

Section 1: The Law and You

Lesson Plan 4: Democratic and Equality Charter Rights

SNAPSHOT

Grade Level	8-10
Duration	2 periods; if the model election simulation is done it will take 2 additional periods

Introduction

Democracy is a concept that, as Canadians, we all understand at some basic level. We tend to think of it as an absolute – Canada is a democracy, while many other countries are not. This lesson will introduce students to both the nature of the democratic rights that are enshrined in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* as well as some of the complexities of defining countries as democratic and undemocratic. Students will become familiar with the basics of the electoral process in local elections in BC. An optional “Model Election” assignment is included. Students also look at federal elections and the right and responsibility to vote.

Objectives

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Understand the wording of the Democratic Rights sections of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and their practical application
- Explore aspects of the factors that contribute to a country being considered democratic
- Learn the basics of the procedures and rules for electing members of local government
- Understand and explain how electoral boundaries are created and revised
- Demonstrate knowledge of the voting process (the writ, enumeration, election campaign, voting, and tabulation)
- Identify and understand different electoral systems - first past the post, proportional representation and single transferable vote
- Become familiar with common reasons that some citizens do not vote
- Develop and defend a position on whether or not voting is a responsibility

Focus Questions

1. What democratic rights do Canadians have?
2. What factors contribute to a country's status as a democratic nation?
3. What is a local government election?
4. What are the rules governing the holding of local government elections?
5. What are the rules governing federal elections?
6. Who is eligible to vote?
7. Do Canadians have not only the right to vote but the responsibility to vote?

Teaching Summary

Topic 1: Democratic Rights

Students will examine democratic rights in Canada and then expand that knowledge by looking at the factors that make any country democratic. They will work in groups to decide what degree of democracy is found in seven make-believe countries.

Topic 2: Elections

Local Government Elections

Students will read about local government elections and answer questions about what they read. If the teacher decides to hold a model local election they can learn first-hand about the process in this optional activity.

Federal Elections

Students are introduced to the processes and procedures of a federal election and will look for words to match to the word clues on the word search handout.

Topic 3: Right and Responsibility to Vote

Students have learned that democratic participation is a factor that enhances the degree and quality of democracy in a country. In Canada, while our democratic rights are well protected and our electoral system is sound, we have seen an erosion in the participation rate of eligible voters in our federal, provincial and local elections. Students will examine by conducting a small voter survey and then debate whether we, as citizens, have not only a right to vote but also a responsibility to vote.

CONTENT

Topic 1: Democratic Rights

As Canadians, we are well aware that we live in a democracy. According to the Economist Intelligence Unit's Index of Democracy, we share this status with roughly half the population of the world. However, only 14% of the world's population lives in a country designated by the Economist as a "full democracy".



Other countries have been defined by the Economist as "flawed democracies", "hybrid states" and "authoritarian states". Countries may change status over time as events and policies in the country become more or less democratic.

Additional Features of a Democracy

Beyond these democratic rights, there are other factors that contribute to Canada's status as a highly democratic country. Definitions of democracy will generally include factors such as:

- A competitive, multi-party political system
- Universal adult suffrage
- Free and open campaigning
- Free media
- An electoral system featuring secret ballots, voter security and absence of fraud

Other factors which might enhance the degree of democracy in a country might include:

- Diversity of participation in politics (gender, ethnic or religious minorities)
- Voter turnout
- Voter confidence in democratic institutions
- Other general aspects of freedom and liberty, including economic and social freedoms
- Freedom from corruption in government

Even a highly democratic country such as Canada might be limited in one or more of these features. In Canada's case, results of recent elections demonstrate some weakness in voter turnout and election of women to parliament.

Democratic Rights

Section Three – Democratic Rights of Citizens

Every citizen of Canada has the right to vote in an election of members of the House of Commons or of a legislative assembly and to be qualified for membership therein.

Section Four – Maximum Duration of Legislative Bodies

No House of Commons and no legislative assembly shall continue for longer than five years from the date fixed for the return of the writs of a general election of its members.

Section Five – Continuation in Special Circumstances

In time of real or apprehended war, invasion or insurrection, a House of Commons may be continued by Parliament and a legislative assembly may be continued by the legislature beyond five years if such continuation is not opposed by the votes of more than one-third of the members of the House of Commons or the legislative assembly, as the case may be.

Section Six – Annual Sitzings of Legislative Bodies

There shall be a sitting of parliament and of each legislature at least once every twelve months.

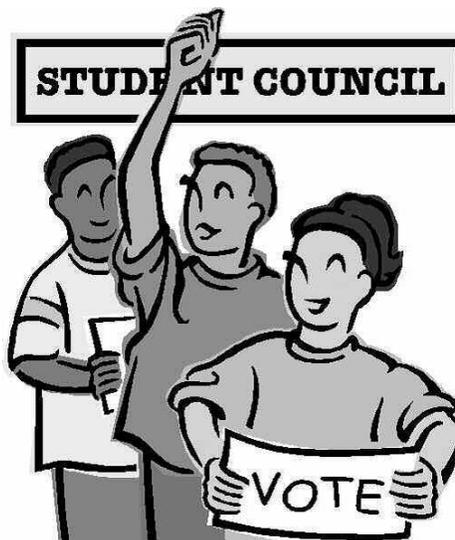
Topic 2: Elections

Local Government Elections

Who is Elected in a Local Government Election?

On General Voting Day, we vote for the following positions:

- The mayor and councillors for each municipality.
- School board trustees.
- Electoral area directors for regional districts.
- Local trustees for areas in the Island Trust (Gulf Islands).



When are Local Government Elections?

General Voting Day is the third Saturday in November, every three years. The most recent election was in November 2008, so the next election will be in November 2011.

How Many Members of Council are Elected?

The size of the council depends on the size of the municipality. There are four, six, eight or 10 members of council, plus the mayor. There is always an even number of members of council so, with the addition of the mayor, there is an odd number of people voting. That way there will never be a tied vote if everyone is present.

Municipality Size	Usual # of Council Members
City of Vancouver	10 plus mayor
Cities or districts of more than 50,000 people	8 plus mayor
Other cities or districts	6 plus mayor
Villages and Towns	4 plus mayor

How Many School Trustees are Elected?

Each school district has three, five, seven or nine school trustees on its board of education. Sometimes, for example in the case of Vancouver, the school district boundaries are the same as the municipal boundaries. In other cases a school district is larger, covering an area that includes more than one municipality or community. In that case, there are sometimes specific rules for the number of trustees elected from each part of the district. For example, the District of North Vancouver and the City of North Vancouver share School District #44. The district has a higher population so the voters there elect four trustees while the city only elects three.

Who is Eligible to Vote?

To vote as a “resident elector”, you must be:

- 18 years old or older
- A Canadian citizen
- A resident of British Columbia for at least six months before the election
- A resident of the place where you are voting for at least 30 days before the election

Or:

- An owner of property for at least 30 days in the jurisdiction



Who is Eligible to Run for Election?

To be allowed to run as a candidate for election as mayor, member of council or school trustee, the person must be:

- 18 years old or older
- A Canadian citizen

- A resident of BC for at least six months prior to the election
- Not disqualified from running for any reason

You do not have to live in or own property in area in order to run in an election there

Who is Disqualified From Being Allowed to Run in Elections?

While most people are allowed to run for elected office, some people are disqualified if:

- The person works as an employee of the local government or school board. For example, your teacher is not allowed to run to be a school trustee in your district. They are allowed to run if s/he goes on leave during the election and then promises to resign from his or her job if elected.
- The person is a Judge of the Provincial Court, Supreme Court and Court of Appeal.
- The person is in prison for an indictable offence.
- The person, as a past candidate, broke election rules.

What Kind of Rules Have to be Followed by Candidates in an Election?

Candidates have to follow rules that are set out in the *Local Government Act* including:

- Candidates have to keep records of donations that they received and have to publish the names of people or businesses who have donated an amount of \$100 or more.
- These donations might be cash or they might be donations of services. For example, if a photographer is normally paid \$500 for a photo shoot but charges the politician only \$200, he or she is making a “donation in kind” of \$300. This has to be on the list.
- This financial list must be turned in to the municipality within 120 days of the election or the candidate will be disqualified from running in the next election.
- Candidates can donate as much money as they like to their own campaign and can accept donations from businesses and unions.
- Candidates cannot bribe or threaten voters.

If an Elected Official Resigns or Passes Away Between Elections, is he or she Replaced?

Yes. Unless this occurs within a few months of the next election, there will be a special type of election called a by-election just to fill that vacancy.

How Does a Voter Fill out the Ballot? How is it Counted?

Many municipalities in BC now use electronic voting machines. The ballot has ovals that are filled in and the ballot is fed into a machine which counts the ballots. Some municipalities still use employees to hand count the ballots. A voter can vote for as many candidates as there are positions available. Thus, everyone has one vote for mayor. If there are six councillor positions, the voter can vote for up to six candidates or choose to vote for fewer candidates.

Federal Elections and Electoral Process

Launching an Election

For a general election, the Governor General (at the request of the Prime Minister) dissolves Parliament, and the Governor in Council (the Governor General acting on the advice of Cabinet) sets the date of the election and the date by which returning officers must return the writs. A writ is a formal document directing a returning officer to conduct an election in his or her electoral district. After election day, the returning officer writes the name of the winning candidate on that district's writ. By law, the time between the issue of the writs and election day must be at least 36 days. In practice, general elections usually last 36 days. An exception was the 39th general election, which included the 2005 Christmas and New Year holiday period and lasted 55 days.

Issuing the Writs

Once advised of the election, the Chief Electoral Officer sends a notice to each returning officer, directing him or her to rent office space, open a returning office and provide the services that enable electors to exercise their right to vote. At the same time, the writs of election are being printed, with the dates for election day and for the close of nominations. After signing the writs, the Chief Electoral Officer sends one to each returning officer, who then publishes a notice of election informing voters of the important dates and other details.

The Election Call

1. The Prime Minister asks the Governor General to dissolve the House of Commons (or the Government loses a confidence vote in the House of Commons).
2. The Governor General issues a proclamation dissolving Parliament and directing that the writs of election be issued.
3. The Chief Electoral Officer issues writs that direct returning officers to hold an election in each electoral district.
4. Returning officers open their offices.
5. Voting by special ballot begins.
6. Elections Canada sends preliminary lists of electors to returning officers.
7. Preliminary candidates and party election expense limits are calculated.

8. Revision of the lists of electors begins.
9. Returning officers mail voter information cards to registered electors.
10. Returning officers receive candidates' nomination papers and deposits.
11. Canadian Forces electors begin voting.
12. Voting at advance polls takes place.
13. Voting by incarcerated electors and those in acute care hospitals begins.
14. Revision ends, and the deadline for special ballot registration expires.
15. Revised candidate and party election expense limits are calculated.

Election Day

- Electors vote at ordinary and mobile polling stations.
- Preliminary voting results are available after the polls close across the country.

Voting

There are a number of ways to vote. The most common way is at the polls on election day. Voters can also cast their ballots at an advance poll or by special ballot, either at the office of the returning officer or through the mail. As additional services, Elections Canada provides mobile polls for voters living in chronic care institutions and, in certain cases, bedside voting by special ballot for voters in acute care hospitals.

In exceptional circumstances – where a voter is registered for a special ballot but cannot go to the office of the returning officer or mark the ballot because of a disability – an election officer can go to the voter's home to help mark and receive the ballot in the presence of a witness.

Ordinary Polls

This is the method of voting used by the vast majority of voters. During the hours of voting on election day, electors go to the polling station indicated on their voter information cards, have their names crossed off the list and go behind a voting screen to mark a ballot.

Voting Hours on Election Day and Staggered Voting Hours

To compensate for Canada's six time zones, polls open and close (in local time) as follows:

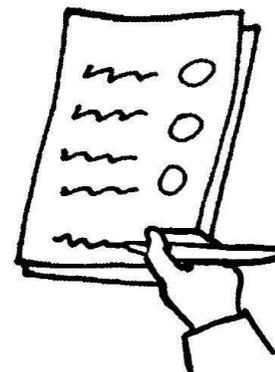
- Newfoundland Time 8:30 am – 8:30 pm
- Atlantic Time 8:30 am – 8:30 pm
- Eastern Time 9:30 am – 9:30 pm
- Central Time 8:30 am – 8:30 pm
- Mountain Time 7:30 am – 7:30 pm
- Pacific Time 7:00 am – 7:00 pm



The *Canada Elections Act* requires polling stations to be open for voting for 12 consecutive hours on election day. The hours of voting are staggered by time zone, so that a majority of results will be available at approximately the same time across the country. If necessary, the Chief Electoral Officer may modify the voting hours in a riding to make them coincide with the voting hours in other ridings in the same time zone.

Marking the Ballot

At the polling station specified on the voter information card, the poll clerk crosses the voter's name off the voters list. The deputy returning officer hands the voter a folded ballot with the initials of the deputy returning officer on the outside. The voter then re-folds the ballot so that the deputy returning officer's initials are visible and hands it to the deputy returning officer. The deputy returning officer checks the initials and the number shown on the counterfoil, removes the counterfoil and discards it, and returns the ballot to the voter. The voter, or the deputy returning officer at the voter's request, places the folded ballot in the ballot box. The poll clerk then places a mark in the "Voted" column beside the elector's name on the voters list.



Advance Voting

Three days – Friday, Saturday and Monday, the 10th, 9th and 7th days before polling day – are designated for advance voting to accommodate electors who know that they will be unable, or do not wish, to vote on election day. Advance polls are open between the hours of noon and 8:00 p.m.

Special Ballot

The *Canada Elections Act* provides alternative procedures for voting specifically designed for, but not limited to, electors who:

- Reside temporarily outside Canada (less than five consecutive years, with certain exceptions) at the time of an election
- Reside in Canada, but might be away from their electoral districts when it is time to vote
- Are members of the Canadian Forces
- Are incarcerated

Any elector can register to vote by special ballot at any point before the sixth-to-last day before election day. Application forms are available from returning officers, on the Elections Canada website or directly from Elections Canada in Ottawa. Once the registration is accepted, a kit containing a ballot and three envelopes is mailed to the elector.

Once registered to vote by special ballot, an elector cannot vote in any other way. Electors can vote only for a candidate who is running in their own electoral district no matter where they cast and mail their special ballots. To preserve secrecy, the elector seals the special ballot in the unmarked envelope, puts that sealed envelope in the envelope with the electoral district's name on it, seals this second envelope and puts it in the mailing envelope.

The Results

Shortly after the polls close on election day, the unofficial results begin to come in to Elections Canada. As the reports arrive from the various polling stations on election night, Elections Canada releases the results to the media for immediate publication or broadcast. Simultaneously, Elections Canada hosts a live feed on its Web site of the unofficial results by riding, by major centre, by province or territory, nationwide and by political party.

Wrap-up

1. Returning officers carry out the validation of the results.
2. Judicial recounts are conducted if necessary.
3. Returning officers return the writs, which declare the winning candidate in each riding.
4. New members of Parliament are sworn in, and the new Parliament is convened.
5. The Chief Electoral Officer reports on the election and the official results.
6. Candidates, political parties and third parties submit financial reports.
7. Reimbursement of expenses to candidates and political parties takes place.
8. Candidates dispose of surplus funds.

Validation of the Results

Within seven days of election day (unless exceptional circumstances prevent some ballot boxes from being available on time), each returning officer validates the results by examining the documents relating to the vote count to verify the election night calculations. Only after the validation has been completed can the official voting results be published.

Judicial Recounts

A judicial recount is automatically requested by the returning officer and conducted by a judge if the number of votes separating the candidate with the most votes and any other candidate is less than one 1000th of the total number of votes cast in that electoral district. A recount may also be conducted if it appears to a judge to whom a request for a recount has been made that an error may have occurred during the count. If the two top-ranking candidates have each received the same number of votes after a recount, a new election is held in that electoral district.

Election Reports

The Return of the Writs

After the sixth day following the validation of the results (or immediately after a judicial recount), the returning officer records the winning candidate's name on the writ received at the beginning of the election, signs it and returns it to the Chief Electoral Officer.

The Chief Electoral Officer's Reports

After each general election, the Chief Electoral Officer must submit three public reports to the Speaker of the House of Commons. The first covers the official voting results by polling division and is published without delay. The second, published within 90 days of the return of the writs, is a report on the election and any activities of Elections Canada since the date of the previous narrative report that the Chief Electoral Officer considers should be brought to the attention of the House of Commons. As soon as possible after a general election, the Chief Electoral Officer also reports on any changes to the electoral legislation that he judges desirable for the better administration of the *Act*. Elections Canada publishes each of these reports in print form and makes them available online at <http://www.elections.ca>.

By-Elections

When a seat in Parliament becomes officially vacant in between election periods, the Speaker of the House of Commons must inform the Chief Electoral Officer immediately with a Speaker's warrant. Between the 11th and the 180th day after the Chief Electoral Officer receives this warrant, the Governor in Council must set the date for holding a by-election. Once the date is known, the Chief Electoral Officer issues a writ to the returning officer of the electoral district concerned, directing him or her to hold a by-election on that date. If a general election is called after the by-election writ has been issued and before the by-election is held, the writ for the by-election is considered withdrawn, and the Chief Electoral Officer publishes a notice in the *Canada Gazette* to that effect.

Referendums

Three federal referendums have been held in Canada since Confederation: in 1898, on whether to prohibit the sale of alcohol; in 1942, on compulsory military service (conscriptation); and in 1992, on the Charlottetown constitutional accord. Under the *Referendum Act* that came into force just before the 1992 referendum, only questions related to the Constitution of Canada can be asked in a federal referendum. Federal referendums and elections cannot be held on the same day. The *Referendum Act* allows the Chief Electoral Officer to adapt the *Canada Elections Act* by regulation for the purposes of applying it to a referendum.

The information above was adapted from the [Elections Canada](http://www.elections.ca) website.

Topic 3: The Right and Responsibility to Vote

Voter turnout has diminished in many western democracies in recent decades, including in Canada. Prior to 1980, it was not common to have a voter turnout of less than 70%.

Federal Election Turnout for Selected Elections

General Election Date	Voter Turnout (%)
4 September 1984	75.3
21 November 1988	75.3
25 Oct 1993	69.6
2 June 1997	67
27 November 2000	61.2
28 June 2004	60.9
23 October, 2006	64.7
14 October, 2008	58.8

(Source: *Elections Canada*)

Elections Canada commissioned a major study of non-voters after the 2000 general election's historic low voter turnout. It found that one of the major factors in diminished voter turnout was low turnout by the youngest voters. Only 25% of 18-25 year olds and only 22% of 18 to 21-year-old voters participated that year. Youth voter turnout for 18-21 year olds improved for the 2006 election, rising to 38%. Results for youth turnout for 2008 are not yet available.

Provincial and local elections in BC have experienced an even lower voter turnout in recent years.

BC General Elections

Year	Voter Turnout (%)
2001	55
2005	58
2008	50.99

(Source: *Elections BC*)

Local elections in British Columbia have an often lower turnout than federal or provincial elections, but there is a great degree of difference between municipalities from election to election. Likely voter turnout is higher when there is a controversial issue or a more contested election than if some positions such as mayor are acclaimed.

Local BC Elections November 2005 –Sample Jurisdictions

Municipality	Voter Turnout (%)

Stewart	84
Terrace	24
Vancouver	32
Nanaimo	32
Saanich	19
Sidney	9

(Source: Union of BC Municipalities)

ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Democratic Rights

Write the word “democracy” on the board and elicit responses from students regarding a definition for what makes a country a democracy. Provide students with *Handout 1: Democratic Rights* which contains the democratic rights in the *Charter*. Remind students of the *Charter* and its place enshrined in the Constitution and discuss each of the rights. Go back to the definition of democracy on the board and have students add any more concepts including the ones on the handout. Talk about other countries in the world and how the face of democracy is always changing. Read the instructions on the handout and have them do the activity in groups. Ask a volunteer to report their ranking back to the class. Tell student about the focus case below where the prisoner fought for the right to vote.

To see the answer key for *Handout 1*, see the Assessment section.

Focus Case

At one time, all inmates in federal and provincial prisons were denied the right to vote. In 1992, Richard Sauvé challenged this under s.3 (the right to vote) and s.15 (equality rights) of the *Charter*. He won his case in Ontario Court of Appeal and the Federal Court of Appeal. Parliament amended the wording so that prisoners serving less than two years were given voting privileges. This didn't help Sauvé, since he was serving a life sentence for first degree murder. Again he challenged the limitation in 1995. He was successful and in 1997 all prisoners were allowed to vote. But in 1999 the Federal Court of Appeal over turned the decision. Sauvé appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada for the third time. In 2002, in *Sauvé v. Canada (Chief Electoral Officer)* [2002] 3 S.C.R. 519, the court ruled that prisoners serving more than two years could not be disqualified from voting. To date, the legislation has not been amended but the Chief Electoral Officer has applied the *Sauvé* decision to allow inmates the opportunity to vote.

Activity 2: Elections

Local Government Elections

Have students read *Handout 2: Local Government Elections* for homework and then answer the questions on *Handout 3: What Do I Know About Local Government Elections?* They will hand this in for assessment. After completion of the sheet, spend five minutes highlighting points that you would like to stress and giving the answers.

Optional: Model Local Government Election Simulation

A model local government election simulation might serve as an interesting unit project.

Preparation

- Divide the class into groups of two-to-three students, with each group made up of one candidate and campaign organizer(s).
- Open nominations. Have students nominate each other for positions of mayor and council. For the purposes of this simulation, a small four-member town council will be elected. Remind students that cities elect larger councils. (See *Handout 2: Local Government Elections*)
- Use the template *Handout 4: Local Election Ballot* to create an election ballot with the names of your student candidates. Photocopy sufficient ballots for your election.
- Give students time in class and for homework to research local issues and to prepare campaign materials and speeches.
- Require the campaigns to produce one, two-to-three minute campaign speech, presented by the candidate and one or two of the following (one created by each campaign supporter in the group):
 - Campaign website
 - Brochure
 - Newspaper advertisement
 - Poster
 - Radio ad
 - Video (Might be posted on YouTube. This would involve parent permission and a talk with your administrator re: school policy. Alternatively, an internal password-protected site could display the students' work.)

Campaigning

Designate one class period as Election Day. Have the candidates present their speeches to the class and display or present their campaign materials.

Balloting and Tabulation

- Set up a voting place with ballot boxes and voting screens, if possible. If your school has participated in Student Vote in a past federal or provincial election, use these props. Remind students of the rules for marking ballots and the number of candidates they are eligible to vote for.
- Allow each candidate to appoint one scrutineer to observe you counting the ballots in another room. Scrutineers may not touch the ballots, but may dispute spoiled ballots and are there to ensure the tabulation process is sound.
- Make sure you look at the local government act to see if you are using current information.

Federal Election and the Electoral Process

This activity may be done for homework or as an in class activity. If you are planning to have the students complete the word clues and word search in class it is advisable to assign reading of *Handout 5: Federal Elections* in advance to save time. Discuss the different electoral systems and how electoral boundaries are created with your students prior to the word search. The students use the handout to find the missing words in *Handout 6: Federal Elections Word Search*. Upon completion of the word search review the answers.

To see the answer keys for *Handout 3* and *Handout 6*, see the Assessment section.

Activity 3: Right and Responsibility to Vote

Survey Results

Have students hand in their surveys at the beginning of the day so a small team of students can compile the results from *Handout 7: Voting Survey*. Alternatively, produce the tally sheet on a white board, overhead or with a digital projector and tally results together. Show students the results from the most recent elections from the websites of Elections Canada <http://www.elections.ca>, Elections BC and <http://www.elections.bc.ca> and your local government. Compare results from their poll with broader results and discuss the most common reasons that participants gave for not voting. Do the students think these are legitimate reasons?

Debate on Responsibility to Vote

Ask students to define the word “responsibility” – what sort of responsibilities do they have at home or school? Pose the question “What responsibilities do citizens of Canada have to our country?” Explain to the class that they will be debating the following resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED: Canadian citizens have a responsibility to always vote.

All students need to take a position and then prepare points to support their position and think of points against their position and how they would refute those points. They can work in teams of like-minded students.

Divide class chairs into three sections on different walls of the room. On one wall, have a sign that says “Responsibility to Vote” and on the opposite wall have one that says “No Responsibility to Vote”. Place chairs between the two positions for students who are entirely undecided or are leaning to one perspective or the other.

Invite students to speak and keep a speakers list, alternating between speakers from different perspectives. Students who are undecided should be encouraged to make comments, ask questions of either side and to move to one side or the other by the end of the debate.

Encourage students to demonstrate open-mindedness by choosing to move from one position in the classroom to another when another student's argument convinces them to change their viewpoints.

Debrief the debate by listing arguments that could be made for each side of the debate. For homework, have students write a paragraph articulating their post-debate position on the issue.

Possible Arguments

Arguments in favour	Arguments against
When most Canadians vote, the results of the election reflect the wishes of Canadians better.	If we have the right to vote, we should have the right not to vote.
Health of our democracy requires active citizenship through voting and other means.	Some voters are not informed about political issues, parties or candidates, so they might not make the best choices in voting.
Voting encourages citizens to become better informed.	Some citizens will not find any candidates or parties that reflect their views so they should not feel compelled to vote.
Canadians are lucky to have the right to vote and should not take it for granted.	Some citizens think that others will do the voting so they do not have to.
If we see voting as a civic duty, we are more likely to do it.	

RESOURCES

Activity 1: Democratic Rights

Handout 1: Democratic Rights

Activity 2: Local Government Elections

Handout 2: Local Government Election

Handout 3: What Do I Know About Local Government Elections?

Handout 4: Local Election Ballot

Handout 5: Federal Elections

Handout 6: Federal Elections Word Search

Handout 7: Voting Survey

Handout 8: Model Election Marking Rubric

Activity 3: Right and Responsibility to Vote

Handout 9: Debate Evaluation Quick Chart

ASSESSMENT

Activity 1: Democratic Rights

Assess the participation and responses of the students during this activity.

Answer Key: Handout 1: Democratic Rights

Rank	Country Name	How did you decide?
1 Most democratic	<i>Polarania</i>	<i>Female participation, universal suffrage, fair and free elections, voter turnout and confidence are all strong.</i>
2	<i>North Dominionia</i>	<i>N.D. – Strong in fair and free system, trust and universal suffrage. Concerns in voter turnout.</i>
3	<i>Nanistan</i>	<i>N – Political parties and regular elections. Reservation of female seats enhances or detracts. Weakness in role of military and violence.</i>
4	<i>Hengary</i>	<i>Universal suffrage and perception of fair elections. Weaknesses in corruption and electoral irregularities.</i>
5	<i>Jarrar</i>	<i>Political parties and regular elections. High participation of women in education and work force. Weaknesses in control of electoral process by theocratic religious leaders, lack of free press and lack of full participation by women in government.</i>
6	<i>Tarvu</i>	<i>Citizens enjoy some economic and social freedoms. Considerable weaknesses in being a single party state which limits freedom of speech and press.</i>
7 Least democratic	<i>Sulisia</i>	<i>Single party totalitarian state with no elections, high degree of censorship and harsh penalties for dissent.</i>

Activity 2: Elections

You can use *Handout 3: What Do I Know About Local Government Elections?* for marks as well as *Handout 6: Federal Elections Word Search*. If you hold a model local election use *Handout 8: Model Election Marking Rubric*. Have students in each group assess their own performance and group members using the same rubric.

Answer Key: *Handout 3: What Do I Know About Local Government Elections?*

1. How often are local elections held in BC?
c. Elections are held every three years, on the third Saturday in November.
2. When will the next election be?
There will be an election on Saturday, November 19, 2011 and every three years after that.
3. Who do we elect in a local election?
c. Generally we elect a mayor and between four and ten councillors, depending on the size of municipality. School trustees are also elected, as are elected positions on regional districts and similar bodies. Vancouver is the only municipality in Canada with elected parks commissioners.
4. How old do you have to be to vote in a local election?
a. 18 (same for federal and provincial elections in BC).
5. Is anyone allowed to vote in a local election even if he or she does not live in that jurisdiction? (Is it ever possible for a person who does not live in Coquitlam to vote in a Coquitlam election?) Explain your answer.
Someone who lives in one place and owns property in another place is entitled to vote in both places.
6. What is a by-election?
A special election which is called to fill a vacancy in between elections.
7. Can a wealthy person choose to spend \$25,000 funding his or her own campaign to become mayor? Is this allowed?
Yes, in a local election.
8. Give three examples of individuals who would not be allowed to run in an election:
Under 18, not a citizen, has lived in BC less than six months, employee of municipality, in prison, disqualified for breaking election rules as a previous candidate, Provincial Court, Supreme Court or Court of Appeal judge.

Answer Key: Handout 6: Federal Elections Word Search

1. Another word for an electoral district. *Riding*
2. There are 308 electoral districts in Canada.
3. The form of electoral system use in Canada. *First Past the Post*
4. The second step in the election process is termed “dropping the *Writ*”.
5. These boundaries are based on population and geography. *Constituencies*
6. An alternative voting system; common to European countries. *Proportional Representation*
7. The act of selecting a candidate on the ballot. *Voting*
8. The agency in charge of federal elections. *Elections Canada*
9. All persons eligible to vote are collectively known by this term. *Electorate*
10. You can only vote in a federal election if you are a Canadian *Citizen*.
11. The process of registering voters. *Enumeration*
12. These are used to read the ‘mood’ of voters. *Polling*
13. A blended form of voting. It was suggested for BC in the last two elections. *STV (Single Transferable Vote)*
14. The members of a riding are also known as *Constituents*.
15. The local workplace of a Member of Parliament is called the *Electoral District office*.
16. The process of counting votes after the polling stations have closed. *Tabulation*
17. An election must be held once in every *five* years except in times of emergency or war.
18. This term describes the closing of Parliament in order to call an election. *Dissolution*
19. Changing or redefining electoral boundaries is called *Redistribution*.

20. All elected candidates will serve in *Parliament*.
21. The person that oversees all aspects of the federal election process.
Chief Electoral Officer
22. Candidates in an election have limits placed on contributions and *expenses*.
23. Each local candidate is *nominated* by the members of the party.
24. Voters go to a *Polling* station on the day of an election to fill in a ballot.
25. The *Governor General* at the request of the Prime Minister announces the call for an election.
26. Polling stations must be open for a minimum of 12 consecutive hours on an election day.
27. In 2002 these Canadians received the right to vote in federal elections. *Prisoners*
28. The law that covers all elements of the federal election process and procedures.
Canada Elections Act
29. If you cannot vote on the day of an election there are *Advance Polls* for three days prior to submit a ballot.
30. Polling is frequently set up at local churches or *Schools*.

Activity 3: Right and Responsibility to Vote

Use *Handout 9: Debate Evaluation Quick Chart*, to evaluate your students' debate performances considering degree of activity in debate, quality of arguments made, clarity of speaking style and respectfulness of other students. Have the students hand in their paragraphs next class. Evaluate the paragraphs based on quality of topic sentence, use of appropriate support arguments for position taken and quality of writing. Let the students know what criteria you are using.

ENRICHMENT

Democratic Rights

1. Look at these two ranking projects that are available online. Discuss the ratings of different real countries. Did you find anything that surprised you? Report back to your class.
 - Freedom House is an American organization established in 1947 to promote democracy. It publishes a series of annual reports, including “Freedom in the World”, which scores countries on their degree of democratic rights and civil liberties and rates them “Free, Partially Free, or Not Free”. The reports and a map demonstrating the rankings are available free on the website. While there has been some criticism of a pro-American bias in Freedom House’s approach, it is otherwise a thorough resource.
 - A 2008 report by the Economist Intelligence Unit expands on the methodology of Freedom House by also including data related to such things as voter turnout, female participation and international surveys of voter attitudes. It is produced by the British magazine *The Economist*. More information is available through the online edition of the magazine, but for a cost.
2. Write a paragraph defining a very democratic country. What are the key five factors that make a country highly democratic? Compare this country with Canada.
3. Volunteer in your community with an organization which promotes democratic rights either here or abroad.

Elections

1. Ward System vs. At Large System Debate: One common debate in BC politics is whether we should elect members of council using the current “at large” system, whereby all members of council are elected to represent the entire jurisdiction or if we should elect members of council to represent their own neighbourhoods or “wards”.

The City of Vancouver had a referendum on the Wards issue in 2004, with 54% of voters rejecting the idea. This result, however, was based on a voter turnout of only 22% of registered voters. Information about the wards referendum, including

a map of the proposed wards in Vancouver, is still available at the Vancouver City Clerk's website.

A class debate on At Large vs. Wards would still be relevant in many jurisdictions as the ward system is commonly used in other provinces and still has some popular support in BC even though it was not approved in the 2008 election. You can prepare this debate and then ask your teacher if you can take some time in class to present it.

2. Invite a local reporter who covers local elections to visit the class to discuss local election campaigns. Prepare questions ahead of time for your speaker to answer.
3. Contact your local Member of Parliament and conduct an interview on the election process. Consider:
 - Campaign funding
 - Campaign platform
 - Campaign expenses
 - Delegate independence
 - Volunteer staff/staffing
 - Party support/infrastructure
 - Advertisement
4. You are a candidate in the next federal election. Describe five key issues that you would use to build your campaign platform around. For each issue explain the 5 W's (who, what, where, when, why).
5. Volunteer with Elections BC or local election committee to work at a polling booth. See <http://www.elections.bc.ca> or <http://www.civicinfo.bc.ca>.

Right and Responsibility to Vote

1. Do some research on voter turnout at the 2008 elections in BC and Canada. Come up with some ideas of how to improve that turnout. Interview students at your school who are able to vote and find out why they voted or why they did not vote. Report back to your class.
2. Research the idea of making voting compulsory in Canada, as it is in some other jurisdictions such as Australia. This issue was the topic of an unsuccessful Senate bill, S-22, sponsored by Senator Mac Herb in 2005.
3. Create a public awareness project related to the importance of voting for a healthy democracy. This could include visuals such as posters, brochures or online public service announcement. Ask your school to support this issue.