Lesson 5
Political Parties

GUIDING QUESTIONS

❶ **Why do we have political parties?**

❷ **How can I learn about the political parties?**

❸ **Which political party aligns with my views?**

OVERVIEW

A political party is a group of individuals with similar political beliefs and goals whose intention is to gain power through an election. The job of citizens is to research and compare the political parties and their promises if elected.

In this lesson, students are introduced to the idea that people have different political views about issues in society. After reviewing the role of political parties, students work in groups to research one of Canada's political parties. Each group prepares information about the party's vision, their leader and platform. Afterwards, students critically analyze the political parties, and determine which party they feel most aligned with.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- voice their opinion on political issues;
- explain the role of political parties in elections and our democracy;
- participate in teams by establishing positive and respectful relationships, developing trust and acting cooperatively; and
- interpret, synthesize and critically analyze information about the political parties and their leaders.

Tips For Teachers

- Please use the activities and combine them in a way that is appropriate for your class.
- Some individuals may jump at the opportunity to share their opinions and even try to convince others to adopt their choices, while others may prefer to keep their politics personal. Remind students that opinions should be respected, even if they differ from their own.
- Consider using a word cloud generator (such as Wordle or Word Art) to help students simplify or summarize political party messages.
- Supplies/Needs: "Introduction to politics and political parties" video, Slide Deck 5, digital access to or copies of Activity 5.1 (or Activity 5.2, alternatively) and Activity 5.3, internet access.
- All digital files, videos and slide decks can be found at: studentvote.ca/canada (*Classroom Resources*).

Starter

1. Read out a political statement and ask students to vote by raising their hands if they agree or disagree (Slide Deck 5, slides 2-4 include the first three statements below). Choose statements you feel students will be comfortable answering in front of their classmates, starting with one or two school-based statements. Ask two or three students to explain their choices. After each student defends their opinion, give the other students the chance to change their opinion, if they were persuaded by others.

   For example:

   - School uniforms should be mandatory for all students.
   - Homework should be banned.
   - Zoos should be abolished.
   - Companies that pollute our air and water should face consequences.
   - The government should invest more money in our armed forces.
   - Canada should give financial aid to poorer countries.
   - The government should be small and provide fewer services so that we don't have to pay a lot of money to the government (taxes).

   > **TEACHER NOTE**
   > If feasible, organize this activity as a four corners debate, with different areas in the classroom or outside labeled as "Agree" and "Disagree" along with " I agree, but..."and "Convince Me." Read out a statement and ask students to vote with their feet by walking to the area that fits with their opinion.

2. Afterwards, review the idea that people have different political views and discuss the importance of respecting others' opinions (Slide deck 5, slides 5-6).

   - In any given place – a community, province or country – anywhere that groups of people live together and where rules and decisions affect everyone, there will be different viewpoints and opinions about how things should work. This includes deciding which issues are most important and how best to take action.
   - Political views are a person's ideas about the role of government and how we should solve community issues.
   - People have different values and beliefs, which influence their political views. It is important to respect others' opinions, even if they differ from our own.

Activities

1. Using the "Introduction to politics and political parties" video and Slide Deck 5 (slides 7-9), review the concept of politics and purpose of political parties.

   - **Politics** can be described as the activities associated with achieving power in society or influencing the actions of government.
   - A **political party** is made up of people who share similar beliefs and goals about society and government.
   - In order for the political party to have the chance to work towards its goals, the party tries to win an election and lead the government.
   - Political parties are made up of members of the community. Anyone above the required age (usually 14-years-old) can be a member of a political party.
   - During elections, political parties usually release a **political platform**, which outlines their promises and actions the party will take if they are elected.

2. Ask students if they can name any political parties at the federal level and if they know which party won the last election. Afterwards, review the political parties represented in the House of Commons, how a party forms government and the 2019 election results (Slide Deck 5, slides 10-13).

3. Divide students into groups and assign each a political party (ideally one that is running a candidate in your riding). Ask students to research their political party using campaign literature, party websites, social media channels and *Pollenize Canada* (pollenize.org/canada). Provide copies of Activity 5.1 to support the research.

Guiding questions:

- What is the party's slogan and/or key messages?
- Who is the party leader?
- What are the party's major ideas? What actions are they promising to take if elected?
- Who seems to be the target audience of the party?
- What is the party's vision for Canada?

As an alternative to Activity 5.2, students can work individually or in small groups to explore a specific election issue and compare the positions of the political parties.

4. Using the information collected, each group will create a physical or digital presentation about their assigned political party.

   Co-create a checklist with your students for the presentation. For example:

   - The party's logo
   - One main slogan or message
   - Three social media posts that represent the party's priorities or vision for the country
   - A short biography of the party leader
   - Two images of the party leader (taken from social media profiles or the party's website)
   - Summary of three major ideas or planned actions they would take if elected (consider using the same three issues across all parties)
   - Analysis about who will be impacted by the three major ideas

5. Have each group share their presentation about their party with the rest of the class. You can create a digital gallery or share the presentations on a projector/screen.

Consolidation

1. Ask students to write a reflection about one or more of the following questions. Consider using a 'Think-Pair-Share' strategy to allow students to share their views.

   - Which party's message or vision do I support the most and why?
   - Did your opinion change of any of the political parties after learning about them? If so, how?
   - Which election issue is most important to me or my family? How does each party plan to address this issue? Which party's platform do I agree with the most?
   - What else would I like to know? How would I find out more?

2. Ask students complete the Reflection Card (Activity 5.3). "The first thing I will share with my family tonight is...."

Extended Learning

Activity A: The Leaders' Debate

Have students watch the federal leaders' debate at home and/or watch clips of the debate in the classroom and complete Activity 5.4. To prepare for the viewing, discuss the qualities of an effective debater and review the party leaders that will participating in the debate. You can use the "Party Leader Q&A" videos or the "Party Profiles" on the Student Vote Canada website to prepare in advance.

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> The entire debate may be close to two hours in length. Many news media outlets will offer segments or highlights the following day.

Activity B: Youth Vote Compass

Have students complete the *Vote Compass: Canada Youth Edition* (youth.votecompass.com/can). This is a political spectrum tool, which helps young people familiarize themselves with federal political issues and different ideological positions. At the end of the survey, the *Vote Compass: Canada Youth Edition* tool indicates your position on the political spectrum so that students can see where they fit compared to other students and adults who are aligned with the political parties at the federal level.

> **TEACHER NOTES**
> - Arrange for computer or internet access so that students can complete the survey. It is estimated to take 15-20 min.
> - Reinforce to students that there are no right or wrong answers, but the questions are meant to encourage reflection on their political views.
> - Background information has been included, along with definitions, to help students better understand the issues and terms. Consider reviewing some terms in advance.
> - Analytics and summary data are provided at the end of the survey. Give students time to analyze their results (the area where they locate themselves on the spectrum, how they compare to people aligned with the federal political parties).

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Section	Guiding Questions for Teachers
Starter	Are students reflecting on their views about the statements?
	Are students being respectful of each other's opinions?
	Can students appreciate that people have different political views?
Activities	Do students understand how political parties function and how they form government?
	Are students posing questions while they research their party in order to spark new areas of interest?
	Are students presenting information that is accurate and informative?
Consolidation	Do student reflections demonstrate critical thinking and analysis of the political parties? Are they making connections to their own priorities?
	Can students communicate newfound knowledge to their family members?

ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

Individual Education Plans	**Modifications** • Give lots of thinking time during the *Starter* activity. • Use an application or word cloud generator to simplify political party messages. • Review key terminology in advance of reviewing party promises, such as 'economy' and 'policy'. **Enrichment** • Encourage students to offer their own political statements for the *Starter* activity. • Have students to research the issue most important to them and see how the media reports on the different positions of each party.
Language Learners	• Repeat terms and rephrase statements in different ways. • Use an application or word cloud generator to simplify political party messages. • Review key words in advance and use visuals where appropriate.
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	• Sharing opinions is always challenging. Be aware of issues that may be controversial and support students in positive ways if they are uncomfortable sharing their opinions. Offer written alternatives. • Select issues that matter most to your students or the community in which they live when researching the party's promises or actions they plan to take.
Accessibility & Accommodations	• Instead of using printed campaign literature, rely on materials on the party website and social media channels (digital flyers, videos, etc.). • Opt for a digital presentation to reduce physical contact or sharing of materials.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

A **political issue** is a topic or subject that people speak about because it affects society as a whole and, often there are multiple opinions on different sides of any given issue.

A **political ideology** is a set of shared ideas and beliefs about the role of government and how society should work.

The **political spectrum** provides a way to characterize different beliefs and ideologies, and distinguish between actions on political issues, as well as political parties.

The political spectrum can be viewed with two intersecting scales: one for economic policies (left-right) and one for social policies (progressive-conservative).

Canadians who are **left-leaning on economic issues** tend to support higher taxes and more government spending, more government involvement, and more social services.

Canadians who are ri**ght-leaning on economic issues** tend to support low taxes and less government spending, less government intervention, and the free market.

Canadians who are **progressive on social issues** tend to support policies that advocate the promotion of social justice issues by changing established practices and institutions. An example of such a policy could be addressing inequities by giving special treatment to disadvantaged groups.

Canadians who are **conservative on social issues** tend to support policies that advocate the preservation of traditional values and established institutions. An example could be ensuring that everyone follows the same established rules and has equal access.

A **political party** is a group of like-minded individuals who share a similar political ideology and goals for society whose intention is to achieve power and create meaningful political change.

Political parties are made up of interested members of the public. Anyone above the required age (usually 14-years-old) can be a member of a political party. Party members choose their party's leader and local candidates, and help them get elected.

During 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.

A **political platform** is a series of declared principles, policies and plans on 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 platforms through announcements, advertising and events and to gain support from constituents.

Elections present an opportunity for citizens to explore key issues and to participate in constructive dialogue about priorities and public policies. This process includes establishing which issues are most important to you and your community, and the entire country, and evaluating how the different political parties will address them.