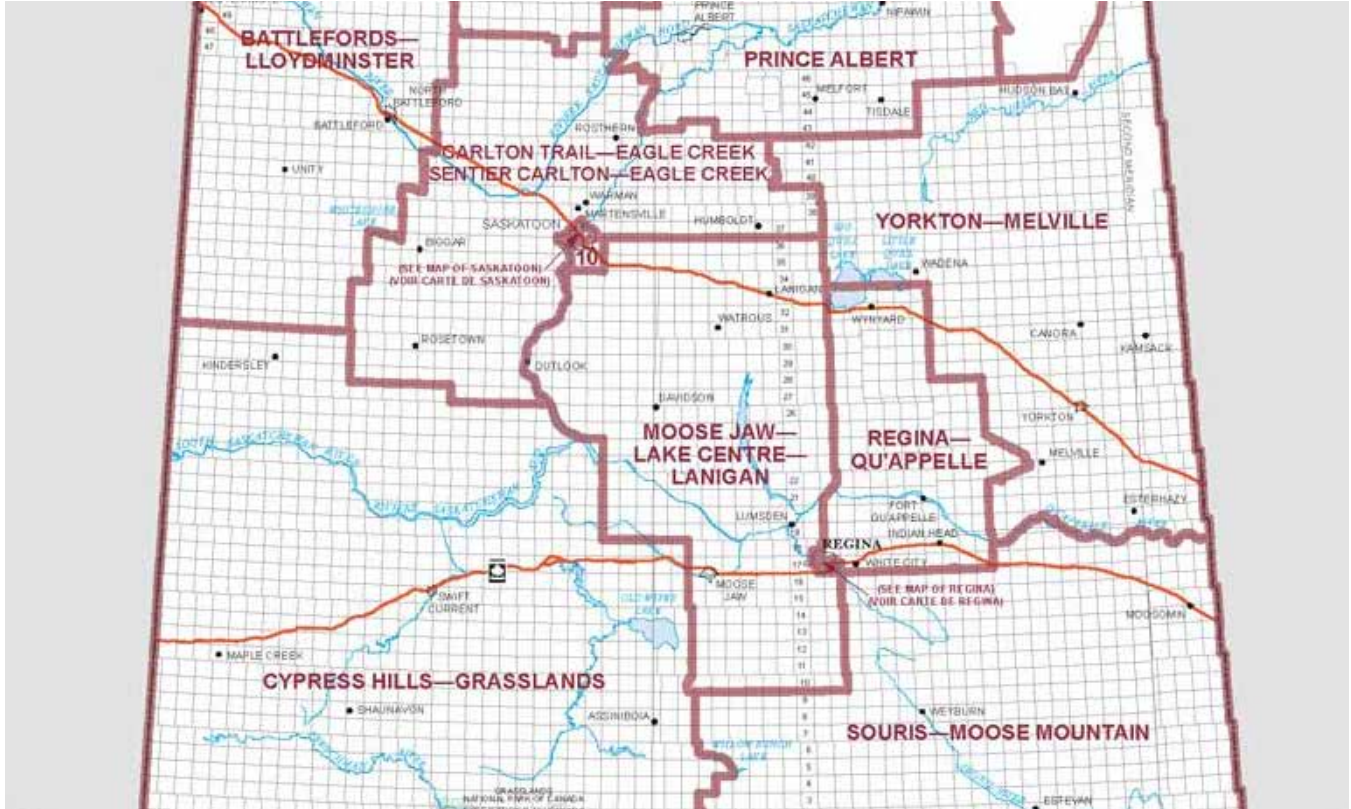


Lesson 7

My Candidates



GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 How are candidates elected in federal elections?
- 2 How can I evaluate the candidates?

OVERVIEW

During federal elections, we elect members to the House of Commons to make decisions on our behalf.

In this lesson, students review the role of elected representatives and discuss the qualities they want to see in their Member of Parliament. After learning about our voting system, students develop questions they want to ask the candidates or to guide their research into the candidates. In the *Consolidation* activity, students reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the candidates, and their own priorities that will shape their decision on Student Vote Day.

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; and
- analyze the characteristics of the candidates and how they will respond to their concerns.

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 338 federal ridings in Canada (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 any virtual meetings.
- If you plan to hold an all-candidates' debate, please be sure to follow any procedures your school board has in place.
- Supplies/Needs: "CIVIX Explains: Elected Representatives" video, "Federal Elections" video, internet access, Slide Deck 7, digital access to or copies of Activity 7.1 and 7.2.
- All digital files, videos and slide decks can be found at: studentvote.ca/canada (Classroom Resources).

Starter

1. Watch the "CIVIX Explains: Elected Representatives" video and review the concept of a representative democracy. Citizens elect politicians to make decisions on their behalf and represent their needs.
2. Through a 'Placemat' activity, have students answer the question: What qualities or skills should an elected representative have?

This cooperative learning strategy allows students to think about, record, share their ideas in groups and then reach a consensus.

- a) You can provide each group with one large sheet of paper divided into sections (one for each student and a centre block for the final group list) or you could provide each group of students with access to a Google Doc version of Activity 7.1. Alternatively, the activity could also be conducted through discussion.
- b) Ask students to respond to the question within their allotted space. Provide time for each student to share their recorded responses with the rest of their group without discussion or debate from the other students.
- c) Next, have each group decide, collectively, on the five most important qualities and record them in the centre of the placemat — it is essential that all group members agree on the top five items.
- d) Review each group's top five as a class.

Activities

1. Review the election process in Canada using the "Federal Elections" video and Slide Deck 7.
 - Federal elections are managed by Elections Canada, our national electoral agency.
 - 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 in each riding 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 > 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. Discuss the differences and what those differences might reflect (e.g., population, geographic features).
4. Show students an individual map of the school's riding, which can be found on the Elections Canada website (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 the following external resources:

- CPAC's 'Route 338' resource, which details information about each federal riding in the country (route338.ca).
- Elections Canada's 'Geography of Elections' Federal Electoral District Fact Sheets (electionsanddemocracy.ca/district-fact-sheets).

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 7.2).
6. Divide students into groups and have them brainstorm possible questions to ask the candidates. Refer back to the *Starter* activity to foster ideas. Guiding questions for students:
 - What information will help you evaluate the candidates?
 - Which issues do you want to see addressed in the community?
7. As a class, narrow down the questions and pose them to candidates through email, or by conducting a phone or virtual interview.

Alternatively, you can use the candidate’s website or news reports to find the answers or analyze how the candidate may respond to the questions. You can assign each group a candidate and have them share their research and responses with the rest of the class.

8. Review the responses and/or group research and encourage students to share their thoughts about the candidates.

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:

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

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.

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 the next 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.

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.

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Section	Guiding Questions for Teachers
Starter	Are students thinking critically about the qualities and skills needed for community leadership?
Activities	Can students understand the federal election process? Are students analyzing their riding and drawing conclusions about what makes it unique? Are students posing good questions to evaluate the candidates?
Consolidation	Can students analyze the strengths and weaknesses of candidates? Can they make connections to the skills/qualities they want to see in their Member of Parliament? Are students able to think critically about the choices and come to a decision? Can they provide evidence to support their thinking?

ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

Individual Education Plans	<p>Modifications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Starter</i> – Make a list on the board of personality traits, qualifications and skills, so that students can choose the ones important to them. • Group students so they are comfortable sharing their ideas. <p>Enrichment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group stronger students together so that they can challenge each other. • Have a mock debate where students take on the roles of the official election candidates and use research to form their responses.
Language Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide vocabulary for qualities an elected representative might possess (e.g., passionate, hard-working, honest, reliable, team player, approachable, good listener, well-spoken, committed).
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss specific questions marginalized groups may have for the candidates. • Discuss specific challenges your community is facing. • Analyze the diversity of the candidates running in your riding and discuss the need for diversity in politics.
Accessibility & Accommodations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If working in pairs or small groups is not possible, consider using Google Docs for collaborative discussion/brainstorming. • Coordinate virtual Q&A sessions with the candidates in place of in-person meetings.