sisters, breathing in the warmth of home."

(Pope Francis)

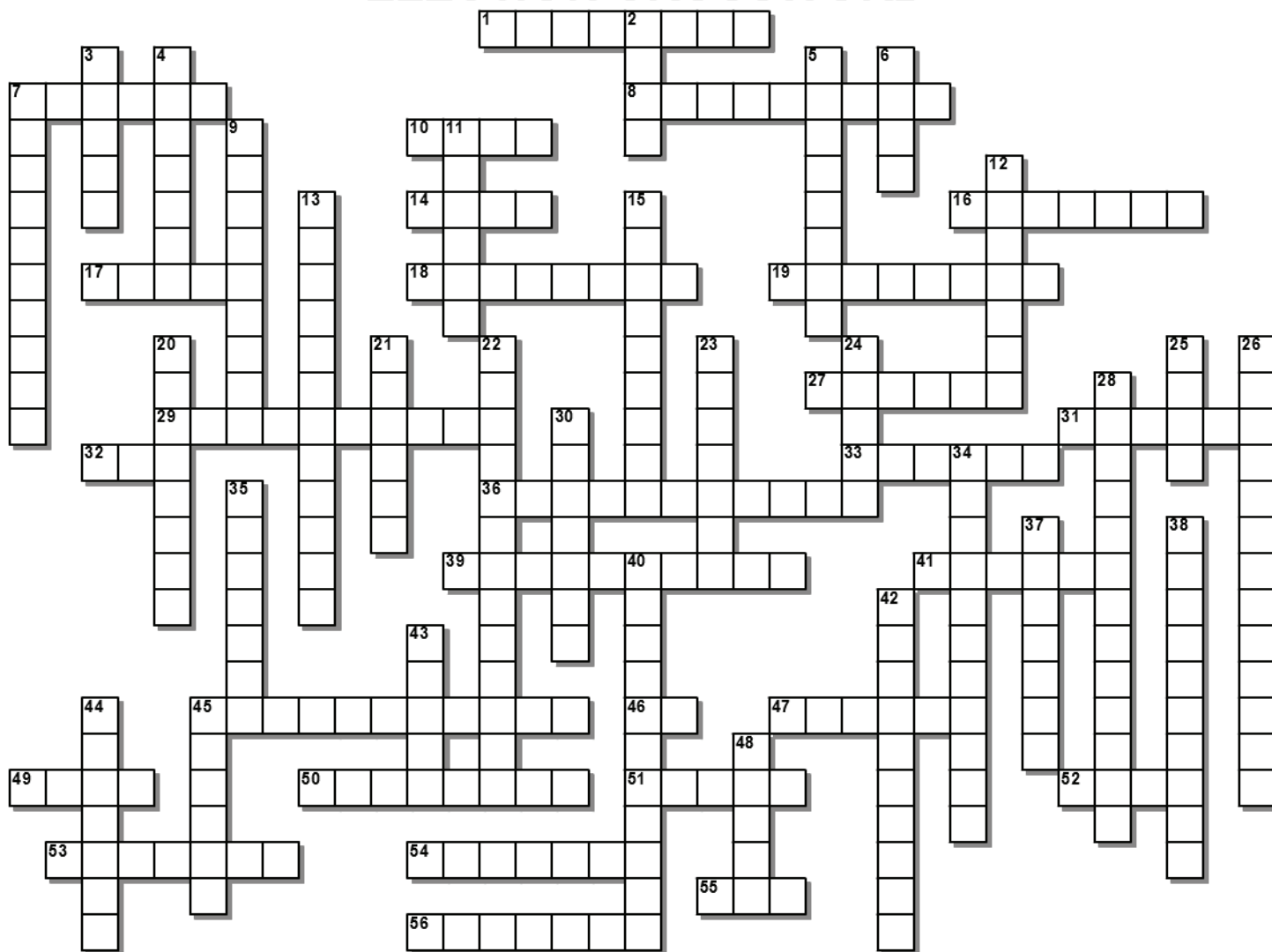
Write a commentary on this statement discussing several of the greatest challenges that the institution of the family faces today, what is the nature of the assault on the family and what can be done to halt the crumbling of family structures.

Name _____

Date _____

Class _____

ELECTION CROSSWORD



Clues start on next page

ELECTION CROSSWORD

Across:

- 1 an important life issue which all three major party leaders try to avoid during an election campaign
- 7 A closed meeting of party members within a legislative body to decide on questions of policy or leadership
- 8 Telephone calls to voters made using an Automated Dialing-Announcing Device or ADAD
- 10 party _____, person who maintains party discipline on key votes
- 14 Old-fashioned nickname for a member of the Liberal Party of Canada
- 16 returning leader of the Bloc Quebecois Party
- 17 country to which Canada has sent fighter jets to attack ISIS
- 18 Political values associated with a liberal or social democratic philosophy on the political spectrum
- 19 An activity of interest groups aimed at influencing governors and the public to achieve a favourable policy decision(s).
- 27 slang for a recognized expert source of opinion or analysis in some field like politics or sports
- 29 what candidates compete for at the local riding level for their respective parties.
- 31 A sheet of paper or a card used to cast a vote
- 32 Support staff appointed by the Prime Minister to carry out political functions.(abbrev)
- 33 type of ads that are aggressive, often simplistic messaging discrediting a political opponent
- 36 a house-to-house survey to prepare a voters list for an election
- 39 A national or controversial policy proposal decided by a direct vote of the electorate.
- 41 appointed chamber of the Canadian parliament
- 45 type of school where aboriginal children were abused and shorn of their culture
- 46 _____-486, an abortion pill that kills babies, recently approved for over the counter sale by Health Canada
- 47 contributors of finances to political campaigns
- 49 specific piece of legislation prior to it becoming law

Down:

- 2 Nickname for a member of the Conservative Party of Canada
- 3 Senator in hot water for bribery charges
- 4 surname of the current leader of the federal NDP
- 5 government's power to take money legally from the populace, power of the purse
- 6 political party devoted exclusively to Quebec interests at federal level
- 7 economic theory that emphasizes freedom of market forces
- 9 leftist ideology that prescribes a large role for government to intervene in society and the economy via taxation and public ownership
- 11 current prime minister of Canada
- 12 number of eligible voters that actually voted in an election
- 13 Members of Parliament on the govt. but not in cabinet, or those similarly distant from shadow cabinet posts in opposition parties
- 15 A person nominated to represent a political party during an election
- 20 When the government party holds fewer seats in the House of Commons than the opposition parties combined
- 21 New Democrat premier of Alberta
- 22 A system of government in which sovereignty is divided between a central government and several provincial or state governments
- 23 the unofficial name of the "Official Report of Debates" in the federal Parliament of Canada
- 24 _____ rights, thought to belong to all people simply because they are human beings.
- 25 a methodical sounding of opinions regarding a public issue, policy, personality, popularity of a leader or government or voter intentions
- 26 the _____, slang term to everything in the Canadian political or economic system that is very entrenched, powerful, and unquestionable
- 28 the theory that government should not interfere in the direction of economic affairs
- 30 leader of the federal Liberal Party
- 34 paid messages to get party votes across to voters
- 35 positive term to describe people who stand against abortion and euthanasia

ELECTION CROSSWORD

Across:

- 50 _____ - General, representative of the monarch in Canada
 51 _____ Wright, former Chief of Staff for the PM
 52 official order authorizing an election
 53 A body of persons who head the executive departments of the government
 54 A political term for the permission or authorization given by voters to the elected government
 55 _____ and trade, a policy allegedly intended to reduce greenhouse gases
 56 politically _____, term for anything that tries very hard to be inoffensive, particularly towards women or racial/religious minorities

Down:

- 37 visual representation of a person or concept, often grossly exaggerated
 38 public relations person who publicizes a favorable interpretation of the words or actions of a political party or its leader
 40 prime concern of the The Green Party of Canada
 42 those members of Parliament who are not part of the government of the day.
 43 Ontario Premier wanting pension to be an issue in the federal election
 44 you have a _____ state, where the govt.provides its citizens with a variety of generous social services from cradle to grave
 45 a constituency, an electoral district with a body of electors
 48 collectively, news reporting agencies, for example, television, radio, and the newspaper

Crossword Solution

