

Canada Votes

TEACHER GUIDE

TORONTO STAR

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Teacher Guide

This learning material is designed to give students tools to research how we elect our governments in Canada. It includes a booklet of basic information about the federal government, introductory texts related to elections, and a student activity book with basic facts. It also includes some games, multimedia activities, and directed research.

The “**Facts About Your Federal Government**” booklet provides an overview of the federal government. It outlines the basic parts of government and the election process. It is a supplement to the activity pages. Students can use this resource in several ways. Primarily it is the first “go to” source for classrooms without internet access. It is also a template students can use to write their own booklet on their provincial or municipal government.

The activities are set up so that individual sections can be copied and used by students in class. They consist of a brief outline of basic facts, followed by a series of activities. These include research, written and spoken word activities, and some alternative expressions of learning, such as art and media presentations. They also provide opportunities for further research beyond the information provided here.

The reading level of the materials in this kit is about Grade 8-9. That means it is useable for students in grades 6 and upwards. However, the reading levels of students in any one classroom vary widely. Research shows that in a Grade 8 classroom, reading levels may range from a grade 4 level to senior high school. Most students will be able to work on the activities with their partners in class. Some will require additional help. One approach might be to pair weaker with stronger students, and good researchers or good writers with poorer ones.

The individual sections of the student resource can be used as lesson plans for the teacher. The activities can also be used as questions and discussion points in class. The activities also work as group assignments in class, as individual self-directed learning or as homework for independent activity.

Class presentations are an important part of this resource. These activities give students the opportunity to present their work to classmates. Respectful interaction among students helps develop skills and confidence.

The written activities often suggest students exchange their work with others. That permits peer editing, and suggestions for rewrites. Students often learn more from teaching others than by researching and studying on their own. Again, it is important to monitor these interactions to ensure that they are civil and respectful.

Activities within each section have different levels of difficulty. Students in lower classes can complete activities at the beginning, while senior classes can concentrate on the later activities. Teachers can adapt the activities to make them easier, harder or more in depth, as suits their classes.

These activities are expandable to suit the focus of individual classes. They make an excellent starting point for senior classes. For example, students could draw flow charts showing a bill becoming law or the organization of the various ministries, and the areas of responsibility of each.

The municipal section of the work is focused on Toronto, and does not deal with the regional governments in southern Ontario. However, the basic structures are the same, and the activities can be adapted to place more focus on the division of powers. Basically, regional municipalities merge neighbouring smaller cities under one regional government. The original cities continue, providing some services, while the region assumes responsibility of fire and police services, waste services, main roads and transit. It is an interesting expansion to have students describe how the regional governments differ from more traditional municipal governments.

Written by Achim Krull, MAT



Answer Key

Our Government: A Constitutional Monarchy

Our Government: A Constitutional Monarchy

1. The Queen appears on Canadian currency because she is our monarch.
2. According to the BNA act, the Governor General may dismiss governments, call for elections, appoint or dismiss the Prime Minister, refuse Royal Assent for legislation, and act as Commander in Chief of the Canadian Armed Forces. In practice, the Governor General acts only on the advice of the Prime Minister. He or she may, on the advice of the Prime Minister, dismiss Parliament, call for elections, appoint Supreme Court Justices and give Royal Assent to legislation. Other duties are mainly ceremonial. The Governor General is the head of the Canadian Armed Forces, but does not have any command function. He or she greets important visitors from other countries, opens and closes parliament, and generally represents the government of Canada.
3. The government, Prime Minister and Cabinet, answer to the elected members of parliament. If the House of Commons passes a motion of non-confidence in the government, the Prime Minister must call for a new election.
4. Answers will vary
5. Answers will vary, but students should examine the impact the Governor Generals have had on Canadian society, and their role as an example for other Canadians.
6. Answers will vary
7. Sir John A. Macdonald coined that phrase, “Chamber of Sober Second Thought” to describe the Senate. The Senate’s role is to review legislation passed by Parliament. It may delay, reject or amend legislation. Usually it tweaks the wording and then passes the legislation. However, it can refuse to pass legislation approved by the House, preventing it from moving on for Royal Assent.
8. See above. The Senate has the same legislative powers as the House of Commons except that it may not initiate financial legislation. It can, and sometimes does, suggest amendments to budget or other financial legislation.
9. See above. The Senate has the same right to approve or reject legislation as the House of Commons. Only Constitutional amendments are an exception; those may only be delayed by up to 180 days. In practice, the Senate generally passes legislation approved by the House of Commons with minor tweaks. However, it has taken strong actions too. One example: the Senate delayed passage of the Canada-USA Free Trade Agreement, indirectly forcing an election. The agreement was passed after the election.
10. Answers will vary.
11. The House of Lords may initiate legislation except for money bills, just like the Senate. The House of Lords may not amend money bills, and may only delay bills from the House of Commons. Unlike Canada’s Senate, the House of Lords also once functioned as a court of last appeal, but that has been transferred to a newly created Supreme Court.
12. Answers will vary, but the Magna Carta established two key points: the monarch must obey the laws of the land just like any other individual. The second: *“No free man shall be seized or imprisoned, or stripped of his rights or possessions, or outlawed or exiled, or deprived of his standing in any other way, nor will we proceed with force against him, or send others to do so, except by the lawful judgement of his equals or by the law of the land.”* That was the beginning of legal “due process” rather than arbitrary actions by the rulers.



Answer Key

Governor General, Lieutenant Governors, Prime Ministers, Premiers, and Mayors

Governor General, Lieutenant Governors, Prime Ministers, Premiers, and Mayors

1. Head of State is the most senior ranked member of the executive branch of government and representative of a country. In Canada, that is the Monarch or her representative. The Head of Government is the second highest individual in the Executive branch of government, namely the Prime Minister.
2. The Governor General swears in elected members of government, cabinet ministers and the Chief Justice of Canada. On the advice of the Prime Minister, the Governor General prorogues and dissolves Parliament, calls for elections, gives Royal Assent to legislation. He or she also performs ceremonial duties such as delivering the Speech from the Throne and heading the Canadian Armed Forces.
3. By tradition, the Governor General has less often acted independently, and mainly now acts on the instructions or “advice” of the Prime Minister. The last serious intervention by a Governor General led to the Byng-King Crisis.
4. Answers will vary
5. In 1926, Prime Minister King wanted to call an election in the middle of a corruption scandal. The Governor General used his authority to appoint the head of the opposition Prime Minister instead of calling an election. The actions were perfectly legal, but led to a major crisis. Since that time, the Governor General has not acted independently of the “advice” of the Prime Minister.
6. Answers will vary but one key point: the Prime Minister is not in the House to present arguments or defend the government in Question Period. Today it also may mean less media exposure.
7. Answers will vary
8. Answers will vary
9. Answers will vary
10. Prime Ministers and Premiers head the cabinet, control appointments to government positions, and even approve candidates seeking to run for election. That gives them a great deal of influence. Usually they also have close ties with their political party executives, which is also a source of influence over other members. Together with Cabinet, they control what happens in the House of Commons. Paul Fox, a Canadian political scientist, once referred to our Parliament as a dictatorship of the cabinet.
11. The mayor, like premiers and prime ministers, controls appointments to senior positions in their administration. They or their appointees chair all committees of the municipal government and control funding for city activities. They also have a far larger media presence. All these factors translate into influence.
12. Answers will vary.



Answer Key

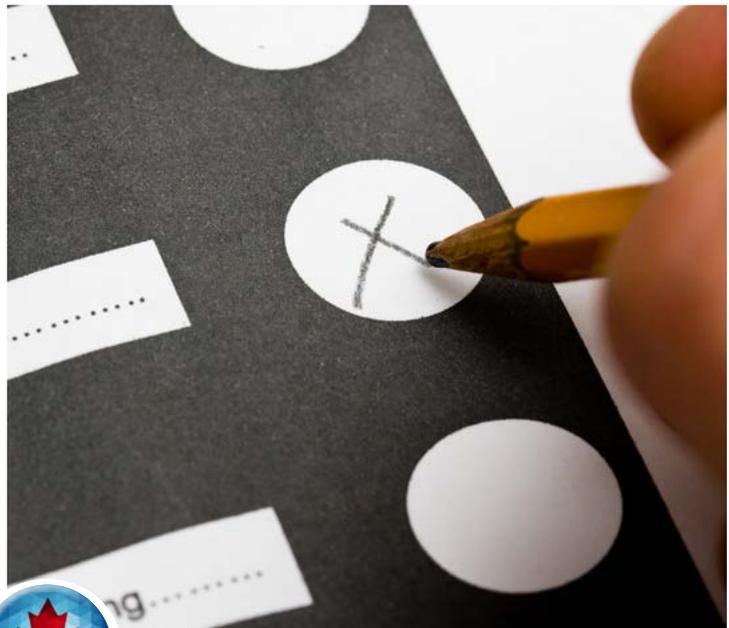
The Vote

The Vote

1. Women did vote in Canada's early days, especially in what is now Quebec. By 1849, the various colonies and provinces passed voting regulations like those of Britain, which did not allow women to vote. After Confederation, the provinces set the rules for voting rights.
2. Inuit and First Nations people, and Canadians of Asian and especially Chinese and Japanese heritage were excluded from voting at different times. Initially, provinces could set the rules on voting rights, so they varied in detail from province to province and over time.
3. Answers will vary, but students should learn that elections prior to the 1890's were often corrupt. Candidates bought votes. Voters' lists were manipulated to exclude some and add others. A show of hands vote ensured that the bought votes were delivered.
4. Secret ballots allowed voters to keep their voting choices secret. That was introduced to reduce corruption and vote buying.
5. Student lists should include most famous, the "Famous Five": Emily Murphy, Irene Parlby, Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, and Henrietta Muir Edwards. Others include Mary Ann Shadd, Margret Benedictsson, Dr. Amelia Yeomans, Francis Marion Beynon, E. Cora Hind, and many others.
6. Answers will vary
7. Answers will vary
8. Answers will vary
9. Answers will vary

Our Voting System

1. Answers will vary, but should explain that candidates only need more votes than other candidates in their riding, not 50% + 1, to be elected.
2. The national popular vote is an aggregate of all votes. It does not take into account that some ridings are won by very large majorities, while others by only a few votes. It is statistically possible for a party to win a seat with 34% of the ballots cast, while in other ridings they may win by an overwhelming majority. That will skew the averages.
3. Answers will vary
4. Answers will vary
5. The main reason is cost and time. The 2015 election in Canada cost \$443 million. If there had to be a second ballot in even only half of the ridings, costs would become astronomical.



Answer Key

Political Parties

Political Parties

1. The key idea is that a political party is a group of people with specific ideas about the running of the country. They will work together to be elected and implement those ideas.
2. A platform is simply the aggregate ideas of a political party.
3. Answers will vary
4. Answers will vary
5. Answers will vary
6. Some key information the students should list:

Federal Government	Provincial Government
Citizenship and Immigration	Education
Fisheries and Oceans	Energy
Foreign Relations/International Trade	Environment and Resource Development
National Defence and Veterans' Affairs	Health Care and Human Services
Industry and Employment	Municipal Affairs
Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development	Tourism, Parks and Recreation
National Revenue	Transportation

There are overlaps in these and other responsibilities. For example, both provinces and the federal governments deal with environmental issues, international trade and health and welfare.

7. Answers will vary, but the political platforms are posted in the parties' websites. Students may also find information on the Toronto Star website or print edition.
8. Answers will vary but students should find that the more liberal parties will favour policies which help the working class, while more conservative parties will prefer less government intervention and smaller roles for government in every day life.



Answer Key

Running for Elections

Running for Elections

1. Answers will vary but essentially the requirements are the same.
2. These are mainly election officials, federally appointed judges, and temporary or permanent residents.
3. Answers will vary, but the key element is fairness to all candidates. The deposit was to discourage nuisance candidates.
4. Fairness to all wishing to run. Fringe candidates may have problems raising the funds, but in fairness, should have the opportunity to run.
5. Parties want to avoid embarrassment or conflict if nominated candidates might bring negative publicity to the party.
6. Answers will vary. However, you could raise the example of the United States where there are few restrictions on funding by candidates. Corporations, wealthy individuals and special interest groups can donate as much as they want to their favourite party or candidates. They may also advertise during the election.
7. Answers will vary, but students should consider the issue of wealthier candidates being able to create a much stronger campaign because of their wealth.
8. Just reinforce the idea that any one who is eligible to vote may be a candidate.
9. Answers will vary. Some key elements: different election dates and lengths of campaigns, different funding and spending limits, no political parties in municipal elections.

Elections

1. It is one of the specific powers of the Governor General and Lieutenant Governor.
2. Historically, prime ministers were appointed by the Monarch, and would serve as long as the monarch was happy with their services.
3. The main reason was communications and travel times back in the 1860s. A train trip across Canada took a week. Travel by road anywhere was slow and tedious. For politicians to visit their ridings and meet with voters took a lot of time. Party leaders had to visit ridings across the country, both difficult and very time consuming. Today those timelines are maintained because they give candidates more time to campaign and voters more time to decide who to support.
4. Elections Canada tries to limit the size of ridings to no more than 100,000 people. Except for PEI and the territories, ridings are somewhere between 60,00 and 80,000. In urban areas, some ridings may be as large as 95,000, while ridings on PEI or the territories have 15-25,000 voters. Elections Canada may not take seats away from an area to adjust for population changes. Instead, it adds seats to underrepresented areas.
5. The voters' lists are based on tax information provincially and federally, and on property lists in municipalities. Individuals wishing to be added to the lists must present valid identification documents, from passports to insurance policies and bills with name and address. The lists are updated from government information before each election. Individuals can check on-line if they are on the various voters lists and also register on-line.
6. Answers will vary.



Answer Key

After the Election

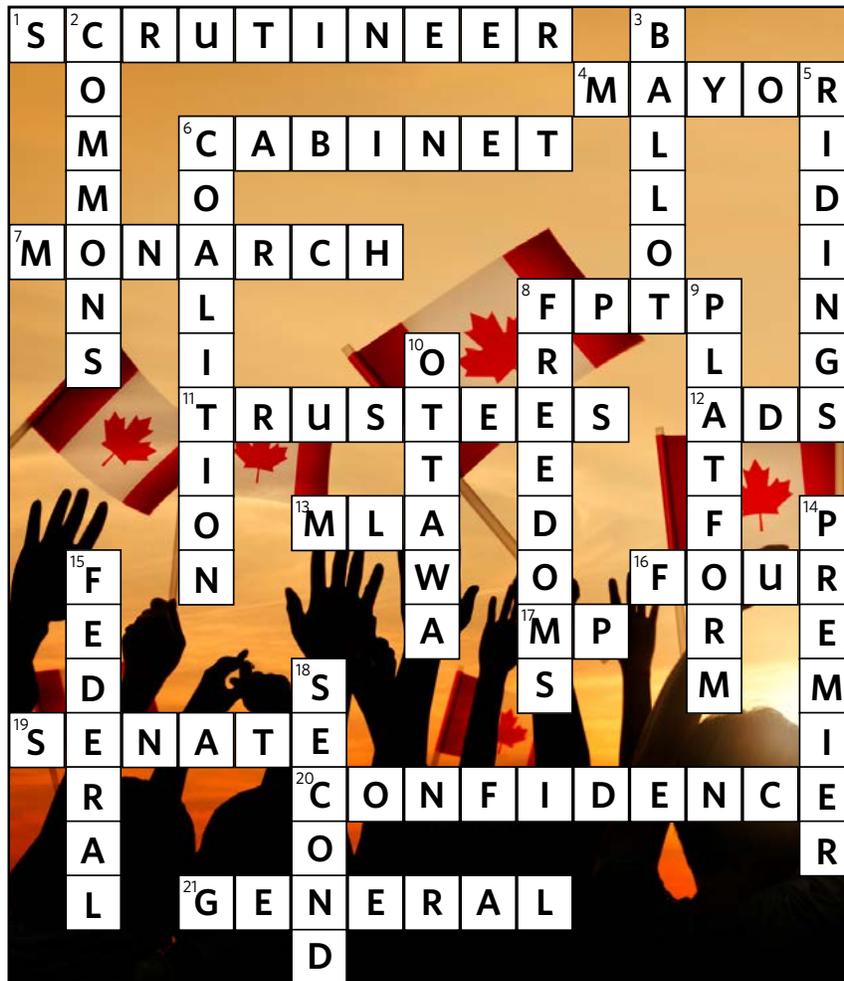
After the Election

1. Any legislation the House of Commons passes must also be approved by the Senate. The Senate can and will reject legislation. If it does, it is considered a major embarrassment for the government. The Senate can also amend legislation. Often the government may work together with senators opposing legislation to come to a friendly solution, so that the legislation is passed. The Senate can also just ignore a bill, and do nothing, waiting for the next election, in which case the bill “dies”, and nothing happens. In addition, the opposition parties in the House have opportunities to speak to the legislation. They can ask questions of the responsible Minister and the Prime Minister. This can evolve into stalling tactics, tying up parliament and slowing down passage of legislation. It can also embarrass the government by attracting unfavourable publicity.
2. Minority governments need the support of their coalition partners to remain in power. That gives these partners a strong lever to push the government in the direction they prefer. Usually it means the government will consult their coalition partners before introducing legislation. It can also mean a less stable government. Minority governments are more likely to lose votes, and be forced into calling elections. There have not been any minority governments since the fixed term limits, so there is no precedent to see how this would work.



Answer Key

Crossword Challenge



ACROSS

1. Checks on ballot counting
4. Head of municipal government
6. Ministers of the Crown
7. Head of State
8. Canada's voting system in short
11. They run school systems
12. Spreading the word
13. Short for member of the Legislative Assembly
14. This is so much
16. Years between federal elections
17. Member of Parliament
19. Canada's Upper House
20. Governments must have this
21. Governor...

DOWN

2. House of ...
3. How one chooses a candidate
5. Election districts
6. Parties working together
8. Charter of Rights and...
9. What a party runs on
10. The capital
14. Provincial head of government
15. Senior level of government
18. Chamber of Sober... Thought



Running for Election: An Election Simulation

This simulation will show students how to organize a political campaign, create a political platform, and run for election. Students will run for the position of member of parliament for the local area. The group and individual student work, at least in part, should be done in class. That will allow you to provide some direction and guidance. Some work can also be done as homework. The timelines suggested are flexible, and can be adjusted as required. As preparation, discuss with your class how parties prepare a platform, and how elections work.

Consider running the simulation twice. That will allow students a chance to try different roles. After the simulation, ask students to write a brief report about what worked in the simulation, how it could be improved or how they would change it. Such a review will show you how well they understood the materials and the simulation.

The Election Game

Three Riding Associations

Select three groups of five students. Each group forms a party riding association. They will select a candidate from their group and organize the election campaign.

Each riding association will:

- Elect the person who will run for their party.
- Discuss and prepare a platform of at least three ideas that they think will attract voters. Have the groups browse Toronto Star stories about current or past elections for ideas, and visit political parties' websites. Their platform should include issues important to all Canadians. It could include lowering the voting age to 16, gun control, immigration, environmental issues such as banning plastic bottles or bags, etc.
- When the platform is completed, the candidate prepares a speech with the help of the group to present their campaign ideas to the class.
- The riding association will prepare at least one election poster promoting their platform.
- The riding association will prepare flyers or brochures to hand out to other students to promote their platform.

The remainder of the class will be: (Students may have more than one role)

An Advertising Agency: (6 or more)

- Three teams of two or more students who will each work with one party to write and shoot a video ad promoting that party.

An All Candidates Meeting Organizer (1 student)

- One student will organize and chair an all-candidates meeting, where the candidates promote their platform. They could also argue that the other candidates' platforms are not as good as they seem. The voters (the class) ask candidates justify their platform.

Class newspaper reporters (3 or more)

- They will attend and report on the all-candidates meeting for the three parties.
- The reporters will also interview the candidates in class, questioning them about their platform.
- The reporters will then write a newspaper style story about their interview and share those with the class.



Running for Election: An Election Simulation

Polling stations staff (3 or more).

- They will select one Returning Officer to run the polls and two poll clerks. They will prepare a voters list. All students are eligible to vote, but they must register with the polling staff before voting day. The students must show some ID to be put the voters list.
- Polling station staff will prepare the ballots, ballot boxes, and count the votes during the election.

The remaining students:

- They are interested voters. They should research the candidates' platforms. They should look for errors or contradictions in the platforms.
- They attend interviews and speeches from candidates and ask questions about the platform.

Timeline:

Day One (60 minutes)

- students divide into groups and work on preparing their roles.

Day Two (60 minutes) (In class preparation work.)

- candidates prepare and distribute handouts and put up posters.
- Polling staff prepare the voters list and make ballots and a ballot box.
- All students register on the voters list and research the candidates' platforms.

Day Three - The Campaign: (2 x 45 minutes)

- In the morning, the candidates will make a speech to the class about their platforms.
- The reporters write stories for or against any platform issues presented, and hand them out to the class. All students continue to research the candidates' platforms.
- In the afternoon, the class has an all-candidates meeting. The candidates debate the issues and the class has a chance to ask questions.

Day Four - Voting Day: (60 minutes)

- The polling station holds the vote. All voters must be checked off on the voters list.
- Each candidate appoints a scrutineer to watch the counting of the ballots.
- The Returning Officer reports the results of the vote to the class.

Follow-up exercise:

- Have the reporters run a class discussion, where students can explain what worked in the various campaigns, and why they voted for a particular candidate.
- With three candidates, it is likely no one candidate received a majority of votes. Discuss how the FPTP vote might affect voters whose candidates did not win. The discussion could be an interesting way to discuss voting system options.

