

LESSON 11

ELECTION ISSUES

GUIDING QUESTIONS

Which issues are important in this election and why? How are the political parties planning to address these issues?

SUMMARY

Elections present an opportunity for citizens to discuss and debate issues and evaluate how different parties will address issues of importance. Some issues are more politically important than others.

In this lesson, students discuss and rank the top challenges facing Ontario today. After reviewing the electoral process in Ontario, students work in groups to investigate an election issue and compare the positions or solutions proposed by each of the parties and/or candidates. Students use the concepts of political thinking to assess the different viewpoints and evaluate the proposed actions. In the 'Consolidation' activity, students reflect on which issues matter most to them and which issues have become the most important in the election campaign and why.

LEARNING GOALS

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Understand how elections work in Ontario;
- Investigate the political importance of current issues facing the province (Citizenship Education Framework – Active Participation);
- Select and organize relevant evidence, data, and information on issues of political importance and ways to address them from a variety of primary and secondary sources;
- Work in a collaborative and critically thoughtful manner to explore issues related to societal responsibilities (Citizenship Education Framework – Attributes);
- Use the concepts of *political significance* and *political perspective* when analyzing arguments for and against different policies on a specific issue.
- Use the concept of *objectives and results* to assess party platforms and proposals to address issues.

SUCCESS CRITERIA

- I can explain how Members of Provincial Parliament are elected in Ontario and how the governing party is determined;
- I can share and discuss current issues facing the province;
- I can select and organize relevant evidence, data, and information on a specific civic issue and ways to address them from a variety of primary and secondary sources;
- I can work in a collaborative and critically thoughtful manner to explore a civic issue;

- I can analyze arguments for and against different policies on a specific issue;
- I can provide evidence to demonstrate my understanding of the concept of objectives and results.

CURRICULUM LINKS

CPC30 – Overall Expectations:

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.

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.

B2. Issues of Political Importance: explain the political importance of some current issues and analyse various perspectives associated with these issues.

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.

CPC30 – Specific Expectations:

A1.1 formulate different types of questions to guide investigations into issues of political importance in various communities and ways to address them

A1.2 select and organize relevant evidence, data, and information on issues of political importance and ways to address them from a variety of primary and secondary sources, ensuring that their sources reflect different perspectives

A1.4 interpret and analyze evidence, data, and information relevant to their investigations using various tools, strategies, and approaches that are appropriate for political inquiry

A1.5 use the concepts of political thinking (i.e., political significance, objectives and results, stability and change, and political perspective) when analyzing and evaluating evidence, data, and information and formulating conclusions and/or judgements about issues of political importance in various communities and ways to address them

A1.7 communicate their ideas, arguments, and conclusions using various formats and styles, as appropriate for the intended audience and purpose

LESSON 11: ELECTION ISSUES

A2.1 describe some ways in which political inquiry can help them develop skills, including the essential skills in the Ontario Skills Passport, and those related to the citizenship education framework, that can be transferred to postsecondary opportunities, the world of work, and everyday life

A2.2 demonstrate in everyday contexts attributes, skills, and work habits developed through investigations into issues of political importance

A2.3 apply the concepts of political thinking when analyzing current events relating to issues of political importance at the local, national, and/or global level

B2.1 explain the political importance of some current local, national, and/or global issues

B2.2 identify criteria that could be used to rank issues in order of their political priority

B2.3 analyze the positions of different stakeholders concerned with some issues of political importance

B3.1 analyze the causes of some issues of political importance and how an understanding of these causes can affect the action taken to address the issues

B3.2 analyze the impact of some issues of political importance, with a particular emphasis on issues related to equity, human rights, and/or the environment

B3.3 identify actions that have been taken to address some issues of political importance, and assess the effectiveness of these actions in achieving the intended objective

READINESS

Within a few days of the lesson, ask students to survey at least five family or friends in the community about the issues they want to see addressed by political parties in the election. Which election issues do they care about the most? Which issues or challenges do they believe should be addressed by the next government?

MINDS ON

1. Initiate a class discussion about election issues and current challenges facing Ontarians (related to provincial government responsibilities). Students should voice their own opinions and those of friends and family collected in the 'Readiness' activity. The goal should be to create a list of 10-12 issues or areas of concern.

2. As a class, review the concept of political significance and co-create criteria to evaluate the list of election issues from the discussion.

*Teacher Note: Recall the definition of **political significance** when developing the criteria. It is a political thinking concept that looks at the importance of particular policies, civic actions, issues, events, or developments, based on their impact on the lives of citizens, or their influence on government decision making.*

Sample criteria:

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

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

3. In small groups, have students rank the issues and identify the top five or six issues.

4. Teacher can poll each group and ask which issue they ranked first and last. Follow up with a class discussion.

5. After the class discussion, give students a few minutes to rank the issues on their own. Students should record their rankings for later use.

ACTION

1. Ask students to fill out the 'before' column in the Anticipation Guide (Activity 11.1).

2. Review the election process in Ontario using the following guiding questions and support tools (Slide Deck 11, 'Elections in Ontario' video).

- What words come to mind when you think of 'election'?
- What is an electoral system or voting system?
- Which system do we use for provincial elections?
- What is an electoral district and how many do we have in Ontario?

Teacher Note: The number of electoral districts will increase from 107 to 124 for the general election on June 7, 2018. This includes four ridings in Northern Ontario, where previously there were two, in order to improve electoral representation in the far north. They include Kiiwetinoong, Mushkegowuk-James Bay, Timmins and Kenora-Rainy River.

3. Assess current knowledge of the upcoming election and demonstrate where students can find out their electoral district and which candidates are running for election.

- When is election day?
- What are the major parties and who are their leaders?
- In which electoral district does the school reside?
- Which candidates are running for election in our electoral district?

LESSON 11: ELECTION ISSUES

Teacher Note: You can find out which electoral district you live in by visiting the Elections Ontario website and accessing the 'Voter Information Service' tool (enter your postal code or lot and concession address). Elections Ontario will also post the list of candidates and this information will be updated on a daily basis during the election. The final list will be posted after the close of nominations on May 17, 2018.

4. Divide students into groups and assign each an issue from the top issues identified in the 'Minds On' activity. Some issues may need to be broadened for this research investigation. Ask students to research their issue and assess how each party or candidate's plans to address it using the following guiding questions (Activity 11.2).

- Background information and any related statistics
- Individuals and groups impacted by the issue
- How media is covering the issue and what are the different perspectives
- How stakeholders or community groups are working on this issue or what they are saying
- Each party or candidate's policy plank and proposed action on the issue

Teacher Note: Review definitions of policy plank and party platform.

Encourage students to use primary and secondary resources, news articles and commentary, party websites and they could even contact the candidates directly.

5. Have each group present their research investigation to the rest of the class. Alternatively, you can post the group work around the classroom on walls or create stations, and use a Carousel format where students move in small groups from station to station.

CONSOLIDATION

Ask students to re-visit their individual rankings from the 'Minds On' activity. Did their rankings change after the presentations or carousel walk? Why? Or Why Not?

Have students submit a written response to the following question:

- Use the concept of *political significance* to explain how your most significant issue impacts you, your family or community?

ASSESSMENT IDEAS

A) Individual *assessment as learning*:

Review the political thinking concept of *objectives and results*. It focuses on factors leading to events, policies, decisions, and/or plans of actions and their intended and unintended consequences. *Objectives and results* is a useful concept because it helps us analyze the reasons and results of actions and determine how governments and citizens can best get things done.

Ask students to self-assess their understanding of the action activity using the criteria for *objectives and results* (Activity 11.3).

B) Ask students to fill out the 'after' column in the Anticipation Guide (Activity 11.1).





ACTIVITY 11.1: ANTICIPATION GUIDE – ONTARIO PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS

Answer the following questions, prior to learning about elections in Ontario.

Afterwards, respond to the questions again based on any new information you have acquired.

Question	Before	After
When is next provincial election?		
Which voting system do we use for provincial elections?		
How many electoral districts are there in the province?		
What is the name of our school's electoral district?		
What is the title given to elected representatives at the provincial level?		
How many candidates can you choose on your ballot?		
Do we vote for the premier of Ontario?		

ACTIVITY 11.2: RESEARCH INTO ELECTION ISSUES

<p>TASK DESCRIPTION</p> 	<p>Using primary and secondary resources, research the following information about your selected civic issue in the current election.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Background information and any related statistics, including the individuals and groups impacted by the issue;• Current programs in place to address the issue by the provincial government (if applicable);• How media is covering the issue and the different perspectives;• How stakeholders or community groups are working on this issue or what they are saying during the election;• Analysis of each party or candidate’s policy plank and proposed action on the issue.
<p>SUGGESTED RESOURCES</p> 	<p>Below are some suggested resources for your investigation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research reports about the issue• News articles and commentary• Government of Ontario website – www.ontario.ca• Websites, press releases or social media platforms of related stakeholder and community groups• Party websites, social media platforms and campaign literature <p>Recommendation: The Ontario 360 project is designed to develop and share evidence-based public policy ideas in the context of the upcoming Ontario election and post-election transition. http://on360.ca</p>
<p>OTHER METHODS FOR DATA COLLECTION</p> 	<p>You can also use other forms of data collection to inform your presentation, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contacting the candidates running in your electoral district through email, phone or social media• Contacting the community groups directly who are working on the issue• Conducting a survey among students or community members about the issue
<p>PRESENTATION FORMAT</p> 	<p>Option A: You will be given 10-15 minutes to report your findings to the class. You are encouraged to use a variety of methods to communicate your research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Slide Deck/PowerPoint• Video• Handouts• Infographics <p>Option B: Create a physical display and use a Carousel Strategy to share your work with your peers. Take turns manning the booth so that any questions can be addressed.</p>

ACTIVITY 11.3: SELF-ASSESSMENT OF POLITICAL THINKING CONCEPTS

Complete the following self-assessment chart after conducting your research and presentation about the selected election issue.

Criteria	Yes/No	Evidence or Next Steps
I can identify the intended rationale(s) or motive(s) for political responses to civic issues		
I can explain how political events or developments can be caused by multiple factors		
I can assess the intended or unintended effect(s) or outcome(s) of a decision		
I can evaluate the consequences of a political decision on various groups in society		
Do I have any questions?		