

June, 2004

A federal election has just been called and Canadians will have the opportunity to make choices. Will the voters flock to the urns to cast their ballots or will the electorate simply yawn in disgust or in cynical resignation because after all the parties and politicians are all the same, so who cares, why get upset, why bother to participate?

Young people in particular need to be educated and energized about the importance of elections and their essential role in the development of just policies and laws for the well being of free societies. This curriculum supplement tries to help teachers to instruct students about the importance of political democracy and the responsibility of citizens to be informed and to participate actively in the political process.

The content of this supplement includes the basic ideas and issues that are fundamental to democratic government, to democratic practices, and to democratic citizenship. The learning expectations include those outlined below. The focus will be on parliamentary democracy and governance, key concepts about Parliament, and the sources and research techniques useful for the study of parliament and citizenship in Canadian society. The learning expectations flow from curriculum documents found in Canadian school systems.

With Respect to Overall Expectations: Students should be able to

- demonstrate an ability to research questions and issues of civic importance, and to think critically and creatively about these issues
- demonstrate a knowledge of different types of individual citizen participation and also organized community involvement in organized political parties and election strategies
- demonstrate an understanding of the reasons for democratic decision-making and the principles underlying them
 - examine the beliefs and values underlying democratic citizenship, and explain how these beliefs and values guide citizens' actions
 - articulate clearly their personal sense of civic identity and purpose, and understand the diversity of beliefs and values of other individuals and groups in Canadian society
 - demonstrate an understanding of the challenges of governing societies in which diverse value systems, mul-

multiple perspectives, and differing civic purposes coexist

- demonstrate a working knowledge of the Canadian parliamentary system of government

With Respect to Specific Expectations: Students should be able to:

- demonstrate an ability to organize information effectively (e.g., using summaries, notes, timelines, charts, visual organizers, maps, comparison organizers)
- communicate their own beliefs, points of view, and informed judgments, and effectively use appropriate discussion skills
- research and report on the elements of democratic decision-making (e.g., rights and responsibilities of citizens, rule of law, parliamentary system, majority rule)
- examine and describe the roles played by elected representatives and interest groups in the political process (e.g., lobbying)
- describe fundamental beliefs and values associated with democratic citizenship (e.g., rule of law, human dignity, freedom of worship, respect for rights of others, work for common good, sense of responsibility for others, freedom of expression)
- articulate and clarify their personal beliefs and values concerning democratic citizenship, and determine the influence of significant factors on their sense of civic purpose
- compare the varied beliefs, values, and points of view of Canadian citizens on issues of public interest
- describe ways in which citizens can participate in public affairs, especially elections

ASSIGNMENTS TO CONSIDER

These objectives can be achieved in a variety of ways. As much as possible the learning activities should be interactive, tending to class discussions, calling for proper research, and involving the courteous expression of well-informed opinions. A two-week unit on the topic of Parliamentary elections would be sufficient to explore the most important components. These are some of the assignments that could be considered for this purpose.

1. The class could create a large chart on which the students place party positions on the various issues. Students complete the chart by concisely entering information summarizing the party position on the various issues. In a separate column the students could note whether the issue is covered by the press. (see details of issues on the last page of this sup-

plement)

2. Another assignment would consist of tracking the local and national media coverage of the

election in general: how party platforms are explained; how the party leaders' day went; debates between the leaders; debates between the local candidates; human interest stories; evidence of any bias on the part of the campaign reporter or the national news reporter; what would constitute bias and what would be the evidence.

3. Students (depending on their age) could be asked to join a campaign of their choice by volunteering to work at the campaign headquarters or to perform other tasks as assigned by the campaign manager or other responsible campaign staff: stuffing envelopes; making phone calls; erecting lawn signs; driving people to meetings; door to door canvassing; serving coffee; doing research.

The students would then write a report on their experiences including some of the following thoughts: diary/journal of events as they occur; reaction of the people involved at the headquarters to major events; excitement of political campaigns; tough edge of political life; political strategies learned; interview with paid staff and volunteers to find out what motivates them - power? service? wishing to make a difference? conviction? belief in democracy? What is it that gives these people the political itch?

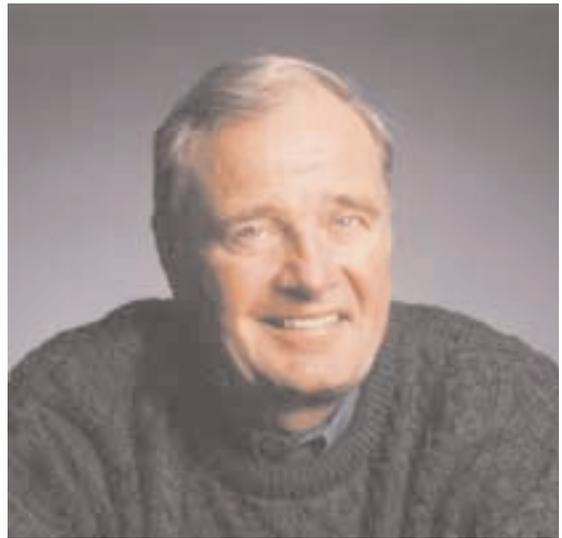
4. Another assignment could consist of learning the major terms associated with a political campaign, so that the students have a better understanding of the terminology when watching television news programs, listening to radio commentary or reading newspaper reports on the campaign. Have the students research the following terms (via internet and newspapers) and define them by using an illustrative example such as:

Riding (also seat) *an area designated as an electoral district; a geographic unit whose qualified citizen population has the right to vote in a federal election and sends the winning candidate to take his/her seat in the House of Commons, the elected lower chamber of Parliament.*

Chief electoral officer	deputy returning officer
poll clerks	scrutineer
attack ads	wedge issues
plurality	first past the post
right wing	left wing
moderate	blog
backbenchers	proportional representation

5. Have the students design their own political ad to be run in class as part of a mock election. It can be strictly audio (for radio) or a video (for television). Similarly, the class could produce a newspaper ad intended to persuade voters to vote for their party.

6. Compare the media coverage. Consider which media is most objective, which is most biased and



Current Prime Minister Paul Martin is hoping to keep his job in the upcoming federal election. Recent polls say that its going to be a tight race between the incumbent Liberals and the new Conservatives.

explain why that is so. How would you correct the bias present in the media coverage? Would you pass laws to prevent that kind of bias?

7. a) Research the nature and purpose of political polling/survey of voter leanings. b) How do polls impact on political campaigns? c) Should polling be prohibited in the last week of a campaign? Why or why not?

8. Should there be spending limits on the amount of money that an individual candidate can spend on an election campaign? What about a political party as a whole?

9. A week before the election the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in favour of a government appeal of the law passed in 2000 limiting third party spending during federal elections. Find out what is meant by "third parties" in this legislation. Why shouldn't a private group have the same privilege as the organized political parties in getting their viewpoints in front of people? Should organized political parties enjoy a total monopoly of communicating with the electorate during election campaigns? Why or why not? (for greater discussion of the issue see page 4 editorial "Supreme Injustice" from the June edition of *The Interim*.)

10. Have students choose five cartoons over a period of two weeks. Let them analyze the cartoons with the following questions in mind:

a) who are the people portrayed in the cartoon?

- b) identify the issue(s) being presented.
- c) what is the point being made by the cartoonist?
- d) what makes the cartoon effective or ineffective?
- e) evaluate the cartoon from your own point of view.

11. Newspapers cover election campaigns in a variety of ways. They print ads. They report on campaign events. They write editorials toward the end of the campaigns in which they lay out the principal issues and why they are giving their editorial endorsement to a particular party. Keep a portfolio of such editorials. Note their date of publication. Answer the following questions on the editorials:

- a) When did the editorial appear relative to the campaign calendar - early, middle, or late?
- b) Check that newspaper's support or endorsement in previous elections. Was it different from 2004?
- c) Summarize the basic arguments presented in the editorial justifying their choice of parties.
- d) Does the editorial convey facts, issues and actual evidence or is it mere preference for a particular philosophy?

12. Do the same with respect to television coverage. Does the reporter report the facts or does the reporter convey a preference judging from his/her choice of material and emphasis given to particular issues or problems encountered by candidates or party leaders?

13. How can people become truly informed about an election and the issues involved? What might be the most reliable means? newspapers? internet? television? radio? friends? neighbours? all-candidates meetings?

14. During an election a party may make many political promises. Have students create a chart with each party's promises listed and with a projected cost beside each one. How are costs projected? How can we know whether they have been kept? Why do so many voters forgive the government when it fails to keep its promises?

15. Party leaders carry a lot of the burden and the promise for a party. What makes the leader believable or credible? Is it how they speak? How they dress? How they debate? How they answer questions? How they come across as ordinary human beings? What qualities do you value in a leader?

16. Most parties shy away from social issues, preferring to tackle only economic problems or general health issues. Why is this so? Should social issues not be part of the public debate in elections? What are key social, moral issues of concern to many voters? (see the editorial in the June edition of *The Interim*, page 4, "Vote Pro-life".)

17. Specifically with respect to life issues do the parties have an official policy? Are they open to a serious discussion/debate of life issues (e.g. abortion, stem cell research, same-sex unions, euthanasia, abortifacient drugs [RU-486], family taxation, pornography)?

18. Conduct a mock election in the school. The student body could participate by

classes or divide up into political groups representing a cross-section of classrooms. Each group develops its own platform for its ideal political party. Then the "parties" wage a campaign and it culminates in a mock election with all the officialdom, structure and rules that one would find at the federal level.

19. Organize an all-candidates meeting at the school. Candidates usually look forward to these kinds of opportunities to reach youthful voters. Make sure that the questions are fair, wide-ranging, and prepared ahead of time. Choose responsible student leaders or members of the student council to actually run the meeting. Time the different parts of the meeting. Allow only qualified student-voters to participate. Ensure that each candidate has an equal opportunity to present his/her platform and to answer questions. Invite the local press to be in attendance. The event informs voters, energizes candidates and gains good publicity for the school.

Political Definitions

Criticism of Canada's parliamentary system of government focuses on the increasing concentration of real power in the Prime Minister, the Cabinet and in the unelected bureaucrats that advise them. The number of people who surround the prime minister, control access to him and carry out his bidding has augmented over the years, but especially in the last four decades. Not surprisingly this has happened in tandem with the growth of government itself and its influence over every aspect of social and economic life.

Who are these people? What is the Prime Minister's Office (PMO)? What does it do? Backbench bellyaching has also increased recently. This is a natural reaction of MP's who do not get respect from the Cabinet and the PMO. For an interesting recent appraisal of this phenomenon go to the website that follows this paragraph. It deals with the Jean Chretien style of governing and his use of the PMO.

<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/PrinterFriendly.cfm?Params=M1ARTM0011780>

To understand our political system we list a glossary of terms that describe some aspect of it.

Act - A law made by Parliament or a provincial legislature. The process of making an Act of Parliament begins with the introduction of a proposed Act, or bill, in one of the two houses of Parliament (the Senate or the House of Commons). A bill becomes an Act if it is passed (approved) by both houses and receives royal assent (signature of the Governor General).

Bill - A proposed law submitted to Parliament for its approval. It may originate either with the Government, with a private Member or from a Committee, and may relate either to public or private interests. Bills may be first introduced in either the Senate or the House of Commons, but money bills must be introduced in the

House of Commons by a Minister (a member of the Privy Council).

Cabinet - The executive arm of government. Cabinet Ministers are chosen by the Prime Minister. They serve at the pleasure of the Prime Minister.

Caucus - Weekly meeting of each party's members of Parliament. It is intended to air differences and problems in private rather than in public. In the case of the governing party, the caucus is one of the few forums that backbenchers have at their disposal for bringing concerns to the attention of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet.

Governor (General) in Council (GIC): the Governor General of Canada acting by and with the advice and consent of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada (i.e. Cabinet).

Legislation - Written laws made by Parliament or a provincial legislature (Acts) or by a person or body that has law-making authority, usually delegated by Parliament or a legislature and exercised by making regulations or other delegated legislation.

Order in Council (OIC): a legal instrument made by the Governor in Council pursuant to a statutory authority or, less frequently, the royal prerogative. All orders in council are made on the recommendation of the responsible Minister of the Crown and take legal effect only when signed by the Governor General. The instrument serves notice of decision taken by the executive arm of government. For example, an Order in Council accompanies all regulations. In recent decades this has been a method used more frequently by the PMO, drawing more criticism from both the opposition parties and government backbenchers.

PMO (Prime Minister's Office): the prime minister and his trusted, un-elected aides and advisors. This group has grown in power and influence in the past few decades.

Regulation - A law made by a person or body that has been granted (delegated) law-making authority. Used both to indicate a specific type of delegated legislation as well as to refer generically to all forms of delegated legislation. For the purposes of the Regulatory Policy, we rely on the Department of Justice's determination that an item will receive an SOR number to indicate that it is a regulation. More broadly, regulation may refer to all government intervention in the lives of citizens.

Royal Assent - The approval, by a representative of the Crown, of a bill passed by the House and the Senate, making it into an Act of Parliament. Royal Assent is accorded in the Senate Chamber, usually by a deputy of the Governor General in the presence of Members of the House and Senate.

Statute - Another word for an Act of Parliament or some other piece of legislation.

<http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/oic-ddc/about.asp?lang=EN>

<http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/raoics->

[srdc/default.asp?Language=E&Page=glossary](http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/srdc/default.asp?Language=E&Page=glossary)

Canadian Government

Canada is a parliamentary democracy with a monarch as titular Head of State. This means that in a ceremonial sense the Queen, Elizabeth II is the reigning monarch, but she rules through her representative in Canada, the Governor General. Another way of phrasing it is that she reigns but does not rule.

The actual ruler is a Prime Minister who functions as her chief minister and whose advice she and her representative (the Governor General) must accept according to long established parliamentary traditions.

This system is duplicated at the provincial level with Lieutenant Governors and Premiers respectively.

The national Prime Minister (and each provincial Premier) governs through a Cabinet, a group of elected officials who head up various departments of government like defence, health & welfare, justice, transport, finance, etc.

The Prime Minister is the leader of the political party that obtains the majority of the parliamentary seats or ridings as a result of a national election. The leader of that winning party is invited to form a "government", that is, to choose a Cabinet to run the affairs of state and to be held responsible by the House Of Commons, all of whose members must stand for election in order to serve in that chamber.

There are several political parties competing for the privilege of governing. The party that wins the greatest number of seats gets to form that government. A change in government occurs either as a result of a national election or as the result of a vote of confidence in the House of Commons.

At election time, when the party opposed to the Prime Minister and his party in office (known as the governing party) gets the majority of seats in the House of Commons or the legislature, the Prime Minister and Cabinet must resign. The new Prime Minister is the leader of the winning part and he chooses the other Ministers who make up the Cabinet.

If there is no clear majority following an election there are two choices possible: the original Cabinet can resign and the leader of the largest opposition party can be asked to form another Cabinet that would enjoy the confidence of the majority of the members of the House of Commons. Or, the original Cabinet can stay in office and meet the newly elected House hoping to enjoy its confidence.

In either scenario it is possible to have a vote of confidence that is not successful, in which case the "government" is deemed to have been defeated. A premature election can result in such circumstances.

The maximum number of years a Member of Parliament or member of a provincial legislature can be

elected is 5 years. Elections do not have to be every five years. In fact the Prime Minister can ask for a fresh election at any time, although if the public feels that an election is not necessary they could end up punishing that Prime Minister and his party at the polls.

Members of the Cabinet have no fixed “term”. Instead every Cabinet minister serves at the pleasure of the Prime Minister and all of them must be or become members of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada.

The Cabinet has sole power to prepare and introduce bills providing for the expenditure of public money or imposing taxes on the population.

If a cabinet Minister does not agree with a policy or action of the Government they must either resign or accept it and defend the policy. This is known as the principle of “cabinet solidarity”.

<http://canada.gc.ca/>

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/library/idb/forsey/to-c-e.asp>

<http://dsp-psd.communication.gc.ca/Reference/queens-e.html>

<http://www.library.ubc.ca/poli/cpwebg.html>

Canada’s Parliamentary System

outlined in chart form

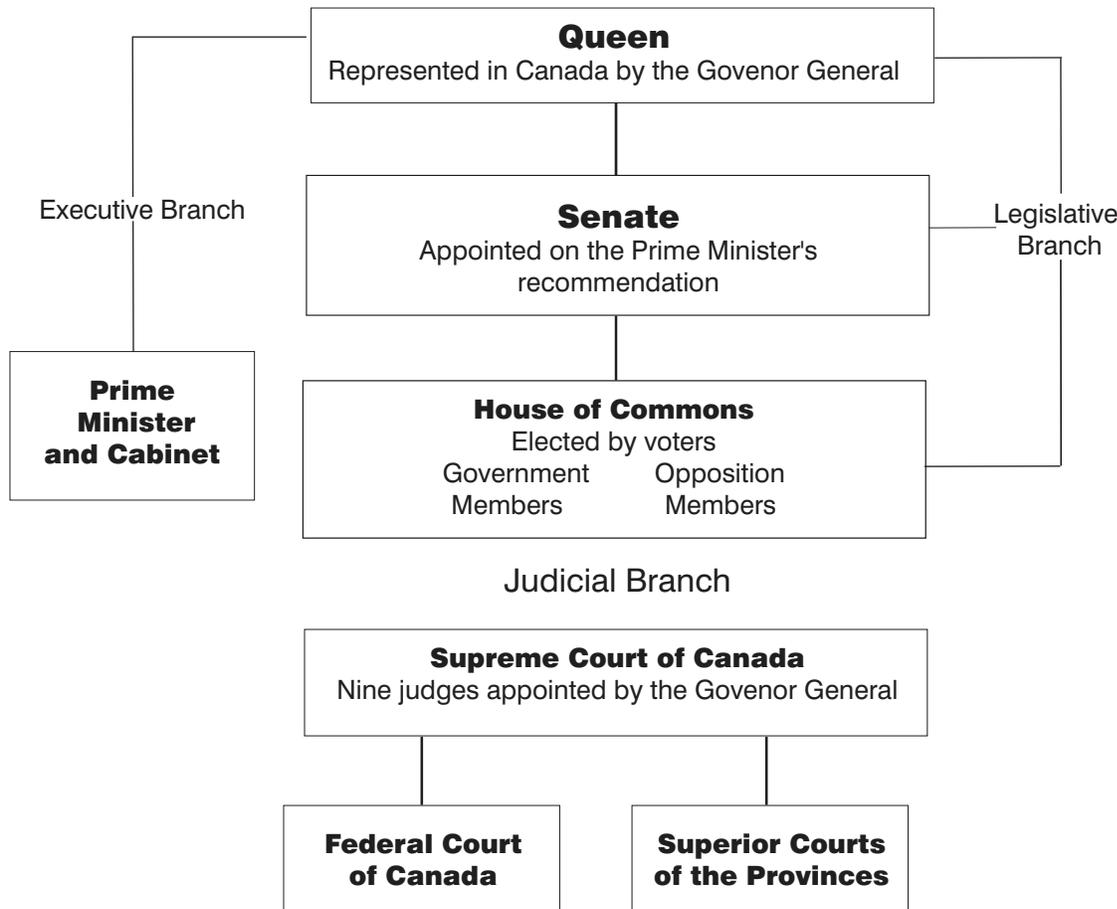
Note that there are three branches to government, the executive, the legislative and the judicial.

The executive consists of the Prime Minister and his Cabinet and the Prime Minister’s Office. This branch carries out and supervises the implementation of the laws enacted. The Cabinet ministers head the various departments with their respective civil service bureaucracy. Deputy ministers are civil servants and are not elected officials.

The legislative branch has tow houses or chambers. One of them is the House of Commons whose members are elected by the people in various ridings or designated representative districts from across the country based on population and according to allotment by province. There are 308 such seats/ridings.

The other part of the legislative branch is the Senate, having 104 members appointed by the Governor General upon the recommendation of the Prime Minister. These Senators are not elected. The provinces and regions are represented in this upper house or upper chamber according to a formula.

The third branch is the judicial branch, consisting of the Supreme Court of Canada and corresponding provincial Superior Courts. It is their responsibility to interpret the constitutionality of laws passed by the legislative branch in light of the Charter of



Rights and Freedoms passed in 1982.

The **Speaker of the House of Commons** is elected by secret ballot by the House itself after each general election. The Speaker is its presiding officer, decides all questions of procedure and order, controls the House of Commons staff, and is expected to be impartial in his decisions.

A “**sitting**” of the House usually lasts a day; a “**session**” lasts for months, or even years, though there must be at least one sitting per year. Bills introduced but not passed in one session dies on the order paper and must be reintroduced in the next session. The bill does not necessarily have to go through the whole process the second time around.

http://www.parl.gc.ca/Information/library/faq/faq.asp?cat=parl_proc&lang=E&Sect=parl_proc_06#6

How a Bill becomes a Law

1. Passage through the first House (sometimes the Senate, usually the House of Commons)

The process in each Chamber is similar:

- a) First reading (the bill proposing a law is received, printed and circulated)
- b) Second reading (the principle of the bill is debated: is the bill good policy?)

It is during the committee stage that the bill gets close scrutiny from the members of the parliamentary committee in charge of vetting the bill. If a bill is rejected at this stage it dies. If the committee allows it to go forward then it proceeds to the next stage. The committee often holds public meetings to obtain input from the general public and from experts in a particular field. Interest groups may also present briefs before these parliamentary committees. This is supposed to be one of the principal means by which ordinary MP's have real impact on the work of Parliament.

Step one: members of the public appear as witnesses before a committee

Step two: committee members study the bill, clause by clause

Step three: the committee adopts a report on the bill, recommending that it be accepted as is, or with amendments, or that it not be proceeded with further

Report stage (motions to amend specific clauses of the bill are considered by the whole House)

- c) Third reading (final approval of the bill)

2. Passage through the second House

3. Royal Assent by the Governor General makes the bill law

PRACTICAL LESSON

Teachers can utilize a range of classroom and research activities to accomplish the ambitious learning objectives. One interesting activity is to have students investigate a variety of political systems or to concentrate on one particular hybrid called proportional representation (PR) and to look at what the impact might be in Canada if that system were applied to the Canadian scene. A detailed model lesson can be found at

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/education/lesson/lesson.asp?lang=E&tife=13&lpl=276>

A shorter, modified version appears below.

1. Provide students with access to a computer. Have students in groups of 4 choose from a list of countries (on different continents, e.g. France, Germany, Italy, etc.) that do have proportional representation. Let the students search the web, find resources and prepare a presentation (on poster paper) that includes:

- Name of country, population, flag, map location, Gross Domestic Product, size
- Parliamentary system
 - Number of seats
 - Structure, division
 - Head of state
 - Minority/regional representation (if a federal system)
- Specific version of PR in the chosen country
- Pros and cons of their system

Compare and contrast that PR system to the Canadian parliamentary system (in group's opinion, choose which system is superior and justify their choice)

2. As a class, review the various systems of PR and look at some suggested PR formulas for Canada and decide upon a PR formula that would work best in Canada.

- This decision-making activity may take the form of a cabinet/caucus/committee meeting chaired by the Prime Minister (teacher or student designate) with the goal of choosing the best system.
- An extra activity for advanced classes could be to have students assume the roles of stakeholders (province, gender, race/minority, language, region, etc.) to ensure that the new system of PR that is chosen is truly representational of Canada's diverse population, regions and official languages.

3. Once a system of PR has been decided upon, students, in collaborative groups, apply this system to past Federal elections.

- a) Each group is responsible for a specific election (e.g. 1911, 1917, 1935, 1957, 1968, 1993, 1997, 2000) and must critically examine how a PR system would have changed election results.

b) On a chart students enter the correct info under each of these headings.

- Election Year: • Government prior to election: • Official opposition prior to election: • PM prior to election: • Opposition Leader prior to election:

c) On a separate chart show what happens to the election results when the principles of proportional representation are adopted. Show the before and after seat results, seat gain or loss by each party, and the nature of the government that would be formed (minority or majority). In each case also include the percentage of the popular vote that each party garnered.

d) As a class, examine the election results and graph the differences between the actual elections and the changes under PR.

4. As an evaluation, students then write an evaluative piece on: "Is it time for change?" The teacher can help the process by making reference to more high level critical thinking expected in this reflection such as:

- Pros and cons of both systems • Implications for Canadian democracy • Winners and losers (parties, regions, organized groups) • Implications for equality (religion, linguistic groups, racial minorities, etc.) • laws, judicial reforms • Sources of opposition to the possible change

The Political Report Card

Most voters evaluate their candidates to arrive at a final choice. They weigh the pros and cons of the candidates, their positions, and the main platform of their party. The party leader is often a big factor as well. Voters mentally grade the candidates before they finally vote for one of them. Make up a model report card that could be used by a voter. How would you grade the candidate in issuing a report card? It might be a neat way to compare the candidates and it might help a voter to make up their mind. Some organizations actually use such report cards to let their own supporters know the voting record or positions of the candidates asking for their vote. (go to www.LifeSite.net for a good example of a report card delving into candidates' views on life issues) Look at the report card and answer these questions.

1. Are such electoral aids useful?
2. Are such cards fair to the candidates?
3. What impact could such cards have on the electorate?

Why Citizens Don't Vote

One of the greatest weaknesses of modern democracies is that the citizens do not participate in the political system to the degree that they should. It appears that the system involves only a small committed minority of the citizenry. Some critics point to this fact as a reason for condemning representative democracy as an empty shell. Others claim that this is a natural state of affairs

when people have little real say in the affairs of the land.

Increasingly in many modern democracies fewer and fewer people are bothering to vote. For example in the last three Canadian federal elections the voter turnout has declined each time, 75% in 1993, 66% in 1997, and 62% in 2000. What accounts for this decline? Is this trend dangerous for Canadian democracy? What could be done to reverse it? How can voters be encouraged to exercise their vote?

For a current article on this general topic of voter turn-off see the page A9 article in the May 25 issue of the *Toronto Star*. In that article some of the most important reasons why some Canadians don't vote include: lack of interest (apathy, meaningless to vote, a foregone conclusion, too confusing); negativity toward politicians and politics (no difference in parties, candidates, lack of information); lack of time, pressure of work (too busy, /work/family, illness, don't know polling location).

Questions

1. How does one convince these people to go vote?
2. Write a letter to the editor decrying this negative, apathetic approach.
3. How serious a problem is this state of affairs for the well being of our democracy?
4. Should legislation be passed making voting compulsory, as in Australia?

Editorial from The Interim newspaper, June, 2004.

Vote Pro-Life!

There is something deeply wrong with a country when remedying a lack of democracy becomes a campaign promise. The so-called "democratic deficit" is not new: Canadians have silently endured it for many years. How ironic that Canada, one of the earliest examples of responsible government, should have squandered so much of its heritage of freedom. Imperceptibly, democratic participation has lapsed into apathy. Canadians ceased demanding good government and settled for tolerable care-taking. Unfortunately, a congenial lassitude on the part of the electorate has invited the worst kind of political operatives: ambition and evil soon fill the vacuum created by sloth and indifference.

Yet, in Canada, it seems that the political will needed to effect change emerges only in the aftermath of scandal. But, as outrage cools to disgust, an increasing number of Canadians are choosing simply to opt out of the political process, leaving the fate of the country in the hands of partisans voting along party or geographical lines.

But for those concerned about the future of Canada,

such disengagement is impossible. The last year has seen the passage of some of the most radical legislation ever proposed in the House of Commons. Just as the right to life has been brutally dispatched by those in power, so too freedoms of expression and free association are now being restricted by laws unprecedented in our history. The time for action is now. It is imperative that pro-life Canadians vote in the upcoming election, and that they vote for defenders of life in all parties. Apathy is a luxury that concerned Canadians do not have. Despite draconian legislation and radical Supreme Court decisions, power remains with the people. New legislation can be proposed, the notwithstanding clause can be invoked: Canadians can still take back their country. The choice, of course, is ours. Without our prayers and hard work now, there will be no pro-life victories on June 28th. Without our commitment of time and, yes, money, there will be no chance to save Canada from the abyss of the Culture of Death. Vote! Vote for Life! And, most of all, pray!

the books doesn't really matter, many constituents are weary of politics. Period.

Chief Electoral Officer Jean-Pierre Kingsley has predicted a low turnout, suggesting the June 28 vote may be the most poorly intended in history. It's disturbing more voters than ever may give up their democratic right despite a government battling one of the biggest scandals in decades. Or maybe it's because of it.

Cynicism, after all, is at an all-time high. The McGuinty government's pile of broken promises and the Chretien government's sponsorship scandal can take much of the blame for that. Giving up on politicians would be easy. And some voters may think they're sending a message by not voting in this ill-timed federal election, which falls on the last day of school as Canadians prepare for cottages and camping trips. But this is the time to vote. This is the time to take democracy seriously. This is the time to stare politicians in the eye and say: You must do better. So, too, must voters.

It's no longer appropriate to vote traditionally; picking the party your parents voted for or choosing a candidate based on political stripes. Those stripes are changing all the time. Right has moved left; left has moved right. And, more than ever, political promises are made to be broken.

It's time to pay attention. Voters are the only ones who can bring good government. To do so, they must demand details from their candidates. Don't write them off. Challenge them. Force them to prove why their platforms will work and how.

This is no time to give up on democracy. It's time to remind our politicians who really runs the country.

Questions

1. What is the chief concern of the editorial writer?
2. What evidence is there for "sloth and indifference" on the part of the Canadian electorate?
3. What would result if Canadians en masse opt out of the political process?
4. What are the anti-life measures that the editorial writer refers to? How serious are these developments?
5. "Despite draconian legislation and radical Supreme Court decisions, power remains with the people". How is this a reassuring statement?
6. What is the appeal made by the editor to the electorate?
7. Compare and contrast this editorial with the one that appears below. What concerns do the editorials share in common? What advice do they give that is common to both? In what important way do the editorials differ? Which would speak more to your own concerns about the future of Canada?

An editorial from the Markham Economist & Sun, Thursday May 27, 2004

Time to remind politicians who really runs country

It's tempting. Given the current state of politics in Ontario, some longtime voters may be thinking of skipping this election. And, at first glance, who can blame them? Will their votes really make a difference? And if the party they vote for wins, will it actually live up to the promises that lured that vote?

After the disastrous Ontario election, whether it was the Liberals breaking promises or the Tories lying about

Questions

1. According to the editorial writer what might tempt some voters to sit out this election?
2. Would the voters be justified?
3. What argument does the editor make in favour of voter involvement/
4. Does the advice make sense/
5. How should the voter participate?
6. Find out what the editor means by "Those stripes are changing all the time. Right has moved left; left has moved right."
7. Who really does run the country?
8. Investigate the editorial stance of your local community paper and compare its advice, if any, to that of this community paper.

The Issues in the June 2004 Election

The media presents a number of issues to voters. Many are very specific and deserve attention and careful analy-

sis. Prime Minister Paul Martin has claimed that this election is about the kind of Canada that we want. What underlying philosophy of human nature should we promote? What is the proper role of government in people's lives? What personal responsibility do people have for their own actions, decisions?

Perhaps the stakes in this election are much higher than the Prime Minister realizes. The country is at a crossroads – the election is about choosing between two overarching philosophies: Should individuals be free to choose and be responsible for their own actions, or should these liberties be the role of government?

Traditionally government power and authority increase during conflict and economic pain. And when the conflict or crisis ends, government power never recedes to its original position. What happens is that the role of government simply advances with each new conflict or crisis as the populace become accustomed to the new powers.

In truth there has not been a major crisis in Canada since the Great Depression of the 1930's (unless one wants to put the ongoing constitutional/separation wrangles in this category) so what accounts for this willing surrender of freedoms and responsibilities to ever expanding governments, whether federal, provincial or municipal?

What is it about a political philosophy that argues that individual behaviour, choice, and freedom should be the

Continued at right



Stephen Harper is running for the newly formed Conservative Party, which was formed as a result of the merging of the Progressive Conservatives and the Reform/Alliance parties.



role of government? Is it because government is wiser than the individual? Is it because the individual must be protected from himself? Is it because if one were empowered to make decisions for himself and his loved ones, the government would play a lesser role? What is it?

Questions ?

1. What is the point made in this brief article?
2. Is there a basis for thinking that Canadians have increasingly surrendered their freedoms to governments

The Issues: Real and Imagined?

Construct a chart featuring the issues listed below. On your chart create columns for each political party. Indicate beside each issue the party's stand.

For example

Issue	Liberals	Conservatives	NDP	Bloc
Immigration policy				

Some Issues

national security/defence expenditures;
national unity;
health care;
education and training; taxation policies;
abortion and human rights;
regional parity;

native land claims;
relations with the United States;
political reform/democratic deficit;
Kyoto Treaty; Homosexual "marriage"; Gas
Tax/municipalities/Viability of cities;

Registered Life Savings Plan;
system of judicial appointments;
integrity in government; external affairs;
research and biotechnology;
govt.competence/expertise;
federal/provincial relations

1. Which issues are the same across the country?
2. Which issues are particular to specific regions or even specific provinces?
3. Are there issues that cross political stripes/parties? Why?
4. Rank the issues in order of importance to you on a

range of 1 - 10, with a 1 being extremely important and a 10 being not very important at all.

5. Compare your ranking of the issues with that of newspapers as revealed in their coverage and editorials.
6. Compare your classmates overall ranking of the

issues to the media's. Are there any outstanding differences? Why or why not?

7. How can ethical considerations be made part of the political process and voter responsibility?

A Real Issue from the Pro-life Point of View: CLC Voters, Guide 2004

Abortion

We live with a terrible reality in Canada. Unlike any other modern democracy, there is no law regulating abortions at any stage of pregnancy. A pregnant woman can get an abortion at any time, for any reason, at any stage of pregnancy.

For all 9 months, indeed at any time, even during childbirth, the unborn child has no rights in criminal law. The Supreme Court of Canada has consistently ruled that Parliament must act for the unborn to have any rights. For example in its 1988 Morgentaler decision the Supreme Court said: **If Parliament considers it appropriate to protect a child during the birth process from criminally negligent acts by those attending and assisting at the birth that is a matter upon which Parliament can legislate.**

Most Canadians believe that the cost of an abortion must be covered by provincial health care systems. However, there is no legal basis for that argument. The Canada Health Act requires that a province must fund only medically necessary procedures. The act does not mention any specific services, including abortion. Neither pro-abortionists nor the government has ever proved that abortion is a medical necessity. Abortion, very simply put, is a lifestyle choice, not health care. And as such taxpayers should not be paying for it.

Questions

1. Shouldn't this be a cause for concern for any thinking and feeling Canadian? If a citizen strives for just laws and for upholding the innate dignity of all human beings, doesn't this situation cry for redress? Why not make this a prime consideration when voting for a candidate? Obtain the information and find out where the candidates stand on this particular issue.

2. Why is the abortion issue not settled despite claims like that made by former prime minister Jean Chretien: "we don't have big debates on the rights of abortion because we decided a long time ago in Canada it is the choice of women, which is not the case in a lot of U.S. states"?

3. Since abortion is not a medically necessary procedure what should be done with public funding of it?

A Political Test

Choose the correct answer by circling the appropriate letter.

1. Women in Canada got the right to vote in federal elections in a) 1867 b) 1896 c) 1918 d) 1933
2. The legal age today for a candidate for a federal election is a) 18 yrs. b) 19 yrs c) 21 yrs d) 26 yrs
3. The phrase "democratic deficit" refers to a) parties owing money b) federal government owing money c) New Democratic Party's tax proposals d) lack of power on the part of backbenchers in parliament
4. Adscam refers to a) province of Ontario's use of lottery revenues b) sponsorship ads scandal involving the federal Liberal government c) tobacco companies' contribution to federal parties d) British Columbia's human rights commission finding against American style ads.
5. In Canada women got the right to run for Parliament in a) 1919 b) 1932 c) 1945 d) 1957.
6. Among today's qualifications for standing for federal elections in Canada a candidate has to a) be born in Canada b) not be in debt c) be gainfully employed d) possess Canadian citizenship.
7. The political "left" refers to parties on the political spectrum that a) want less government b) want more government c) want strong police power d) none of the above.
8. The political "right" refers to parties on the political spectrum that a) want a strong military b) believe in the pro-choice position on life issues c) desire an increase in taxes d) all of the above
9. Cabinet solidarity refers to the principle by which a) members of the Privy Council resign in one body b) government ministers meet weekly with the press c) members of the cabinet must resign if they publicly disagree with a government decision d) all of the above.
10. In Canada a piece of legislation a) may originate in either House of Parliament b) must have government approval to be introduced c) cannot be amended once introduced d) all of the above.



Jack Layton is hoping to take the NDP to its first federal victory

