

Lesson 5: The Provincial Election



GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 Which issues matter to me in this election?
- 2 How are candidates elected to the provincial legislature?
- 3 Which party or candidate do I support and why?

SUMMARY

During the provincial 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 views and priorities.

In this lesson, students reflect on which issues are important to them and their community in this provincial election. After learning the election process, students research the candidates and their parties running in their school's electoral district. In the *Consolidation* activity, students analyze the candidates and parties and determine which they support and why.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- analyze current political issues;
- explain the provincial election process and how candidates are elected to the provincial legislature;
- gather and synthesize information about the candidates and parties running in the election;
- analyze the priorities and policies of the candidates and parties;
- express their own political views and preferences.

Readiness Activity

Within a few days prior to the lesson, ask students to survey at least five family members or friends about which issues they believe are most important in the upcoming provincial election. This information could be collected informally through discussion or through an online poll or survey.

A Google Forms template is also available online that could be used for this purpose.

- Which of the following issues do you want the government to prioritize?
 - Agriculture & Fisheries
 - Civil rights
 - Crime and law
 - Economy
 - Employment
 - Environment and climate change
 - Education
 - Healthcare
 - Housing and community services
 - Social services/programs
- Do you feel confident about the future of Newfoundland and Labrador?

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 province.

Have a whole class conversation about what issues students believe are most important right now to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Draw upon family discussion or poll results from the Readiness activity, the activities from Lesson 4 (*Vote Compass Newfoundland and Labrador*) or opinion polls from the election campaign. Remind students that these issues need to fall under provincial jurisdiction (Handout 3.2).

Questions to prompt discussion:

- What concerns do you have about your future?
- If you could improve one thing for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, what would it be?
- In what areas, do you want to see more investments by the provincial government?

- Which single issue should the newly elected government focus on after the election?
 - Which issues do you want to see the leaders and candidates debating this election?
3. As a class, come to a consensus regarding the three most important election issues.

Activities

1. Review the provincial election process in Newfoundland and Labrador using Slide Deck 5. Guiding questions:
 - What is an election?
 - Who manages provincial elections in Newfoundland and Labrador?
 - What is a voting system?
 - How are candidates elected to the provincial legislature?
 - What is a political platform?
2. Demonstrate to students how they can find out which electoral district they live in by visiting the Elections NL website (www.elections.gov.nl.ca/elections). Go to the 'Electoral District Search' page and enter your school's address.
3. Using the maps on the Elections NL website (Resources > Electoral Boundaries > Maps), compare your electoral district to other electoral districts throughout the province. Discuss how people living in different electoral district may have different priorities than others.
4. Review the list of candidates running in your school's electoral district and show students how to find this information (www.elections.gov.nl.ca/elections).

TEACHER NOTE

The school's electoral district 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 electoral districts, to accommodate students who would like to vote for their local candidates.

5. Organize students into groups and assign each group a candidate, or allow them to choose one based on their preference. The goal is to ensure that one group covers each candidate running in your electoral district, including independent candidates.

Using online sources, ask each group to research their assigned candidate and create a physical or digital 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 experience do they have?
- Do they belong to a political party? Who is the leader of the political party?
- What are the main messages of their campaign advertisements?
- What are the candidate's or party's top priorities? What are they promising to do if elected? Who are the main beneficiaries of these promises?
- How will the party address the three issues identified by your class?

Suggested sources:

- Candidate/party websites
 - Candidate/party social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube)
 - Candidate/party campaign literature and advertisements
 - News sources
6. Have each group present their political party 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 other students and classes in the school, to help in their preparation for Student Vote Day.

ALTERNATIVE METHOD

Individually or in pairs, have 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

1. Have a brief closing discussion about the political parties and local candidates with your class, or have students fill out the *Campaign Reflection* (Activity 5.3).
 - Which party or candidate's priorities or views align most closely with your own? Explain your answer with specific examples.
 - Which party do you think is best suited to lead the province?
 - Which candidate will you vote for and why?
 - What else do you want to know before making your voting decision?
2. Ask students to fill out the 'after' column in the *Anticipation Guide* (Activity 5.1).

ASSESSMENT SUGGESTION

Using Graphic Organizer 5.4, ask students to select an issue that matters most to them and research each party's proposals and policies on the selected issue. Will the policy have long-term benefit? If so, how? Which party's policy do you most agree with and why? Provide enough copies of Graphic Organizer 5.4 to allow for a write-up on each party running a candidate in your electoral district.

ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

English Language Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide key terms in advance. • Use an application or word cloud generator to simplify political party messages.
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss specific questions marginalized groups may have for the candidates. • Discuss issues or challenges your community is facing. • Analyze the diversity of the candidates running in your electoral district 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

Elections NL is a non-partisan office of the House of Assembly and is responsible for the delivery of provincial elections, by-elections and plebiscites referendums) and oversees provincial elections.

Newfoundland and Labrador established **fixed-date elections** beginning in 2007, with a requirement that provincial general elections be held on the second Tuesday in October every four years. Additionally, in the event that a premier leaves office during their term, the new premier is required to call an election within 12 months of taking office. Regardless of fixed-date election legislation, a provincial election can be held at any time if the government loses the confidence of the legislature or if the lieutenant governor were to dissolve the legislature on the advice of the premier. The previous provincial election was held on May 16, 2019, and the upcoming provincial election is scheduled for February 13, 2021.

To be eligible to vote in a Newfoundland and Labrador provincial election, you must be:

- a Canadian citizen;
- at least 18 years of age;
- a resident of the province the day before polling day;
- a resident of the district and polling division on polling day.

Voting in elections is done by **secret ballot**. This ensures the privacy of each voter's preference. No one except the voter knows the choice that was made.

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

Newfoundland and Labrador uses a system called **Single-Member Plurality** or **First Past the Post (FPTP)**.

The province is divided into smaller geographic areas called electoral districts. Newfoundland and Labrador is currently divided into 40 electoral districts.

Each electoral district is represented by one Member of the House of Assembly (single-member districts). The size of electoral districts is determined by factors such as population size, demographic make-up and geography. Urban electoral districts are often smaller and more populous, while rural electoral districts are larger with less dense populations.

In FPTP, voters are only allowed to choose a single candidate on the ballot (categorical or exclusive 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 (plurality).

Under Newfoundland and Labrador's parliamentary system, the party that elects the greatest number of representatives to the Legislative Assembly usually forms government and their leader becomes the **premier**.

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.

There are many ways to gather information about the provincial election candidates. Information can be found online through party and candidate websites and social media pages. Community groups hold in-person or virtual town hall meetings or all-candidate debates where citizens are invited to listen to candidates speak on the issues and ask questions. News media often profile the leaders and candidates and summarize their party platforms. Individuals may also visit campaign offices, attend campaign events or have a chance to talk to candidates when they are canvassing in the community. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, you can expect to see a much greater focus on virtual outreach compared to traditional methods.