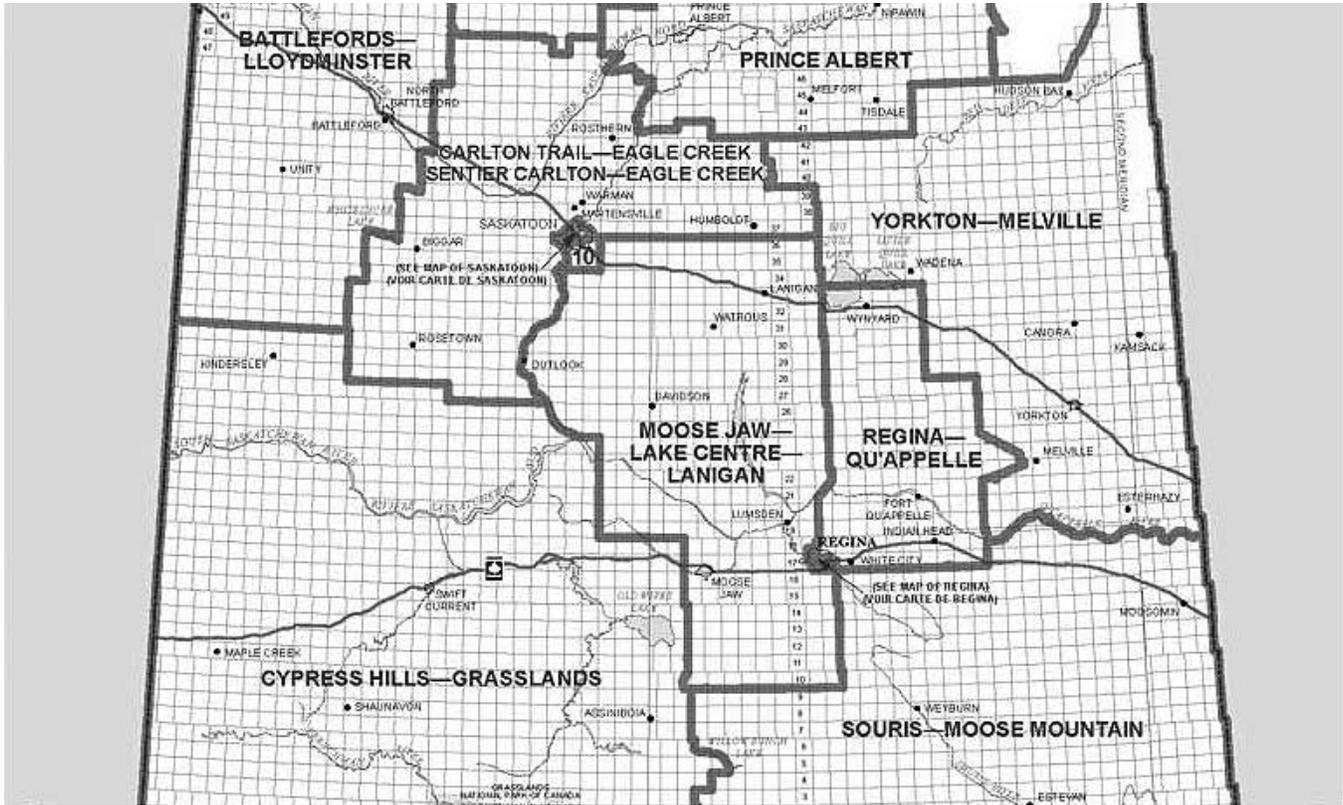


# Lesson 10

## My Candidates



### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 How are candidates elected in federal elections?
- 2 Who are the candidates in my riding, and how do I choose who to vote for?

### PURPOSE

In a representative democracy, we elect individuals to represent us in the different levels of government and make decisions on our behalf.

In this lesson, students consider the qualities they look for in their Member of Parliament before conducting their own research into the candidates. After learning about our voting system, students analyze the distribution of ridings across Canada and investigate their school's riding. Next, students discuss which issues matter to them and develop questions they want to ask the candidates or to guide their research into the candidates. In the *Consolidation* activity, students will reflect on what they liked or learned about the candidates.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the lesson, students can:

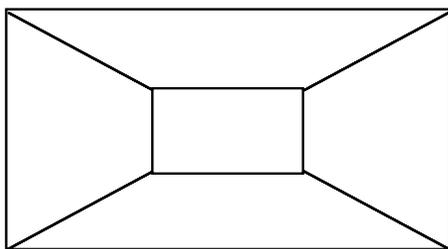
- describe the qualities and skills they would like their elected representative to have;
- explain the rules of our voting system and how candidates are elected;
- identify their riding;
- communicate questions they want to ask or learn about the candidates;
- analyze the characteristics of the candidates and how they will respond to their concerns;
- voice their opinion on matters relevant to their community.

## Tips For Teachers

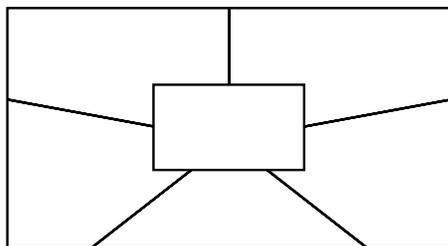
- Please use the activities and combine them in a way that is appropriate for your class.
- CPAC's 'Route 338' resource has pictures and 'fast facts' about all of the federal ridings in Canada ([www.route338.ca](http://www.route338.ca)).
- To avoid any bias or partisanship, ensure that all registered candidates are invited to respond to questions, visit the school or take part in the all candidates' debate.
- If you plan to hold an all-candidates' debate, please be sure to follow any procedures your school board has in place and refer to 10.2 for guidelines.
- Supplies/Needs: 'Federal Elections' video, internet access, Slide Deck 10, copies of 10.1.
- Any videos, slide decks, handouts and activity sheets in Word can be found at: [studentvote.ca/canada](http://studentvote.ca/canada).

## Starter

1. Review the concept of a representative democracy. Citizens elect political representatives to make decisions on their behalf and represent their needs.
2. Through a 'Placemat' activity, have students answer the question: What qualities or skills would I (or my parents/guardians) like to see in our elected representative?
  - a) Divide the class into groups of four or five and provide each group with one large sheet of paper and a marker for each group member.
  - b) Instruct each group to divide its sheet of paper into sections, with an area in the centre and enough separate areas around the outside to match the number of members in the group, as illustrated below.



Four person group



Five person group

- c) Ask students to respond to the question within their allotted space in one of the outside sections. Provide time for each student to share their recorded responses with the rest of their group without discussion or debate from the other students.
- d) Ask groups to decide, collectively, on the five most important/significant qualities and record them in the centre of the placemat — it is important that all group members agree on the top five items.

## Activities

1. Review the election process in Canada using the 'Federal Elections' video and Slide Deck 10.
  - The country is divided into 338 geographic areas called ridings. Each riding has its own election race, where interested individuals compete for the job of Member of Parliament. These individuals are called candidates.
  - Voters can only choose one candidate on the ballot.
  - The candidate with the most votes wins.
2. Find your school's riding on the federal riding map (provided in your physical package) and write the name of the riding on the blackboard, chart paper or interactive whiteboard. If you do not know your school's riding or do not have the printed wall map, visit the Elections Canada website ([www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca) > Voter Information Service)

### TEACHER NOTE

The school's riding may be different from where some students call home. Please contact CIVIX if you would like your school to receive Student Vote ballots for multiple ridings, to accommodate students who would like to vote for their local candidates.

3. Compare the size and shape of ridings in your jurisdiction, and across the country. Specifically, compare an urban riding to a rural riding. Ask students to consider why there are differences and what those differences might reflect (e.g., population, geographic features). If possible, use a physical geography map to further examine landforms and bodies of water.

4. Show students an individual map of the school's riding, which can be found on the Elections Canada website ([www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca)). Through a class discussion, answer the following questions:

- What are the boundaries of the school's riding?
- What communities or neighbourhoods are included in the riding?
- What major landmarks are included in the school's riding?
- What makes the riding unique?
- Do you think people living in other ridings have similar concerns to the ones you have in your riding? Why or why not?

#### TEACHER NOTE

Consider using CPAC's 'Route 338' resource, which details information about each federal riding in the country.

5. On the blackboard, interactive whiteboard or on chart paper, list the candidates running for election and their party if applicable. Demonstrate to students where they can find this information by visiting the Elections Canada website. Give students a few minutes to fill out the related worksheet (Activity 10.1).
6. Divide students into groups and have them brainstorm possible questions to ask the candidates. Guiding questions for students:

- What do you want to know about the candidates before casting your vote?
- Which issues matter to you, your family and community?

7. As a class, narrow down the questions and pose them to candidates through email, by conducting a phone interview, coordinating classroom visits or organizing an all-candidates' debate (Guide 10.2). Students and their families can also plan to attend a local all-candidate's debate or forum.

If candidates are not responsive, use the candidate's website or news reports to analyze how the candidate may respond to the questions. You can assign each group a candidate and have them share their research or candidate profiles with the rest of the class.

## Consolidation

Have a brief closing discussion about the candidates running for election, or ask students to write a reflection on one or more of the following questions:

- Which candidate will you vote for and why?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate?
- Does your preferred candidate belong to the same party you like best? Share your thoughts.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

A **voting system** (or electoral system) is the way in which we elect our representatives. A voting system includes set rules for how preferences are recorded and the method for determining which candidates win. There are many different voting systems used around the world.

Canada uses a system called **Single-Member Plurality** or **First Past the Post (FPTP)**. The country is divided into geographic areas called ridings (or electoral districts). Canada is currently divided into 338 **federal ridings**.

In our system, each riding is represented by one **Member of Parliament**. The size of ridings is determined by factors such as population size, geographic features and social considerations, such as culture and language. The most

important factor is making sure that the number of people represented is as equal as possible, so that every vote counts the same.

Urban ridings are often geographically smaller due to dense populations, while rural ridings are often geographically larger with less dense populations.

In FPTP, voters choose a single candidate on the ballot and the candidate with the most votes wins. The successful candidate does not need more than 50 per cent of the vote; they only require one more vote than any of the other candidates. This is called **plurality**.

Under Canada's parliamentary system, the party that elects the greatest number of representatives to the House of Commons usually forms government and their leader becomes **prime minister**.

Canada has a **fixed-date election** law. This means that federal elections must take place at least every four years, and that the date for that election is set. Canada's 43rd federal general election is scheduled for October 21, 2019. Though we have fixed-date elections, a prime minister can still request that a federal election be held at any time as long as it is no later than five years after the previous election.

The election campaign period starts when Parliament is dissolved by the governor general, on the advice of the prime minister, and an election is called. The length of a campaign may vary, but it must be between 36 and 50 days.

In an election campaign, an organized course of action is taken by a political party, its candidates and campaign teams with the intention to share its message and ideas with voters.