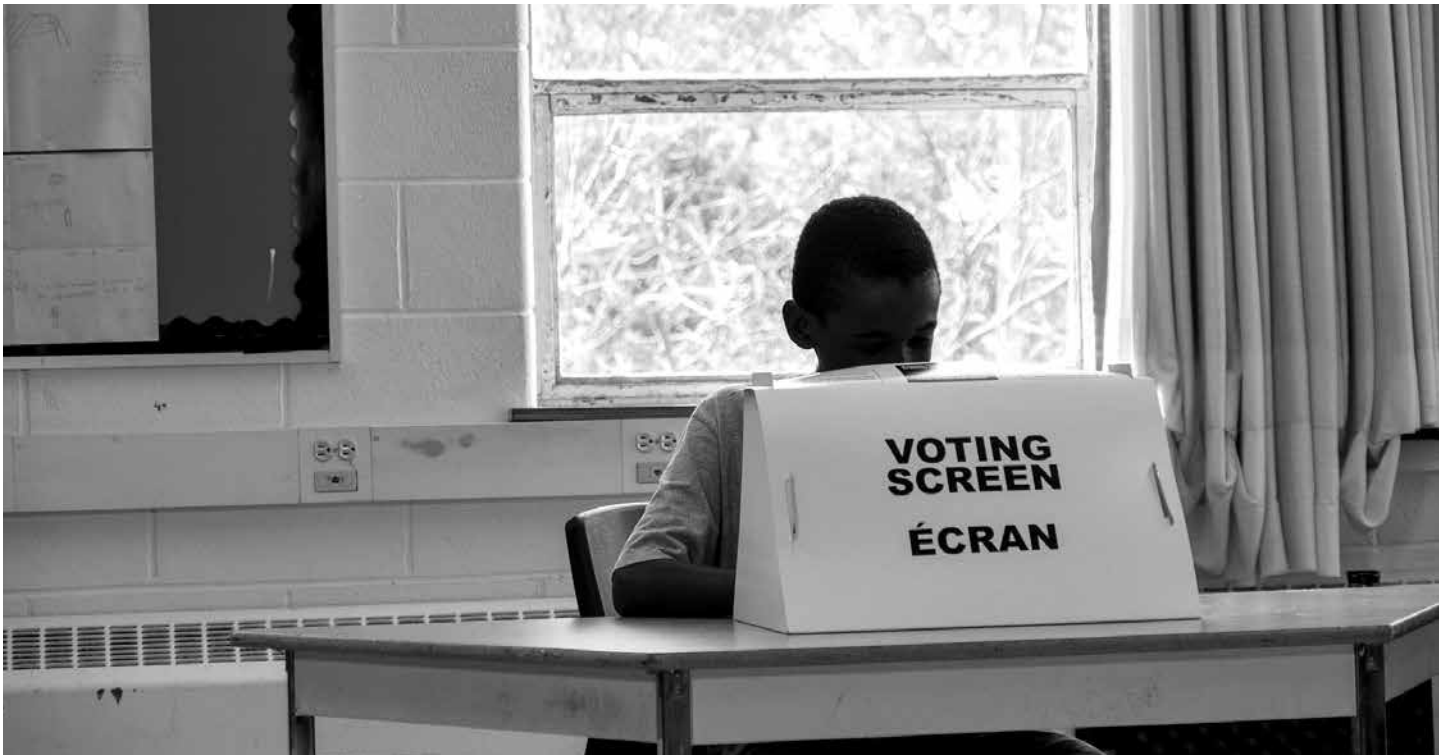Every four years, voters across Ontario decide who will represent their interests and lead their communities by electing the members of their municipal councils and school boards.

The provincial government sets out common rules that all voters and candidates must follow. However, municipalities are responsible for conducting elections to their council and school boards within their jurisdiction. Every municipality has a municipal clerk who is in charge of running the election.

You are eligible to vote in the municipal council election in Ontario if:
• you are a Canadian citizen
• you are aged 18 or older
• you qualify to vote in the municipality*

*You may qualify in one of three ways:
1. You are a *resident elector* if you live in the municipality.
2. You are a *non-resident elector* if you own or rent property in the municipality, but do not live there.
3. You are the spouse of a *non-resident elector*.

There is also a special rule for students who may be living away from home while they attend school. If you are a student and consider your "home" to be the place where you live when you are not attending school (i.e. you plan

on returning there), then you are eligible to vote in both your "home" municipality *and* in the municipality where you currently live while attending school.

You are eligible to vote in the school board election in Ontario if:
• you are a Canadian citizen
• you are aged 18 or older
• you qualify to vote for that particular school board

If you are a *resident elector* in a municipality, you are eligible to vote for a school trustee that represents the municipality or ward where you live.

There are four types of school boards, but you can only vote for one type.
• English-language public school board
• English-language Catholic school board
• French-language public school board
• French-language Catholic school board

Voters are automatically eligible to vote for the English-language public school board unless they take steps to change and become a supporter of a different kind of board. The Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) keeps the provincial record of school support.

If someone wants to change which type of board they vote for, they must contact MPAC. When they contact MPAC, they can change the type of board they vote for in any of the following scenarios:
• to vote for an English-language Catholic school board, they are Roman Catholic and they or their spouse are an English-language Catholic school board supporter;
• to vote for a French-language public school board, they have French-language rights* and they or their spouse are a French-language public school board supporter;
• to vote for a French-language Catholic school board, they are Roman Catholic, they have French-language rights and they or their spouse are a French-language Catholic school board supporter.

*According to the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom*, in Ontario, a French-language rights holder is defined as either someone whose native language is French, someone who has received French-language education in elementary school, or someone whose child has received or is receiving French-language education in elementary or secondary school.

The Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) is responsible for preparing the preliminary list of electors for each municipality. Your municipality receives the preliminary list from MPAC and creates and posts the **voters' list.**

A voter's name must be on the **voters' list** in order to cast a ballot. While a voter's name can be added on voting day, it is helpful to do this in advance. In some municipalities, being on the voters' list ensures they receive a voter information card, which indicates their voting place on voting day and the dates, times and locations of advance polling places. Voters can check and see if they are on the voters' list by contacting their municipality or by visiting the Voter Lookup website (www.voterlookup.ca).

Each municipality is responsible for conducting the election and determining the voting method. Options include online voting, voting by mail, voting by phone, paper ballots or a combination of these methods. Please consult with your municipal clerk's office or local elections office to find out specific information about your municipality's election process.

When a voter arrives at a voting place, they must show identification to prove that they are the person whose name appears on the voters' list. The identification must show their name and address. Photo identification is not required.

The **ballot** lists the names of the candidates running in each race. There is a space beside each candidate's name on the ballot to mark their choice. In **First-Past-the-Post** elections (not ranked ballot elections), voters are permitted to mark their choice for as many candidates as are elected in the race. For example, in a multi-member race where five council members are elected **at-large**, voters can vote for up to five candidates. Alternatively, if only one candidate is being elected in a ward, it is only possible to vote for one candidate. You can only vote for one type of school trustee.

Municipalities have the option of using **ranked ballots** to elect members of council. The City of London is the first municipality in the province to change their voting process, beginning with the 2018 elections.

A ballot is declared invalid by the **deputy returning officer** because it was not properly marked. This is called a **rejected ballot.** For example, the voter selected more than the number of candidates they were allowed to choose or if the ballot was left blank. In the case of municipal elections, one race or section may be declared valid and another may be deemed invalid.

Ontario's Municipal Act allows voters to **decline** their ballot. To decline their ballot, voters must inform the election official that they are declining their right to vote when they receive their ballot. This is a public process and it is done out loud. The election official will mark "declined" on the election documentation and the ballot will not be placed in the ballot box but in an envelope for **declined ballots**.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

What should voters know about voting in municipal and school board elections? How is it different than provincial or federal elections? Why is it important to be an active and engaged citizen?

OVERVIEW

Voting in municipal elections is the way citizens express their choices for who they think is best to represent their needs locally and to lead their community.

In this unit, students review essential information about voting in municipal elections in Ontario. Afterwards, they will practice voting and counting ballots through a mock vote. In the culminating activity, students will demonstrate their knowledge of voting by creating an instructive pamphlet or poster, which can be shared with a parent, guardian or an adult they know, encouraging them to vote.

UNIT 8: THE VOTING PROCESS

LEARNING GOALS

We are learning to:

- explain the importance of being an active and engaged citizen (Concepts of Thinking – Significance);
- understand how to participate in municipal and school board elections (Citizenship Education Framework – Active Citizenship);
- describe the rights and responsibilities associated with citizenship in Canada (Concepts of Thinking – Significance);
- demonstrate effective communication skills to share information and messages about voting using our words and graphics (Global Competencies – Communication).

SUCCESS CRITERIA

I CAN…

- discuss why is it important to be an active and engaged citizen;
- describe when, where and how to vote in municipal and school board elections;
- mark my choice on a ballot correctly;
- explain how and why voting is a responsibility of citizenship;
- use words and images effectively to convey my thoughts about voting and knowledge about the voting process.

CURRICULUM LINKS

	Overall Expectations	*Specific Expectations*
Social Studies	**Grade 5 – B3.** Understanding Context: demonstrate an understanding of the roles and key responsibilities of citizens and of the different levels of government in Canada, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit governments (FOCUS ON: *Significance*)	**Grade 5 – B3.1** describe the major rights and responsibilities associated with citizenship in Canada (e.g., rights: *equal protection under the law, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, the right to vote;* responsibilities: *to respect the rights of others, to participate in the electoral process and political decision making, to improve their communities*) **Grade 5 – B3.5** describe different processes that governments can use to solicit input from the public
Oral Communication	2. use speaking skills and strategies appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes	2.7 use a variety of appropriate visual aids to support or enhance oral presentations
Writing	2. draft and revise their writing, using a variety of informational, literary, and graphic forms and stylistic elements appropriate for the purpose and audience 3. use editing, proofreading, and publishing skills and strategies, and knowledge of language conventions, to correct errors, refine expression, and present their work effectively	2.3 use some vivid and/or figurative language and innovative expressions to add interest 3.8 produce pieces of published work to meet identified criteria based on the expectations related to content, organization, style, use of conventions, and use of presentation strategies
Media Literacy	3. create a variety of media texts for different purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions, and techniques	3.1 describe in detail the topic, purpose, and audience for media texts they plan to create

MINDS ON

1. Explain to students that the purpose of the Student Vote program is to give students a chance to practice voting so that they will be more prepared to vote in the future. The Student Vote results are released publicly and through the news media. This allows young people to have a voice in the election and have their perspectives shared. Watch the 'Student Vote Ontario 2018' video (3:16 min) with your class to give students a preview.

2. Through a whole class discussion, answer the following questions:
- What skills do you practice regularly? (e.g., sports, music, languages)
- Is it important for students to practice voting? Why or why not?
- Why should young people have the opportunity to share their views and opinions?
- Is voting in elections important? Why or why not?

ACTION

1. Using the accompanying slide deck, discover some of the key aspects of the voting in Ontario municipal elections.
- What does it mean to vote by secret ballot?
- Who is able to vote in municipal elections?
- Who organizes municipal elections in Ontario?
- What is the voters' list?
- Where do I vote?
- How do I mark my ballot?
- How do municipal elections differ from provincial or federal elections?

2. Have students practice voting by holding a mock vote with your class. You can use the samples provided in Activity 8.1 or create your own ballots. You could also use an online application or software program. It is important to demonstrate that there are multiple races and at times, different rules about the number of candidates you can choose.

3. Show students how to fill out a sample ballot correctly. Students can use a checkmark, X, or any other mark as long as it clearly indicates their choice(s). Remind students that they must follow the rules for each race – if only two choices are permitted, you cannot vote for three candidates.

4. Distribute the ballots and invite each student to go behind the voting screen one at a time to mark their choice. Afterwards, ask them to re-fold their ballot to ensure privacy and place it in the ballot box.

5. Review the ballot terms 'accepted' and 'rejected'.
- Accepted: The voter's choice is clear and marked according to the rules.
- Rejected: The voter's choice was not clear or more options were selected than permitted, or the ballot was left blank.

6. Divide students into small groups and ask them to review and count the ballots from the mock vote. One person should show the ballot to the rest of the group and as a group they should decide whether the ballot or ballot section would be deemed 'accepted' or 'rejected'. One person should be selected to tally the votes.

7. Add up the results from each group and announce the overall results.

8. Have a closing discussion and answer any remaining questions about the voting process.
- Do you think voting is easy?
- Do you feel ready to vote in the Student Vote election? Why or why not?
- What other questions do you have about voting?

CONSOLIDATION

Voting Poster

Have students demonstrate their knowledge by creating a poster or pamphlet about how to vote or to promote voting in the municipal elections. It could be designed for a parent, guardian, or an adult they know. This poster can be done informally in a notebook, or as a larger assessment opportunity.

Ideas for possible content:

- Lists the qualifications for eligible voters in municipal elections
- The different races on the ballot
- Voting opportunities – the days and times (in advance and on election day)
- Reasons for voting

Co-create criteria with your class. Sample criteria below.

- Headings are meaningful and appropriate
- Graphics or symbols are used to help explain the content
- The tagline and/or graphics are used to capture interest
- Maps and charts are presented to help the intended audience

TIPS FOR TEACHERS
- Be aware of cultural responsive practices when discussing voting with students. Open and non-judgmental discussions about reasons why people do or do not vote will help foster comfort during class talks.

UNIT 8: THE VOTING PROCESS

ASSESSMENT

Type of Assessment	Unit Area	Guiding Questions for Teachers
FOR LEARNING	MINDS ON	Can students describe the benefits to voting and consequences that come from not voting?
AS LEARNING	ACTION	Can students explain who is qualified to vote? Are students accurately casting a ballot? Can students evaluate an accepted ballot and tally the votes?
OF LEARNING	CONSOLIDATION	Are students choosing an appropriate audience for their poster? Do posters demonstrate important details about the municipal elections and why people should vote?

LEARNING FOR ALL

Individual Education Plans	**Modifications**
	• Provide students with terms and definitions in advance.
	• Use CIVIX video resources on voting to help students develop prior knowledge before class discussions and activities.
	
	Enrichment
	• Provide the opportunity for alternative research:
	  -*Action* segment: Research the different election worker roles and/or ways the voting process has evolved to be more accessible.
	  -*Consolidation* segment: Research alternative ways Indigenous groups in Canada vote, current and historical.

English Language Learners	• Provide students with terms and definitions in advance. • Use additional CIVIX video resources on voting to help students develop prior knowledge before class discussions and activities.
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	• Remind students that new immigrants, adults who have difficulty reading, English Language Learners, persons who are homeless, newly arrived refugees, and other specific groups may face challenges understanding or accessing the election system. Keep the focus on ideas to increase access and the benefits our society gets from hearing different voices, not only on the disadvantages these groups face. **Indigenous Focus** • Remind students that enfranchisement of Indigenous Peoples happened late in Canadian history. Despite this challenge, Indigenous groups have incredibly rich histories of voting in different ways in their communities.
Accessibility & Learning Space	• Ensure students can access ballot templates (alternative colours in printing, electronic copies). • Provide mobility accommodations when casting and counting ballots.