

The Interim Plus + + + + +

Curriculum Learning Resource

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The *Interim Plus* is a curriculum learning resource specifically designed to assist teachers in integrating life issues into their lesson planning, with a distinctly moral perspective. The periodical is published bi-monthly by *The Interim Publishing Company*, 157 Catherine St. North, Hamilton ON L8L 4S4 TEL 416-204-1687 interimplus@theinterim.com

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Canada Votes

One sign of a healthy, stable and free society is the degree of commitment their citizens have toward their system of government. Short of revolutions or daily referendums, periodic free and open elections are a vital part of how citizens choose their government. It is shocking that fewer than 65% of Canadians eligible to vote actually exercise this franchise at the various levels of government, and the number of participants declines precipitously as you go from federal to provincial to municipal levels of government.

Perhaps, as some observers suggest, the problem lies in the fact that most Canadians trust uncritically media coverage of political matters (leaving them generally satisfied with how the country is run). Others believe that Canadians either know little about the responsibilities of active citizenship, or that their fellow citizens are cynical about the



nature of politics, thinking that political parties differ only superficially.

This curriculum resource is an attempt to explore why Canada has the system of government that it has, and how elections are conducted. Hopefully, by studying these elements students will better understand Canada's system of government and will take a more active interest in the political process.

All public representatives elected by the people should be scrutinized and held accountable, before

and during their time in public office, whether in the House of Commons, the provincial legislature, municipal chamber, or school board meeting room. Fortuitously, a federal election has been called for September 20, offering a real opportunity to take an interest in the political process by which Canadians choose their national government.

The suggested curriculum lessons presented here reflect the learning objectives of Ontario curriculum document **Civics (CHV2O)**, more specifically, **B2.5 Governance in Canada**: *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)*. However, other provincial guidelines would be equally applicable.

Note: At the end of the election material we include information about the **Father Ted Colleton Scholarship and Essay Contest for the 2021-2022 academic year**. Please note the relevant dates for submission of applications, the theme for the essay portion, and where students may go online to obtain further details, including how to download the actual brochure/application.

Part A

Our System of Government and Why We Have Elections

It surprises people when they are told that Canada, legally, is a constitutional monarchy with the Queen, Elizabeth II as the titular Head of State. This means that in a ceremonial sense the Queen is the reigning monarch, but she rules through her representative in Canada, the indigenous person to hold this office. In representative government with a Prime elected House of Commons and an geography Canada is a confederation, ment according to the British North a national government located in governments, with each level ties. There is one Parliament for the government in Canada is a Prime minister and whose advice she and accept according to long established



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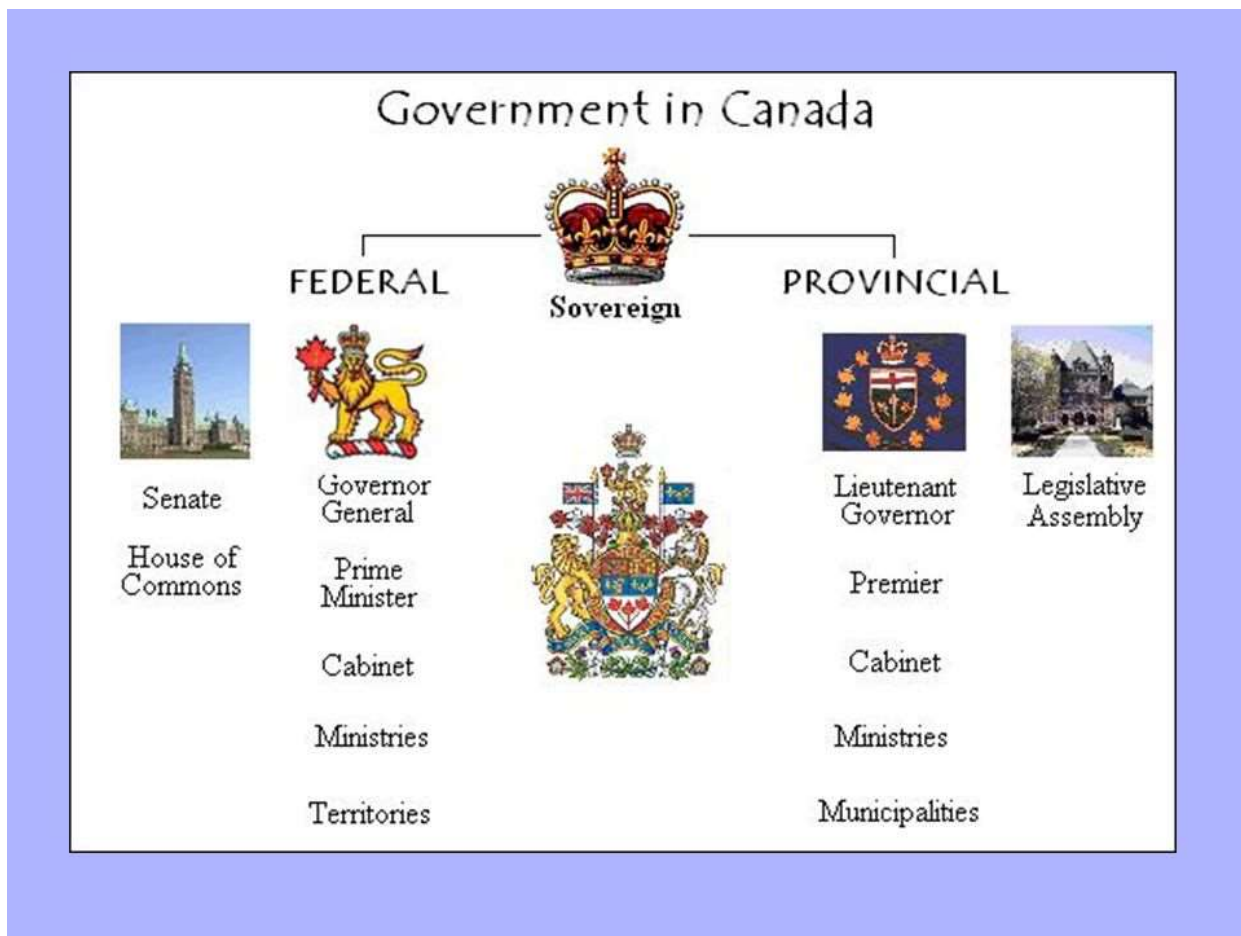
the British parliamentary tradition Canada enjoys a Minister who rules and exercises power through an appointed Senate chamber. Because of history and meaning that it has two major levels of govern- America Act (now The Constitution Act, 1982), Ottawa and also provincial and territorial having its own distinct powers and responsibility whole country. The practical ruler or head of Minister who functions as the monarch's chief her representative (the Governor-General) must 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.

Political parties or organized factions came into being over the centuries in the British parliamentary tradition and they have come to play a critical role in the Canadian parliamentary system. Some political parties operate at the national and provincial levels. Party members are bound together usually by a common ideology or political philosophy, and perhaps loyalty to a specific leader. They seek political power in order to implement their preferred policies for the country, their province or territory. In a democratic representative system like that of Canada, the competition for power or privilege of governing takes place in the context of an election.

The Prime Minister is a member of the House of Commons and the leader of the political party that usually 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, external affairs, treasury, etc.



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; in the second instance, 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 Commons 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 was 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. Since the 2019 election there has been a Liberal “minority” government in place, that is, the Liberal Party has held government and has been passing legislation with help from other parties, like the NDP, Bloc Quebecois and the Greens. In such a situation an election could be called by the governing party in an attempt to gain a majority (more than 170 seats of the 338 parliamentary seats in the House of Commons) or it could have been triggered by a vote of no confidence on a major piece of legislation (a budget usually) that the government wanted to pass but which a majority of other MPs did not support. The election call made on August 15 (for September 20) was surprising as there did not appear to be any urgent matter that should have triggered an election. The governing party may have miscalculated and was merely wanting a new majority mandate. The electorate will decide whether it was an astute decision by the governing Liberals.

Because of changing political practices and a degree of public lassitude, there has been growing cynicism and criticism of our political system in the past several decades. Some pundits bemoan the lack of public interest in politics and the lack of substantive discussions in the House of Commons itself. The critics point to worrisome trends



– the decline in political participation by the masses and the ever stringent control exercised by party leaders over their caucus members and even the local nomination process for their parties. (Some party leaders, like Justin Trudeau of the Liberals insists that candidates wishing to run for the Liberal Party must be “progressive” on life and family issues, that is pro-choice regarding 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, England in 1215. General information about our system of government can be found at the sites listed below. Most large urban and regional newspapers provide website links to their own local stories on the election as it develops. Check the newspapers in your locality and ditto for local television stations in addition to Global, CBC/Radio Canada, and CTV national networks.

Governor-General Mary Simon

- <http://www.canada.ca/en/gov/system/index.html> [from Govt. of Canada website]
- <http://www.parl.gc.ca/MarleauMontpetit/DocumentViewer.aspx?Sec=Ch01&Seq=2> [parliam. institutions]
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yi1yhp-x7A> [former comedian Rick Mercer’s explanation, a bit dated]
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nTLaQua1LiQ> [basics of the Canadian government’s structure]
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yEFFbcom88> [political system explained for new immigrants]
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6--Cr9JU4Q> [political parties, a bit dated on party leaders]
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=erP9-gjRoTYY> [election system, voters, first past post]
- https://www.samaracanada.com/docs/default-source/reports/party-favours-by-the-samara-centre-for-democracy.pdf?sfvrsn=a888052f_4 [how federal elections candidates are chosen]
- <https://www.elections.ca/home.aspx> [official Elections Canada site, practical guide]
- <https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=ele&document=index&lang=e> [excellent on election results]
- <https://www.macleans.ca/politics/ottawa/canada-is-a-great-democracy-but-you-need-to-understand-it/> [Macleans magazine, 2017, praise of Canada’s democratic system]
- <https://www.lifesitenews.com/blogs/wondering-how-the-canadian-political-system-works-watch-this/> [interview with a political leader talking about how Canada’s govt. system works.]

Questions

1. What was the Magna Carta? Was it the first step toward responsible government?
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? What factors tend to limit the independent voice of MPs? Have MPs simply become “trained seals” in practice?
5. Do unelected key players (PMO, political party strategists, senators, judiciary, senior bureaucrats) have too much power or influence?
6. What factors likely play important roles in how and whom the Prime Minister chooses for the Cabinet? (e.g. regional representation, gender, language, ethnicity, etc.)
7. What changes/developments have worked to erode the importance of Parliament and contribute to the creation of a “democratic deficit”?
8. Explain the intended function of the parliamentary opposition parties. Have they been effective in fulfilling that function?

9. Investigate the nomination process for each of the political parties. Are the processes equally free or undemocratic? Visit this site for a good introduction to this topic.
https://www.samaracanada.com/docs/default-source/reports/party-favours-by-the-samara-centre-for-democracy.pdf?sfvrsn=a888052f_4
10. Are there any good arguments in favour of the party leader having a certain discretionary power over the process?
11. 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?
12. Watch the video “How do political parties work?” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIUICrUITE>
13. What are the strength and weaknesses of the Parliamentary system?

Part B

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 (this year this is August 15-September 20). 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. (see Part G, Election Finances below for fuller treatment)

If issues are supposed to decide the outcome of elections, who determines what constitutes the key issues? (Newspapers have their own agendas. Check out the August 21 edition of the Toronto Star and compare its coverage of “issues” with other journalistic sources). 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 and the kind of coverage given to social issues like abortion, euthanasia, pornography, biomedical research, palliative care, transgenderism, gender equality). 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.

Canada’s Political Parties and Their Leaders

Organizations have leaders. Political parties are no exception. Indeed, throughout history developments in a society, for better or worse, are influenced by the policies of political parties and their respective leaders. Whether it is an republican system with a president, a parliamentary system with a prime minister or chancellor, democratic systems cannot function without competent leaders and well-organized political parties. Canada has generally been fortunate in having several political parties with leaders who have governed with competence and even brilliance at times. This is an achievement for the country, which is rather large geographically, regional in

many respects and divided linguistically and culturally. These are important factors to take into account when evaluating the relative merits of the parties and their leaders.



Justin Trudeau
Liberal Party



Rod Taylor
Christian Heritage Party



Erin O'Toole
Conservative Party



Derek Sloan
True North Party



Yves-Francois Blanchet
Bloc Quebecois



Jagmeet Singh
New Democrat Party



Annamie Paul
Green Party



Maxime Bernier
People's Party of Canada

The parties, their leaders and platform information may be accessed at their official web sites. The True North Party, headed by Derek Sloan, is unlikely to have received permission from Elections Canada in time to participate in this election. He will probably run as an Independent candidate. Both Bernier and Sloan left the Conservative Party.

<https://www.peoplespartyofcanada.ca/> People's Party of Canada

<https://liberal.ca/> Liberal Party of Canada

<https://www.ndp.ca/> New Democrat Party of Canada

<https://www.conservative.ca/> Conservative Party of Canada

<https://www.greenparty.ca/en> Green Party of Canada

<https://www.chp.ca/> Christian Heritage Party Canada

Part C

Classroom Election Activities

In the 2019 federal election 67% of eligible voters actually voted, slightly higher than most elections. The turnout of young voters has been the lowest traditionally. Can teachers help young people catch the political bug? Well, for starters, they can be directed to check out *Samara Canada's* political participation list for high school students.

<https://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 manageable number of the activities and write up a page on their experiences (what they enjoyed, what they found challenging and any barriers they encountered in trying to complete the activity).

Another excellent website to consult regarding the election process and the rules governing the various aspects of electioneering is the official site of Elections Canada.

<http://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=vot&dir=bkg&document=index&lang=e>

Activity I

1. Divide the class into 4 groups and have each group track the Canadian election campaign for two of the parties. To make it more interesting have each group assigned a major party and a minor party, for example, the Conservatives and the Greens, or the Liberals and the Christian Heritage, the NDP and the True North Party, the Bloc Quebecois and the People's Party. The groups create a platform chart (or use the one below) for the parties they are researching and on which they record the position of that party and its leader. To persuade voters, parties usually try to come up with four or five points expressed in concise statements and sometimes encapsulated in a slogan. Each group should be able to identify the main platform points of their parties. Note those as well. They can start by visiting the official party websites.
2. Of course, as the campaign progresses the students should research the issues as reported in news magazines, newspapers, television, radio, internet sites and blogs run by various organizations with distinctly partisan views. Students ought to include the news source for any report. Have students also consider other issues that do not make it on to 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 3 issues each and become class experts/authorities on those issues.
4. Each group presents its summary after three weeks of the campaign. 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 lobbying organizations like Campaign Life Coalition that lobbies for just laws protecting the vulnerable unborn and seniors alike or a similar organization that lobbies for some other cause (*National Citizens Coalition, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, Canadian Civil Liberties Association, Canadian Federation Of Independent Business, World Society for the Protection of Animals Canada, Chicken Farmers of Canada, Alliance of Manufacturers & Exporters Canada, Black Action Defence Committee, National Council of Canadian Muslims, Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms, MADD Canada, REAL Women of Canada, Fair Vote Canada, , Alliance of Concerned Jewish Canadians, etc. etc.*) [See <https://slideplayer.com/slide/12946556/> for an explanation of lobby groups and influencers]
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? <https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/in-the-lobby/>



Election Issues				
Campaign slogan or theme				
Handling of Pandemic, e.g. restrictions, vaccines				
Small businesses, unemployment				
Public spending, inflation, cost of living				
New taxation policies, tax credits				
Foreign affairs, China, Globalism, Afghanistan, national security				
Law and order, Justice, gun controls				
life&family euthanasia, day care, senior care, abortion				
climate change, carbon taxes environmentalism				
energy prices pipelines, trade agreements				
national unity regional disparities				
immigration refugees, borders				
national pharmacare, dental, health& medical needs				
Individual rights and freedoms				
Housing crisis Cost of rent, home ownership				
Other issues, e.g. Foreign aid, AI research, Biotechnology, Indigenous relations/reconcile				

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Activity II

To further enhance student interest in our political system, schools can help elevate political intelligence among youth by encouraging learners to become involved in a practical way during an election cycle. Teachers may wish to consider these suggestions and incorporate one of them into a lesson plan or individual assignment, always being mindful of the restrictions that Covid protocols may play. Perhaps electioneering may not be possible in the traditional manner. Candidates may not be able to engage in door to door canvassing or there may not be multiple all-candidates meetings open to the public. There may be not as much activity in local party election headquarters. All this may be up in the air, therefore the suggestions below may not be practical this time around.

Video Recording the Candidates During the Election Cycle

It cannot be stressed enough that a democracy needs 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. 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 (if they are allowed in the current circumstances) 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. (Such organizations may be more limited by new election rules. You may want to find out how and why new rules have been enacted)

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 in the local riding; prepare questions; decide on who will ask the questions; form of evaluation for the activity. This is one of the ways for students to learn first hand about the ins and outs of politicking.

Election Debates

In the modern era, television has been a key medium for the presentation of information during election campaigns. Televised debates among the party leaders can make a difference in the outcome of an election. There are to be

two debates, one in French on September 8 and the other in English on September 9. But, who decides that debates are to be held, or how many debates and the timing of the debates? Who decides which leaders should be invited to the debates? What should be the criteria for participation? Do the common folk have any say as to format or timing? (For more detailed information about the 2021 election debates, dates, names of moderators, etc. go to <https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/2021-federal-election-debate-broadcast-group-announces-venue-dates-and-moderators-for-leaders-debates-858653596.html>)

Should only the leaders of the major parties be involved? For strictly logistical reasons does it make sense to have more than five or six people debating? Placing limits on the number of participants would give enough time and space to each debater to flesh out their policies and poke holes in their opponents' positions; but there is an argument to be made for including all party leaders, thus giving each person a fair hearing. These observers argue that by giving all the leaders a chance to speak, the process is truly democratic as all party platforms can be vetted, supported or critiqued, and voters get to hear and evaluate a diversity of policy options. However, the drawback for including all leaders is that there may be a superficial discussion of the issues since there would not be enough time in a two or three hour debate format to discuss anything in depth.



It appears that with each election cycle each debate has done something to win more people over to a particular cause. Unsurprisingly, the greatest impact of the debate is not on the night of the debates, or on the actual audience watching them live, but rather on the viewers who later catch snippets from the debates and then are won over. The reason for this delayed reaction may lie in the fact that those who usually watch debates are already politically informed and very often quite opinionated, with only a select few being open to change. On the other hand, the post-debate news greatly affects the wider population which is less informed or less interested/involved and is more easily swayed by the coverage that follows. So in a sense, the media can still make a huge difference by what they choose to emphasize from the debates and what statements or exchanges between leaders they want to play over and over. (teachers ought to ask students to watch at least one debate and to assess the debate based on their own criteria and then compare the media's take on the debate). Given the limitations placed on campaigning, it may well be that the national party leaders' debates may be even more important than usual.

Debates on a local level receive less attention due to their less significant impact on the election in comparison to national debates which raise greater concerns for the national and international communities. The greater impact produces greater media coverage and greater public attention in general. Again, under Covid conditions there may be very limited opportunities to assess local candidates via public debating.

Some of the more popular and known reasons for the significance of the debates are as follows: *they give the media a chance to hold candidates' feet to the fire; they give voters a way to see how candidates handle a pressure*

situation; or they give the candidates a chance to close the deal; or it's one last chance to raise questions about their opponents' readiness to govern; or an opportunity to exploit a late-breaking gaffe or scandal.

For a critical view of the current rules for debates here are links to a blog written by a young man and one written by Rex Murphy of the *National Post*. The title of Peter N.'s blog article is *The Undemocratic Debate Commission* and that of Rex Murphy is *Who else would have the empathy to interrogate our feminist PM?* The writers take issue with various aspects of the debate format, the criteria established for inclusion in the debate and the composition of the debate moderators. Perhaps this year's debates will be different and more educational.

<https://www.campaignlifecoalition.com/youth-blog/id/169/title/the-undemocratic-debates-commission>

<https://nationalpost.com/opinion/rex-murphy-who-else-would-have-the-empathy-to-interrogate-our-feminist-pm>

Questions and More Classroom Activities

1. Have students watch the leaders' debate live and analyze the debate according to some criteria: e.g. clarity of arguments presented; effectiveness of speaking; power of the arguments or issues presented; the leader's ability to answer questions posed and to poke holes in the answers of opponents; what is main message; what is the big issue; credibility, likeability, contrast between leaders.
2. How many leaders should be allowed in a debate? If not all, then by what criteria would you choose the participants? Is it fair to exclude any of the party leaders? If so, on what basis?
3. How can media affect the result or impact of a leaders' debate? How much does media influence what is said about debates? What or who are the party "spin doctors"?
4. Are leader debates important? Why or Why not?
5. Can social media serve as an effective alternative to leader debates?
6. What should be the objectives in holding party leaders' debates?
7. Does the nature of the questions being posed by the moderators in a debate influence the outcome?
8. Does the choice of moderators (gender, age, region, language, race) influence the debate process and outcome? Why or why not? Check out the background of the moderators chosen for the September debates in each language.
9. What is the specific criticism that Rex Murphy leveled against the choice of moderators in that cycle?
10. Should television debates be publicly or privately funded?
11. Should there be any limits on the topics at these debates?
12. Are debates given a disproportionate degree of importance in comparison to the campaign as a whole?
13. How can youth get involved in the debates?
14. Should people be allowed to ask questions in addition to questions posed by the moderators?

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Part D

To Vote or Not to Vote

As mentioned previously some cynics charge that voting is not important. Others are adamant that voting is vital to a free society. Here are some reasons or arguments regarding the necessity of voting in elections.

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
11. You lose a right if not exercised. Such apathy encourages the possibility of corruption.
12. It is necessary to set a good example of civic virtue.

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 the Prime Minister and Cabinet have any real say in what will be presented in Parliament
6. Don't bother voting since laws ultimately are declared void or unconstitutional according to whim 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 be informed
9. Need to streamline the process, make it less demanding, 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.

The Charge of Pseudo-Democracy

Defenders of our current method of voting do not think that Canada's Supreme Court has hijacked political legislative initiative. They assert rather that the justices are "apolitical wildcards, unpredictable - and if justices do render controversial decisions, the notwithstanding clause of the Canadian Constitution allows parliamentary decisions to prevail". They opine that the selection of Justices is not ideological, but rather based on gender, region, ethnicity – the regular, accepted criteria for the appointment of justices and also cabinet members and even members of the Canadian Senate. But, a contrary point of view is that the Supreme Court justices have been increasingly chosen from a liberalized, left-wing legal professional cadre who have embraced a form of judicial activism and rather than guarding against the tyranny of the majority, the courts seem to be erecting the rule of a minority against the wishes of a majority thus making voting in elections a futile exercise. This problem has received attention in several publications:

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.. (Interim Publishing, *From Democracy to Judicial Dictatorship* –Landolt &Redmond).*

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://policyoptions.irpp.org/>)

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)

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)

Other Weaknesses/Obstacles That Hamper Voting



There are many reasons why people do not make an effort to vote. These may range from lack of time to lack of any compelling reason to participate, from complete apathy and ignorance of issues to dissatisfaction with the whole electoral process. It is worth exploring the main arguments, or excuses for why people don't vote. Here they are in their own words:

I don't care who wins the election...no elected politicians have helped during these hard, dark times.

I don't feel represented by the candidates the parties in power keep offering up.

The officials are all out for themselves and cannot be trusted to behave in a moral fashion.....voting is useless.

Until and unless there is a candidate who I feel I could vote for in good conscience I am not voting..I want to see a candidate with real principles.

News and politics don't interest me.

Politics is dirty, difficult to understand.

Political beliefs are not central to me, I have better things to do.

Voting is irrational because one vote isn't going to make any difference.

I don't know enough to make an informed decision.

I don't know where the polling places are.

I have to take a bus or taxi. It's too hard and I don't want to be bothered.

Not easy to access for me with my disability.

Not enough real choices... number of parties is fine but they are all the same.

In my riding my vote is wasted...I am in a minority.

The polls already say who is going to win, why bother?

I'm too busy, got too many things on my plate.

Not feeling well.

But, just as there are excuses for not caring or bothering to vote, there are politically active people who point to good reasons for why they vote and what could be done to improve the level of civic engagement for all citizens including the young people. Ordinary folks are going to participate when they think they are going to make a difference and there's no telling who might win. One fellow explained his change of heart in this way:

You don't vote? Well, I do, and let me tell you why. There are lots of people in this country who are way more impacted by politics than I am: kids born into poverty, people with disabilities or chronic illnesses, people fleeing domestic violence, and so on. I want better things for those people. And how can I say that I support them if I won't pull over for 10 minutes on my way to work and vote in their interest? How can I look them in the eye if I won't give them that much?

This is the argument that got me to start voting, and it's one I came to on my own. I realized that voting costs me almost nothing, but it means a great deal to the most vulnerable people in our country. I simply couldn't claim to care about those people if I wouldn't donate a few minutes of my time to them.



If you think back to my reasons for not voting, it's clear why this argument won me over, and why it can work for you. First off, you're presenting yourself as a "political" person who isn't augmentative or angry, but rather empathetic and reasonable — you are modeling yourself as someone the non-voter might want to be like. Second, you're completely undercutting the mathematical argument without laboring for an angle that disproves it. Maybe a single

vote doesn't count for much, but it also doesn't take much effort either.

But most importantly, this method gets around the "head" and goes for the "heart." Voting doesn't have to be all about your political identity or motivations, it can be about other people. And it doesn't matter if one vote doesn't make much difference, because it's a simple, free gesture that you care about people in need. Instead of defending their reasons for not voting, your listener is instead thinking about other people, about the friends and family that are most impacted by our government.

Without telling the non-voter what to do, or arguing why they're wrong, you've given them a reason to change.



Questions

1. Is voting important? Should one vote regardless of the situation or issues involved, simply as a civic duty?
2. What impact does voting have?
3. How much power should the government, courts, and voters be given respectively and what are their duties/responsibilities respectively?
4. Does Canada suffer from an encroaching judicial branch of government, thereby diluting the significance of elections?
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. Should the government defer to the appointed, non-elected judges/courts as much as it does?
10. Who from the population should be allowed to vote?
11. What are the principal or most persuasive reasons for why a citizen should vote? What are the chief reasons/excuses why many do not vote in elections?
12. Have any political parties made this question an issue in the developing election campaign?
13. 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.
14. Why do young people not vote, relatively speaking?
15. What recommendations have been made (or would you make) to encourage more youth to vote?
16. Name four reasons first-past-the-post is less democratic than proportional representation.
17. Does proportional representation encourage greater voter participation?
18. Should Canada's voter age be lowered ? Why? Why not?
19. Are electronic elections a surefire way to get people to vote and to do so securely? Why or why not?
20. Why are some issues ignored deliberately during election campaigns? Can you provide a few examples? Does this contribute to voter apathy? How? Why?

Part E

First-Past-the-Post and Critics

The electoral process is the method in which a vote is held to determine a winner. A set of rules 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 perceived problems within the Canadian electoral process. In Canada we have 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. Most observers would agree that a good election in a democracy should be where the person with the most votes wins and each citizen is only allowed to vote once. First-past-the-post is beneficial for it meets both of these criteria: allows each citizen to vote for a candidate in their riding and the candidate with the most votes wins.

However, many people are critical of the first-past-the-post system. Their objections can be summarized in this way: it often results **in minority rule** when there are more than two relatively strong or popular parties; it may drive people to engage in strategic voting; eventually the process may produce a non-democratic two-party system (favoured by many as providing more predictability, more stability, and ensuring a majority that is truly a

majority). However, over time this may produce a dangerous or cynical level of disinterest in the democratic process because certain points of view on important issues are not in fact represented or discussed within the two parties, and thus it leads to further fractionalization of the process with the rise of new third parties. In fact, this has happened not only in Canada but in all modern western nations with the exception of the United States, where a two party system holds sway, with the Republicans and Democrats occupying all the political spectrum. Here we give a brief explanation of these perceived problems or weaknesses of first-past-the-post, or 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>)

Minority rule can result at the local riding level 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. This is why **first-past-the-post is also sometimes called winner-take-all**. 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, you could get a result with 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 65-67% 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**, that is, 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 a lot about 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. The more candidates the more choice there is for voters and it is more likely that a variety of issues will be discussed. Discussion typically leads to new ideas and methods for dealing with serious issues. Candidates with a variety of ideas and focus issues is better for voters. 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? Is this what has happened with the rise of both the People's Party and the True North Party.

Various proposals have been made and some have been enacted in different jurisdictions to render the electoral process more democratic, more fair and more efficient. The aim has been to get people to commit to the electoral process by participating more directly and on a regular basis. But, to get more people to vote we need to understand what matters most to voters and why they would bother to vote. According to the American source *Crash Course* (<https://thecrashcourse.com/courses/usgovernment>), party loyalty, candidate characteristics, and issues are the three main factors that voters use to rationalize whether they vote and who gets their vote. The Canadian experience is not that much different.

Nonetheless, the problem remains that a lot of people still feel that their vote does not really count, dependent very much on 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.

Reforms of the System

There is a concern addressed in editorials periodically about the need for electoral reform. This concern is that Canada suffers from a democratic deficit, not enough people take an interest in political affairs and thus the apathy weakens the democratic system itself. Different proposals have been recommended for improving the Canadian electoral system.

Example 1

For a rather unique, if complicated scheme for reforming the existing system, read the article/brief presented by Stephen McCulloch. He recommends that a novel plan be considered to address most of the unfair elements of the first-past-the-post system. He suggests that large ridings or districts be transformed into Multiple Representative Electoral Districts in which seats would be allocated proportionally by party within the riding. Some ridings would remain single seats. Voter choice would be respected and a fairer system would result through an allocation of excess votes across ridings in a province.

<https://www.ourcommons.ca/content/Committee/421/ERRE/Brief/BR8550163/br-external/McCullochStephen-e.pdf>

Example 2

Proportional Representation

Some would-be reformers feel that proportional representation is a good option to make every vote count. 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 example, let's assume that the percentage 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. (For comparison of what might have been the seat distribution if by proportional representation in the 2019 election, see <https://www.macleans.ca/politics/ottawa/a-338canada-projection-if-proportional-representation-was-real/>)

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. The latter two parties have less desire to see the system changed.

Conversely, there are contrary arguments that suggest instability and possible paralysis. 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? Can one maintain that proportional representation would be a fairer and better method for respecting the popular vote and identifying issues that matter most to citizens? Would proportional representation 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 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, etc. etc.

Another variation of this ranked ballot is to transfer all choices immediately 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 run off elections 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. If this were in place this year, it would see a first round on September 20 and a second round on September 27.

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 limited

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? 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 on whom to vote for. 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. (Like youth crimes stats. But are there not also irresponsible adults who consume foolishly, get into debt, commit crimes, create problems, etc?)

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 again, 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?" Well 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, ordering a taxi, purchasing a game ticket, ordering fast food, require that your 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 pretty 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, corrupting the entire democratic process. There is evidence that the November 2020 American presidential election was manipulated through mail-in voting and other subterfuges in several states. (see forensic audit in Maricopa County, Arizona)



However, certain countries like Estonia introduced online voting in 2005 and encountered no problems. Canadian municipalities have introduced this method in recent years, however, they 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 disruption to a 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. Explain strategic voting. Does it help or harm efforts to engage more people in the election process?
5. 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.
6. Which alternate method(s) of voting or other reform proposal do you find most appealing and why?

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Part F

Social Media and Political Campaigns

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*, *Facebook*, *Tik Tok*, *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 a controversy or crisis. However, social media can also be a source of attacks and embarrassment, especially if past postings by a candidate creates a problem on their social media accounts.

The use of social media in politics has dramatically changed the way campaigns are run and how voters in most modern nations 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, dates of 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 all is not rosy. There is the real danger of "fake news" which can spread like wildfire, uncontrollably and do vast damage to a candidate or 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. There are fears that the Canadian election process can be manipulated in some subtle ways by foreign "actors", whether individuals, organizations or governments.

10 ways Social Media have changed politics

Direct Contact With Voters. Social media tools 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. Oftentimes, journalists covering campaigns will write about those *YouTube* ads, essentially broadcasting their message to a wider audience at no cost to the politicians.

How Campaigns Go Viral. 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, they also may be a wearing out the messaging if done constantly. Fatigue can set in.

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 that one message appropriate for voters under 30 years will not be as effective with those over 60 years old. Or some messages may play better with women than with men and vice-versa.

Fundraising. Some campaigns raise large amounts of cash in a short period of time (typically a 24-hour period) by pressing their supporters to donate money. They use social media such as *Twitter* and *Facebook* to get the word out and connect the money appeal to specific controversies that emerge during campaigns. It can generate vast sums, relatively speaking, from many people even if in small amounts, just \$1 or \$5 or \$10.

Controversy. Direct access to voters also has its downside. Handlers and public-relations professionals often manage a candidate's image. Allowing a politician to send out unfiltered tweets or Facebook posts can land a candidate in hot water as happened many times. It can lead to candidates withdrawing from the election.

Feedback. Asking for feedback from voters or constituents can be both a good thing 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 a bunker-like mentality can make a campaign appear defensive and closed off from the public.

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.

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 may have a profound impact on elections.

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 one should not overestimate the influence of numbers alone.

Crafting the Message

The art of political messaging is important. There are various aspects to consider: what sort of messaging can make an effective appeal to the voters? What type of political ads work best? How long should the ads be? 30 seconds? 15 seconds? 60 seconds? What kind of message can be delivered in that short span of time? What works best, still photos or graphs or videos? How to control spending? Maximize the available funds? What is affordable? Where should one place the spots - radio, television, internet, billboards? During what time of day should the ads be placed – driving time, nightly news, sporting broadcasts? These are all legitimate questions that party strategists have to address in order to get the biggest bang out of their bucks. It can be quite a complex operation and very much tailored by the amount of money available to the party and leadership candidates.



Other considerations of campaign strategies must be kept in mind and changed according to circumstances, polling results and unforeseen developments during the campaign itself. What mode of transportation will the leaders use on the hustings and for getting around a large nation like Canada? Flying is quick and efficient for reaching large communities coast to coast, but they are also very expensive. Bus transportation is often used for local campaign stops. This too requires much attention to details, like what time of day to make an appearance, how to get

people to show up for a rally, what to be wearing, how to get refreshments, how to ensure press coverage. In fact, campaigning strategies can be key to the outcome of elections, for wrong strategies can waste time and resources: Where should the party leader spend personal time - convincing the party base, or expanding the winnable list of ridings? On the periphery and far-flung rural ridings or concentrate on dense urban centres? Have stand-ins, like strong cabinet ministers or leading critics? Emphasize the efforts of the national leader or rely on the strength of the local candidates? How to manage the message so it remains clear and fairly simple to understand and make it sink in to the electorate? How to project personal and party integrity? How to avoid errors on the campaign trail and be able to respond to surprises? It is an exciting time for the political operatives who must perform and obtain results, after all, the votes obtained is what determines the success or failure of their creative efforts.

Questions

1. What is social media?
2. What is “fake news”? What are trolls?
3. On balance do social media advance the election process or muddy the waters? How?
5. What problems may be 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. In the 2019 election what negative opinion was expressed by the Conservatives on Elections Canada using “celebrity influencers”? <https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/elections-canada-scraps-social-media-influencers-to-encourage-youth-vote-1.4475444>
8. What are the most important components of campaign strategies in your opinion? Why?

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

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<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)

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Part G

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 excerpts from an interesting article from the *Canadian Encyclopaedia* and it tackles 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

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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](#) (see [Corruption](#); [Conflict of Interest](#)).

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. [Is it fair to limit the freedom of “third parties” in terms of election expenses

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 compromise the fundamental political equality of citizens by giving those with access to greater financial

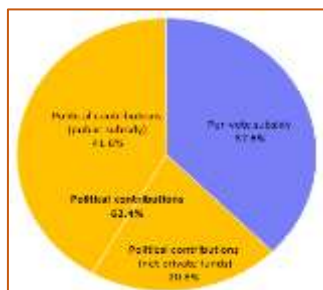
opportunities excessive influence over the electoral process. It is this tricky balance that Canada's regulation of political party finance attempts to strike.

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/party-financing>

Note: 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 to Consider Regarding Election Finances

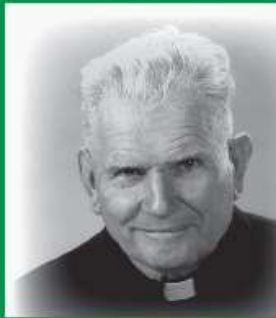
1. How much do parties raise for election purposes? Which parties raise the most? Which parties spend the most? Try to get hold of a party letter in which the party asks for a donation. Note the tone of the letter. Is it emphasizing fear, hate, concern, partisanship?
2. What are the major sources of election finances?
3. 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 to 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 of 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. Is public tax money available to candidates running for office? Should it be?
15. Is it fair to treat political donations more generously than charitable donations? Why or why not?
16. Should there be any limits on the amount that can be spent on election campaigns by parties, companies, organizations, or individuals?



Father Ted Colleton Scholarship and Essay Contest

For 20 years, Niagara Region Right to Life has been organizing the Father Ted Colleton Scholarship program, and once again it is offering an 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 generations about the preciousness and possibilities of human life from conception to natural death. Sadly, certain threats/trends and societal changes affect those life possibilities at its most vulnerable beginning stage. This year's theme is no exception as can be seen in the poster announcement below. Three money prizes are awarded following an evaluation process conducted by a committee that assesses the essay-writing component of the scholarship contest. These awards are in the value of \$2000, \$1500, and \$1000 respectively for first, second and third prizes. Please note the deadline for submission of applications and essay for this 2021-2022 edition of the program. Brochure/application with details are available at www.niagararegionrighttolife.ca or www.theinterim.com

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 home schooled in Canada) are invited to participate.

Three prizes of \$2000 (1st), \$1500 (2nd) and \$1000 (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:

Describe how one could help build a *culture of life* (one that uncompromisingly respects and cherishes the dignity of all human life from conception to natural death). Your suggestions may range from a plan to protect the conscience rights of both current health professionals and of those contemplating medical studies - to more effective regulations regarding biomedical research, or from new peaceful public activism - to more effective strategies in the various fields of communication. This is an open-ended, non-exhaustive list.

**SUBMIT DOCUMENTS VIA EMAIL BY
DECEMBER 1, 2021**

Email: dirocco@theinterim.com

Or leave a message for Dan Di Rocco at
(416) 204-1687