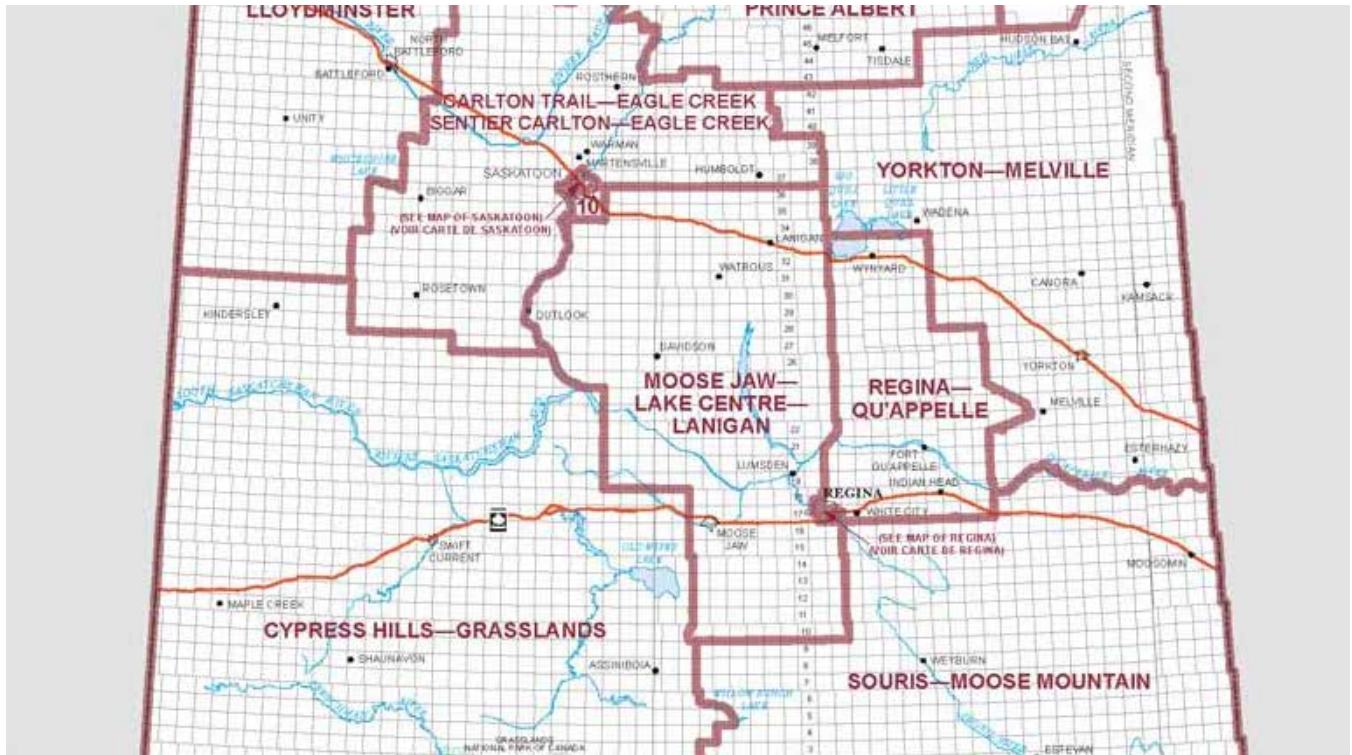


Lesson 5

My Candidates



GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 How are candidates elected to the House of Commons?**
- 2 Who are the candidates running for election in my federal riding?**
- 3 Which party or candidate will best address my interests and concerns?**

OVERVIEW

During the federal election campaign, political parties and candidates communicate their vision and ideas to try to gain public support. As a voter, you need to evaluate the policies and promises critically, and find out which party or candidate best aligns with your political views and priorities.

In this lesson, students become familiar with federal elections in Canada and how to become an informed voter. After learning about the electoral process, they work in groups to research the candidates or parties running in the current election. In the *Consolidation* activity, students analyze the choices and evaluate who they support and why.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- describe the federal election process and how candidates are elected to the House of Commons;
- explain how to find out which riding they live in and which candidates are running for election;
- collaborate with their peers to learn about the candidates and parties running in the election;
- compare and contrast how different political parties or candidates will respond to the same political issue; and,
- evaluate the parties/candidates and determine who they support, and why.

Readiness

A few days before the lesson, ask students to survey at least five family members or friends about which issues they believe are most important in the upcoming federal election. This information could be collected informally through discussion or through an online poll or survey. (A Google Forms template is available on the Student Vote Canada site under Lesson 5.)

Suggested questions:

- Which issue is most important to you over the next five years?
- Which two issues should the federal government take action on immediately?
- Is Canada headed in the right or wrong direction?

Starter

1. Ask students to fill out the 'before' column in the *Anticipation Guide* (Activity 5.1).
2. Explain to students that the upcoming election presents a chance for citizens to discuss political issues affecting them and their communities, and to debate the future direction of the country.

Have a whole class conversation about what issues students believe are most important right now and over the next five years. Draw upon family discussion or poll results from the *Readiness* activity, the activities from Lesson 4 (*Vote Compass: Canada Youth Edition*) or opinion polls from the election campaign.

Questions to prompt discussion:

- What concerns do you have about your future?
 - If you could improve one thing for Canadians, what would it be?
 - Which issues should the newly elected government focus on after the election?
3. As a class, come to a consensus regarding the three most important election issues.

Activities

1. Review the election process in Canada using the "Federal Elections" video and Slide Deck 5. Key questions:
 - When do federal elections take place?
 - How does Canada's election process work?
 - What is a candidate?
 - What is a riding?

2. Demonstrate to students how they can find out which riding they live in by visiting the Elections Canada website (www.elections.ca). Go to the 'Voter Information Service' and enter your school's postal code.
3. Afterwards, download a copy of a map of your school's riding from the Elections Canada website and review the boundaries. Point out the location of your school within the riding.
4. Next, review the list of candidates running in your school's riding (www.elections.ca).

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.

5. Organize students into groups and assign each group a candidate (or political party), or allow them to choose one based on their preference. The goal is to ensure that a group covers each candidate/party running in your riding, including independent candidates and those with no party affiliation.

Using online sources ask each group to research their assigned party/candidate and create a presentation and product in a selected format (e.g., slide deck, video, bulletin board).

Co-create a checklist for the research. Guiding questions:

- Who is the local candidate? What skills and qualifications do they have?
- Do they belong to a political party? Who is the leader of the party?
- What are the main messages of their campaign advertisements?
- What are the party's main priorities or promises? Who are the main beneficiaries?
- How will the party address the top issues identified in the *Starter* activity? Are the proposals short-term solutions or will they have long-term benefit?

Suggested sources:

- Candidate/party websites
- Candidate/party social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube)
- Candidate/party campaign literature
- News sources
- *Pollenize* – pollenize.org/canada (party platform summaries on a dozen topics)

- Have each group present their political party/candidate to the rest of the class, or share their presentations/products through a digital gallery. Students can take notes on each presentation using Graphic Organizer 5.2. Provide as many copies as necessary. Digital and/or virtual presentations could also be shared with classes in the school, to help prepare other student voters for Student Vote Day.

ALTERNATIVE METHOD

This activity can also be completed individually or in pairs, where students collect information about all the candidates running in the election using the same suggested resources. Students can use Graphic Organizer 5.2 to help them organize their findings or encourage them to use a digital format that incorporates images and social media posts.

Consolidation

- Have a brief closing discussion about the political parties and local candidates with your class and have students fill out the *Campaign Reflection* (Activity 5.3).
 - Which party or candidate's priorities or positions align most closely with your own?
 - Which party do you think is best suited to lead the country, and why?
 - Which candidate will you vote for and why?
 - As a young person below the voting age, does this election matter to you? Why?

TEACHER NOTE:

- Some students may jump at the chance to share their opinions and even try to persuade others to adopt their choices. Others may opt for silence and prefer to keep their politics private.
- Reinforce the choice for privacy and the importance of being respectful towards others with different points of view.

- Ask students to fill out the 'after' column in the *Anticipation Guide* (Activity 5.1).

Assessment

Using Graphic Organizer 5.4, ask students to select one issue that matters most to them and research each party's position or promises on the selected issue. Do the policies have long-term benefit or are they short-term solutions? Which party's position or policy do you most agree with and why? The *Pollenize* tool (pollenize.org/canada) can be used to support this research and comparison. Provide enough copies of Graphic Organizer 5.2 to allow for a write-up on each party running a candidate in your riding.

Extended Learning

Organize a virtual all-candidates forum or ask each candidate to submit a video to the class about their reasons for running and/or their priorities for the community. Alternatively, you could collect a few questions from the class and pose them to all the candidates through email.

ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

Language Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide key terms in advance (e.g., electoral process, riding, candidate, political party, party platform). Use an application or word cloud generator to simplify political party messages (e.g., www.wordclouds.com, monkeylearn.com).
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss issues or challenges your community is facing. Analyze the diversity of the candidates running in your riding and discuss the need for diversity in politics.
Accommodations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If working in pairs or small groups is not possible, considering using Google Docs for collaborative activities. Have students create digital presentations of their candidate/party research rather than physical formats.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

The Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, commonly known as **Elections Canada**, is an independent, non-partisan agency that reports directly to Parliament. Elections Canada is responsible for organizing federal general elections, by-elections and referenda.

An **electoral system** is the way in which we elect our representatives. An electoral system includes set rules for how preferences are recorded and the method for determining which candidates win. There are many different electoral 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 the **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. Regardless of fixed-date election legislation, a federal election can be held at any time if the government loses the confidence of the House of Commons or if the governor general were to dissolve Parliament on the advice of the prime minister.

During an election campaign, an organized course of action is taken by a political party and its candidates to share its vision and platform with voters. The length of a federal election campaign may vary, but it must be between 36 and 50 days.

A **political platform** is a series of declared principles and policies on jurisdictional issues concerning government and the public. Candidates and parties use a communications strategy that incorporates all three types of media (paid, earned, owned) to share their party platforms through announcements, advertising and events and to gain support from constituents.