

LESSON 1

VALUES, BELIEFS & PERSPECTIVES

In a democratic society, people have different beliefs, which influence their position and actions with respect to issues of civic importance.

A **civic (or political) issue** is a topic or subject that people speak about because it affects society as a whole and, often there are multiple opinions on various sides of any given issue.

An **opinion** is your belief or thought about a particular issue. Opinions are personal, subjective and formed by our values, knowledge and perspectives. Not everyone will have the same opinion about the most important issue facing the province, but there is no right or wrong opinion.

A **perspective** is from one particular point of view. It is an outlook and can represent an entire demographic. Our perspectives are shaped by who we are and our environment and experiences. High school students may have a different perspective about life and priorities than their parents or guardians.

How does a perspective differ from an opinion? Your perspective is where you are standing and how you look at something. Your opinion is what you see or believe about something.

Each individual has a **worldview**, which is an overall perspective with which one sees the world and interprets events on a daily basis. Your worldview relates to your **values**, which are your principles or standards of behaviour and priorities in life.

A **political ideology** is a shared philosophy, which includes ideas or beliefs about the role of government and how society should work. Common political ideologies include:

- **Liberalism**, which favours individual liberty but acknowledges the need for some form of government intervention in the economy;
- **Conservatism**, which advocates for the preservation of society and opposes radical changes;
- **Socialism**, which favours a political and economic system in which the means of production, distribution and exchange are owned by the community collectively, usually through the state; and,
- **Libertarianism**, which advocates for minimal state intervention in the lives of citizens.

There are also other ideologies, which are more extreme, such as communism and fascism. Communism promotes the establishment of an egalitarian and classless society

based on common ownership and control of the means of production and property. Fascism favours strict social and economic measures as a method of empowering the government and limiting the freedom of citizens.

The political spectrum provides a way to characterize and distinguish between different beliefs, ideologies, political parties and policy ideas.

A linear spectrum is represented as a horizontal line, with the left favouring social equality, government involvement and more social services, and the right favouring tradition, smaller government and lower taxes.

Political perspective is a political thinking concept that looks at the way in which a person or group's beliefs, values and ideology can affect their position on, or response to, issues of civic importance. It also involves analyzing how stakeholder groups with different perspectives can influence the policies and platforms of political parties and the decisions of governments.