

Lesson 6

Municipal Elections



GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 How is my municipal council elected?
- 2 How can I learn about the election candidates?
- 3 Which candidate(s) do I support and why?

OVERVIEW

Elections present an opportunity for citizens to discuss political issues and shape the future direction of their community.

In this lesson, students become acquainted with the municipal election process and analyze ways to compare the candidates. In groups, students collect information about or from one of the candidates, and share their findings with the rest of the class. In the *Consolidation* activity, students reflect on the reasons behind their candidate preferences.

LEARNING GOALS

By the end of the lesson, students will:

- develop an understanding of the municipal election process (Citizen Framework – Structures);
- use the political inquiry process to research the municipal election candidates running;
- compare and contrast how different candidates will respond to the same political issue (Concepts of Thinking – Political Perspective);
- develop a sense of their civic self-image by exploring their own political views (Citizen Education Framework – Identity).
- voice informed opinions on matters relevant to their community (Citizenship Education Framework – Active Participation).

SUCCESS CRITERIA

I can...

- analyze issues facing our community;
- explain details about the municipal election process;
- identify different ways to compare the candidates;
- research the candidates running for election using primary and secondary resources;
- compare and contrast how different candidates will respond to local issues;
- evaluate which criteria is important to me when comparing the candidates and/or which candidate(s) I support and why.

Curriculum Links

CIVICS – CHV20

A1. Political Inquiry: use the political inquiry process and the concepts of political thinking when investigating issues, events, and developments of civic importance (A1.1, A1.2, A1.3, A1.4, A.5)

A2. Developing Transferable Skills: apply in everyday contexts skills developed through investigations related to civics and citizenship education, and identify some careers in which civics and citizenship education might be an asset (A2.1, A2.2, A2.3, A2.4)

B1. Civic Issues, Democratic Values: describe beliefs and values associated with democratic citizenship in Canada, and explain how they are related to civic action and to one's position on civic issues (B1.1, B1.5)

B2. Canadian and Indigenous Governance Systems: explain, with reference to a range of issues of civic importance, the roles and responsibilities of various institutions, structures, and positions in Canadian and Indigenous governance systems, treaty relationships, and other Crown-Indigenous relations (B2.8)

B3. Rights and Responsibilities: analyse key rights and responsibilities associated with citizenship, in both the Canadian and global context, and some ways in which these rights are protected or may be infringed upon (B3.2, B3.3)

C1. Civic Contributions, Inclusion, and Service: analyse the importance of various contributions to the common good, and assess the recognition of beliefs, values, and perspectives, in communities in Canada and internationally (C1.2, C1.3, C1.5)

POLITICS – CPC30

A1. Political Inquiry: use the political inquiry process and the concepts of political thinking when investigating issues of political importance in various communities and ways to address them (A1.1, A1.2, A1.3, A1.4, A.5, A.6, A.7)

A2. Developing Transferable Skills: apply in everyday contexts skills developed through investigations related to politics, and identify some careers in which a background in political studies might be an asset (A2.1, A2.2, A2.3, A2.4)

B2. Issues of Political Importance: explain the political importance of some current issues and analyse various perspectives associated with these issues (B2.1, B2.2, B2.3)

B3. Causes, Impact, and Solutions: analyse some issues of political importance in terms of their causes, their impact, and ways in which they have been addressed (B3.1, B3.2)

Starter

1. Share the following with students to frame the lesson.

In any given place – a neighbourhood, community, province or country – anywhere that groups of people live together and where the laws and decisions affect everyone, there will be differences in opinions about how government and society should work, including which issues are most important and how best to take action. Elections present an opportunity for citizens to discuss political issues and shape the future direction of their community.

2. In small groups, have students brainstorm some of the most pressing issues in your community. Aim for 6 to 8 issues.

3. As a class, co-create criteria to evaluate the list of community issues.

Sample criteria: Ask students to respond to the following questions for each issue – Definitely / Probably / Probably not / Definitely not

- Is the impact long lasting?
- Is the impact extreme – positively or negatively?
- Are many people affected?
- Does it directly affect you, your family and friends?
- Are many people for and/or against it?
- Are the differences between supporters and opponents substantial?

4. Return to small groups and have students rank the issues using the criteria established.

5. Follow up with a class discussion to review the small group rankings and as a class come to a consensus on the top three issues facing your community.

Activities

1. Review the municipal election process in Ontario using the following guiding questions and Slide Deck 6. Add specific information about the election races in your municipality to the Slide Deck in advance.

- Why do we have elections?
- Who is responsible for organizing municipal elections?
- How are candidates elected in municipal elections?
- How many candidates can I vote for in each race?

2. On a blackboard or whiteboard, write down the following question: How do voters decide who to vote for?

Through a discussion, generate questions to frame this decision. Start with pairs or small groups and then move to a whole class discussion.

Sample criteria for evaluating candidates:

- Why does the candidate want to be elected?
- Who would make a good leader for the community?
- Would they work well with the rest of council to make decisions for our community?
- What experience does the candidate have in serving the community?
- Which candidates share the same concerns as me? Do they have ideas to address these issues?
- What ideas or proposals do the candidates have for our community? Which candidate's ideas do I support?

3. Find out which candidates are running for election in your municipality. Show students where they can find this information by visiting your municipality's website.
4. Divide the class into pairs or small groups to research the candidates running for election. As a class, develop a checklist for creating a candidate profile. Have students also choose how the information will be presented (e.g., poster, slide deck, video, mock social media profile).

Sample candidate profile:

- Name and photo
- Personal information (What skills or experience do they have for the job?)
- Reason for running (Why do they want the job?)
- Priorities (What issues are most important to the candidate?)
- Issues (What is their position or proposed ideas for three election issues?)

TEACHER NOTE

Encourage students to use primary and secondary resources, including news articles and commentary, candidate websites and social media, or even contact the candidates directly.

5. Have each group present their candidate profile to the rest of the class. Ask students to take notes using Activity 6.1. Alternatively, you can post the group work on a digital platform and allow students to review each profile on their own.

Consolidation

Have a brief closing discussion about evaluating the candidates, or ask students to write a reflection on one or more of the following questions.

- What criteria is most important to you when evaluating the candidates and why?
- Which candidate do you prefer and why?
- Which candidate do you think will best address the issues that matter most to you? Explain your reasoning.

Extended Learning

Consider inviting candidates to visit your class/school or organize a candidates' debate (Handout 6.2). 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.

ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

Language Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide students with terms and definitions in advance (e.g., electoral system, First-Past-The-Post, multi-member election, at large, ward).
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze the diversity of the candidates running in your community and discuss the need for diversity in politics. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of council diversity puts municipalities at risk: https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/october-2018/lack-of-council-diversity-puts-municipalities-at-risk/ - Women in Politics: https://www.cbc.ca/news2/interactives/women-politics/ - London's first female Muslim councillor believes representation can inspire others: https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/london-s-first-female-muslim-councillor-believes-representation-can-inspire-others-1.6252907
Accommodations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If working in pairs or small groups in the classroom is not possible, consider using Google Docs for collaborative activities and discussion. • Consider using a digital format for the candidate research and profile so that it can be shared online, in order to limit interactions or movement in the classroom.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

Municipal elections provide citizens with an opportunity to discuss and debate the future direction of their community.

An individual who seeks public office or competes for the role of an elected representative is called a **candidate**. It is their job to share their vision, ideas and commitment to the job in order to win the support of voters during a campaign.

On October 24, 2022, Ontarians will elect candidates to sit on their municipal councils. The size, arrangement and election of the council differs per municipality.

Council members can be elected **at-large** (by all eligible voters in the municipality) or by **ward** where the municipality is broken down into smaller geographic areas that elect one or more representatives for their specific ward. The head of council is elected at-large in single-tier or lower-tier municipalities.

An **electoral system** is the way in which citizens elect their representatives. There are set rules for how preferences are recorded and the methods used for determining which candidate wins. There are many different electoral systems used around the world.

Municipalities in Ontario use a system called **First-Past-The-Post** (FPTP). A successful candidate must receive the most votes in order to be elected in their area. In some cases, more than one candidate is elected, either at-large or within a ward. This is called a **multi-member election**. For example, if there are six council members elected at-large, the six candidates with the most number of votes are elected.

In some municipalities, there will be numerous candidates running for a seat on council. In other municipalities, there may only be a few candidates and the race will be less contested. If a candidate has no opponents, or if the number of candidates match the number of seats on council, then the

candidate(s) automatically win. This is called **acclamation**. When this happens, no vote is held for that race.

To become a candidate in a municipal election in Ontario, you must be at least 18 years of age, a Canadian citizen and be eligible to vote in the election.

There are many ways to gather information about the election candidates. Information can be found on media websites or in newspapers, radio and television, and local magazines. Town hall meetings or all-candidate debates are typically organized where citizens are invited to listen to candidates speak on the election issues and ask them questions. Individuals may also visit candidates' offices, attend campaign events or have a chance to talk to candidates when they visit homes during door-to-door canvassing. Information may also be found through candidate websites and social media profiles.

