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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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We continue with a second set of lesson materials with a focus on the federal election. We thank the summer interns who helped research and prepare the material used in this teaching resource. Teachers can decide what and how to integrate any of this material in their lesson plans. The content is fresh and relevant, and available for the creative uses of the classroom teacher.

In addition to fulfilling the objectives of CHVO, this material is more directly related to the objectives outlined in the C3.3

Obstructions of the CPC3O Politics curriculum: *analyse a current political issue to identify factors that could facilitate or obstruct efforts to reach a solution (e.g., facilitating factors: public accountability processes, community support, leadership support; obstructing factors: “not in my backyard” opposition, lack of awareness or consensus, a focus on negative consequences, lack of money and resources, resistance from powerful groups).*



Part A To Vote or Not to Vote

Is Canada still a “democratic” nation in which people should participate in the election process by voting? Or is it a pseudo-democracy as some cynics charge, claiming that voting is not important, not really making any difference since Parliament constantly defers to the judgment of the courts? Well, in a democratic system of government the will of the people is to be respected. And one of the best ways to ensure that is to give the citizens the means to express their preferences for a mode of public action on issues of common interest. Responsibility means accountability, answering for a choice, exercising one’s right, but also recognizing that the right carries a duty or obligation owed to oneself as a member of a community and to others who also live in that larger community we call the nation.

Below are two boxes outlining some reasons or arguments regarding voting in a democratic election, followed by a piece outlining serious dangers presented by the evolution of the role and powers of the judicial branch of the government in Canada. One needs to keep vigilant about the judiciary potentially undermining the democratic/representative system of government whether deliberately or unwittingly.



Why one should vote, or the benefits of voting: a committed citizen’s viewpoint

1. Help elect the best politicians or representatives to the House of Commons
2. Help elect politicians who will keep election promises and pass good laws
3. It’s a chance to exercise one’s “legal right”, the precious voting franchise of citizenship
4. Show support for policies and decisions made by parties

5. A large turnout helps to keep the process honest and transparent
6. Voting shows democracy is alive and working proof of significant participation by the populace
7. Keeps person directly involved in the process of choosing a government that perhaps reflects their own values
8. Gives people a claim on the outcome, prevents unnecessary whining, helps avoid blaming others.
9. Voting gives everyone a stake in the outcome, even enhances the possibility of reforming the system
10. Provides a necessary relief outlet for pent up public frustrations, prevents possible violence or revolution

Why one need not vote, a cynic's viewpoint

1. Not exercising one's right or doing one's supposed civic duty to protect the state is a free choice
2. There are no real differences among the political parties, so why bother
3. The quality of candidates is poor and the important issues are ignored
4. The political propaganda is too negative, campaigns are confusing with all the competing promises and attacks
5. The election is a sham since everyone knows that only had a handful of the elected officials (Prime Minister and the Cabinet) have any real say in what will be presented in Parliament
6. The most important reason not to bother voting is that laws ultimately are declared void or unconstitutional according to the personal whim or social agenda of the justices of the Supreme Court.
7. The process is controlled by the media and insiders
8. The process takes too much time, energy, and a need to become informed
9. There is a real need to streamline the process, make it less demanding, and so more appealing to the ordinary person
10. Most party leaders seem to suggest that party discipline trumps other factors. MPs are not free to truly speak for or represent local voters' wishes or values. Backbench MPs are just handclapping penguins

A slightly different, more detailed argument goes something like this: Canada is a democracy, ergo one should vote. Newspaper pundits and editorialists come up with arguments against the charge that the judicial branch is out of control and has taken over the law-making role.

(NP refers to the *National Post* newspaper in the citations below)

1. Canada's Constitution is young and so misinterpretation by the courts is not an unexpected issue. (NP Why...)
2. The Supreme Court justices are apolitical and are wildcards. (NP Why...)
3. The Notwithstanding clause can keep a check on run-away courts, allows for democratic decisions taken by elected officials to prevail. (NP Why...)
4. Court selection is not ideological, but based on gender, region, ethnicity. A contrary point of view is that the Supreme Court justices have been increasingly chosen from a liberalized, left-wing legal professional cadre. (NP Why...)
5. "Former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada Beverley McLachlin stated that: *the charge of judicial activism may be understood as saying that judges are pursuing a particular political agenda, that they are allowing their political views to determine the outcome of cases before them. ... It is a serious matter to suggest that any branch of government is deliberately acting in a manner that is inconsistent with its constitutional role.*[1] (Wikipedia)



6. In the debate over judicial activism and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the most important thing is the judiciary's role, made possible by the Charter, in guarding against the tyranny of the majority, and in particular, protecting us from an overweening executive branch in full control of the legislature. (*Globe and Mail*)

But there are strong arguments to made to the contrary, that Canada has become a pseudo-democracy, court controlled, ergo voting isn't important:

1. "Supreme Court: The Supreme Court and all lower courts are completely unelected and/or do not have any sort of open and transparent selection process." (straight.com/news)
2. "The 1982 Patriation caused the transfer of power from the elected federal Parliament and provincial Legislatures which are accountable to the public, to non-elected, unaccountable judges sitting on the Supreme Court of Canada. The judiciary now make, without public input or accountability, fundamental decisions affecting our daily lives...Canadian judges have used the Charter to expand their role and influence, contrary to the clear intent of the drafters of the Charter. Time and again, judges have thrown aside judicial restraint, abandoned legal merit and precedent as the basis of their decisions, and instead have applied their own political ideology in reaching their decisions. They have now become the most powerful individuals in Canadian history. These startling events are examined through a critique of a number of Supreme Court of Canada and lower court cases, and the apparent mentality of the judges who believe that they are personally qualified to decide "what is best for Canadians."... Both the courts and Parliament must actively seek to re-balance their respective roles based on principles of responsible government and electoral accountability, to ensure that Canada, once again, becomes strong and free, rooted in the consent of the governed." (Interim Publishing, *From Democracy to Judicial Dictatorship* –Landolt &Redmond).
3. The law, legal precedent, the constitutional text, and the institutional norms and processes within the Court all make a difference in shaping and constraining judicial decisions. But law and politics overlap. Judges' ideologies do matter. Judges are humans and therefore fallible. One ought to recognize that Charter cases are political and the Court itself is a political institution...Dismissing the notion of judicial activism entirely is to deny that judges have the discretion—which they invariably exercise—to act with more or less deference to the decisions of democratically elected governments. (*Macleans* judicial activism)
4. The Court isn't partisan, and it isn't political in the same sense as a legislature or government, but its decisions involve politics and policy. Moreover, while the law is important, the law is not – contrary to the implicit assertions of many in the legal community – autonomous from politics. (<https://policypoptions.irpp.org/>)
5. To my disquiet, the Charter handed huge power to the judiciary. What were judges but unelected, well-fed, upper-middle-class bureaucrats, drawn from a narrow and elite sector of society, with similar

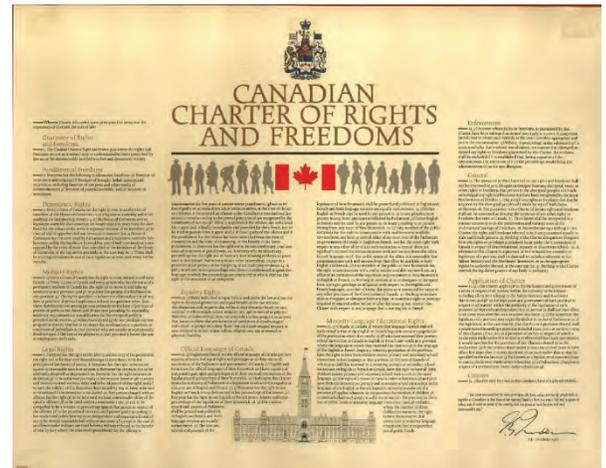


educations and worldviews, safe in their jobs and immune from criticism? It was fine for them to resolve private disputes and apply the law routinely. But it wasn't right that they decide important matters of policy and politics. It wasn't democratic. (*Globe and Mail*)

6. "The Supreme Court of Canada is crossing the line by intruding on Parliament's policy-making role. This critique is not being leveled by right-wing political scientists, eager politicians or dissatisfied litigants — but rather by judges on the Court itself. Our annual review of the Court's top-10 decisions highlights five judges who harshly criticized their colleagues for inappropriately interfering with Parliament's job. It's a serious critique that goes to the heart of the relative responsibilities of the Court versus Parliament and points to a growing philosophical rift." (iPolitics)
7. "From 1994 (the first full year of Liberal rule under the current prime minister) until the end of 2002, the government had shut off or limited House of Commons debates 80 times. Meanwhile, activism at the Supreme Court has accelerated: The success rate for *Charter of Rights* claimants was 63% in 2002, the highest rate in the previous 10 years." (Fraser Institute)

To summarize, it seems that voting is of great significance in a democracy and therefore one should vote because the strength of a free society is dependent on the vigilance and participation of its citizenry in the public affairs of the nation. Their vote could be meaningful and help produce a good government that will pass good legislation in keeping with constitutional norms and respectful of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. That newly elected government could also appoint better judges who exercise restraint and accept their limited oversight over legislation.

On the other hand, one could also reasonably conclude that Canada is an imperfect or even a pseudo-democracy because the courts truly have become radical institutions in assuming the law-making prerogatives of the legislative branch of government. In effect, the Justices have taken away the real power from parliamentary representatives, and therefore, the voters who elect them. In Canada, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* seems to have become the vehicle by which the Supreme Court has usurped that power that rightfully rests with the elected House of Commons. The Justices have appropriated or have been given so much freedom or leeway to interpret the constitution as they see fit, that they have been able to render judgments on different government bills based on ideological concerns and notions not found in the constitution.



Some observers point out that the more fundamental errors are the lack of definition found in the Charter concerning concepts and terms (like lifestyle, sexual orientation, transgenderism, etc.) and the absence of any value/philosophical/moral/legal/religious/ideological standpoint by which one can clearly understand the constitution. This has been exploited by Supreme Court justices to not only strike down certain laws, but also to promote laws that are beyond their power, such as those pertaining to euthanasia, assisted suicide, same-sex marriage and abortion, among other controversial public issues. Many constitutionalists insist that there must be a reform of the system in order to return power to the people through their elected representatives. (Interim Publishing, *From Democracy to Judicial Dictatorship* –Landolt & Redmond).

Questions

1. Why is voting important?
2. What impact does voting or non-voting have on a society?
3. How much power should the government, courts, and voters be given respectively?
4. What are the duties and objectives of voters, the government, and the courts, respectively?
5. How strong and clear should our Canadian values be in our Constitution?
6. What is more important, voter choice or the court's decisions?
7. How do we determine what should be legal?
8. Why is democracy important, assuming it is good?

9. What good can an elected government do?
10. Should the government defer to the courts as much as it does?
11. Should judges be elected or appointed?
12. Who from the population should be allowed to vote?
13. What is the definition of a “democracy”?
14. What are the principal reasons for a citizen voting? What are the chief reasons/excuses why many do not vote in elections?
15. At its core, why is the Charter of Rights and Freedoms so controversial?
16. Have any political parties made this question an issue in the developing election campaign?

Classroom Activity

Invite students to form two teams of debaters to argue the respective cases for voting or not voting, and whether Canada is a true democracy or only a pseudo-democracy.



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Part B: Why Do Young People Not Vote

The following satisfies the requirements listed in section D2.1 of the Ontario Social Sciences curriculum requirements for Politics in Action (CPC30) pg. 526: *identify and describe the intended goal relating to the selected issue and explain the reasons for choosing that goal.*

- “Politics is boring!”
- “Politicians can’t be trusted”
- “I don’t understand the issues”
- “I don’t know what’s going on. Why bother to vote.”
- “The issues don’t affect me and my friends.”
- “I can’t find the polling station. Why don’t they make it easier to vote?”

One could come up with another 101 statements from young people (but truly, there are just as many adults) expressing either their distaste for politics and politicians, or their genuine frustration with the process, or their cynical indifference to the demands of responsible citizenship. However they say it, the fact is that young Canadians between the ages of 18 and 25, generally speaking, do not participate in the political process to the same

extent as their elders. Some accept this state of affairs and conclude that it is probably not necessarily a bad thing to not have ignorant or insufficiently informed people voting on serious matters. Others decry this situation as bad news for the health of democracy if many young citizens cannot be bothered to learn about issues of public importance or to make the effort to cast a ballot.

Youth Votes in the Last Five Elections

Although the number of youth voters age 18-25 has been increasing over the past 5 elections, they have the lowest voter turnout in comparison to all other age groups. According to Statistics Canada, youth are more likely than older adults to participate in non-electoral civic and political activities. In 2013, the proportion of politically inactive people was 32% among youth aged 15-19 and 26% among youth aged 20-24, compared with 12% among seniors aged 65-74.

By cross-referencing actual votes with data from the National Register of Electors, Elections Canada was able to measure voter turnout for each federal election by age group. The following statistics are estimates from Elections Canada based on citizens in the voting age population:

- 2004 37% of youths ages 18-24 voted, voter turnout increased steadily with each group and reached a high of 75% among 58-65 year olds
- 2006 43% of youth ages 18-24 voted, even with a slight increase, youth continue to have the lowest voter turnout compared to all other age groups
- 2008 37% of youth ages 18-24 voted, this general election has the all-time low statistics for participation
- 2011 38% of youth ages 18-24 voted, differences within age groups do not appear to be widening over time and this pattern has been seen in every general election since 2004
- 2015 57% of youth ages 18-24 voted, turnout for age groups 18-24 and 25-34 is closer to that of the 35-44 age group than in previous elections, the 18-24 group saw the most significant increase since 2004

Why do so many not bother to vote and what common recommendations are there to improve the situation?

Individuals who are more interested in politics, those who follow news and current affairs regularly, and those who feel a strong sense of belonging to Canada are among the most likely to vote in federal elections. According to Elections Canada, these characteristics are less prevalent among youth. In order for youth to get involved, they must determine what political issues are important to them and their local communities. In doing so, they will learn to understand how politics is relevant to their own lives and why it's important to cast their ballot once eligible. Another way to get youth to the polling stations is to make voting easier and more meaningful for first-time voters. It is proven that those who begin voting at an early age, are more likely to continue voting throughout their lives. Whereas those who do not actively participate in elections, are more likely to continue the same trend as they get older. Television, media websites, blogs and other web sources are the main sources of information that youth use to find out about elections. Media coverage and politicians/parties who use social media platforms have a greater chance of engaging youth in political discourse while also educating them on party positions regarding certain issues.

The following article from *Flare Magazine*, a publication geared to a young audience, made a recent attempt to explain this voting or rather non-voting phenomenon, by interviewing 8 young Canadians. These may or may not be fully representative of young people, but their views reflect certain positive attitudes as well as the perceived barriers which exist to prevent their fellow youths from voting in elections.

8 Young Canadians on What Keeps Them From Voting

From accessibility to intimidation, here are the real reasons why young people feel left out of the political process



<https://www.flare.com/news/millennials-election-voting/>

Rachel Chen

Feb 25, 2019

(Photo: Getty Images)

[even though we do not have problems of voter suppression] ... we should acknowledge that Canadians, especially young people, definitely experience barriers to voting. According to Jane Hilderman, the executive director of the Samara Centre for Democracy, a nonpartisan group that works to make

Canadian politics more accessible and inclusive, there are access barriers, which come up when you don't have enough information on what you're voting on or how to vote, and motivational barriers, such as when you are made to feel like your vote doesn't matter. We wanted to look at how those barriers impact young Canadians, so we spoke to eight millennials about what keeps them and their peers from political engagement—and showing up on election day. Here's what they said.

Marginalized groups don't always see themselves reflected in the candidates



(Photo: Alia Youssef, The Sisters Project)

“Historically, certain marginalized populations (such as youth and some racialized communities) have not seen themselves reflected in politics, and are led to believe that Canadian politics is not relevant to them. It's hard to care about politics, watch candidate debates, or volunteer for a local candidate when you don't feel it will make an impact.

Also, some demographic groups have lower voter turnout than others, which means that candidates don't knock on those doors or attend events in those communities, because they don't think they will get votes. This in turn fuels the sentiment in those communities

that politicians don't care about them, and makes them less likely to vote, which confirms to politicians that those groups are not worth their time. It's a catch-22” — *Seber Shafiq, 28*

It can be hard to get to polling stations

(Photo: Courtesy Jayden Wlasichuk)

“As someone originally from the Swan Valley in Manitoba, I've noticed that polling stations are quite far from farmers and rural folks, and this can make voting more difficult. For example, if the election falls during harvest, some farmers can't afford to take the time from the field to go to the polls to cast their ballots, so their votes are lost. Since moving to Guelph, Ont. for university, I've had the privilege to have polling stations brought directly to me on campus, making voting incredibly accessible and easy for myself and other students. Moving forward to the 2019 election, I think it's important to place emphasis on rural votes, making voting accessible for rural and northern Canadians, and bringing polling stations to more locations—including campuses. I also hope that more outreach is done for northern and rural voters, so they know their votes are valued” — *Jayden Wlasichuk, 21*



The political process can be ableist



(Photo: Courtesy Landon Krentz)

“I believe that the political climate is not accessible in sign language, and that itself is a major barrier to those who are language deprived. I have encountered a Deaf person who is so removed from this world, [they don't] have a clue who Donald Trump is. That makes me feel very frustrated.

In my entire professional life, I have only been to one political debate that has ASL interpretation. I was the only Deaf person in the audience. There is a lack of outreach activities from politicians and I feel that if they had partnered with a Deaf consultant in the process, they would have a better understanding of the best inclusive practices. I would recommend

having three interpreters to support each other and a brief meet + greet with the candidates in order to ensure that the access is more equitable rather than be an afterthought in the process. In my perfect world, each politician at a debate would have their own interpreters representing them” — *Landon Krentz, 28*

First-time voters—like immigrants and students—can feel intimidated by the process

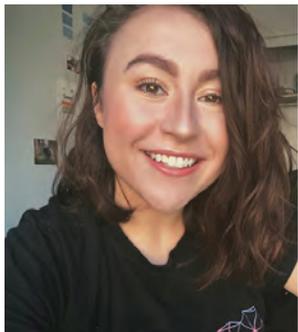
(Photo: Tyler Valiquette)

“As an immigrant, my first experience with voting was when I was 11 and I went to the polls with my family. As the only one who could read English, it was my job to translate the names and parties on the ballots so my parents and grandparents could vote. It was the first time, I saw how empowering the act of voting was for my family of new Canadians. Fast forward seven years and I'm voting for the first time in the advanced polls with all my new friends at university. But I also saw that voting was a confusing and intimidating process for first-time voters and youth—students change their addresses too often due to moving for school and jobs, so they're often not registered.



And now, [as the program manager for the Samara Centre for Democracy,] I’ve talked to youth across Canada, who told me they care about democracy but don’t believe their vote mattered under the first-past-the-post system. Overwhelmingly, young Canadians felt that politicians talked at them not to them” — *Yvonne Su, 29*

Canada’s political systems aren’t equitable



(Photo: Ava Truthwaite)

“Equity in elections is difficult to find. There’s an automatic assumption that everyone has access to the polling station of their riding, but it’s not that simple. Not everyone has a method of getting to their polling station, whether that be the vehicle or the funds needed for a different form of transportation. This is especially true in Indigenous communities. Not all First Nations communities have polling stations.

Elections are not designed in a way that considers the intersecting axes of disadvantage that individuals experience. Able-bodied, financially stable, employed, (usually) white, cisgender people benefit from the way elections are structured. Am I denying Canada’s multiculturalism? Absolutely not. However, I am highly critical of our country’s political/electoral system, in that, despite being so vocal about our multicultural society, these systems are still built upon structural racism, ableism, heteronormativity and settler colonial ideals. These systems still benefit the archetype they were designed for and exclude the others who don’t fit that mould”— *Ava Truthwaite, 19*

How will intentional misinformation play into this year’s election?

(Photo: Erika Wade Photography)

“I have been voting in every election since I was 18. I was really interested in politics at a young age, but many of my friends were not. My personal experience is young women are taught from a young age that their currency comes from being agreeable, pretty, easygoing. It’s part privilege—their day-to-day life was not affected by politics—and part being a young woman in a patriarchal society. My concern going into the 2019 federal election is misinformation. I think the 2016 American election really energized voters, and not just in the U.S. But it also highlighted the problem of intentional misinformation on social media” — *Erin Graves, 33*



Polling stations often aren’t accessible



(Photo: David Gillispie Photography)

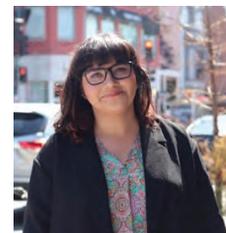
“As a person living with cerebral palsy who uses mobility aids to participate in the community, I need to make sure that the polling station I go to in my local community is wheelchair accessible. This involves searching the location online or calling the polling station myself before Election Day to find out if it is equipped with an accessibility ramp, accessibility ‘push-to-open’ buttons at the main entrance and exit, and to find out if the walkway leading to the building has a curb cut, so that I can easily maneuver myself from the outdoor parking lot into the building. There are also many other barriers that people with disabilities may face when it comes to voting. I think people—especially people my age—might decide not to vote in elections because they don’t pay close attention to political issues or current events in politics. Or, perhaps they might not be highly informed about where the various political parties stand on different social and political issues that

may directly affect their lives, or they might not know a great deal about the government policies and legislation that impact and shape their everyday lived experiences the most. As a young person with a disability, I think it is extremely important to vote because voting is a huge way in which people with disabilities can exercise their voices on the issues that matter most to them” — *Andrea Luciani, 25*

Sexual violence can isolate women from political engagement

(Photo: @stefany.io on Instagram)

“I started Young Women’s Leadership Network as a result of my own experiences as a teenager and young woman in politics, coming up against barriers like sexism and ageism, and different forms of gender-based violence that didn’t exactly make politics the world of civic engagement the most welcoming space. Say you are 16, volunteering with a party, and are faced with an incident of sexual violence and don’t have the supports needed to ensure that act of gender-based violence isn’t the last interaction you have with the political system. That doesn’t really create a feeling of belonging and inclusion in that system. That can have huge implications on



your future and how you proceed to get involved with the politics of our country. In the It's Time research that we did with 60 women in Ontario who had worked and had an experience with sexual violence in politics, we found out that 80 per cent of them had either left politics completely or it had dramatically changed the way they engaged with politics as a result of sexual violence. That's a huge number" — *Arezoo Najibzadeh, 20*

Why Voting Matters To You and Your Family: An Issue Ignored

This curriculum material supplement addresses content from the Ontario curriculum for Civics and Citizenship, Grade 10 (CHV2O) Section B2.5 - *identify Canada's form of government and demonstrate an understanding of the process of electing governments in Canada (e.g., the first-past-the-post electoral system, riding distribution, voters' lists, how elections are called, campaigning, candidates' and party leaders' debates, advance polls, election day procedures)*

Why do we have government?

Part of the reason for low voter turnout is that key issues are ignored or not considered important at all because deemed "too hot" and likely to create unwanted controversy. Thus many people are turned off as they don't see their issue being covered or debated at all. Once again, it is good to recall what many consider to be the main purpose of government --- to promote the common good, by providing order, safety and justice. Of course there may be other subsidiary tasks or objectives, such as providing an environment conducive to free economic activity and the protection of human rights. Others may argue that government is there to provide services that people cannot do on their own – like the education of their children, public transportation systems, policing and administration of justice, border controls, the building of hospitals, a safety net for when people are unemployed or sick. Another responsibility of government could well be its duty to honor and assist the family and promote values that encourage family formation and that strengthen family life since families are the basic social cell of human life and civilization itself.

Throughout history many political leaders have stated the importance of families for a nation, governing as if they truly believed in it. Sometimes governments only pay lip service to the need for strong family values. But, in recent years, politicians have either become silent as attacks are launched against the family or downright hostile to measures that protect traditional family values, seemingly cowed by the threat of a backlash from the more radical "progressive" elements in society. Some critics argue that government has helped to weaken the family as an institution because of various policies it has introduced. In this very real sense, government no longer seems to be pursuing policies that promote the common good of society. The attack on the family is an attack against the common good.



Does the Canadian government protect family values? One can pose questions like these and then make a judgment: Does the government provide and protect the freedom to establish a family, have children, and raise those children in morals and virtues?

Does the government protect the stability of marriage? Does the government protect the right to own private property, protect a free market, and to obtain work and housing? Does the government protect the right to medical care, assistance to the elderly or disabled? Does it provide beneficial institutions and resources for the family? Do families have the freedom to form associations with other families to have civil representation before the government? Does the government hinder or prohibit the establishment of a family in any way? Does the government protect their citizens' safety and security from violence? Does the government adopt tax policies that promote and strengthen family formation? Does the government ban or restrict practices that are anti-life, such as abortion and euthanasia? The answers to these questions may obviously vary a great deal, but shouldn't they at least be raised and debated in any society concerned with its future?

Questions

1. How many youth, (age 18-25) have voted in the last five elections?
2. Is it a low figure in comparison to the rest of the population? Why is this?
3. Has it gone up at any time? What would account for that?
4. Why do so many not bother to vote?
5. Which of the reasons cited in the Flare magazine article above surprise you the most? Is there validity in these complaints or concerns? Are the so-called “barriers” insurmountable?
6. What recommendations have been made (or would you make) to encourage more youth to vote?
7. Why are some issues ignored deliberately during election campaigns? Can you provide a few examples? Does this contribute to voter apathy? How? Why?
8. Do governments have a duty to strengthen families as key social building blocks for a healthy society?
9. Have governments lost their way in not doing more to protect and promote family formation and the continued viability of the Canadian family?
10. How can the general public help in ensuring that all major important issues are raised during an election campaign?
11. What is the responsibility of media to raise the same concern?
12. Which parties appear to be addressing family needs during the election? What evidence is there of that?

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<https://www.flare.com/news/millennials-election-voting/>
https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2011/04/05/social_media_help_voting_go_viral_among_youth_elections_canada.html
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7tWHJfhiyo>
http://faculty.georgetown.edu/kingch/Electoral_Systems.htm
<https://www.elections.ca/scripts/vis/FindED?L=e&QID=-1&PAGEID=20>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=48EZKXweGDo>
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Aristotle/Political-theory>
<https://canada.isidewith.com/political-parties/issues/electoral/minimum-voting-age>
<https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=ele&dir=turn&document=index&lang=e>
<http://www.revparl.ca/english/issue.asp?art=1140¶m=168>
<https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/voter-turnout/compulsory-voting>
http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s2c2a4.htm

Part C: Social Media and Political Election Campaigns

In this section we investigate and report on the use of social media to promote political messages and to inspire/activate voters to cast a ballot. The following material satisfies requirements listed in section B1.1 of the curriculum requirements for Politics in Action (CPC30) pg. 520: identify some agents of political socialization (eg. the family, public education, religious institutions, the media, peers, personal experience, political/social organizations), and analyse how these agents affect their own personal political beliefs and engagements and the beliefs and engagement of others.

Digital media have played an increasingly important role in election campaigns according to political operatives and observers. Social media have the power to influence the public's political knowledge, attitudes and behaviour. No doubt these digital tools have multiple uses, from presenting



information to galvanizing supporters to vote in an election. Nonetheless, there appears to be more than one point of view about the relative importance of social media tools.

Political Parties use social media to express their political agenda, increase their visibility with all voters and to target niche groups in order to get their candidates elected. Unlike television and radio broadcasting, YouTube, Twitter and Instagram are free. As a result candidates can save a significant amount of money by having several social media accounts. Candidates with their own accounts can see who is following them, and use that information to tailor their posts to address a specific demographic.

Since having a public account can have both positive and negative effects on a campaign, it is common for politicians to have a manager that is responsible for protecting their public image, especially during controversy or crisis. Already during the current election campaign a number of candidates have been forced to drop out of the election by their party or on their own because of past postings on their social media accounts. Social media thus can be a double-edged sword, a weapon for attacking the opponent, but also laying oneself open to counterattacks.

The use of social media in politics including Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube has dramatically changed the way campaigns are run and how voters in virtually every modern nation interact with their elected officials. There are claims that the prevalence of social media in politics has made elected officials and candidates for public office more accountable and accessible to voters. Moreover, the ability to publish party platforms, reports, rallies, and other content and then broadcast it to millions of people instantaneously allows campaigns to carefully manage their candidates' images and to tailor their message accordingly.

But, it is not a totally rosy picture. There is the real danger of "fake news" which can spread like wildfire, uncontrollably, and do vast damage to a candidate or their party before it is revealed that the news report was made up and constituted "fake news". Not only that, but there are many trolls operating whose job is to misinform, deflect, distract, create division, falsify numbers and reports. A lot of what passes for information is quite unreliable and has to be checked for accuracy and authenticity. To take the example of American politics, the news outlets themselves can be the purveyors of "fake news" either by reporting nonsense and sensationalizing it, or by ignoring the facts and pretending that something did happen, or the opposite, something did not happen. The whole "Russia collusion" story according to the Mueller Report and ongoing revelations is proving to be a hoax perpetrated by one political party abetted by the mass media. No evidence emerged that showed otherwise, despite the continued protestations of the party opposed to the American President.



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It is possible for foreign entities and domestic players to interfere or at least influence the election process of democratic societies, even when laws exist to prevent that. There are fears that the Canadian election can be manipulated in some subtle ways by foreign "actors", whether individuals, organizations or governments. In the Canadian election right now there are fears that at the local level, in specific ridings, people from India and China are wanting to influence the result in their ridings, so that whoever is elected might adopt a policy or stance favourable to their country of origin. (John Oakley Show, September 17, 2019 on AM 640 radio)

Here are 10 ways Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube have changed politics, not just in the United States but also in Canada and other western nations.

Direct Contact With Voters. Social media tools including Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube allow politicians to speak directly to voters without spending a dime. Using those social media allows politicians to circumvent the traditional method of reaching voters through paid advertising or earned media. They provide 24 hour access or exposure by and to potential voters by party leaders and their campaigns.

Advertising Without Paying For Advertising. It has become fairly common for political campaigns to produce commercials and publish them for free on YouTube instead of, or in addition to, paying for time on television

or the radio. Often times, journalists covering campaigns will write about those YouTube ads, essentially broadcasting their message to a wider audience at no cost to the politicians. Again its's both a cost-saving device and maximum flexibility in messaging.

How Campaigns Go Viral. Twitter and Facebook have become instrumental in organizing campaigns. They allow like-minded voters and activists to easily share news and information such as campaign events with each other. That's what the "Share" function on Facebook and "retweet" feature of Twitter are for. However, there also may be a wearing out of messaging if done constantly.

Tailoring the Message to the Audience. Political campaigns can tap into a wealth of information or analytics about the people who are following them on social media, and customize their messages based on selected demographics. In other words, a campaign may find one message appropriate for voters under 30 years old will not be as effective with those over 60 years old.

Fundraising. Some campaigns have used so-called "money bombs" to raise large amounts of cash in a short period of time. Money bombs are typically 24-hour periods in which candidates press their supporters to donate money. They use social media such as Twitter and Facebook to get the word out and often tie these money bombs to specific controversies that emerge during campaigns. It can generate vast sums relatively speaking from mamny people even if insmallamounts. Typical request is often for just \$1 or \$5.



Controversy. Direct access to voters also has its downside. Handlers and public-relations professionals often manage a candidate's image, and for good reason: Allowing a politician to send out unfiltered tweets or Facebook posts has landed many a candidate in hot water or in embarrassing situations. There is also a segment of the voters who are distrustful of all media including social media.

Feedback. Asking for feedback from voters or constituents can be a good thing. And it can be a very bad thing, depending on how politicians respond. Many campaigns hire staffers to monitor their social media channels for a negative response and scrub anything unflattering. But such a bunker-like mentality can make a campaign appear defensive and closed off from the public. Well run modern-day campaigns will engage the public regardless of whether their feedback is negative or positive. See the article that follows this section, about how Elections Canada itself recognizes the power of "influencers".

Weighing Public Opinion. The value of social media is in its immediacy. Politicians and campaigns do absolutely nothing without first knowing how their policy statements or moves will play among the electorate, and Twitter and Facebook both allow them to instantaneously gauge how the public is responding to an issue or controversy. Politicians can then adjust their campaigns accordingly, in real time, without the use of high-priced consultants or expensive polling. But again, many voters are sophisticated enough to screen out the nonsensical claims of campaigns.

It's Hip. One reason social media is effective is that it engages younger voters. Typically, older voters tend to make up the largest portion of voters who actually go to the polls. But Twitter and Facebook have energized younger voters, which has had a profound impact on elections. This is a new phenomenon, but it remains to be seen whether this novelty will last past one election cycle.

The Power of Many. Social media tools have allowed voters to easily join together to petition the government and their elected officials, leveraging their numbers against the influence of powerful lobbyists and monied special interests. While this may be true we must not overestimate the influence of numbers alone.

Questions

1. What is social media?
2. What is "fake news"? What are trolls?
3. On balance, do social media advance the election process by engaging voters or do they serve mostly to muddy the waters?
4. How have social media changed election campaigns?
5. Are there any problems associated with the use of social media for campaign purposes?

6. What are the best or most positive impact of social media on voting turnout?
7. What negative opinion was expressed by the Conservatives on Elections Canada using “celebrity influencers” to encourage people to vote in the upcoming October 21 election? Read the article at this link <https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/elections-canada-scraps-social-media-influencers-to-encourage-youth-vote-1.4475444> (problem with social media, could be biased)
8. Were the concerns of the Conservatives justified in any way?
9. How did Elections Canada respond to the criticism?

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311717978_Impact_of_Social_Media_on_Voter's_Behaviour-a_Descriptive_Study_of_Gwalior_Madhya_Pradesh (deals with social media and elections in India, but the general ideas are still applicable to the Canadian context).

<https://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/13/us/politics/social-networks-affect-voter-turnout-study-finds.html>

<https://www.thoughtco.com/how-social-media-has-changed-politics-3367534> (simple summary of 10 ways social media tools have changed campaign strategies)

<https://www.povertyactionlab.org/evaluation/effect-media-voting-behavior-and-political-opinions-united-states>

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/how-the-media-covers-elections-other-government-activities.html>

<http://www.ushistory.org/gov/5d.asp>

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/elections-canada-scraps-social-media-influencers-to-encourage-youth-vote-1.4475444> (problem with social media, could be biased)

<https://sysomos.com/2016/10/05/social-media-affects-politics/>

Part D:

How could voting be improved, both in numbers and method?

The electoral process is the method in which a vote is held to determine a winner. An electoral system is the set of rules that determine how elections or referendums are conducted and how their results are determined. There are two major electoral systems: the plurality electoral system and the proportional representation system. To identify ways in which voting can be improved we must first identify some of the problems inherent to the current electoral process in Canada, namely, a single member plurality electoral system commonly known as the first-past-the-post because the winner of the election is the person with the most votes. This system has served the country well over the decades.

However, many people are critical of the first-past-the-post system. Their objections can be summarized in this brief explanation of the perceived problems or weaknesses of a simple plurality. (For a full exploration of the first-past-the-post and proportional representation see *The Interim Plus* of March, 2016. Part A Electoral Reform <http://www.theinterim.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/March-2016-Interim-Plus.pdf>)

It can produce a form of minority rule within the local riding when a candidate gets less than 50% of the vote and still wins. In a riding election with six or more candidates, it is possible theoretically (and sometimes practically) for 75-80% of the population to vote against one candidate, in favour of the other candidates, and it is possible for a candidate to achieve as little as 17% of the popular vote to win and have complete power. The more candidates running in an election, the smaller the portion of the popular vote is necessary for a candidate to win. If this were to occur in many ridings across the nation, a political party could obtain a majority government (most number of seats, 170 of 338 total ridings) and yet have earned no more than 32% or 35 % of the total votes cast across the entire country. Effectively it would mean that 65-68% did not vote for the party that ends up forming the government. Strangely, a minority actually functions as the practical majority.

To avoid minority rule at the local level (that is, each individual riding), voters will sometimes cast a strategic vote for a different candidate than the one they would normally vote for, just to make sure that the candidate of the party they fear the most ends up losing. For example, voter X normally wants his Liberal candidate to win, but the local NDP candidate is stronger in his particular riding and stands the best chance of defeating the Conservative candidate which voter X absolutely does not want to win. So voter X opts to cast his vote not for his Liberal candidate but instead for the NDP candidate even though he does not like the NDP party or the NDP candidate.

Politics are fluid and even in a traditional two-party parliamentary system, if the leaders of both major parties completely ignore a single issue which is very important to a certain voting block, and this issue is the only reason why most of the voters in that voting block vote, then people will not vote. Currently in Canada, there are

some issues that are completely ignored by all the major parties. Will this give rise to yet another new party?

The reality is that when a large enough portion of a political party disagrees on a certain issue or multiple issues, that block of disaffected party members may choose to form their own new party. If 60% of voters are left wing but 20% vote for the NDP instead of the Liberal party, the Conservative party will beat both parties even though the majority of voters would prefer a left wing candidate. In the federal election in October, there will be at least seven political parties represented on the ballots across the nation: the Liberal Party of Canada, The New Democratic Party, The Green Party of Canada, The Conservative Party of Canada, The People’s Party of Canada, The Christian Heritage Party and the Bloc Quebecois. This provides a substantial opportunity to split both the left wing and right wing vote. The collapse of just one of these parties could significantly affect the election outcome. The NDP and the Liberal party have historically split the vote which allowed a conservative majority under Stephen Harper in 2011. Similarly, the Progressive Conservative and the Canadian Alliance parties split the vote which allowed the Liberal Chretien government to attain a majority government in 2000. But the outcome of elections can also produce new parties because of the situation noted above, when leaders of the major parties remain silent about an issue or outright ban any discussion of an important issue. Disaffected and frustrated members will break off to form a new party or migrate to a smaller party seeking to influence that party or to take it over.

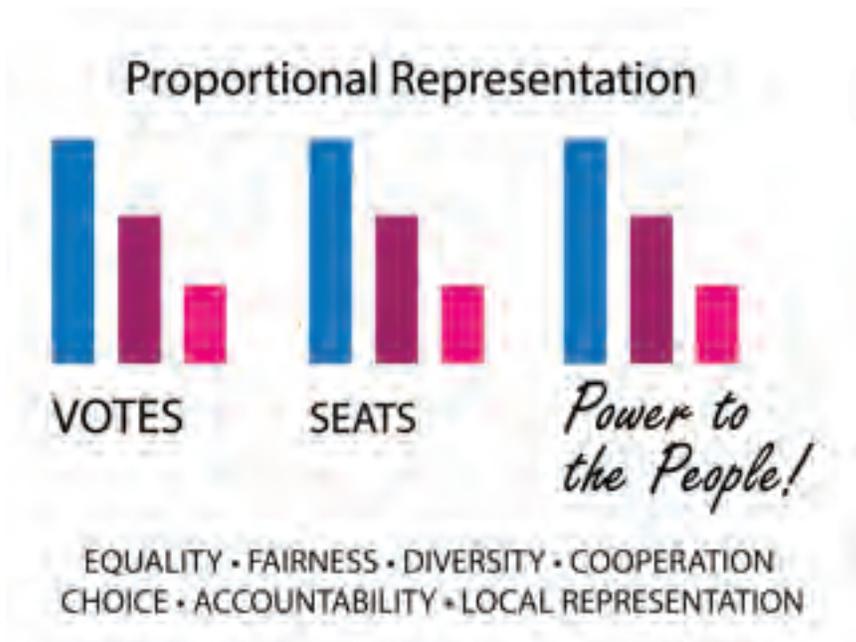
For a variety of reasons some see the existing system as unfair, as undemocratic. A lot of people feel that their vote does not really count, because of where they live and the composition of the electorate in their particular riding. For example, in a riding made up of 86,000 voters where one party, say, the Liberal Party, gets 70% of the votes, the people who support the other parties do not have any real say. The same would apply for a riding where a different major party receives an equally large plurality. Across Canada, this is repeated a number of times in certain provinces, where a particular political party seems to enjoy a stranglehold, e.g. Liberals in the Atlantic provinces and Quebec, and the Conservatives in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

There is a concern addressed in editorials, periodically, about the need for electoral reform. The claim is that a democratic deficit (not enough people take an interest in political affairs) or apathy weakens the democratic system itself. Different proposals have been recommended for improving the Canadian electoral system.

Proportional Representation

Some would-be reformers feel that proportional representation is a good option to make every vote count. Most European nations have adopted some form of proportional representation.

According to this proposed system, the number of seats held by each party would be in proportion to the number of votes each party received nationally (or province-wide in case of its application to provincial elections) , rather than the number of ridings won by each party. For the sake of an illustrative example, let’s assume that the percentages of the popular vote obtained by the parties were something like: Liberals 32.6 %, Conservatives 30.2%, NDP 17.4%, Green Party 9.3%, People’s Party 5.7% and Bloc Quebecois 4.8%. Under current first-past-the-post, the results in terms of 338 total ridings could be Liberals 157 seats, Conservatives 129 seats, NDP 39, Green Party 4, Bloc Quebecois 8, and People’s Party 0. One can conclude that based on these results the votes cast for Liberals and Conservatives proved to be much more valuable than votes cast for the other parties. Under a proportional system the results instead would more closely mirror the true number of votes that a party received nationally: Liberals with 32.6% of the popular vote would earn 110 seats; the Conservatives with 30.2% of the total votes would be assigned 102 seats; NDP with 17.4% would get 59 seats; Green Party with 9.3% would have 31 seats, the Bloc with 4.8% gets 16 seats; and, the People’s Party with 5.7% would have 19 seats.



A strong argument can be made that indeed it is a much fairer system of voting and that this approach would

encourage people to take politics more seriously and actually make the effort to vote. Every vote would count, whereas in the current system every vote for the People's Party has no value and the Greens and NDP have a bit of value, while the votes for the Liberals and Conservatives have a weighted value much beyond their real numbers. Those parties have less desire to see the system changed.

Conversely, there are opposing arguments. One can plainly see the perpetual minority government situation that would result from proportional representation. That, in turn, would create political instability with governments falling and more frequent elections made necessary. Not only is that harmful to the economy and detrimental to the continuity of policies and programmes, but the power and influence that the individual voter has on the local level, in their personal riding, might be curtailed and made virtually insignificant because he would no longer have a direct say in who gets the party nomination in the riding. Power would come to be concentrated even more in the hands of the party leader and the party apparatus. One would be sacrificing local power to some central organization or party election committee over which the individual would have little if any control whatsoever. Many argue that this would create a much worse democratic deficit. The local Member of Parliament would become a representative of the party in the riding rather than the representative of the people in the House of Commons. In fact, there is already a danger that existing party nomination procedures have transformed the role of local candidates, turning them into strictly party people, more loyal to their party than truly representing the views of the people that voted for them in the riding.



It is really a difficult issue to resolve to everyone's satisfaction. One can ask, is it necessarily a bad thing, having to compromise, for several parties having to cooperate in forming a governing coalition? Would the parties not want to introduce legislation, policies and regulations that are for the common good? Is it good to place all power and responsibility in the hands of one party that may enjoy the seat majority, but which received only 36% of the total votes cast in the nation? Its proponents maintain that proportional representation should be considered a fairer and better method for respecting the popular vote and identifying issues that matter most to citizens. Proportional representation would more fairly express the democratic principle that people should be represented in proportion to how they voted. Allegedly, proportional representation not only defends the self-interests of the voter, but because of likely minority governments or working coalitions, it prevents government tyranny. Proportional representation would increase the value of every vote, allowing a government to be elected according to the popular will of all the people.

Despite all these wonderful assumptions and seemingly logical benefits that would flow from its introduction in Canada, this proposed reform has been rejected time after time in individual provinces whenever it has been submitted to a referendum process. It has never been passed. Furthermore, it was a promise made by the Liberals under Trudeau in the 2015 election and it was abandoned by the majority Liberal government after extensive cross-Canada consultations. Failure to carry out this reform may well become a hot election issue this time around, bringing into question the integrity of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his Liberal government.

The ranked ballot

Another way of engaging more people is to give people multiple choices on a ballot. The ranked ballot idea would produce a majority result in the riding by simply allowing a voter to vote for as many candidates as she wishes, but the winner is declared to be the candidate who wins the most first place votes in combination with their placement on the ballots where they were not the first choice. So many points are earned for a first choice, so many for being the second choice and so many for being third. Transferring or reallocating all choices imme-

diately according to the preferences indicated by the individual voters. Following the vote reallocation by ranked choices, the winner would emerge.

Yet another approach is to have a run-off election to ensure that the winner in each riding in fact has a true plurality. This would mean having two stages to the election in those ridings. Only the top two vote getters from the first round would appear on the second round ballot. Voting would take place on October 21, and then again on October 28.

Lower the Voting Age

Others have suggested that the voting age be lowered to increase the level of participation. The age for belonging to a political party and voting in that party's leadership contest is already 14-years-old for certain political parties including the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, the Ontario New Democratic Party, and the Conservative



Party of Canada. If this is a precedent for raising young people's political awareness and encouraging participation in the political process, why not consider voting in federal elections? Why does a citizen have to be 18-years-old to vote in a federal election? Advocates for this reform assert that, after all, 16-year-olds can get a job, learn to drive, pay taxes and join the Canadian military. Many 16-year-olds are already young adults, mature enough to have an informed opinion for whom to vote. The supporters of lowering the voting age to 16 are mainly found among the Green, and Liberal parties.

The arguments can cut both ways. Perhaps the political reasons for why 16-year-olds don't get the vote are mainly because many politicians regard young people as the objects of policy, due to

the policy work they do to limit bad behaviour shown by reckless youth.

More reasons against lowering the voting age is that the percentage of voter turnout will diminish and that young people tend to vote for extremist parties. Educational reasons for why 16-year-olds are not allowed to vote include the fact that young voters may not be knowledgeable enough on political issues to vote or that young voters are easily swayed to vote by their parents or peers. But, how is that any different from the uninformed voter who is not in that younger age category?

Make voting compulsory as in Australia

According to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 172 out of 203 countries (85%) do not have compulsory voting for their democratic elections, but 27 countries (13%) do have compulsory voting, including Argentina, Australia, regions in Austria, and Belgium. In the countries with compulsory voting, the citizens have to provide a legitimate reason for not voting and even then they could be punished with a fine called a sanction. In countries with compulsory voting, the voter turnout was 7% higher on average than countries without compulsory voting. Compulsory voting marginally increases voter participation, but at what cost? Does it guarantee better government? Is it a violation of a citizen's freedom?

Modernize voting by allowing electronic voting

With every election cycle one hears the same questions being posed, "Why can't we vote online?" or "Why can't the voting machines be electronic?" Actually these are two distinct questions, one addresses a location for voting, more intimate, more convenient because it could be done anywhere - in the home, on the bus, at work etc., while the second question is more a consideration of efficiency and quickness of tabulating the results.

Most of the activities we do online, like banking or ordering fast food, require that the information be saved to an internet database. When it comes to electronic voting, it is harder to maintain anonymity and to protect voter identification. In paper-based voting systems, the simple process and high accountability has been very effective at preventing compromises or errors. With internet voting systems, the electorate can't see or understand exactly what is going on inside computers and servers. Election tampering with paper voting is almost impossible, but in electronic voting it could slip by undetected, thereby corrupting the entire democratic process.



However, certain countries like Estonia introduced online voting in 2005 and encountered no problems. Canadian municipalities have introduced this method in recent years; however, the latter also maintain the paper ballot for those who wish to wait until election day. The main reason why online voting was allowed in Estonia was that Estonia has a nationwide digital identification system and each citizen's identity card includes cryptographic keys which make it easier to verify their identity.

Despite reassurances and the promised efficiency, the fear remains that election systems are subject to hacking and massive fraud through this type of election interference. Cybersecurity experts still have significant criticisms about the system. Just as there has been an increase in the hacking of banking information and stealing of personal identities, there is danger that a democratic society is susceptible to digital manipulation by insiders and foreign entities eager to create confusion and disrupt our democratic system of electoral decision-making.

Questions

1. Briefly outline the two main electoral systems for voting and creating a government that rules with the consent of the people?
2. What are seen as major problems or weaknesses of Canada's first-past-the-post system for elections?
3. What are the perceived advantages of that same system?
4. If you had to choose how your country voted what electoral system would you choose?
5. Should voter age be lowered in Canada? Why? Why not?
6. If you became prime minister, would you change all elections to become electronic? Why or why not?
7. Explain strategic voting. Does it help or harm efforts to engage more people in the election process?
8. Assess the relative merits/strengths and weaknesses of the various proposals for improving the nature of the electoral system in Canada and the level of citizen participation.
9. Which alternate method(s) of voting or other reform proposal do you find most appealing and why?

<https://www.comparitech.com/blog/information-security/electronic-voting-risks/>

<http://www.cpac.ca/en/conservative-leadership-results/#>

<http://www.thecanadaguide.com/data/federal-elections/>

https://www.ontariopc.ca/riding_by_riding_results

<https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=res&dir=eim/issue8&document=p9&lang=e>

<https://www.therebel.media/tommy-robinson-campaign-election-european-parliament-news-ezra-levant>

<https://www.crikey.com.au/2019/04/29/vote-online-election/>

Part E: Costs of Election Campaigns

Much is made of the ever-spiraling costs of holding elections and running for political office. Today the laws regulating election financing permits only individuals to donate or contribute to a party's election expenses - not companies, not unions and not "third parties". Here follows an interesting article from the Canadian Encyclopaedia and it tackles this aspect of electioneering. It gives a very good overview of the topic of election financing from the early days of Confederation to the most recent changes in the laws governing this matter. Knowledge of the law and its application helps to understand the intricacies of conducting election campaigns.

Political Party Financing in Canada

By Harold Jansen

Originally Published online, February 27, 2006

Lastly edited, December 14, 2016,

Election laws regulate most aspects of federal political party financing, both during and outside of election periods. The purpose of such regulation is to encourage greater transparency of political party activities and ensure a fair electoral arena that limits the advantages enjoyed by those with more money. Election finance laws govern the manner by which political parties and candidates are funded, and the ways in which parties and candidates can spend money.

Political parties and candidates need money to pay election campaign expenses, to maintain organizational activities and to conduct research for policy purposes. They are funded both privately and publically.

Canada’s federal election finance laws put limits on contributions to political parties and candidates. Only individuals — not corporations or trade unions — may donate. Contributions are limited to up to \$1,500 a year to each political party and up to \$1,500 to all of the registered electoral district associations, contestants seeking the party’s nomination and candidates for each party. In addition, donors may give up to \$1,500 to leadership contestants for a party as well as up to \$1,500 to independent candidates. These limits were set in 2015, and the amounts increase by \$25 each year. Political actors must disclose the names of anyone who donates more than \$200.

Canada’s system of party and election finance regulation provides two forms of state funding to political parties and to candidates.

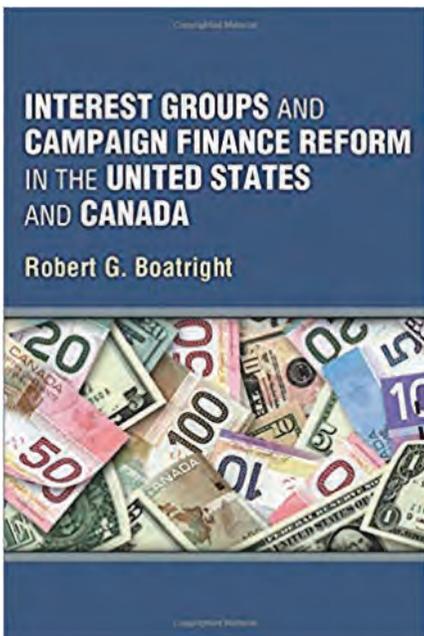
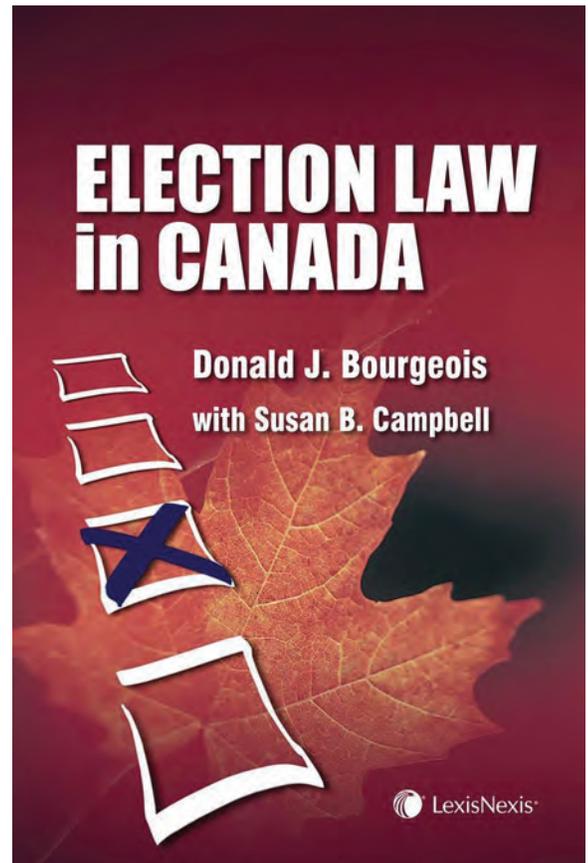
First, political parties and candidates receive a reimbursement of some of their election expenses (see Political Campaign). Political parties that received either 2 per cent of the national vote or 5 per cent of the vote in the districts in which they ran candidates receive 50 per cent of the money they spent as a reimbursement. Candidates who received at least 10 per cent of the vote receive 15 per cent of the election expenses limit in their district as a reimbursement. In addition, if the candidate spent at least 30 per cent of the limit during the election, the reimbursement increases to 60 per cent of what the candidate spent during the election

Second, Canada provides generous tax credits for donations to political parties and candidates. The first \$400 of donations receives a 75 per cent tax credit; the amount between \$400 and \$750 receives a 50 per cent credit. Amounts over \$750 receive a 33 per cent credit. An individual’s total tax credit in one year cannot exceed \$650. Political parties and candidates face limits on the amounts they may spend during an election. Political parties may spend 73.5 cents for every voter in districts where they are running candidates. For their local campaigns, candidates may spend an amount based on the population of the district in which they are running, typically between \$75,000 and \$115,000. If the election campaign is longer than 36 days, as was the case in 2015, the limits for both parties and candidates are increased proportionately.

Groups or individuals other than political parties and candidates may spend no more than \$150,000 to try to persuade voters during an election, and no more than \$3,000 of that may be spent in any one district. Critically, all of these limits to spending apply only during the election period — between when the writs of election have been issued (when the election is officially called) and election day

Although Canada now has an extensive regime regulating political party and election finance, this was not always the case. Before 1974, the financial activities of political parties were largely unregulated. From Confederation until about 1897, party funds were used to overcome weak partisanship. At the time, certain partisan Members of Parliament did not always follow party lines. As a result, party leaders were directly involved in fundraising and in distributing election funds to ensure the election loyalty of their followers. The Liberals and Conservatives also tended to rely on corporate donations, which led to periodic scandals, such as the Pacific Scandal. However, these were not enough to prompt comprehensive regulation of political party finance.

As partisanship crystallized, party leaders tried to distance themselves from the raising of campaign funds. Fundraising specialists gradually assumed this role, freeing party leaders from immediate involvement in this aspect of party politics.



Canada's political parties began to run into financial difficulties in the 1960s and early 1970s. At the time, a series of minority governments resulted in more frequent elections. Meanwhile, political parties faced rising campaign costs, as television advertising and polling became integral parts of campaigns. These developments led to the passage of the *Election Expenses Act* in January 1974. At the heart of the legislation was a bargain: political parties would receive state money in return for greater regulation of their financial activities.

The *Election Expenses Act* established most of the principles at the heart of Canada's regulatory regime. It established a tax credit system for donations and a system of reimbursements for election expenses, as well as the principle of disclosure of election donations (set at donations over \$100). The legislation also placed limits on the amount that candidates and political parties could spend on campaigns.

Besides helping to ease the financial woes of Canada's political parties, the Election Expenses Act changed the financial basis of Canadian parties. The tax credit system created an incentive for individuals to donate to parties and, more importantly, an incentive for political parties to solicit individual donations. As such, the new system reduced the reliance of parties on corporate donations.

Parliament made only minor changes to the regulations governing political parties and candidates in the three decades following the passage of the Election Expenses Act. Most of the significant debate had to do with the regulation of what "third-party spending" — that is, money spent by groups other than political parties and candidates during elections. In 1983, Parliament banned third party advertising during elections; however, the National Citizens Coalition successfully challenged the law as a violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms the following year. In 2000, Parliament passed the current limits on spending by third parties, which the Supreme Court upheld in 2004.

The most significant change to Canada's election finance regime came in 2004. Starting that year, corporations and trade unions could no longer donate to political parties and could donate only small amounts to candidates. The law also placed a \$5,000 limit on the amount that individuals could donate. In return for eliminating a significant source of party funding, Parliament enriched the tax credits and the reimbursements. Most significantly, the legislation established a quarterly allowance that paid qualifying political parties a \$1.75 per vote per year for every vote they had received in the previous election. The 2004 amendments also extended the reach of finance regulation to things that had previously been seen as internal political party matters, such as nomination and leadership contests.

These changes had a significant effect on the competitive balance between political parties. The Conservative Party flourished because of its success in raising money from individual donors, and the Bloc Québécois did well because of the quarterly allowance. The legislation also contributed to the rise of the Green Party of Canada. The New Democratic Party (NDP) was reasonably successful under the new rules, but the Liberals fared the least well, partly because of the party's historical reliance on corporate donations — a surprising outcome for the architects of the legislation.

Coalition Crisis

When the Conservatives came to power in 2006, they made minor changes to the 2004 regime, including eliminating corporate and union donations to candidates and lowering the maximum individual donation to \$1,000. After the 2008 election, the Conservatives introduced legislation to remove the quarterly allowance. This sparked the 2008 coalition crisis, in which the opposition parties united to try to replace the minority Conservative government with a Liberal–NDP coalition backed by the Bloc Québécois. The government relented, but passed legislation phasing out the quarterly allowance after winning a majority government in 2011. The quarterly allowance was officially ended in spring 2015.

The passage of the Fair Elections Act in 2014 saw some minor changes to Canada's party finance laws, including an increase in the amount that individuals could donate to political parties and candidates (a \$1,500 limit set in 2015 and increased by \$25 each year) as well as increases to the spending limits (see Party and Election Finance Laws).

Because money is such an important resource in elections, party finance laws are often controversial. One of the enduring controversies is the appropriate balance between public and private funding of parties, as well as the appropriate way to provide public funding. Proponents of extensive public funding argue that it promotes transparency and reduces the potential for corruption, while opponents claim that public funding might insulate political parties from party members and voters who signal their discontent by withholding donations. The quarterly allowance was particularly controversial in this respect. For example, the Bloc Québécois derived approximately 90 per cent of its income from public sources while the quarterly allowance was in effect.

The tax credit system, on the other hand, provides public funding to parties, but encourages them to connect

with individual donors. It is much less transparent, however, than the other forms of public funding.

Another continuing source of controversy is the limits placed on “third parties.” Canada’s election finance regime implicitly recognizes political parties and candidates as the primary political actors in elections and places more stringent limits on the activities of advocacy groups and others who seek to intervene during elections. This limits the range of viewpoints expressed during elections, but also prevents parties from working around spending limits by having advocacy groups advertise on their behalf, a phenomenon common in the United States.



Follow the Money

A more recent concern has to do with the interaction of fixed election dates with spending limits. Election spending limits only come into effect when the election is called and only cover the official campaign, which typically lasts 36 days. With fixed election dates, however, parties, candidates and “third parties” all know when the election will be and can do significant advertising before the election is called, rendering the spending limits much less effective.

At the heart of the above controversies, and the regulation of political party financing itself, is a tension between the liberal democratic principles of freedom and equality. On the one hand, liberal democracies recognize the freedom of citizens to use their resources — including money — to achieve their political objectives. On the other hand, such freedom can compro-

mise the fundamental political equality of citizens by giving those with access to greater financial opportunities excessive influence over the electoral process. It is this tricky balance that Canada’s regulation of political party finance attempts to strike.

Editor’s Note: *The jury is still out on how successfully the balance is being maintained. All the major parties have raised more funds than ever before. They also receive tax payer support, so much money per vote received in the 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 the huge financial backing of special interest groups or companies. Thus 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 continuously, as frequently as once a week, 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.*

Questions

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. Why regulate election finances?
4. Who are the biggest individual donors? Which are the largest corporate donors?
5. What important limitations exist now as to amounts and as to contributors? Are the limits for contributions reasonable?
6. Why do some companies donate to more than one candidate or more than one party?
7. How did the Elections Expenses Act of 1974 change the election finance system?
8. What important change was made in 2004?
9. Which parties seemed to gain from the change? Why?

10. Why is election finance still a controversial component in the election process? Is there still a need to reform Canadian election expenses laws?
11. Why should only officially organized political parties have a say in what gets discussed during an election? If the media is biased in favour of a particular party and quite critical of another or even opposed to their agenda, how is that fair in not allowing other groups to defend their interests as the media seeks to define and promote its preferred agenda and that of the political party that it favours?
12. 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?
13. What incentives would there be for individuals and companies to donate to political candidates or to political parties?
14. Public tax money is available to candidates running for office. Should it be? Why or why not?
15. Why treat political donations more generously than charitable donations?

Sources

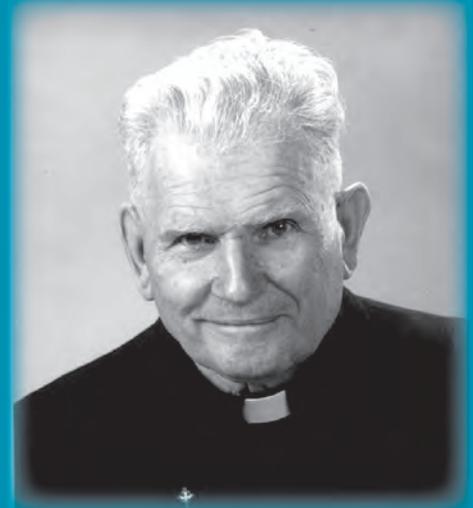
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FATHER TED COLLETON SCHOLARSHIP



Niagara Region Right to Life is once again pleased to offer The Father Ted Colleton Scholarship essay contest as part of its mandate to reach out to society in an educational format. In particular, Niagara Region Right to Life wishes to help educate and inform the younger generation about the preciousness and possibilities of human life from conception to natural death and how certain threats affect those possibilities in its beginnings.

All students in grade 11 or 12, attending a Canadian high school (or being homeschooled in Canada) are invited to participate.

Three prizes of \$1500 (1st), \$800 (2nd) and \$500 (3rd) respectively will be awarded. Candidates are required to submit a personal profile, a letter of recommendation and a 1200 word essay on the theme outlined below:

“Choose a feature film or documentary that deals with sensitive material regarding pregnancy and the abortion issue. Analyze the film as to its content, plot, and main characters and explain how it promotes a positive outlook about human life.”

**SUBMIT DOCUMENTS VIA EMAIL BY
MONDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2019**

Email: dirocco@theinterim.com

Phone: (416) 204-1687 ext 233