



OUR
GOVERNMENT

OUR
ELECTION



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OUR GOVERNMENT, OUR ELECTION

2024 (Version 4.0)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Selected PLEA Learning Resources.....	ii
Introduction.....	iii
SECTION ONE: THE PURPOSE OF GOVERNMENT.....	1
Lesson 1.1 What is Democracy?.....	3
Lesson 1.2 Why Laws?.....	7
Lesson 1.3 Public Goods and Services.....	13
Lesson 1.4 Paying for Government Services.....	19
SECTION TWO: THE MECHANICS OF GOVERNMENT.....	27
Lesson 2.1 Provincial Governance: A Structural Outline.....	29
Lesson 2.2 Creating Laws in Saskatchewan.....	37
Lesson 2.3 Opposition Parties.....	43
Lesson 2.4 Legacy Media.....	47
Lesson 2.5 Social Media.....	53
Lesson 2.6 Citizen Participation.....	59
SECTION THREE: THE ELECTION OF GOVERNMENT.....	67
Lesson 3.1 The Provincial Election Process.....	69
Lesson 3.2 Considering How We Vote.....	95
Lesson 3.3 Smaller Political Parties and Legislative Representation.....	103
Lesson 3.4 Considering Party Platforms.....	107
Lesson 3.5 Local Candidates.....	109
Lesson 3.6 Post-Election Analysis.....	111
Answer Keys.....	112

SELECTED PLEA LEARNING RESOURCES

Check out teachers.plea.org for a wide range of learning resources. Print copies available at no charge.



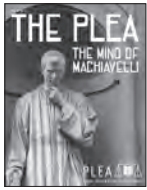
REVOLUTION

Learn how revolutions overturn laws and institutions. History 30, Social Studies 30.



VICHY

Learn what happens when democracy is overturned. History 20.



THE MIND OF MACHIAVELLI

Learn how Machiavelli influenced modern governance. Social Studies 30.



LEGAL IMMUNITY

Learn about the history of vaccines and the law. Social Studies 30, Law 30.



CURB YOUR FANATICISM

Learn how moderation in views can help create better societies. Social Studies 30, Law 30.



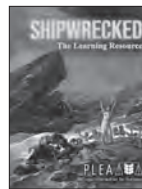
RUNNING JOKES

Learn why we all have the right to run for office. Social Studies 30, History 30, Law 30.



CANADA'S LEGAL SYSTEM: AN INTRODUCTION

Learn about the pillars of Canada's legal system. Social Studies 8.



SHIPWRECKED: THE LEARNING RESOURCE

Learn how survivors of shipwrecks created systems of rule. Law 30.



DEMOCRACY AND THE RULE OF LAW

Learn how the rule of law supports democracy, and democracy supports the rule of law. Social Studies 30, Law 30.



SUNSHINE SKETCHES OF A LITTLE TOWN: THE LEARNING RESOURCE

Learn about Canada's history and governance through Stephen Leacock's classic book. ELA A30.



DIRECT DEMOCRACY: PLEBISCITES AND REFERENDUMS

Learn how Saskatchewan citizens have the power to create laws through popular vote. Social Studies 30, Law 30.



HAMMURABI'S CODE

Learn about the foundations of western legal systems, and how they compare to Indigenous law. Social Studies 9.

INTRODUCTION

The social studies classroom is a public square. Young citizens assemble to understand society as it exists, debate the ways society should change, and propose how to accomplish change. With this understanding, PLEA has created the fourth edition of *Our Government, Our Election* to build civic-mindedness.

Our Government, Our Election explores Saskatchewan's government, politics, and the electoral process. Each section has a specific focus:

SECTION ONE: THE PURPOSE OF GOVERNMENT

Section One introduces the foundational purpose of government in society, considering:

- the concept of democracy;
- how laws and regulations play a role in society;
- the role of public services; and
- how governments raise revenue.

SECTION TWO: THE MECHANICS OF GOVERNMENT

Section Two explores how laws are made and how governments can be held to account, considering:

- the make-up of the legislature;
- the creation of written laws;
- the role of opposition parties;
- the role of the media; and
- the role of the citizen.

SECTION THREE: THE ELECTION OF GOVERNMENT

Section Three explains how we elect our governments, considering:

- forming governments;
- voting processes;
- political parties;
- local candidates; and
- election results.

These lessons are not meant to be prescriptive or holistic. Teachers are the professionals best-situated to facilitate student learning. Thus, the material in *Our Government, Our Election* is a suggested starting point. There are many other excellent resources on governance and elections that can help build a diverse approach to teaching social studies. Some suggestions are referenced in this resource's lessons.

Feedback on this or any other PLEA learning resource is always appreciated. Drop us a line at plea@plea.org.



SECTION ONE
THE PURPOSE
OF
GOVERNMENT



LESSON 1.1

WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

OBJECTIVE

To understand how we are governed, concepts of democracy will be considered.

TEACHER'S BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Ideal of Democracy

Democracy is a complex term. The word is rooted in the Greek nouns *demos* (people) and *kratein* (rule). At first this seems simple: the people rule. However, in practice it becomes complicated. Can every person rule? If not, then who actually rules? And what gives legitimacy to their rule?

To ground an understanding of democracy, it is helpful to look at its ancient forms in Athens and Rome, before considering its modern-day practice in Canada.

The cradle of western democracy is widely considered to be Athens of 5th century BC. Athenian citizens directly participated in law-making. They gathered in public squares to debate and then vote on policies. Such an approach is called direct democracy.

In Athens, the right to participate was taken seriously: the state paid citizens a day's wages to attend the assembly. However, Athenian direct democracy was not democracy for all. Only males with citizenship—a mere ten percent of the population—had the right to participate.

Since the time of ancient Athens, the concept of the state has grown. States are geographically bigger, have larger populations, and take on more responsibilities. The growth of the state makes the idea of the Athenian public square—where all citizens directly participate in all decision-making—almost impossible. Hence, modern Canadian democracy is primarily based on the Roman concept of representative democracy.

Canada's federal, provincial, and municipal governments, alongside Indigenous governments under the *Indian Act*, are representative democracies. Occasionally we directly decide an issue by referendum, but most often we choose representatives to govern on our behalf.

Around the same time direct democracy began in Athens, representative democracy emerged in the Roman Empire. Roman representative democracy was similar to how we choose our governments today. Individuals elected representatives to government to govern on their behalf.

Greek democracy ended when Macedonia conquered Greece in 338 BC. Roman democracy ended when power centralised in the Imperial Palace following Augustus' death in 14 AD. Pockets of democratic rule could still be found around the world, but for the most part democracy went into hibernation. It was not until the last half of the early modern period (c. 1500-1800) that democracy re-emerged on a larger scale. By the beginning of the 21st century, the majority of countries were considered democracies.

Today, a key aspect for a country to be considered a democracy is a universal franchise (the right to vote for all adult citizens). In Canada, the franchise is almost universal: virtually every adult citizen has the right to vote. The lone exception in Saskatchewan is the chief electoral officer, the person who coordinates and oversees provincial elections.

Our universal right to vote represents a great advance in a short period of time. At the beginning of the 20th century, Canadian democracy was disappointingly close to its ancient Greek derivative: women, minorities, prisoners, younger adults, and people without property could not vote. Some of these restrictions were not lifted until the 1970s.

Towards a Definition of Democracy

To define democracy, it is helpful to turn to Canadian political scientist Henry Bertram Mayo. In his 1960 book *An Introduction to Democratic Theory*, he said that modern western democracy usually includes the four following elements:

- popular sovereignty: the people have the final say, usually in the form of elections
- political equality: every person's vote counts equally
- political freedom: today, the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* guarantees foundational freedoms such as freedom of expression and freedom of political association
- majority rule: the larger number takes precedent over the smaller number, with due consideration given to minority rights.

Mayo's framework may not definitively define democracy, but it helps capture the basic parameters upon which Canadian representative democracy operates. Every adult citizen is free to participate with equal voice, and collectively the larger number will prevail so long as the majority does not trample the rights of minorities.

Our Government, Our Election

It is difficult to overstate the importance of democratic education. As Canadian senator Eugene Forsey said, "Government is our creature. We make it, we are ultimately responsible for it." We choose the people who govern us. This means that our rights and responsibilities are the product of our democratic decisions.

PROCEDURE

1. Brainstorm with students what democracy means to them. Use the varied answers to establish that it is hard to precisely define democracy.
2. Break students into smaller groups and distribute [What is Democracy?](#). Each group should discuss the statements about democracy amongst themselves.
3. Have groups share with the class the statement that they believe to be most compelling, and explain their reasoning.

4. Reconvene groups so they may create their own definition of democracy.
5. Bring class together to share each group's definition of democracy.

KEY QUESTION

- **How was the process of working together to create a definition of democracy similar to the concept of democracy itself?**
6. One more round to the definition-creation process can be added by having the class work together as a whole to define democracy.
 7. For a summary of the lesson, have class discuss George Bernard Shaw's statement about "Democracy is a device that ensures we shall be governed no better than we deserve."

FURTHER EXPLORATION

8. Canada is a representative democracy. Canada is also a liberal democracy. This means that the broad principles of liberalism guide our democratic rule. To better understand the principles of liberal democracy, check out Lesson Three: What is Liberal Democracy? in *Democracy and the Rule of Law*. Find it at teachers.plea.org.
9. For an exploration of the history of the right to vote in Canada, check out Indigenous People and the Right to Vote in Lesson One of *Democracy and the Rule of Law*. Find it at teachers.plea.org.
10. For an overview of how the Haudenosaunee governed themselves, check out Roots of Indigenous Democracy in Lesson One of *Direct Democracy*. Find it at teachers.plea.org.
11. For insight into how Rome's representative democracy is reflected in modern Canadian governance, check out *The Mind of Machiavelli*. Find it at teachers.plea.org.
12. Astra Taylor's recent work on the origins and forms of democracy provides valuable insights into the different meanings of democracy. An excellent introduction can be found on CBC's *Ideas* episode "What is Democracy?"

WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

Discuss the following statements about democracy. Some of the them are complicated, so the discussion questions will guide you.

1. “Democracy is a system in which no one can choose himself, no one can invest himself with the power to rule, and therefore, no one can arrogate to himself unconditional and unlimited power.”

- Giovanni Sartori, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited*

DISCUSS: Why should no single person have unlimited power?

2. “The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.”

- Article 21(3) of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

DISCUSS: Suffrage is the right to vote. Why must everyone have the right to vote? Why must each vote count equally?

3. “Democracy as a political culture generally implies the simultaneous operation of several elements, two of which are fundamental: government by the majority (either directly or through representatives), and the protection of individual or minority rights.”

- Israelite Rubinstein and Chaim Adler, *The Development of Democratic Culture in a Society with Powerful Traditional Forces: The Case of Israel*

DISCUSS: Is the majority always right? Can the majority sometimes trample over the rights of individuals and minorities?

4. “Democracy is a political system in which different groups are legally entitled to compete for power and in which institutional power holders are elected by the people and are responsible to the people.”

- Tatu Vanhannen, *Prospects of Democracy: A Study of 172 Countries*

DISCUSS: Do the groups with the best ideas always win power in a democracy?

5. “Modern political democracy is a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives.”

- Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, *What Democracy Is . . . And Is Not*

DISCUSS: What are the merits of competition? What are the merits of cooperation?

6. “Participation in a democracy is not a matter of subservience to power or blind loyalty to the state but is a willingness to be responsible for the state and to engage at all levels in the decisions that will chart its course.”

- Shirley Engle and Anna Ochoa, *Education for Democratic Citizenship*

DISCUSS: Why is blind loyalty dangerous?

7. “Democracy makes the sustained achievement of social goals more likely; and social progress makes more likely the survival and development of democracy.”

- UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children*

DISCUSS: How would you define social progress?

8. “Democracy is not simply a theory of self-interest that gives people license to pursue their own goals at the expense of others; the common good is a central feature of democracy.”

- Michael W. Apple and Jeffery Beane, *Democratic Schools*

DISCUSS: Why is the common good a central feature of democracy?



LESSON 1.2

WHY LAWS?

OBJECTIVE

To understand why laws are needed for social stability, the purpose of creating laws will be examined.

TEACHER'S BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Legislative Powers in Canada

Publisher, author, and political activist Mel Hurtig once stated that Canada's premiers are virtual kings when compared to American state governors. The development of these "kingships"—the broad scope of jurisdictional authority held by Canadian provinces—can be traced back to at least 1840.

In 1840, the *Act of Union* united Upper Canada and Lower Canada into one legislative territory and renamed them Canada East (modern-day Quebec) and Canada West (modern-day Ontario). Because Canada East and Canada West were very culturally divergent, governing them under one legislature was difficult.

The difficulties with governing Canada East and Canada West as one jurisdiction has led to speculation that Confederation in 1867 was not only done to unify the British territories north of the United States. It was also done to divorce Canada East and Canada West from their legislative union, and return some of their political autonomy. In this sense, Confederation politically unified Canada and gave each province considerable power.

The distribution of powers between the federal and provincial governments are set out in *The British North America Act, 1867*. It was later renamed *The Constitution Act, 1867*.

Federal Government

Section 91 of the constitution gives the federal government control over areas such as:

- banking
- criminal law
- broadcasting
- the RCMP
- air transportation
- national defence
- national parks
- international trade
- postal service
- oceans and fisheries

Provincial Governments

Section 92 of the constitution gives provincial governments control over areas such as:

- education
- highways
- health care
- forestry and mining
- agriculture
- labour standards
- liquor and gaming licences

Municipal Governments

Provincial governments delegate some of their powers to municipalities. Through bylaws and other actions, municipalities can deal with a wide range of matters such as:

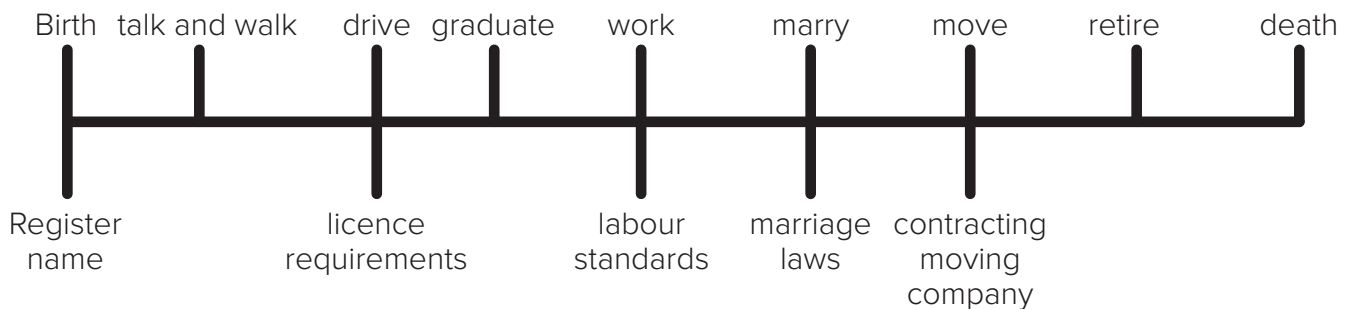
- streets and roads
- property taxes
- utilities such as water
- sewage and garbage disposal
- local police and fire protection
- parks and playgrounds
- building codes
- nuisances, such as noise, junked vehicles and litter

- store hours
- curfews
- animals and dangerous dogs

In addition to federal, provincial, and municipal governments, there are also various First Nations governments. The structure and authority of First Nations governments differ with each Nation. The structure and authority of these governments differ for each nation. There are parameters for how reserve governance will work under the *Indian Act*, but the full scope of power of each First Nation is largely determined by the agreement each nation strikes with the federal government. It can range from minimal governance to self-government agreements with Canada.

PROCEDURE

1. Draw a line on the board. At one end write birth and at the other write death. Ask students to think of various events of our lives, and write them chronologically along the line.
2. Have students think of laws related to those life events, and label them underneath the line. An incomplete example is provided below.



3. Discuss the resulting line and the laws.

KEY QUESTIONS

- **Do laws unnecessarily interfere with the right to live one’s life as one chooses?**
- **When do public needs override the individual’s right to do what they choose?**
- **What would life be like without laws?**

Teachers may also wish to explore the level of government that has jurisdiction for each law to illustrate the distribution of powers in Canada.

4. Summarise discussion with overhead Purpose of Laws.
5. Read Case Studies on the Purpose of Laws, then assign Renting a Home in Saskatchewan. PLEA’s Renting a Home is helpful for this activity. Find it at www.plea.org/housing/renting.

FURTHER EXPLORATION

6. To better-understand how laws help keep order in a democracy, check out Lesson Five: Freedom and Law in *Democracy and the Rule of Law*. Find it at teachers.plea.org.
7. “The Great Stink of London” is an excellent case study on the purpose of laws. Find it in *The Bathroom Barrister* at teachers.plea.org.
8. To explore the ways that laws help create order in a society, check out the stories of castaway societies that succeeded and castaway societies that failed in *The PLEA: Shipwrecked*. Find it at teachers.plea.org

PURPOSE OF LAWS

- Law supports broad social values, by helping society achieve goals such as promoting democratic processes, protecting the right to a fair trial, prescribing honest business practices, and establishing social programs.
- Law is a way of resolving disputes in an orderly manner following legal rules.
- Law protects citizens, their property, and rights.
- Law provides a framework for order in our society and ensures some degree of predictability and stability.

CASE STUDIES ON THE PURPOSE OF LAWS

Sometimes we think of laws as restricting our freedoms. For example, we are not free to speed through a school zone. Society believes that there should be a limit on how fast we drive in a school zone. Therefore, we created laws to limit vehicle speeds around schools. This is an example of how laws spell out a society's belief.

However, laws do more than just spell out our beliefs. Laws also are meant to have a positive effect. In the case of school zones, speed limits reduce the chances of children being run over.

Nevertheless, some people will view certain laws as too prohibitive, even if the intention of that law is good. They will say things like "Government should stay out of our lives."

It is true that we need to limit how far the law intrudes into our lives. Yet the absence of laws is often dangerous. Finding the right balance between laws and freedom is a difficult task.

Consider the following scenarios that illustrate what can happen without laws.

JAPAN AND HAITI:

Two Earthquakes, Two Outcomes

On March 11th, 2011, a 9.0 magnitude earthquake struck Japan. It was the seventh-most-powerful earthquake ever recorded. The quake and resulting tsunami caused widespread devastation, killing over 20,000 people.

On January 12th, 2010, a much less powerful 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck Haiti. Even though the earthquake did not trigger a tsunami like the Japanese earthquake, the damage was far more catastrophic. Haitian authorities said the earthquake killed 230,000 people, injured 300,000 and left a million homeless. Almost all deaths and injuries were the result of collapsing buildings.

Engineering professor Karl Stephan noted that the widespread death in Haiti was an example of "what happens when government absents itself completely from the supervision of private and even public construction. Things can go well for a while, but when an earthquake hits, the devastation is nearly total."¹

Japan's strict building codes and routine earthquake and tsunami drills ultimately saved lives. On the other hand, Haiti's looser building codes and lack of emergency drills contributed to their high death toll.

1. "Building Codes, Earthquakes, and Haiti," *Engineering Ethics*, 25 January 2010. <http://engineeringethicsblog.blogspot.com/2010/01/building-codes-earthquakes-and-haiti.html>

CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES:

Two Banking Systems, Two Outcomes

In 2008, the "Great Recession" devastated the global economy. Banking systems in the United States and across Europe collapsed. 465 banks collapsed in the United States alone. However, in Canada not one bank collapsed. One reason was our government regulations.

Economist Paul Krugman compared American and Canadian bank regulations. He noted that "the United States used to have a boring banking system, but Reagan-era deregulation made things dangerously interesting. Canada, by contrast, has maintained a happy tedium."

Canada's "boring" regulations force our banks to be extremely careful when lending money. There are tight limits on how much money they can lend and their ability to offload risky loans to other banks is restricted.

Krugman concluded that "[Canadian] restrictions meant fewer opportunities for bankers to come up with clever ideas than would have been available if Canada had emulated America's deregulatory zeal. But that, it turns out, was all to the good."² Our bank regulations helped Canada withstand the global recession without a banking collapse.

2. "Good and Boring," *New York Times*, 31 January 2010. www.nytimes.com/2010/02/01/opinion/01krugman.html



RENTING A HOME IN SASKATCHEWAN

Rental property regulations are a prominent issue in Saskatchewan, especially for young people. Virtually everyone will either rent a home at some time in their life or know someone who does.

Use PLEA's *Renting a Home* (find it at plea.org), various local news sources, and the experiences of people in your community to consider how rental regulations balance the rights of landlords and tenants.

1. What kind of regulations exist for rental properties in Saskatchewan? List the rules you deem most important.
2. How do Saskatchewan's rental regulations reflect the four purposes of law:
 - Law supports broad social values, by helping society achieve goals such as promoting democratic processes, protecting the right to a fair trial, prescribing honest business practices, and establishing social programs.
 - Law is a way of resolving disputes in an orderly manner following legal rules.
 - Law protects citizens, their property, and rights.
 - Law provides a framework for order in our society and ensures some degree of predictability and stability.
3. Do you believe the regulations are adequate? What changes would you make?
4. What are potential consequences of having no regulations whatsoever?



LESSON 1.3

PUBLIC GOODS AND SERVICES

OBJECTIVE

The role of government in providing public goods and services will be explored.

TEACHER'S BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Foundational Reasons for Public Goods and Services

Generally, public goods are goods that have shared consumption and are non-exclusionary. To illustrate the idea of “shared consumption” and “non-exclusionary,” consider a local park. The park allows shared consumption because many people receive the benefit from it at one time. The park is also non-exclusionary because everyone is entitled to use it.

The same logic applies to roads, sidewalks, and bridges. They are public goods. Many museums and libraries are also public goods. In Canada, most health care and the vast majority of K-12 education fall into the realm of public goods as well, though they are often referred to as public services.

Public goods and services are paid for by taxes and profits from Crown Corporations. Sometimes, the costs are offset by user fees. For example, consider public transportation. Governments invest money in public transportation. However, we also pay a fare when we board a bus. Together, the government subsidy and the user fees cover the full cost of the bus service.

Because bus fares have a greater impact on low-income earners like students and seniors, certain people are able to receive discounted fares. Basing bus fares on people's ability to

pay helps ensure that even the poorest members of society have access to the same services as the well-off.

Critics, however, charge that a good is not truly public unless it is free for everyone.

According to the Henry George Foundation of Great Britain—named after the 19th century social reformer—“The value of [public] services does not relate to the cost of providing them but rather to the value that would be lost if they were not provided.” Think again about public transportation. It provides an affordable means for individuals to travel to work, shop, or socialise. There is also a benefit for people who do not use the bus. More people using buses means that less cars will be on the road. Less cars means easier driving. As well, less cars mean less pollution in the air. Less pollution means better health for everyone.

As should be clear, the value of public transportation cannot be reduced to the simple cost of running buses.

Now consider other public services, such as fire and police protection, sewage and sanitation systems, and health care and education. Their value to society as a whole cannot be reduced to their financial cost. The broader context must also be considered to understand their true value.

Another reason why governments provide goods and services is a concept called “market failure.” Market failure exists when:

- a good or service would not or cannot be adequately provided by the private sector
- society would be put at risk if the private-sector provider failed

To illustrate market failure, consider water utilities. It probably would not be economically-feasible for a private-sector company to build and manage a city's entire water system. Even if a private company took on this task, if they went bankrupt the company could just walk away, leaving the public without safe access to water. After all, private-sector companies are ultimately responsible to their shareholders. Government is ultimately responsible to each and every citizen, and accountable through the democratic process. Since the state will always be there, it is best-suited to provide certain essential goods and services.

Of course, the government does not need to provide non-necessary goods and services that can be provided by the private sector. For example, a functioning society would not be at risk if there was a collapse in the provision of pantyhose.

Therefore, government does not manufacture, distribute, or sell pantyhose.

Public goods and services fulfill a unique social purpose. They help create an equal, functioning, and healthy society. Further, public goods and services serve a democratic function. Every citizen is an equal owner, thus every citizen has an equal say in how these goods and services are provided.

PROCEDURE

1. To introduce the idea of public spending, discuss how K-12 schooling is a public good.

KEY QUESTIONS

- **Are citizens unable to attend public school if they are unable to pay?**
 - **Would that be different if school was not a public good?**
 - **What would the short-term and long-term consequences be if education was not public, but rather based on ability to pay?**
2. Using background information, discuss the concept of public goods and services. The overhead [Government of Saskatchewan Public Spending](#) can help illustrate the discussion.
 3. Lead classroom reading of [The Purpose of Public Spending](#).

KEY QUESTION

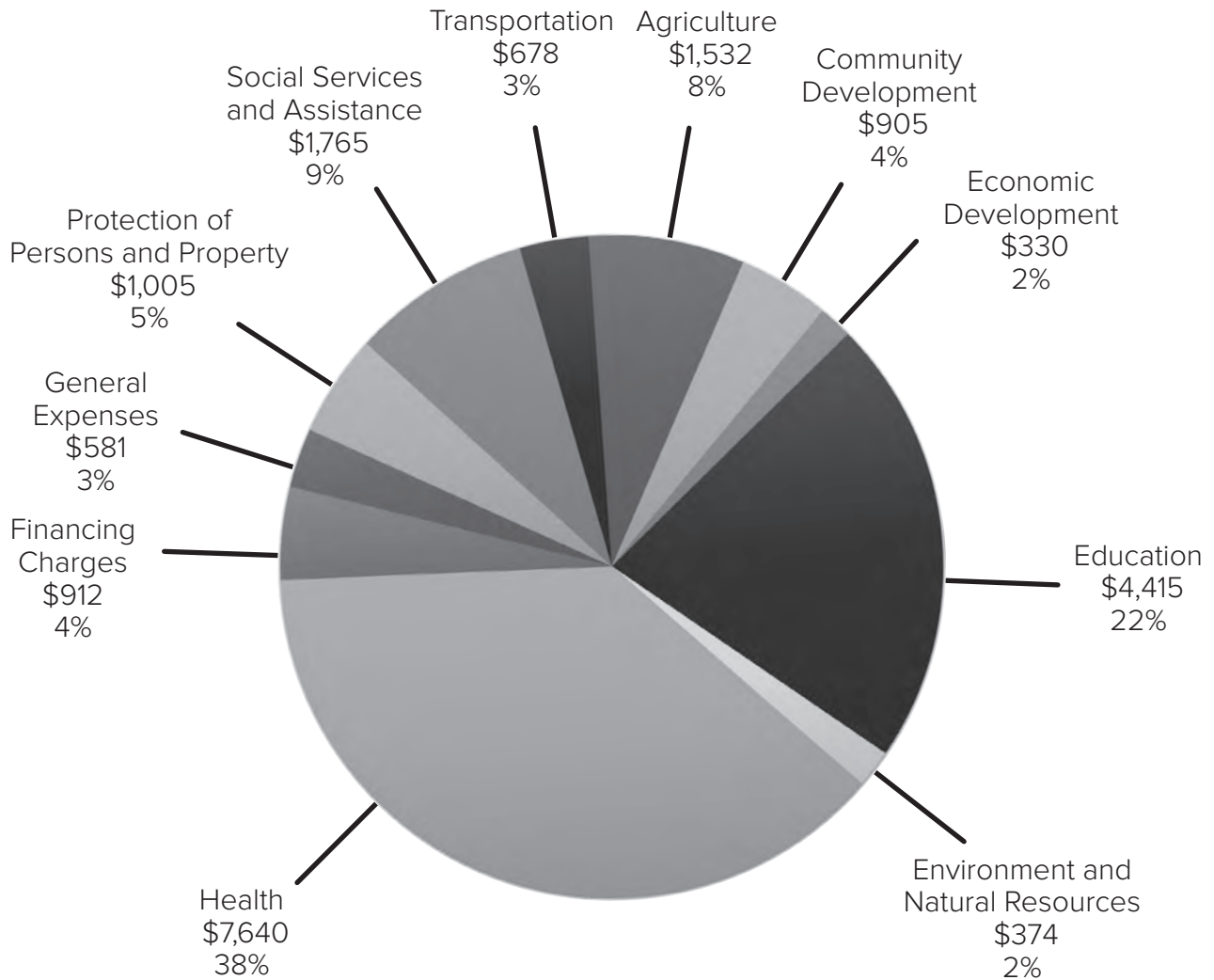
- **All citizens are equal. Why must we ensure that certain goods and services are equally available to all citizens?**
4. Students may research and report on the goals, benefits, and critiques of a particular public good or service. Starting points for research could include policy think-tanks, such as the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (www.policyalternatives.ca) and the Fraser Institute (www.fraserinstitute.org).

FURTHER EXPLORATION

5. To discuss some ways that public goods and services are accountable to citizens, check out Ombudsman Saskatchewan. Find them at www.ombudsman.sk.ca

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN PUBLIC SPENDING

(In millions of dollars)



TOTAL EXPENSES: \$20.135 BILLION*

Source: Government of Saskatchewan Provincial Budget, 2024-2025

* Discrepancy in total is due to rounding of department subtotals

THE PURPOSE OF PUBLIC SPENDING

Public spending serves many functions. The roads we drive on, the schools we attend, and the hospitals we visit are just a few examples of how public money is put to use in Saskatchewan. Other examples include seniors' drug plans, farm income stability programs, and provincial parks. The list is very long: in total, the Government of Saskatchewan spends over \$20 billion a year.

To help understand the purpose of public spending, consider the example of how roads are planned, built, and maintained.

Without government, how would roads be constructed? Perhaps you could build the road directly in front of your home, then hope your neighbours would continue the road. But even if that could be done, who would plan where the road should ultimately go? How would the road be maintained? And who would build connecting roads across areas where nobody lived?

By having government build and maintain roads, there are many positive results:

- **Costs are reduced**
the theory of “economies of scale” suggests it is cheaper to build roads through central planning than to build them piece-by-piece
- **Citizens have greater mobility**
facilitating travel by foot, bike, or vehicle gives citizens more freedoms
- **Businesses generate wealth**
access to businesses is created for customers, employees, and suppliers
- **Society has more freedom**
freeing individuals and businesses from the task of creating their own road network gives people more time to devote to their personal interests
- **All citizens have an equivalent say**
if suggestions about or problems with the road arise, each person is entitled to have their say as an equal owner of the road.

The above example of roads, although simplified, illustrates economist and Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen's research on the purpose of public spending. In *Development as Freedom*, Sen pointed out that countries with higher public spending have healthier and better educated citizens. He believed when government adequately provides core services, citizens are free to pursue individual choices that bring about personal and social development.

Public spending can also make society more fair. For example:

- social assistance programs help ensure the poorest in society—such as seniors and the unemployed—have a minimum income and affordable housing
- agriculture stabilisation programs help protect farmers and farm communities from fluctuations beyond their control, such as bad weather and global market shocks
- health care and education ensure that all citizens receive services essential to a healthy and informed life

When government provides goods and services to all citizens, the middle class and the poor have access to the same services as the rich. In other words, public spending helps equalise society. This benefits everyone in society, including the rich. *The Spirit*



THE PURPOSE OF PUBLIC SPENDING... CONTINUED

Level, Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett's book about equality in societies, found that when the gap between the rich and the poor narrowed, life was better for everyone:

- crime was reduced
- drug misuse was less prevalent
- child well-being was higher
- educational achievement was stronger
- communities exhibited higher degrees of mutual trust
- people lived longer and healthier lives

Investing in public goods and services builds up the well-being of individuals in a society, which in turn builds up the well-being of society as a whole.

Discuss

1. What basic services or facilities do you believe should be available to all citizens?
2. What services and facilities are actually available to all citizens through public means?
3. How do the public goods and services you have identified in Questions #1 and #2 enable citizens to pursue individual choices that bring about personal and social development?
4. What kinds of goods and services should not be provided by government? Why not?



LESSON 1.4

PAYING FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES

OBJECTIVE

To understand how we pay for public goods and services, their relationship to taxation will be explored.

TEACHER'S BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Progressive Personal Taxation

A recurring theme in public discussion is income and wealth inequality. Following World War II, the significant economic growth of Western democracies was shared relatively equally between the poor and the rich. However, in the 1970s the richest few began taking a disproportionately larger share of the wealth. This shift has led to economic inequality not seen since the 1930s. Today, about half of the world's wealth is owned by the richest 1% of people.

Though economic disparity in Canada is much less exaggerated than the world as a whole, Canada still suffers from a high degree of economic inequality.

According to Statistics Canada, in 2022, the wealthiest 20% of Canadian households held more than two-thirds of the country's household net worth. The bottom 40% of households only held 2.6% of the country's household wealth.

The news is not entirely bad. In the same year, Statistics Canada reported that the income gap between the rich and the poor narrowed ever-so-slightly.

Despite small bits of good news, economic inequality remains a real problem in Canada. According to the Bank of Canada, economic inequality exploded in the 1980s and 1990s. While inequality stabilised during the 2000s,

the fact remains that the incredible shift of wealth seen in the 1980s and 1990s has never been corrected.

There will always be some degree of wealth inequality in liberal democracies. Nonetheless, many experts have identified substantial economic inequality as a serious problem. As discussed in Lesson 1.3, the more economic inequality in a society, the worse off that society becomes. Literacy, life opportunities, and even life expectancy become worse for the poor.

In fact, the growth of wealth disparity can contribute to a breakdown in mutual trust and social cohesion.

Wealth and Social Cohesion

Warnings that society could break down due to wealth inequality have come from the highest levels. For example, Janet Yellen—then the chair of America's central bank—told an American senate hearing that growing inequality “can shape [and] determine the ability of different groups to participate equally in a democracy and have grave effects on social stability over time.”¹ In other words, inequality undermines democracy.

Research backs up Yellen's worries. For example, one study analysed nearly 1,800 public policies in the United States. The authors, Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page, concluded in part that “preferences of economic elites ... have far more independent impact upon policy change than the preferences of average citizens do. To be sure, this does not mean that ordinary citizens always lose out; they fairly often get the policies they favor, but only because those policies happen also to be preferred by the economically-elite citizens who wield the actual influence.”²

Quite simply, the rich are more likely than the poor to get the laws that they want.

Such claims give reason for pause. That being said, one also must be careful not to directly transpose the American political experience with that of Canada. This is especially true given America's loose political financing laws and greater income inequality. However, the broader point should not be missed. Every voice should count equally in a democracy, but steep economic stratification could result in laws and public policies that do not always reflect the wishes of the majority.

Taxation for Equality

Because economic inequality is harmful to democracy, how can government help mitigate it?

Lesson 1.3 examined how public goods and services help to equalise society. When everyone is provided with the same essential services, society becomes more equal.

For example, wealthy Canadians and poor Canadians use the same health care system. The rich cannot buy their way to the front of the line for treatment, because health care in Canada is rationed by your health needs, not by your ability to pay. Public health care makes society more equal.

Further, this shared experience helps contribute to our sense of mutual responsibility. Because the rich and the poor rely on the same health care system, everyone shares an equal interest in seeing it work well.

Nevertheless, wealthier citizens are better-able to financially contribute to the health care system, along with other public goods and services. It would be patently wrong to ask a poor widow to contribute the same amount of taxes for public services as a wealthy CEO. Reflecting this reality, income tax in Canada—the single-biggest source of government revenue—is levied in a progressive manner.

Progressive income tax means that the more a person earns, the higher the marginal rate of tax that they pay. In Saskatchewan in 2024, the very lowest income earners pay no provincial income tax whatsoever. Those who earn more than \$18,491 pay 10.5% provincial tax on every dollar earned up to \$52,057. The additional earnings between \$52,057 and \$148,734 are taxed at 12.5%. Finally, there is a top provincial tax bracket of 14.5% on any earnings over \$148,734.

Canada's federal income tax structure is very similar. When provincial income tax is combined with federal income tax, the top income tax rate in Saskatchewan is 47.5%.

Progressive taxation makes Canada's tax system more fair for everyone. The less income you have, the more of your total earnings go towards essentials such as groceries and shelter. The higher your earnings, the more "disposable income" you have for luxuries that are not necessary for life.

However, the tax system's progressivity has been in a general decline for sixty years. In 1965, there were 17 income tax brackets. In 1987 there were 10. Today, when the federal and provincial income tax rates are combined, there are only seven.

Along with the reduction in tax brackets has come a reduction of tax rates, especially for the wealthy. It began in 1972 when the top rate was slashed from 80% to 60%. While 80% tax is high, Nobel Prize-winning economist Paul Krugman has pointed to research that suggests that the ideal tax rate for top earners is between 70-80%, if the goal is to generate optimal tax revenue.

The reason a 70-80% tax rates generate optimal tax revenue is not because these rates siphon tax dollars from the wealthy straight to the government. Rather, these high rates change the incentives for corporate pay structures. Political economists such as Mark Blyth have explained this phenomenon well. They called this era—roughly from the close of World War II until the 1970s—the "Great Compression."

During the Great Compression, tax rates on top earners were incredibly high. These high taxes meant that corporations had little incentive to provide ridiculously high pay for their top executives. Why hand out millions of dollars to a few executives when 80% of it would go straight to the government?

This changed the behaviour of corporations. It made sense for companies to more fairly-distribute salary across the company instead of see a few people's paycheques mostly vanish in taxes. As a result, lower-paid employees were paid more.

At first, it would seem that paying all employees more would lower tax revenues: after all, low-and-middle class earners pay lower tax rates than the highest earners. However, this tax policy led to two things happening.

First, when the wages of low-and-middle income people went up, their tax bills went up. At the same time, because these people had more money in their pockets, they relied less upon public services and government supports.

Second, low-and-middle class earners tend to spend their money in the local economy. The flow of money locally generated more local tax revenue.

The result of 80% taxes on the highest earners? A rise in overall tax revenues and a flourishing middle class. Government revenues were boosted and government costs were reduced.

To be sure, no single tax policy can explain complex economic phenomena. Other characteristics of the Great Compression that contributed to the

burgeoning middle-class were well-organised labour unions that were largely focussed on working conditions and salaries. As well, the era was a time of heavy restrictions on foreign investment, making it more difficult to move money outside of Canada.

Highly progressive taxes on the rich were only one component of the Great Compression.

Canada's tax system has become less progressive in other ways as well. For example, there have been regressive changes to how income from capital gains is taxed. Generally speaking, the tax rates discussed above only apply to labour. When money is earned from selling property or investments, it is considered a capital gain. Capital gains are subjected to less taxes than labour.

Capital gains taxes were introduced following a 1972 Royal Commission. The commission reported that capital gains and wages should be treated the same, since both increase an individual's economic power. Or as the commission's chair simply put it, "a buck is a buck."

At first, 50% of any capital gain was subjected to income tax. In 1987, two-thirds of any capital gain became subjected to income tax. In 1990, three-quarters of any capital gain was subjected to income tax. However, in 2000, tax laws were changed so that, once again, only half of the money earned as capital gains were taxed. More recently, in 2024 the law was changed again in a more progressive manner. Half of all capital gains remained taxable, but now two-thirds of any capital gain over \$250,000 became taxable income.

Because the super-wealthy often earn considerable money from capital gains, their tax rate can be significantly less than the tax rates of working-class people. Even some billionaires, such as Warren Buffet, have remarked that capital gains tax exemptions are unfair. Buffet frequently remarks that while he pays more taxes than his secretary, his secretary pays a higher rate of tax than he does.

That being said, not all changes to the income tax system have been at the expense of progressivity. In addition to recent changes to how capital gains are taxed, federal and provincial basic personal income tax exemptions have risen in recent years, increasing the amount of money a person can earn before having to pay income tax. As well, the federal government has slightly raised taxes on the highest income earners in recent years. To claim

that tax trends have been entirely for the benefit of the wealthy at the expense of the poor is not true.

These tweaks noted, the overall long-term trend of income taxes has been a story of declining progressivity.

Nevertheless, some argue the system is still progressive enough. There may be merit to that argument. Data from 2021 showed Canada's top 1% of income earners paid 22.5% of total taxes. In fact, the top 10% of earners pay over half of all income taxes. Meanwhile, the bottom 20% of income earners pay less than 1% of all personal income taxes.

Of course, income taxes are only one part of the story of how each of us contributes taxes for public spending. When other types of personal taxes, such as sales taxes, payroll taxes, profit taxes, property taxes, fuel taxes, import duties, tobacco taxes, and liquor taxes are factored in, a 2023 study from the Fraser Institute found that the bottom 20% of earners took in 5% of the total income earned in Canada, and paid a 2% share of Canada's total personal taxes. On the other end, the top 20% of earners took in 46% of all income earned in Canada, and paid 62% of Canada's total personal taxes.

Regardless of where one stands on the issue of income tax progressivity, the fact remains that government must generate revenue to pay for public services. Canada's progressive taxation demonstrates that our society has a degree of mutual responsibility. People with more wealth pay more taxes. How we came to this understanding can be partially explained through Canada's political development.

Canada's History of Mutual Responsibility

Rand Dyck explained in *Canadian Politics* that the logic guiding Canada's relatively strong sense of mutual responsibility can be traced back to the United Empire Loyalists. United Empire Loyalists opposed the American Revolution and fled to current-day Canada, then called British North America. As Dyck wrote, "[t]hey saw society not as a mass of grasping, ambitious, "free" individuals, but as an organic community in which all people had their place and did their respective part to contribute to the welfare of the whole."³

This belief in our responsibility to society as a whole may seem left-wing, but it actually links back to the roots of Canadian conservatism. According

to Charles Taylor, Canadian conservatism descended from the British Tory tradition, influenced by the French along with the ex-American Empire Loyalists. Together, this dynamic created a conservatism that was wholly different than the United States' libertarian-based conservatism. "Unlike the caricatured capitalist," wrote Taylor in the early 1980s, "Canadian conservatives believe in an organic society and the mutual obligations among all classes. Which is why... they embrace the principle of social justice and even the welfare state."⁴

Many have argued, however, that this structural framework of Canadian conservatism has steadily drifted towards the American model in more recent times.

All of this helps explain not just Canada's progressive taxation system, but also why Canada has traditionally been a more equal society than our neighbours to the south. Canada has high levels of economic inequality, but our unique political history has made us more economically equal than the United States.

1. <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/bernie-sanders-asks-fed-chair-whether-us-oligarchy/>
2. http://journals.cambridge.org/download.php?file=%2FPPS%2FPPS12_03%2FS1537592714001595a.pdf&code=580426554dc482cc83c2e95bce65491e
3. *Canadian Politics: Concise Fifth Edition*, 2011
4. *Radical Tories*, 1984

PROCEDURE

1. With the class, compile a list of goods and services that the students have made use of in the past 24 hours. Determine which are public goods and services.
2. Explain that taxes pay for public services. To consider differing views on the role of taxes in paying for public services, lead classroom reading of *Were you happy working for the government until June 10?* and *"Tax freedom day?" Not really.*

KEY QUESTIONS

- **Are taxes a cost to society or an investment in society?**
- **Generally speaking, lower taxes mean less public services. Would you be willing to forgo public services for lower taxes?**
- **What would be the consequences of your decision to have lower taxes for less public services?**

3. Use the overhead Government of Saskatchewan Revenue to break down sources of public money.

KEY QUESTIONS

- **Can taxes be used to change the behaviour of citizens? Think about carbon taxes, liquor taxes, and taxes on junk food, for example.**
 - **Should certain sectors or certain groups contribute more taxes? Less? Think about very profitable corporations or high-income earners, for example.**
4. Using teacher's background information, narrow the discussion to the idea of progressive taxation, to help inform a class discussion of Universality vs. Means Testing.
 5. To move towards considerations of the role of elected officials and of the purpose of elections, lead class discussion of the responsibilities of governments when using public money.

KEY QUESTION

- **If citizens are unhappy with how public dollars are spent, what recourse do they have?**

FURTHER EXPLORATION

6. Teachers interested in further pursuing discussion around the concepts of taxation and public expenditure may be interested in the activity "Taxes and Public Expenditure: Springfield's Bear Patrol" in *Learning About Law with The Simpsons*. Find it at teachers.plea.org
7. Further concepts about universality of public services are explored in "Absolute Freedom and Universal Health Care" in *Albert Camus' The Plague: The Learning Resource*. Find it at teachers.plea.org

The Calgary Sun

June 11, 2015

Were you happy working for the government until June 10?

*Charles Lammam and
Milagros Palacios*

Vancouver, BC (Troy Media). No one really thinks there shouldn't be any taxes. After all, how would governments fund important public services that form the foundation of our economy? Think of services such as protecting property, building infrastructure, upholding the legal system, to name a few.

The real debate is about the amount of taxes governments extract from us given the services we get in return. Are we paying too much, too little, or just the right amount? In other words, are we getting good value for our tax dollars?

That's up to you to decide.

WORKING FOR THE GOVERNMENT FOR NEARLY HALF A YEAR

But to make an informed assessment, you must have a complete understanding of all the taxes you pay. Unfortunately, it's not so clear because the different levels of government levy a wide range of taxes—some visible, many hidden. This includes everything from income taxes, payroll taxes, health taxes, sales taxes, property taxes, fuel taxes, vehicle taxes, profit taxes, import taxes, to “sin” taxes on liquor and tobacco, and much more.

The Fraser Institute's annual Tax Freedom Day calculation is a handy measure of the total tax burden imposed on Canadian families by the federal, provincial, and local

governments. If you had to pay all your taxes in advance, you'd give government each and every dollar you earned before Tax Freedom Day.

In 2015, we estimate the average Canadian family (with two or more people) will pay \$44,980 in total taxes. That works out to 43.7 per cent of annual income, which, on the calendar, represents more than five months of income—from January 1 to June 9. It's not until June 10—Tax Freedom Day—when families finally start working for themselves, not the government.

Is working almost half the year to pay for government reasonable given the current mix of government programs and services? This is a question we don't purport to answer here.

But it makes you think. Are governments doing too much? Can they do what they do now—but more efficiently and with fewer tax dollars? Would the income that goes to taxes be better used by you and your family for spending, saving, or paying down household debt?

With 43.7 per cent of our income going to taxes, it still isn't enough to pay for what our governments do.

This year, the federal government and seven provincial governments (including Ontario) are planning deficits totalling \$18.2 billion. When governments spend beyond their means, they borrow, incurring deficits, which are essentially deferred taxes.

YOU DECIDE

According to our calculations, Tax Freedom Day would come four days later this year, on June 14, if Canadian governments covered their current spending with even greater tax increases instead of borrowing to cover the shortfall. If that happened, the percentage of income going to taxes would jump to 44.9 per cent.

In the end, it's up to you and your family to decide whether you're getting good bang for your tax buck. But we all need a complete understanding of the total tax bill to make an informed assessment. And therein lies the value of our Tax Freedom Day calculation.

So, are you happy with working until June 10 to pay for government?

Charles Lammam and Milagros Palacios are co-authors of the Fraser Institute study *Canadians Celebrate Tax Freedom Day on June 10, 2015* available at www.fraserinstitute.org. Watch this year's Tax Freedom Day video at the Fraser Institute's YouTube channel www.youtube.com/FraserInstitute.

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The Toronto Star

June 27, 2005

“Tax freedom day?” Not really

Neil Brooks and Linda McQuaig

Tax Freedom Day has come and gone. Feel any richer yet? Almost every cause has designated a day of the year to draw attention to its message, from World Leprosy Day to Chronic Fatigue and Immune Dysfunction Day. Few, however, have enjoyed the success of Tax Freedom Day, an event that routinely prompts loud laments about the heavy tax burden weighing on Canadians.

This is a remarkable achievement on the part of the Fraser Institute, the right-wing think tank that promotes Tax Freedom Day (according to Fraser, it was yesterday) and has succeeded in presenting it as simply a day of public education about taxes. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

If anything, it's a day of public misinformation, in which the tax burden is grossly exaggerated and the nature of taxes hopelessly distorted.

The institute bills “Tax Freedom Day” as the day when the average Canadian family has earned enough to pay off its tax bill for the year. Only then, it says, will Canadians stop “working for the government.”

So does this mean that, for the rest of the year, Canadians will be working for Loblaws, Canadian Tire, Shoppers Drug Mart and other places we'll spend our money? Of course, when we shop at these enterprises, we don't think of ourselves as employees, but as consumers buying things we need and want.

But our taxes also pay for things we need and want—health care, education, pensions, highways, police and fire services, libraries—that we've decided through our democratic system to pay for collectively. If we paid individually for these benefits on the open market, they'd cost us a lot more. In what sense is paying for public services that benefit us all a denial of freedom?

In calculating when Tax Freedom Day occurs, the institute further distorts the picture. It bases its calculations on a family's “cash income,” rather than the more meaningful measure of a family's “total income.” This shrinks the size of the family's income and makes the tax burden therefore seem heavier.

So, for instance, the institute determined last year that Tax Freedom Day fell on June 28, leaving Canadians with the impression they spent almost half the year “working for the government.” But if the institute had used the more meaningful measure of “total income,” Tax Freedom Day would have fallen near the end of April—about two months earlier.

For most Canadians, Tax Freedom Day arrives even earlier. That's because most Canadians have less income and pay less tax than the “average” family cited by the institute. The average includes well-to-do families, who are few in number but who, in some cases, have really big incomes and therefore pay more tax.

The institute's own numbers show that, for low-income earners, Tax Freedom Day would arrive in late February; for the huge group of those who straddle the middle range of incomes, Tax Freedom Day would arrive by mid-April.

The institute also calculates that our taxes have risen by a staggering 1,550 per cent since 1961. Sounds dramatic. But the number is essentially meaningless; it fails to take into account inflation and the real increase in Canadian incomes. Once these factors are accounted for, a different picture emerges: the effective tax rate in Canada has risen by about 40 per cent—not 1,550 per cent—in the last few decades.

Of course, over those decades, some major government programs have been established, including universal health insurance and the Canada Pension Plan. Failing to mention the extra government benefits we now receive is like complaining the family's Loblaws bill is 40 per cent higher, without acknowledging the family now gets a lot more groceries on each shopping trip.

Unions have attempted to draw attention to how little tax corporations pay, noting that Corporate Tax Freedom Day would fall in late January. The concept has been attacked as an attempt by unions to advance an ideological agenda.

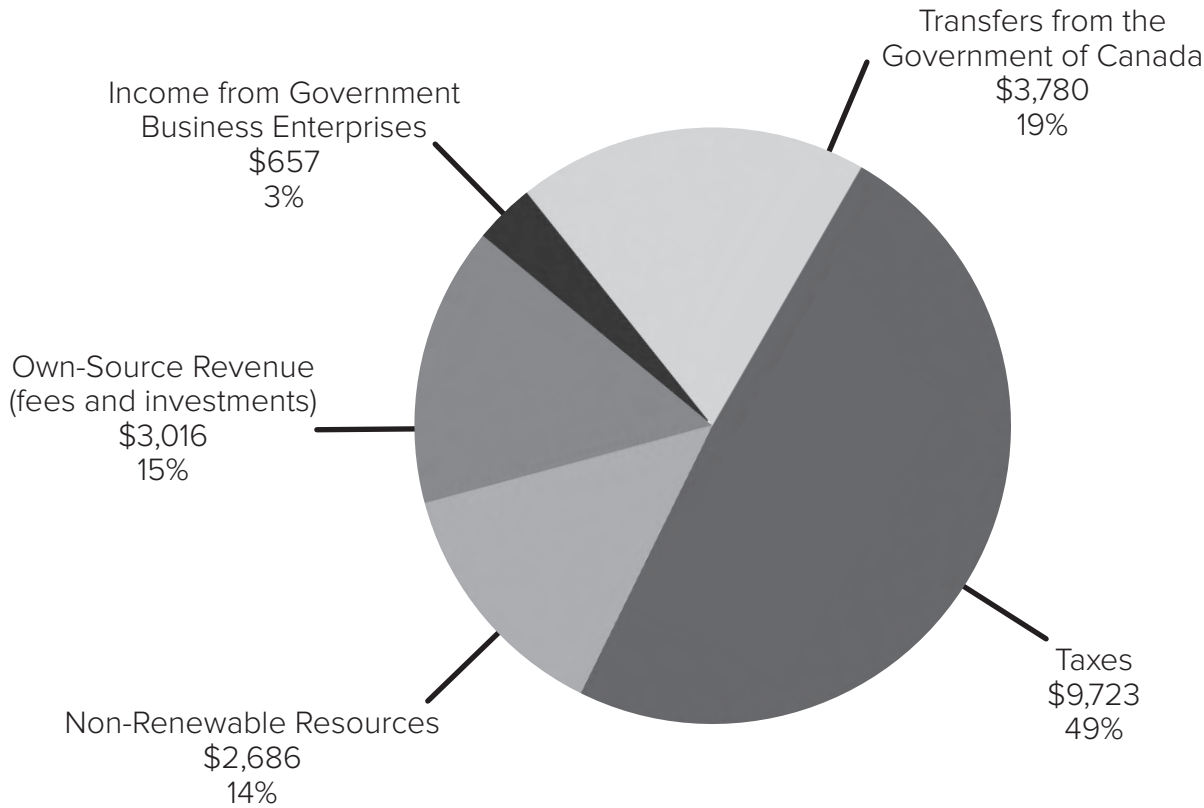
Oddly, however, the media seem blind to the blatantly ideological agenda of the Fraser Institute. And so it is that the institute's Tax Freedom Day is given extensive media coverage each year, while Corporate Tax Freedom Day gets about as much attention as Chronic Fatigue and Immune Dysfunction Day.

Neil Brooks teaches tax law and policy at Osgoode Hall Law School. Linda McQuaig is a Toronto-based author and commentator.

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GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN REVENUE

(In millions of dollars)



TOTAL REVENUE: \$19.862 BILLION

Source: Government of Saskatchewan Provincial Budget 2024/2025

UNIVERSALITY VS. MEANS TESTING

Some people believe that government programs such as public pensions, child care plans, and pharmacare should be “means-tested.” In other words, if an individual is above a certain income level, they will not be eligible for the government program.

Other people believe that such government programs should be fully universal. In other words, regardless of income everyone qualifies for the program.

Arguments for universality include:

- progressive income tax already acts as a means test
- there are administrative costs associated with implementing means tests
- shared experiences can lead to a stronger societal cohesion across classes

Arguments against universality include:

- programs for individual classes can build class solidarity
- there is higher cost when programs are universal
- the rich simply do not need extra benefits

What do you think? Should the wealthy be entitled to the same services and benefits as the poor? Some services but not others? No services whatsoever? Justify your position.



SECTION TWO
THE MECHANICS
OF
GOVERNMENT



LESSON 2.1

PROVINCIAL GOVERNANCE: A STRUCTURAL OUTLINE

OBJECTIVE

The role of elected members of the legislature, the Lieutenant Governor, and the judiciary will be explored to understand how governments are elected and laws are made.

PROCEDURE

1. Using the overhead The Three Branches of Government, introduce students to governance in Saskatchewan.

KEY QUESTIONS

- **Can you name any politicians? If so, who? (This is an opportunity to distinguish between Canada's three levels of government as well as First Nations governments, as discussed in Lesson 1.2)**
 - **What do you know about these people and the work they do?**
2. To build specific understandings of Saskatchewan's government and politicians, read Saskatchewan's Governance: An Overview.

KEY QUESTION

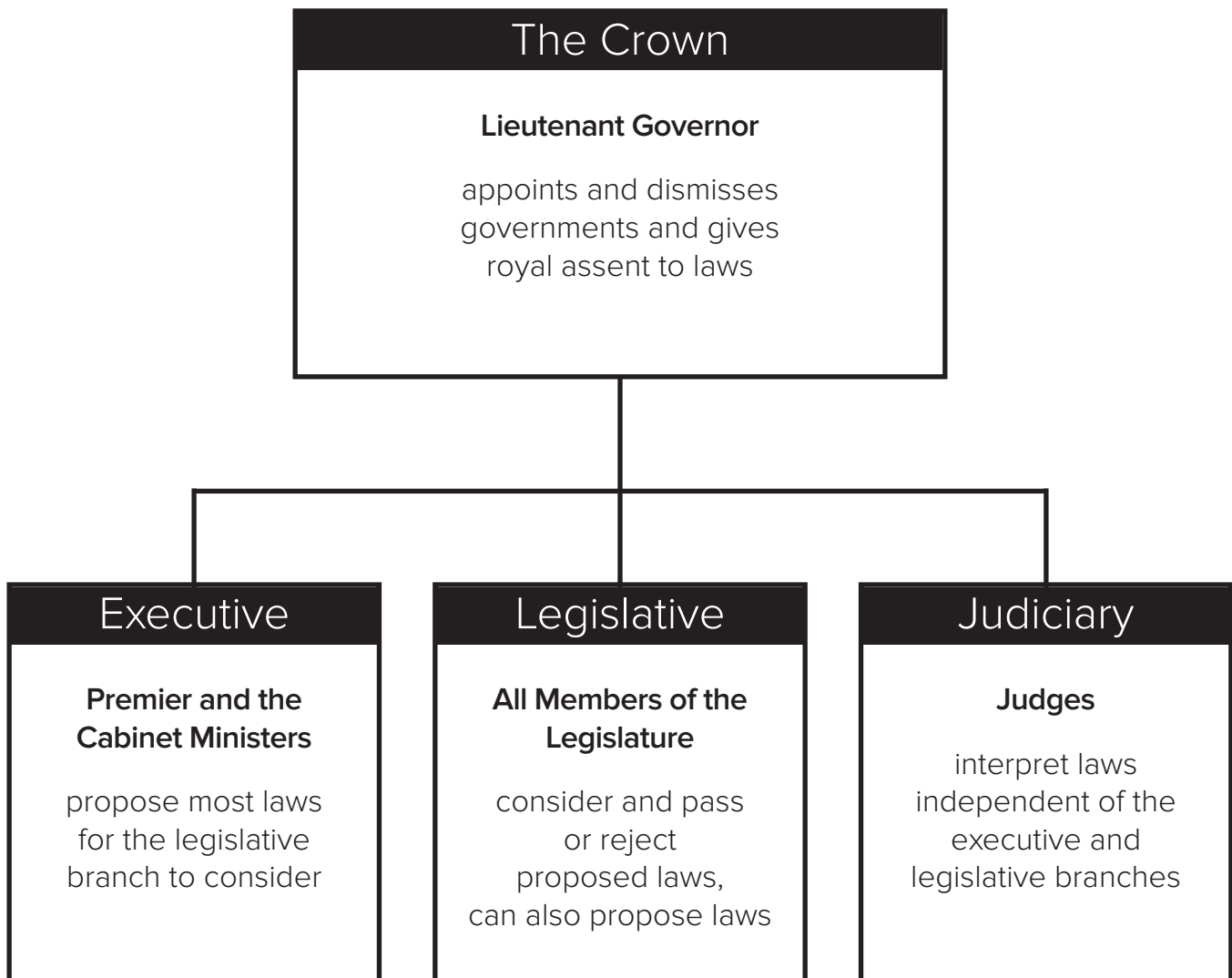
- **What ways can politicians keep in touch with their constituents, to understand what the public wants?**

3. To learn about a few past MLAs and MLA candidates in Saskatchewan, assign Politician Names and Places.
4. To broaden understandings of government's functions and specific MLAs, assign Considering MLAs and Ministries. Teachers may wish to assign specific MLAs and ministries. Keep in mind that ministers do not need to be from the governing party. NOTE: If this resource is being taught during an election period, this assignment should be adapted by profiling candidates for public office.

FURTHER EXPLORATION

5. Teachers looking for a broader explanation of the judiciary's role in governance should check out *The PLEA: Canada's Legal System: An Introduction*. For an explanation of how judges are required to stay above the political fray, check out *Judges and the Rule of Law* in lesson four of *Democracy and the Rule of Law*. Find them at **teachers.plea.org**.
6. Class tours of Saskatchewan's Legislative Assembly are an excellent opportunity to better-understand provincial government. Learn more at **www.legassembly.sk.ca/visitors**

THE THREE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT



SASKATCHEWAN'S GOVERNANCE: AN OVERVIEW

In Saskatchewan we elect people to be members of the legislative assembly (MLAs). This group makes up one branch of our government: the legislative branch. The legislative—together with the executive and the judicial—form our three branches of government. All of it is overseen by the British monarchy.

To understand this structure of governance requires a quick look to Canada's past. Following Columbus' "discovery" of the western world, European countries began to lay claim to various First Nations lands. Britain, France, Spain, Denmark, and Russia all made claims to parts of modern-day Canada. Slowly, Britain took control of the vast majority of the territory, through war, negotiation, and treaties. As the British gained dominance, they put in place governing institutions that recognised the British monarch (or Crown) as the head of state.

At first, Britain sent governors to rule their Canadian colonies. These governors were the highest authorities in the colonies: the representatives of the Crown. They set policy direction for the colony, generally following the instructions of the British government.

To help rule the colony, each governor would appoint an executive council. Executive councils performed much of the day-to-day work of governing and creating laws. However, their power was limited. The governor could instruct the executive council on what to do and had final say over their decisions.

As the colonies grew, government grew more complex. A significant step towards democracy in the colonies was the establishment of elected legislative assemblies. The first colonial legislature appeared in Nova Scotia in 1758. Property-owning men could now vote for representatives in government. The legislatures debated and voted on laws and policies. However, the power of the legislatures was limited: the executive and governor were free to ignore their wishes.

Political reformers wanted change. They thought that colonial governors had too much power. They believed that wealthy locals were too cozy with the governors. And most importantly, they believed that laws must be approved not just by the governor, but also by the legislature.

These beliefs gave rise in the 1830s to the responsible government movement. Responsible government is a system where the executive branch of government is responsible to the legislative branch. In other words, laws must be approved by legislative assemblies.

The responsible government movement was well-timed. In the mid-1800s, Britain was looking for ways to reduce their overseas commitments. The British saw responsible government as a way to slowly spin off their colonies, while keeping them loyal to the Crown. So with the support of Queen Victoria, in the 1840s the North American colonies were granted responsible government. Any law proposed by the executive council would now be approved or rejected by the legislature. To be sure, the British governor still retained the right of final approval, but only after the legislature had their say.

Responsible government remains in Canada and its provinces today. Generally, the executive proposes laws, the legislature approves or rejects the executive's proposals, and a governor representing the British monarchy—or Crown—signs laws into power.

In Saskatchewan, the Crown's tasks are the responsibility of the Lieutenant Governor. Like earlier times, our Lieutenant Governor is an appointed position. And like earlier times, the Lieutenant Governor is our head of state. However, the British no longer choose our Lieutenant Governor. Instead, the Prime Minister consults with the province, and together they recommended someone for the position. Canada's Governor General then appoints that person to a five-year term.



EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Saskatchewan's executive branch of government consists of the premier and cabinet ministers. The executive is generally chosen from elected members of the legislative assembly (MLAs). This branch of government proposes most of the laws considered by the legislature. It also oversees the civil service and the enforcement of provincial laws.

The Premier

The premier is the head of Saskatchewan's government. Usually, the premier is the leader of the political party with the most elected MLAs. The premier's duties include:

- selecting a cabinet,
- addressing the public on issues of provincial concern,
- representing the province and speaking on behalf of the province's citizens on a national level, and
- working with stakeholders in the province (elected officials, community organisations, labour organisations, business owners, etc.) to advance the province's social and economic prosperity.

Cabinet Ministers

Each cabinet minister leads a department of government. They are chosen by the premier, based on their individual skills. However, when forming a cabinet as a whole—which generally consists of about twenty people—consideration is given to such things as gender, ethnicity, occupation, and geographic representation. This is done so that the cabinet better-reflects the diversity of Saskatchewan.

There is no law stating a person must be elected to the legislature to serve in cabinet. Eleven people have served in Saskatchewan's cabinets without being elected to the legislature. Perhaps the most interesting example is the story of Herb Pinder.

In the May 1964 general election, Herb Pinder narrowly won the constituency of Hanley as the Liberal candidate, over the incumbent CCF candidate Robert Walker. Premier Thatcher immediately appointed Pinder as Minister of Industry and Information.

A recount revealed Pinder had actually lost to Walker by two votes. Pinder thus lost his seat in the legislature, and Walker became the MLA for Hanley.

Pinder, however, did not resign from cabinet. Instead, the Liberals questioned the neutrality of the recount. At the same time, the Liberals went to court to ask that the election result for the Hanley constituency be declared null and void. If the results were declared null and void, a new election for the constituency would have to be held.

Walker was uneasy with all the questions circulating about the legitimacy of his two-vote victory. Before the courts could consider the Liberal's case, he resigned the seat. The resignation meant a by-election would have to be called.

Pinder and Walker again faced off in a December contest. This time, Walker won decisively, with 744 more votes than Pinder. Pinder resigned his cabinet position and returned to private life.

Later in life, Pinder remarked that his time in cabinet was rather unremarkable. However, his unremarkable seven-month reign made him Saskatchewan's longest-serving unelected cabinet minister.



Cabinet ministers do not have to be from the governing party. In fact, it is not even necessary for a cabinet minister to be an MLA. However, they almost always are. Their duties include:

- overseeing the development of new laws to be considered by the legislature,
- responsibility to the legislature for the actions and management of their department, and
- representing their department to the public.

When a cabinet minister has an idea for a new law, they present it to the cabinet as a whole. If they approve of the concept, then a bill will be written by lawyers in that ministry. The bill can then be presented to the legislature for consideration.

Discuss

1. What kind of qualities would you want our premier to have?
2. The cabinet is the most politically-powerful group of people in the province. Why is it important that this group, as a whole, be broadly reflective of the provincial population?

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

From a purely democratic perspective, the legislative branch is the most important branch of our government. It is made up of 61 MLAs. These 61 MLAs include the twenty or so people who are appointed to the executive branch of government.

The Legislative branch is primarily responsible for considering laws proposed by the Executive, then passing or rejecting those laws. Every MLA is also responsible for acting in the interests of the residents of their constituency. This may involve handling complaints about government services, and advocating for programs that advance their community. However, the province's collective needs must be a primary consideration since they are all elected as representatives of Saskatchewan.

As a principal of parliamentary democracy, the Executive Branch is accountable to the Legislative Branch. This helps ensure that the people remain supreme in Saskatchewan's democracy: the premier and cabinet must answer to elected MLAs.

The Opposition Leader and Shadow Cabinet

The party with the second-most elected representatives usually forms the official opposition. Officially called Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, the opposition—while generally opposed to the government's policies—are still loyal to the Crown. As such, they act in the manner which they believe to be in the best interest of the province.

The leader of the party that forms the official opposition is known as the leader of the official opposition. One of the duties of the opposition leader is to scrutinize the actions taken by the government. To help accomplish this, several opposition MLAs are assigned critic roles. Together, the opposition leader and critics form a shadow cabinet. They follow the actions of their government counterparts to ensure the province is being governed with due diligence.

The opposition is often viewed as the government in waiting. Their goal is to gain enough support to win the next election and form the provincial government. Thus, in addition to criticizing the government's actions, opposition parties also propose their own alternative ideas for how the province should be run.



Speaker of the House

The Speaker of the House is an MLA who is the legislative assembly's presiding officer. The speaker impartially oversees the legislature's debates and votes, ensuring they follow established rules. As well, the speaker is responsible for overseeing many administrative functions of the legislative assembly. The speaker is chosen by all MLAs through a secret ballot.

Unlike all other members of the legislative branch, the speaker does not normally vote on legislation. The exception is if there is a tie vote. If this is the case, the speaker must cast a vote to break the tie. Normally, the precedent is that the speaker will vote for the status quo. Broadly speaking, this means that the speaker will vote to move debates on legislation forward. However, when it comes to final votes on legislation, the speaker will cast their vote in whichever way ensures that as little change happens as possible. This usually means they will vote against passing new legislation.

Discuss

1. Members of the opposition occasionally will support government initiatives. Similarly, at times MLAs from the governing party will support opposition ideas. Why must MLAs consider the merits and drawbacks of each issue presented to them, regardless of whose idea it is?
2. The speaker ensures rules are followed in the legislative assembly. Why is it vital that we have an orderly way to debate and create laws?

JUDICIAL BRANCH

The judicial branch is made up of judges. It is independent of the legislative and executive branches of government. Because no written law can possibly envelop every possible circumstance, the judicial branch is responsible for interpreting the laws passed by the legislative branch, when cases come before the court.

Judges are not elected in Canada. Instead, they are appointed by the Governor General upon advice of the Prime Minister in the case of federal courts, and by the Lieutenant Governor upon advice of the premier in the case of provincial courts.

One reason why we appoint judges is so they are free to make fair decisions, based on the facts of each case and what the law says. Judges do not make decisions based on popular opinion. Nor do they make decisions to please supporters and campaign contributors. Instead, their decisions are based on the law and what other judges ruled in earlier, similar cases.

Because judges are independent of the legislative and executive branches, they protect the rule of law. The rule of law is the idea that everyone must follow the law, no matter how powerful they are.

If citizens believe government or a particular elected representative is breaking the law, the judiciary can be a neutral arbiter. Put another way, the judiciary helps ensure that everyone in government respects the law.

Discuss

1. In Canada, judges are appointed and may keep their jobs until the age of 75. Do you think electing our judges would make them more concerned about making popular rather than correct decisions? Explain.
2. In some cases, a judge's decision can be appealed to a higher court. The higher court has the option of overturning the lower court's decision. How do appeals ensure that laws are properly interpreted by judges?



POLITICIAN NAMES AND PLACES

Buildings, public infrastructure, and other landmarks are often named in honour of people who committed their lives to public service. Match the past MLAs or candidates for MLA in Saskatchewan with the place bearing their name.

1. Saskatchewan's first female MLA, she successfully ran for office in 1918 to replace her husband, the MLA for Pelly. He died from the Spanish Flu pandemic.
 2. The province's first Minister of Agriculture and founder of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers Association, he became the federal Minister of Agriculture in Mackenzie King's Liberal government.
 3. This long-time MLA served the Tisdale constituency from 1938 to 1967. He is recognised as a pioneer in the growth and development of Saskatchewan's potash, oil and uranium industries.
 4. A former Regina teacher and principal, he became the first Minister of Finance in Tommy Douglas's CCF government.
 5. In his early years, he helped found the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and the Prince Albert Board of Trade and Agriculture Society. In government he established the Department of Co-Operation, spurring significant growth in cooperatives and credit unions.
 6. This premier came to power on the then-biggest landslide victory in the province's history.
 7. This former teacher and leader of the Saskatchewan Progressive Conservative Party went on to serve as a member of the House of Commons from 1958 to 1988, losing only one election in that period.
 8. This former Prime Minister was a perpetual loser at elections. Other than a successful run for Wakaw village council, he failed to win a mayoral race in Prince Albert, lost in two provincial elections, and failed at two federal races for MP. He finally became an MP in 1940 in a constituency in which he had never lived.
 9. Following World War II, Saskatoon sent two MLAs to the legislature. Both MLAs elected in Saskatoon in 1944 came from the CCF: one worked towards restorative justice programs, the other was a supporter of organised labour.
 10. This leader of the Saskatchewan Liberal Party began his life in politics as a city councillor and ended it as a senator.
 11. This premier was a key player in creating the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.
 12. This premier died only a few weeks after losing the 1971 election.
- a) Brockelbank Place, Tisdale
 - b) Grant Devine Dam, near Alameda
 - c) Rt. Hon. John G. Diefenbaker Bridge, Prince Albert
 - d) C. F. Fines Building, Regina
 - e) Motherwell Building, Regina
 - f) Dave G. Steuart Arena, Prince Albert
 - g) Sturdy-Stone Building, Saskatoon
 - h) Francis Alvin George Hamilton Building, Regina
 - i) Ramsland Building, Yorkton
 - j) L. F. McIntosh Building, Prince Albert
 - k) W. Ross Thatcher Building, Moose Jaw
 - l) Roy Romanow Provincial Laboratory, Regina



CONSIDERING MLAS AND MINISTRIES

Your assignment is a two-fold activity to learn more about MLAs and Ministries.

PART ONE: PROFILES

A) Profile of an MLA

Select a member of the legislative assembly from either the governing or opposition side. Create a professional profile of this person. The profile could include:

- volunteer and community experience
- academic background
- work or business experience
- beliefs and values
- other personal interests
- their vision for Saskatchewan

B) Profile of a Ministry

Select a provincial ministry. Links to all major government departments can be found at www.saskatchewan.ca/government/government-structure/ministries. Create an introduction to the ministry. The profile could include:

- what services the ministry is in charge of or directly offers
- who are the people, community organisations, or businesses who benefit from this ministry's services
- examples of major undertakings or initiatives of the ministry

PART TWO: MLA / MINISTRY MIX AND MATCH

Now that you and your classmates have information on both a ministry and an MLA, you need to find matches for each. Rotate through the classroom, sharing your research information with classmates. You will need to accomplish two things:

- For your selected MLA, find a ministry that is suited to that person's skill set and justify your decision. If your chosen MLA is already a cabinet minister, choose a different ministry than what they are currently responsible for.
- For your selected ministry, find an MLA that would make a good cabinet minister for that department. Justify why this MLA is suited to the ministry.



LESSON 2.2

CREATING LAWS IN SASKATCHEWAN

OBJECTIVE

The creation of statutory laws will be understood.

TEACHER'S BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Statutory Law vs. Common Law

Most of us think that the laws in Canada are passed by the legislative branch of government: parliament or provincial legislatures. And we're right, because most of the important laws on the books are pieces of legislation—or statutes—which are examined, debated and passed by our elected representatives.

Some statutes passed by Saskatchewan's legislature are *The Education Act*, which frames how Kindergarten to Grade 12 education is provided in Saskatchewan, or *The Consumer Protection and Business Practices Act*, which sets out obligations and responsibilities of businesses and consumers in their transactions.

Governments try to make statutes that are easy to understand and that apply to many situations. This is often a difficult task. The words or phrases used in a law may not always be clear. The judicial branch of government may be asked to interpret or define the meaning of these words. When judges interpret a statute, they are using a system of justice known as common law or case law.

Common law—the practice of looking at judges' past decisions to make a ruling—comes from a time in England before there was a parliament with the power to pass legislation. Then, judges applied a common standard of rules to all cases heard in the country. These rules originated from local customs. Under common law, a judge deciding a case was bound by an earlier judge's decision in a

similar case in the same or higher court. These earlier decisions set precedents.

The practice of using previous decisions as a guide is part of the Canadian legal system today. When judges are asked to interpret laws, they look at the decisions of other judges in earlier cases. Similar legal problems are decided similarly, and lower courts will follow higher court decisions. This ensures consistency in the law.

Let's look at a simple example. Suppose the provincial government wanted a park where citizens could, by law, enjoy nature in peace. To help achieve this goal, they passed a law stating "No team sports may be played in the park." The law may seem clear enough at first. However, questions may arise in certain situations. Would the law apply to four people throwing a frisbee, a relay team informally practising for a track meet, or a group of children playing tag? It might not be easy to decide. If there was an earlier case in which a judge had ruled that young children's activities or other informal games are not "team sports" that decision would act as a precedent for how a judge could decide on a game of tag. Judges will also look at what the lawmakers intended the law to do when it was passed.

This simple example helps illustrate that interpreting the law is rarely a straightforward matter. Most laws require interpretation, which is done by the judicial branch of government.

PROCEDURE

1. Review the purpose of having laws in society, as discussed in Lesson 1.2.
2. Read [How Written Laws are Made](#).

KEY QUESTIONS

- **What is the value of reviewing proposed laws three times?**
 - **What is the purpose of using committees to review bills after second reading?**
3. To consider the role of private member's bills, assign [Private Member's Bills in Saskatchewan](#).
 4. To consider the role of the judiciary in interpreting laws passed by the legislature, review Lesson 2.1's overhead [The Three Branches of Government](#) in conjunction with this lesson's teacher's background information.

FURTHER EXPLORATION

5. For additional consideration of the challenges of interpreting laws, check out *No Vehicles in the Park*. Find it at **teachers.plea.org**.
6. For historical perspective on the development of statutes, check out *Hammurabi's Code*. Find it at **teachers.plea.org**.

HOW WRITTEN LAWS ARE MADE

Laws help maintain order in our society. Because of this, it should come as no surprise that an orderly process is necessary to create laws. Unlike a dictatorship where leaders can rule by decree, Saskatchewan has a defined process to guide the creation of laws, from their first idea to becoming rules we are expected to obey.

When a law is first proposed, it is called a bill. Bills are most often brought forward by a minister of the government. Backbench and opposition MLAs can also propose bills, provided that they do not contain financial provisions.

Bills are not created on a whim. They usually are developed through a larger planning process.

In a democracy the will of the people sets the course for government. Generally, the governing party's election platform and ideology sets the stage for what kinds of laws the government will attempt to pass.

Winning an election gives the government a mandate from the people to implement their agenda. The first legislative step to develop their agenda of laws is the Speech from the Throne. The Speech from the Throne does not contain any specific bills. Instead, it outlines the government's coming priorities.

The legislature will vote on the speech. If they approve, the government may go forward with their lawmaking plans. If the legislature rejects the speech, the government falls. This means a new government must be put in place: The Lieutenant Governor will either ask an opposition party to form government, or allow for a new provincial election.

Ideas introduced in the Speech from the Throne are worked into specific bills by a policy and planning division of the government. They create a legislative proposal. It outlines in more detail what the law is meant to accomplish. Once the legislative proposal is completed, a lawyer who specialises in writing legislation drafts the actual proposed law, or bill. At this point it is ready for consideration by the legislature.

A bill is considered in three stages, called readings. It is worth pointing out that there is no actual "reading" of the bill in the legislature: copies of it are distributed so that MLAs and the public may consider the proposed law.

FIRST READING

After a law is developed and drafted, the bill is introduced in the legislature. This is called first reading. There is no debate or vote at this point. The bill is simply introduced so that MLAs may begin examining it.

SECOND READING

The next stage is called second reading. The minister or MLA proposing the bill explains what it is supposed to achieve. At this stage the principle and objective of the bill are debated. There usually will be no debate of the bill's finer points.

If a bill passes a vote at second reading, it is referred to committee. In committee, a group of MLAs examines it in more detail. Some reasons why the committee stage is crucial for creating good laws include:

- committees can examine and consider a bill in greater detail
- committees are able to call in experts to discuss a bill so that they may learn more about its purpose and implications
- committees are able to propose and debate amendments to a bill



While the public pays little attention to committees, they are vital for creating good laws. Thorough and properly-functioning committee work prevents society from being saddled with poorly-thought-out laws.

THIRD READING

After the committee stage, the bill in its final shape is again presented to the legislature. This is its third reading. At third reading, MLAs vote on the bill. If the bill is passed, it is ready to become law.

To actually become a law, bills must receive royal assent. This is the signing of the bill by the Lieutenant Governor on behalf of the Crown.

Most bills become law when they receive royal assent. However, this is not always the case. Sometimes, provisions are written into a bill specifying the date it will become law. Other times, bills will not become law until the Lieutenant Governor is instructed by cabinet to put the law into force.

If the Lieutenant Governor has concerns about a bill passed by the legislature, they have two options to stall or stop the bill.

The Lieutenant Governor's first option is to refuse royal assent. This means the bill must be reintroduced in the legislature and be reconsidered.

Refusal of royal assent is virtually unprecedented in the modern history of the British Monarchy. The last time it was used in the United Kingdom was by Queen Anne in 1707. In Canada, the only time it was used was in Prince Edward Island in 1945.

The Lieutenant Governor's other option is the reservation of royal assent. If a bill is "reserved," it will be reviewed by the Governor General, who will rely upon the advice of the federal cabinet to determine whether or not it should become law.

Reservation of royal assent was originally intended so that the federal government could intervene in legislation that threatened the interests of the country as a whole. It has been used 79 times in Canada, mostly in the early nation-building days before 1900.

Only once has Saskatchewan's Lieutenant Governor practised the right of reservation. In 1961, the Woodrow Lloyd government passed Bill 56, *The Alteration of Certain Minerals Contracts*. Lieutenant Governor Frank Bastedo had doubts about the validity of the bill. He also wondered if the bill was in the public interest. Bastedo's advisors told him that the bill was constitutionally valid. Nevertheless, he reserved Bill 56 and sent it to the Governor General.

Following protocol, the Governor General turned to the federal cabinet for advice. The Diefenbaker government's cabinet passed an order in council (a motion created by cabinet and carried out by the Governor General) to give Bill 56 royal assent. This was the last time reservation of royal assent has been used anywhere in Canada.



CLOSURE

There are normally no limitations on the length of time that a bill can be debated in the Saskatchewan legislature. The purpose of debate is to critically analyse and bring about public awareness of bills. This is why debate is normally allowed to go on for as long as is required to understand legislation. However, a procedure called closure can be enacted to limit the amount of time for debating a measure. Closure can be enacted if the majority of MLAs agree.

Closure had never been used in Saskatchewan until August 7th, 1989. The government was attempting to pass legislation to privatise the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan. The opposition had planned to carry on the debate for as long as possible to stop the privatisation, a strategy that is called a “filibuster.” It became the longest debate over a piece of legislation in the history of the province. To stop the filibuster, the government passed a motion to limit all stages of the debate on the privatisation of the Potash Corporation to three days.

Discuss

1. Should the Lieutenant Governor have the right to withhold royal assent on bills passed by the democratically-elected legislature? Why or why not?
2. There is usually little chance of a private member’s bill becoming law. Why would a member propose legislation?
3. Even if it is a foregone conclusion that a majority of MLAs will support a bill, why must that bill be thoroughly and openly debated before it becomes law?



PRIVATE MEMBER'S BILLS IN SASKATCHEWAN

The following are just a few private member's bills that have been presented to the legislature in Saskatchewan for consideration. Not all of these have become law.

1. **Bill 609 (2010)—*The Whistleblower Protection Act***

granted Saskatchewan's public sector employees protection from reprisal for reporting wrongdoing in their workplace.

2. **Bill 201 (2006-07)—*The Bio-diesel Fuel Act***

required minimum amounts of bio-diesel fuel blends to be used in Saskatchewan.

3. **Bill 227 (1999)—*The Grain Elevators Sales Act***

required sellers of grain elevators to locally advertise its sale, and if any offer was rejected an arbitrator could decide if the offer price was fair.

4. **Bill 617 (2010)—*The Protection of Service Animals Act***

prohibited the touching, feeding, impeding, or interfering with service animals such as guide dogs, helper monkeys, or police dogs.

5. **Bill 612 (2010)—*The Earth Day Recognition Act***

formally designated April 22nd as Earth Day in Saskatchewan.

6. **Bill 603 (2012)—*The Seniors' Bill of Rights Act***

declared rights of Senior Citizens, including freedom to plan their own lives, protection from abuse and neglect, and a right to long-term care regardless of income.

7. **Bill 618 (2018)—*The Saskatchewan Strategy for Suicide Prevention Act***

required a provincial suicide prevention strategy that would be evaluated annually.

8. **Bill 602 (2012)—*The School Bus Drivers of Saskatchewan Appreciation Day Act***

formally designated a day at the start of the school year to appreciate the work of school bus drivers.

9. **Bill 606 (2009)—*The Protection of the Wild Ponies of the Bronson Forest Act***

gave protected status to the wild ponies in the Bronson Forest north of Lloydminster.

10. **Bill 612 (2015)—*The Respect for Diversity—Student Bill of Rights Act***

declared rights of public school students, including positive and safe environments, freedom of expression, and the freedom to establish safe and inclusive activities and groups.

Discuss

1. Decide in principle if each law would be a good idea, and explain why.
2. Have any of these bills become law?
3. Even if a private member's bill does not pass, do you see a purpose in it being proposed and debated in the legislature?
4. Is it important that private members—and not just the cabinet and premier—be able to introduce legislation?
5. Private member's bills cannot oblige the government to spend money. Why do you think this is? Do you think this is fair?
6. If you were an MLA, what kind of private member's bill would you put forth?



LESSON 2.3

OPPOSITION PARTIES

OBJECTIVE

The concepts of how opposition parties hold the government to account will be explored.

PROCEDURE

1. Briefly review the role of a member of the legislature. Discuss how they spend many hours in the legislative chamber, in committee meetings, and in their constituencies. Then point out that substantial media coverage of politicians and almost all coverage of legislative proceedings focus on a half-hour window of each day, known as Question Period.
2. Read Question Period—Debate or Spectacle?.

KEY QUESTION

- **Question Period has been called political theatre. Does the emphasis on “theatre” help propel good performers into the public eye, regardless of whether or not they have good ideas?**
3. View live or archived video of Question Period for the activity Considering Question Period.

www.legassembly.sk.ca/legislative-business/watch-legislative-proceedings

Transcripts are found in *Hansard*.

<https://www.legassembly.sk.ca/legislative-business/debates-hansard>

4. To illustrate that much of the work legislators do is tedious and rather non-acrimonious, share a brief clip of a legislative committee meeting, possibly one that links to a relevant current event.

Find them at www.legassembly.sk.ca/legislative-business/watch-legislative-proceedings

KEY QUESTION

- **Would public debate be better-served if the media and the public paid more attention to legislative debates and committee meetings, and less attention to Question Period?**

FURTHER EXPLORATION

5. Students interested in learning and practising parliamentary procedure can check out Saskatchewan Youth Parliament. Find them at www.facebook.com/saskatchewanyp
6. Students interested in learning speech and debate skills can check out The Saskatchewan Elocution and Debate Association (SEDA). Find them at <https://saskdebate.ca/>

QUESTION PERIOD—DEBATE OR SPECTACLE?

Government and opposition parties spend much time discussing and debating laws in the legislative chamber, in committees, and in the community. Perhaps the best-known of these discussions is the thirty minutes set aside every day for Question Period. Question Period is a forum where the opposition parties question the government on issues of the day.

Question Period was introduced to the Saskatchewan legislature in 1976 on an experimental basis, at about the same time it was introduced in the House of Commons in Ottawa. Following a successful trial period, it was formally made part of routine proceedings on November 22nd of that year.

Because Question Period is sometimes more a performance than a substantial debate, it is sometimes thought of as political theatre. The goal of the opposition is to eventually form government, so their questions in Question Period are often designed to discredit the government and its policies. They try to catch the government off-guard, and point out differences between what the government has said it will do and what it is actually doing. The government has no advance warning of what the questions will be.

Questions are usually based on current events. In preparation for each question period, advisors for the opposition and the government monitor provincial trends, largely through mainstream and social media.

While the questions in Question Period are to the government, like all procedures in the legislature, MLAs must direct statements to the Speaker of the House. In fact, members must not refer to each other by name. Instead, they refer to one-another by title, such as the Minister of Education or the Leader of the Opposition. If the MLA has no title, then they are referred to by their constituency, such as the Member from Cannington. This keeps with parliamentary tradition: it is a sign of respect and helps to avoid personalising debate. We should think of members as representatives of their constituency or of their ministry.

During procedures in the legislature, members are immune from slander or libel laws. This means they are free to make statements about other members without fear of legal repercussions. This does not mean, however, that MLAs can say anything they wish. If MLAs use unparliamentary language—such as swearing or accusing other members of lying—they will be asked by the speaker to retract the statement.

In 2005, a new recording system was installed in the legislature. Shortly after, a microphone picked up the agriculture critic referring to the deputy premier as a “lying s.o.b.” This broke two protocols of parliamentary language: accusing another member of lying, and uttering an obscenity. The speaker asked the agriculture critic to apologise and withdraw his remarks.

Because good humour is not considered unparliamentary, the agriculture critic was able to bring levity to the situation. He began his apology by saying “First of all kudos, Mr. Speaker, to the new sound system in the Assembly and to whoever designed and installed it.”



CONSIDERING QUESTION PERIOD

It is often said that there is a reason why Question Period is not called Answer Period. Watch the proceedings of Question Period and/or follow along with a copy of *Hansard*—the official transcripts of the proceedings of the legislature—while considering the following questions.

1. Do you think the questions dealt with important issues? Would you have raised different issues?
2. Did the responses seem relevant to the questions?
3. If a question was not *really* answered, what techniques were used to avoid giving an answer? Did the non-answer help bring forward useful discussion?
4. Did the opposition listen to the government's response and meaningfully engage with it?
5. Did you notice any theatrics by opposition or government members? If so, what?
6. Did the Speaker of the House have to intervene and ask for order?
7. Consider Question Period as a whole. Is it a valuable part of our governance? If so, why? If not, how would you improve it?



LESSON 2.4

LEGACY MEDIA

OBJECTIVE

Students will learn about legacy media's role in scrutinising government.

TEACHER'S BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

A Brief History of Legacy Media Journalism

We expect journalism to be neutral, objective, and non-partisan. For the most part, much of the legacy media we consume today—newspapers like the *Globe and Mail* or the Regina *Leader-Post* and radio and television networks like the CBC or Global—do their best to live up to these standards. Their journalists are trained professionals who follow codes of conduct, and their work is overseen by editors who do their best to see that their journalism lives up to the highest standards.

However, the ideal neutral, objective, and non-partisan journalism is not consistent with the field's history. Journalism has a long history of partisanship. In fact, being highly partisan was the original purpose of most journalism.

At the dawn of the 20th century, most cities in North America had several newspapers. Each newspaper would put forth the owner's political views. Smaller centres were not much different, except that there were not as many newspapers.

Early into the 1900s, the nature of newspapers began to transform. Owners began to focus on profits. That is, the owners' politics took a back seat to making money off the newspaper.

To facilitate this profits-first change, newspaper owners looked for ways to reach the widest audience possible. Papers began to merge so there would be less competition. Meanwhile, publishers toned down the partisan rhetoric. By reaching more people and having less-heated, less-slanted news, papers became more appealing to advertisers. At the same

time, because there were fewer newspapers being published but each remaining paper sold more copies, the owners could charge more for advertising.

For owners, the model worked. Profits soared. For readers there was some benefit too: less-heated, wider political debate in the papers helped people see things from a more moderate perspective. When radio and television entered the scene, they too followed this model of news coverage.

Middle-of-the-road news for profit was not perfect. The ideological diversity found in late-19th century news was gone. Upton Sinclair critiqued the system in his 1919 book *The Brass Check*. Sinclair exposed how the few newspapers that were left simply promoted profit-centred values and desires.

Owners recognised that their newspapers needed to appear neutral if they wanted the public to trust what they were reading. Thus, a push began to create schools of journalism. The idea was that trained editors and journalists would be held to professional standards. Professional journalists would work independently of the owners, hence they could be trusted to create news that was neutral, objective, and non-partisan.

However, media historian Robert McChesney believes that complete objectivity in the news is merely an ideal, something most journalists aspire to but something that can never be fully achieved. As he wrote in *The Political Economy of Media*,

over time it has become clear that there was one problem with the theory of professional journalism, an insurmountable one at that. The claim that it was possible to provide neutral and objective news was suspect, if not entirely bogus. Decision making is an inescapable part of the journalism process, and some values have to be promoted when deciding why one story rates front-page treatment while another is ignored. This does not mean that some journalism cannot be more nonpartisan or more accurate than others; it certainly does not mean that nonpartisan and accurate journalism should not have a prominent role to play in a democratic society. It only means that journalism cannot actually be neutral or objective, and unless one acknowledges that, it is impossible to detect the values at play that determine what becomes news, and what does not" (p. 30).

Legacy media today performs a valuable journalistic function, with news created by trained professionals who are held to high standards. However, there are values at play in all news, which may have some influence over even the most objective journalism.

PROCEDURE

1. Play the Whisper Game to consider the shortcomings of second-hand information. Have a student write down a statement, then whisper it to their neighbour. The next student will whisper it to their neighbour, and so on. Compare what the final student heard to what was originally said. Use this to illustrate that news coverage is second-hand information.
2. Read *Legacy Media and Political Coverage*.

KEY QUESTIONS

- **What kinds of Saskatchewan-specific legacy news sources are available to your community?**
- **What are the qualities and weaknesses of legacy media?**

3. Read [Editorials and Opinions](#).

KEY QUESTIONS

- **Editorial stances and the opinions of media owners—in theory—are not supposed to impact the work of journalists. Do you think this is the case in practice?**
- **Should legacy media outlets that offer opinions be obliged to provide a balanced diversity of opinions? Why or why not?**

Note that the summary activities in [Legacy Media and Political Coverage](#) and [Editorials and Opinions](#) will be returned to in Lesson 2.5, with students to be asked to consider the role of online conversation in relation to the articles they explore.

4. Summarise topics of this lesson with a wider class discussion of the question:

Do you trust the news offered by legacy media?

FURTHER EXPLORATION

5. For an in-depth case study of the media's role in shaping common sense see "Hiroshima and Nagasaki: The Damage and the Reporting" in *70 Years of the Bomb*. Find it at teachers.plea.org.

LEGACY MEDIA AND POLITICAL COVERAGE

Citizens cannot be present at every government meeting or hope to understand all the goings-on in their community. Yet, for citizens to make well-informed political choices, they need to know what is happening. This is why society relies on the media.

When we say media, we are including many things. There are social media platforms, such as TikTok, X, Reddit, and Facebook, where citizens actively participate. Then there are legacy media platforms, such as newspapers, radio, and television stations. Our focus for now will be legacy media.

Saskatchewan has several legacy media outlets. Many communities are served by weekly newspapers and a few have community radio stations. They are predominantly run by local owners. Then there are larger daily newspapers and major radio and TV stations, predominantly owned by large corporations. In addition, there is the public broadcaster, CBC/Radio-Canada. It differs from the other legacy media outlets because it is owned by the public and has a federally-legislated mandate to provide the country with cultural and informational programming.

HOLDING GOVERNMENT TO ACCOUNT

In order to provide the public with reliable information, the media must be free to pursue stories without government interference or control. This is essential to democracy. In Canada, the media's freedom is enshrined in the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

One strength of legacy media is its ability to cover news from the provincial legislature. Many media outlets have reporters who are members of the press gallery. The press gallery is a group of reporters dedicated to covering what happens in the legislature. Members have access to offices in the legislature to report on the government.

The press gallery plays an important role in democracy. Unlike many “hot takes” on social media, these reporters offer a first-hand account of the business of the legislature. They watch question period, legislative proceedings, and committee work. They also take part in scrums, an unstructured questioning of politicians that often takes place in the hallways of the legislature. As well, they are well-positioned to engage in investigative reporting that holds the government to account.

Most press gallery members cover the legislature part-time, popping in and out as need be. This is a reality of cutbacks that legacy media have seen in recent years.

During elections, the nature of political coverage changes. The leaders of the major political parties spend most of their time touring the province. Reporters from major news organisations are often embedded with each leader's tour, travelling with them to report their activities and announcements. Other politicians spend their time campaigning in their constituencies. These activities are often covered by each community's local media outlets.

MEDIA BIAS?

Decision-making is an inevitable part of any news gathering and new reporting process. Certain issues and ideas will be brought to the forefront in some coverage, while other issues and ideas will be neglected. Because choices must be made in creating news, there will always be some degree of bias in the media.

This does not mean that reporters are inherently careless in their work. It is only to say that no news report can possibly envelop all perspectives on any issue.

Because no single news report or single news outlet can possibly envelop every perspective on every issue, it is important to seek out multiple sources. By reading multiple reports from a broad range of sources on the same news story, we will be better-equipped to form opinions on the news of the day.



Discuss

1. By law, Canadian media is almost entirely Canadian-owned. Do you think it is important to restrict foreign ownership of our media?
2. Choose a news story about a current Saskatchewan political issue. Find many different legacy media sources to compare the coverage.
 - a) What elements of the story have been reported by all media outlets?
 - b) What elements are in some stories but not others?
 - c) Are there issues related to this story that are completely absent from all coverage?
 - d) Do you see any evidence of a bias towards any particular perspective?
 - e) If there are differences in the news stories, can you think of reasons why this would be?

CORPORATE INTERFERENCE IN LEGACY MEDIA JOURNALISM

The independence of journalists is important to democracy. We know that journalists should be free to pursue their stories without interference from the government. Just as importantly, journalists should be able to pursue their stories without direct interference from owners of the media. This principle was put to the test in a recent dispute between the president of Bell Media (the company that owns CTV) and the chairman of the CRTC (Canada's broadcasting regulator).

In March 2015, the CRTC ruled that cable TV companies—including Bell Media—must offer subscribers pick-and-pay options, instead of simply bundling several channels together. As well, TV service providers must offer low-cost basic cable packages. This infuriated Richard Crull, president of Bell Media.

Crull called the head of CTV News. He decreed that CRTC chairman Jean-Pierre Blais was not to appear on any news coverage of the ruling. A 5:00pm interview with Blais on CTV News Channel was cancelled. As well, stories on 6 o'clock CTV newscasts across the country excluded Blais. However, senior CTV reporters felt that Blais's perspective must be part of a story about a CRTC ruling. They defied Crull's orders, and included Blais on CTV National News at 11:00 that night.

Learning of Crull's interference, Blais put out a stern press release. It said, in part:

One of the pillars of Canada's broadcasting system—and, in fact, of our country's democracy—is that journalists are able to report news stories independently and without undue editorial influence.... An informed citizenry cannot be sacrificed for a company's commercial interests.

Crull apologized for his actions, but less than three weeks after the incident he was fired from Bell Media.



EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

Editorials and opinion pieces are different from regular news stories. They are created to share a perspective and influence beliefs.

Opinion pieces are easily found in most newspapers. The writers—often called columnists—will share their opinions on events of the day. For example, the *Saskatoon StarPhoenix* and *Regina Leader-Post* feature regular columns by writers such as Doug Cuthand and Murray Mandryk, who offer valuable perspectives on current events.

Editorials are found in many newspapers. Editorials are unsigned articles written by the newspaper's editorial board. Editorial boards oversee a newspaper or magazine's general direction. Their editorials present the newspaper's "official" opinion on a particular topic. Editorial beliefs are not supposed to directly influence the work of journalists.

The fair and open exchange of ideas in opinion columns and editorials is essential to democratic society.

NEWS OR OPINION?

At one time, editorials and opinion pieces were aired as special segments on TV and radio broadcasts, and placed on a dedicated page in newspapers. The segments were clearly marked as opinion pieces. Often this is no longer the case.

Many legacy media outlets and their online news portals have shifted their focus from providing news to providing opinions. One reason for this shift is that most news organisations are businesses. Businesses try to maximise their profits. It costs less to broadcast opinions than to produce in-depth investigative journalism.

Meanwhile, opinion articles and programs tend to be more popular than investigative journalism. As a result, many news organisations have shifted their focus from journalism to opinions. The prominence of opinions in the news means that citizens should choose their news and information wisely, being aware of the differences between opinions and journalism.

Discuss

1. Why do you think opinion-based programming is more popular than investigative journalism?
2. Find an opinion/editorial that appeared in Saskatchewan's legacy media.
 - a) Is it made clear to the audience that it is an opinion/editorial?
 - b) What is the topic?
 - c) What facts does the opinion/editorial use to support its stance?
 - d) Is the opinion piece a balanced perspective on the issue? Why or why not?
3. Look more closely at your chosen opinion/editorial.
 - a) Who stands to benefit from its stance?
 - b) Who stands to be disadvantaged by its stance?
 - c) Regardless of your personal opinion about the topic, do you think the editorial/opinion adds a valuable perspective to public discussion?



LESSON 2.5

SOCIAL MEDIA

OBJECTIVE

Students will consider the merits and drawbacks of information gathered on social media.

PROCEDURE

1. The Edelman 2023 Trust Barometer found that traditional legacy media was by far the most trusted source for news in Canada. 60% of Canadians gave high levels of trust to traditional legacy media, an increase of 3% from 2022. By contrast, social media was only trusted as a news source by 21% of Canadians, the same level of trust found in 2022.

Ask students to consider why social media is less-trusted than legacy media.

2. Read [Social Media: History Repeating?](#)

KEY QUESTIONS

- **Do we treat people the same way online as we do in person? If not, how does this damage ourselves as a society?**
- **The internet has allowed almost everyone to have a platform to challenge dominant narratives. What are the benefits and drawbacks of this?**

3. To close discussion on the importance of the internet to public discourse, think back to Lesson 1.3, [Public Goods and Services](#). SaskTel is owned and controlled by the public, providing most of the province with internet and mobile access.

KEY QUESTIONS

- **Is it important for democracy that SaskTel remains a public good?**
 - **Given the internet's central role in informing citizens, should internet access become a true public good: available to everyone at no charge?**
4. Return to the summary activities in [Legacy Media and Political Coverage](#) and [Editorials and Opinions](#) from Lesson 2.4. Have students search out online discussion of the stories and editorials they chose. Questions to consider include:
 - **How much of the online discussion adds missing facts?**
 - **How much of the online discussion is merely opinions?**
 - **Overall, does the online discussion add helpful context? Why or why not?**

FURTHER EXPLORATION

5. Deeper insights into social media's role in understanding government and political issues can be found in "Do the People Know Best?" in Lesson 4 of Direct Democracy. Find it at [teachers.plea.org](https://www.teachers.plea.org)
6. For a consideration of how bias shapes the information we create and the way we receive and react to information, check out "The Reliable Narrator and Objectivity" in *Albert Camus' The Plague: The Learning Resource*. Find it at [teachers.plea.org](https://www.teachers.plea.org)
7. The federal government has developed a comprehensive resource for identifying disinformation and "fake news." The portal includes links to other resources created by non-governmental organisations. Find it at www.canada.ca/en/campaign/online-disinformation.html

SOCIAL MEDIA: HISTORY REPEATING?

In 2024, Statistics Canada reported that 62% of Canadians aged 15-24 most commonly used social media to get their news. On the flip side, for Canadians 65 and older, 64% tended to rely on traditional legacy media sources such as television.

Social media's dominance as a source of news for young people does not necessarily mean that people trust what they find on social media. The Edelman 2023 Trust Barometer reported that across all ages, only 21% of Canadians trusted the news they found on social media.

While everyone has their own reasons to trust or distrust various news sources, the one thing we can agree upon is that the nature of how we consume news has changed dramatically in recent years.

During the 20th century, news was largely a one-way flow. A handful of television channels, radio stations, and newspapers reported the news. For the most part, the reporters at these legacy media outlets kept high standards. We could be reasonably confident that news on the CBC, CJME, or in the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*, for example, was accurate even if at times it was not perfect.

The number of news sources expanded with the rise of the internet. Legacy media and its stable of professional reporters are still around, providing news with an expectation that they uphold high journalistic standards. However, these legacy outlets now share our attention with a fresh batch of media sources.

Some newer online news sources look a lot like legacy media. In fact, many of them are the products of legacy media. For example, news platforms such as paNOW sprouted from established and respected radio newsrooms in the province. Like their radio predecessors, these new platforms are expected to uphold high journalistic standards.

Other media outlets are less interested in high journalistic standards. Their priority is putting a partisan slant on the news. Partisan media is something similar to the newspapers of the 18th century. They offer limited views of current events, driven more by their ideological view of the world than their desire to convey all sides of an issue.

Unfortunately, some partisan outlets pair their highly-ideological takes on the news with inflammatory language. This approach stirs up emotions just as much as it conveys facts. At their worst, some partisan news sites tip into outright misinformation.

Of course, legacy and new media outlets are not our only source of news. Anybody with internet access can sign up for a social media account, be it on X, Reddit, Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, or others. There are 5 billion social media users worldwide, who spend an average of 2.5 hours a day online. Being on social media enables individuals to share news stories and comment on the news. Add to that, individuals can report news as they see it breaking around them.

Social media's impact on news creation, distribution, and consumption can be seen in the results of the 2023 "Best of" competition by Regina's *Prairie Dog Magazine*. Every year, *Prairie Dog* asks readers to vote for their favourite everything, from hair stylists to politicians. The 2023 winner for Best Online News in Regina was Just Bins. Just Bins is not a newsroom, but instead a disposal company that has a very active and sometimes controversial presence on social media. Coming in second to Just Bins on the *Prairie Dog* survey was CBC Saskatchewan. CTV Regina came in third.

Today, virtually anyone can instantaneously comment on or create news and immediately share it with the entire world. This is nothing short of a revolution.

To be sure, we all could share, comment, and even create news in the past. For example, people often clipped articles or passed around entire newspapers to share with and discuss with their friends. And some enterprising individuals even set up their own newsletters.



SOCIAL MEDIA: HISTORY REPEATING?... CONTINUED

However, in the past spreading news and opinions far and wide was an expensive and ambitious undertaking. A television or radio station could only be established with a licence from the government, and required dozens of staff members and millions of dollars in equipment. Newspapers and magazines were easier to set up, but still required considerable resources to print and distribute.

Because today anyone with an internet connection can create and distribute news, entertainment, and information, at virtually no cost, a side-effect is growing skepticism with what we read. Some of this skepticism is understandable. With so many people creating so much information—often without any training in journalism or supervision of editors—not all of what we see is reliable. Sometimes people are quick to pass judgment, before all the facts are in. Other times, people may selectively post only a misleading clip. Add to that, some people may have a vested interest in misinforming others. And often, people just make honest mistakes.

With so much information to choose from, how do we determine what is trustworthy and what is not?

Curiously, the quandary this question poses is not new. In some ways, the rise of new media and the challenges it creates are an echo of previous historical changes in media. To illustrate this, consider how the invention of the printing press radically changed society.

LOOKING BACK: THE PRINTING PRESS AND THE PAMPHLET

Six hundred years ago, the invention of the printing press had a similar impact on creating and sharing information as the invention of the internet had at the dawn of this century.

The printing press, which arrived in the mid-1400s, replaced expensive and slow practices like hand-copying books. It is believed that before the printing press, the biggest book collection in Europe was the University of Paris library. It had 300 books.

It was not just books that were being printed in unprecedented quantities. Waves of pamphlets began to spread across Europe. These pamphlets were short, often unsigned, and usually written in everyday language. They contained everything from news, to ideas about how we should organise society, to completely crackpot theories.

The philosopher Erasmus worried that the popularity of pamphlets undermined learning. Books and formal education offered the chance for in-depth exploration of an issue. By contrast, pamphlets were criticised for being too brief. They could not thoughtfully convey and explain ideas.

Perhaps the most famous pamphlet of the printing press revolution was Martin Luther's "95 Theses," a sheet of religious reforms. Luther was not paid to write "95 Theses," and nobody reviewed what Luther wrote for accuracy or fairness. Nevertheless, his ideas quickly caught on.

He nailed a copy to a church door in Wittenburg, Germany on October 31, 1517. Barely two weeks later copies reached London, where printers began reproducing it. Luther's pamphlet spawned a revolution in religious thought in Europe known as the Protestant Reformation.

The rise of mass printing also gave rise to new forums for discussing ideas and current events. In London, a coffeehouse culture developed in the 1600s. For the price of a cup of coffee, people could gather to learn about and discuss issues. Pamphlets and newspapers were provided for free, and the coffeehouse provided a physical space to engage with other people.

Social decorum was expected at coffeehouses. Unlike taverns, many that were full of rowdy ale-drinkers, coffeehouses were polite and respectful places. Social class was left at the door, and travellers from afar were welcome.



The rise of the printing press, the pamphleteering it inspired, and the development of London's coffeehouse culture suggest that even if history does not repeat, it can echo. The development of the internet has created new ways of conveying and distributing information, and has created space for online discussions.

These similarities, however, must also be thought about with awareness of timelines. Changes brought about by the printing press took centuries. The internet's impact on societal change has come about in a matter of a few decades.

Discuss

1.
 - a) How was the creation and distribution of Martin Luther's "95 Theses" similar to and different from the ways we create and share information today?
 - b) How was London's coffeehouse culture similar to and different from the ways we discuss information today?
2. In the 20th century, the vast majority of people received their news from the same sources. People would gather around the television or share newspapers to learn about current events. Today, people may gather in "bubbles" and "echo chambers," where the information they receive looks vastly different than the information that others view.
 - a) How can we diversify the viewpoints we consume?
 - b) Does social media encourage us to find common ground, or pit us against each other?
3. Think about a typical online posting of a news story, be it on Reddit, X, Facebook, or the like. The posting is usually followed by a long thread of comments on the story.
 - a) What value is offered by these long threads of comments?
 - b) Are these long discussion threads always valuable information? What are the downsides of these threads?



THE UN-REALITY OF SOCIAL MEDIA

In 2017, Facebook reported that the average person scrolls through 90 metres of social media feeds every day. To put this in perspective, this is about three times the height of a typical wooden grain elevator in Saskatchewan. In fact, Saskatchewan's tallest building, the Nutrien Tower in Saskatoon, is only 88 metres in height.

Unfortunately, scrolling through a Nutrien Tower worth of social media does not provide a realistic insight into public opinion. In fact, simply relying upon social media to gain insight into society is, on the whole, a bad idea.

Several studies have shown that social media conversations about politics and governance are dominated by a small and vocal minority. This small minority, about 10% of users, generate 80 to 90% of the posts about politics and governance.

What makes these motivated users so harmful to our social fabric is that they generally are the most ideologically extreme members of society. Their posts tend towards the enraging or the fantastical. On the whole, such views do not reflect the vast majority of society.

Social media algorithms make matters worse, promoting divisive content that triggers our emotions. They do this because such posts generate the most engagement, thus keeping people online longer.

Meanwhile, higher engagement levels with outrageous content reinforces the poster, who see their extreme views being validated.

At the same time, these algorithms crowd out the few moderate views that appear on social media.

The end result? A distorted perception of real life. This misperception of society leads more people to feelings of negativity, hostility, and political polarisation.

The overwhelming majority of people are moderate, kind and decent. However, there is a good chance you could walk away with a much more negative perception of society after a session of looking at politics, governance, and law-making through the lens of social media.

So the next time you're inclined to look at social media, perhaps take a walk around your community instead. Check out some local events. Talk with the people around you. And look up at the tallest building in your town or city, to remind yourself of just how much time we waste "doomscrolling" on social media.



LESSON 2.6

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

OBJECTIVE

The effectiveness of involving ourselves in the political process will be explored.

PROCEDURE

1. On the board, create five columns that students can line up in front of. Label columns:
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

Read the statement “Government listens when we express our thoughts on how we are governed.” Ask students to stand in the column with the stance they most agree with. Open class discussion on various stances, then give students the opportunity to change their position. Ask those who moved to share why they changed their opinion. Ask those who stayed why they were unmoved by other arguments.

2. Read Participating in the Political Process.

KEY QUESTIONS

- **What kind of interest groups and political groups exist in the community?**
- **Is it enough to express opposition to a law or policy? Should you also propose an alternative?**

3. Read Violence and Political Protest. Use questions for individual consideration or class discussion.
4. To demonstrate how citizen engagement can create change, read the case study Saving Saskatchewan Libraries.
5. To broaden understandings of citizen participation, have students participate in any of the listed activities in Participating in the Political Process. For example, students could observe a rally, write a letter, speak at a public meeting, volunteer with a community advocacy group, or report on or create posters with advocacy messages.

FURTHER EXPLORATION

6. To learn about the history of plebiscites and referendums in Saskatchewan, check out either *The PLEA: Direct Democracy* or the full-length *Direct Democracy* learning resource. Find them at teachers.plea.org

PARTICIPATING IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS

Voting is not the only way to participate in the political process. Democracy relies on participation by informed citizens. Here are just a few ways to raise awareness and get involved. And remember, you don't just need to participate if you oppose something. When government does something right, don't hesitate to show your support.

INTEREST GROUPS

Interest groups form civil society: the non-governmental, non-business organisations that influence and shape our world. They include such things as local heritage societies, advocacy groups for minority rights, and environmental groups. Supporting civil society helps focus the government's attention on community issues.

POLITICAL PARTIES

Joining a political party can help us learn more about political and law-making processes. Party members influence party policies and candidate selection, thus helping shape the laws that govern us. Most parties have youth chapters, allowing young people to vote on internal party matters.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Online platforms such as Facebook or Reddit create digital spaces to voice our thoughts on issues of the day. By posting on social media and engaging in productive discussion and debate, we can influence fellow citizens, politicians, and the media.

POLITICAL RALLY OR PROTEST

All Canadians have the right to peaceful assembly. Rallies and protests help raise awareness about particular issues. Even if we do not believe in a cause, attending a rally or protest as an observer help us understand the multiple viewpoints that exist in a diverse society.

POSTERING

Many communities have public spaces dedicated to displaying posters. We can make use of these spaces for posting information about issues, concerns, and causes relevant to the community.

CONTACT MLAS

Writing letters and emails, signing petitions, and visiting government representatives are effective ways to express opinions. MLAs—like all elected representatives—are there to represent their constituents, so it is important that we let them know our thoughts.

CREATING PETITIONS

Petitions can be used to share an opinion. Collecting signatures for a petition can also create awareness about the issue. If a proper process is followed, a petition may be read by and entered into the record of the provincial legislature. Find these rules at <https://www.legassembly.sk.ca/media/1308/practicalpetitionsguide2020.pdf>

PLEBISCITES

A plebiscite is a province-wide vote on an issue of public interest. If at least 15% of voters sign a petition that requests a plebiscite, and the issue is within the provincial government's jurisdiction, then a province-wide vote on the issue must happen.



VIOLENCE AND POLITICAL PROTEST

All Canadians have the right to protest. It is a form of expression guaranteed in the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

However, this right is not absolute. Protesters must follow all relevant laws. For example, there is no right to protest uninvited on private property. Protestors are not free to use hate speech. And protestors cannot resort to violence. Add to that, provinces or municipalities may have laws that limit how, when, and where protests can be held.

These limits understood, the overwhelming majority of protests in Canada respect the rules. They are peaceful and productive.

Unfortunately, some protests turn violent. While violent protest is not the norm, recent opinion polls in the United States have suggested that violence could be just around the corner. Several recent polls suggest about one in five Americans believe that they may need to resort to violence to save the country from what they perceive to be political threats.

No similar polling data is available in Canada.

These polls may be discouraging, but it is not time to panic. In 2022, four political scientists—Sean J. Westwood, Justin Grimmer, Matthew Tyler, and Clayton Nall—took a closer look at all these polls. They found several problems with them. In reality, they believe that at the very worst, less than 7% of Americans support political violence. Suggesting that these researchers are on to something, a mere 1% of violent hate crimes committed in the United States are political in nature.

On the whole, there simply is not an epidemic of violent political unrest.

Nevertheless, some protests do turn violent. When they do, the protesters generally undermine their cause.

VIOLENCE AND PROTEST

When a protest turns violent, it can sometimes be difficult to determine who is to blame. To be sure, a few movements do have inherently violent beliefs. In many other cases, determining the cause of the violence is not that simple.

Sometimes, a few supporters of a cause can spark chaos, acting alone and without the approval of the protest's leadership. Other times, protests are infiltrated by provocateurs, people who show up to start trouble so they can ruin the reputation of a movement. And occasionally, overreactions by authorities can spark a violent reaction.

Because protests are complex, it can be difficult to determine who is responsible if a protest turns violent.

Overall, though, violence does not help a protest's cause. It usually makes the movement and its leaders look like lawless extremists. On the flip side, research has shown that the most effective and the legal avenue for change is peaceful protest.

For example, researchers Maria Stephan and Erica Chenoweth looked at 323 violent and non-violent protest movements between 1900 and 2006. They found that 53% of the non-violent campaigns were successful in getting the changes they asked for. On the flip side, only 26% of the violent campaigns achieved their aims. Put differently, peaceful protest movements were twice as likely to succeed as violent movements.

Another study from Florida Atlantic University looked at groups seeking greater powers of self-rule. Self-rule can include such things as autonomous governing agreements, or



VIOLENCE AND POLITICAL PROTEST... CONTINUED

full political independence from a state. Of the 168 racial and ethnic groups across 87 states that engaged in independence protests, the strongest predictor that a group would be successful was if they used peaceful tactics and protests.

Violence may even set back a cause. This was suggested by a recent Princeton University study. It looked at American civil rights protests from 1960 to 1972. In places where non-violent protests took place, votes for the Democratic Party—which generally supported the civil rights movement—increased 1.6 to 2.5%. Meanwhile, in places where protesters initiated violence, votes by white people for the Republican Party—which generally opposed the civil rights movement—increased anywhere from 1.5 to 7.9%. In the simplest of terms, peaceful protests strengthened support for civil rights. Violent protests strengthened opposition to civil rights.

GIVE PEACE A CHANCE

On the whole, peaceful protests are more likely to succeed. Peaceful activism sends positive signals to the greatest number of people. It minimises feelings of fear or anger in people who would otherwise not know about the cause. And it shows that the cause is willing to follow processes and respect our democratically-agreed-upon rights.

Protests do not need to be large to bring about public awareness. In July 2020, Tristen Durocher walked 600 kilometres to Regina’s Wascana Park, setting up camp and holding a ceremonial fast. He did this to bring awareness to high suicide rates in the province’s north. The government tried to evict him from the park. However, a judge ruled that attempts to remove his camp were unconstitutional: the park was a public square and a place to express dissent. In the judge’s words, “In my respectful view, Tristen’s ceremonial fast represents an admittedly small and personal attempt to encourage all of us to move a little further along in our national journey.”

Discuss

1. Are violent protests more likely to get media attention? Is that attention necessarily a good thing?
2. Is violent protest ever justified?



SAVING SASKATCHEWAN LIBRARIES

CASE STUDY: “WE’RE NOT AFRAID TO ADMIT WE MADE A MISTAKE”

Political engagement can take on many forms and often involves finding common interests across different groups. Consider this as you read the following case study about how citizens of Saskatchewan convinced the government to reverse a funding cut to the public library system.

The Background

In April 2016, the Saskatchewan Party was re-elected into government with an overwhelming 62% of the vote. Their re-election platform talked about “Growth to Build a Better Quality of Life” and “Growing Active and Vibrant Communities.”

However, facing a collapse in commodity prices, the 2017 provincial budget increased taxes and cut funding for many public services.

One cut was a \$4.8 million reduction to library funding. The operating grant for rural libraries was reduced from \$6 million to \$2.5 million, and the \$1.3 million operating grant for the Saskatoon and Regina public libraries was entirely eliminated. The cuts were announced without consultation.

The Minister of Education Don Morgan defended the cuts several ways, including:

- library circulation had dropped by 1.6 million items since 2007
- the number of library cards were down by 175,000
- many small towns already have school libraries, so why would they need a separate public library?

The Libraries React

The Saskatchewan Library Association (SLA) warned that the cuts would devastate the library system. Staff would be laid off, programs would be eliminated, and interlibrary loans would be axed.

They countered that the minister’s arguments showed a limited understanding of what happens at public libraries:

- even though resource circulation was dropping, library use was increasing: for example, Saskatoon had a 30% increase in program attendance and a 10% increase in wireless internet and desktop computer use in 2015 alone
- cards were a poor measure of library use: families often had one card for their entire family; institutions like seniors’ homes often had a single card to serve dozens of members; and a new integrated card system in 2015 eliminated many duplicate cards
- combining school libraries with public libraries would be costly and difficult, given the many ways they serve very different purposes

The SLA encouraged people to contact their MLA and ask that the cuts be reversed.

The Public Reacts

Immediately, people went online to voice their concern. A Facebook group Save Saskatchewan Libraries popped up, soon boasting over 7,000 members. Meanwhile, a website www.savesasklibraries.ca appeared along with a **#saveSKlibraries** hashtag.



Christine Freethy, one of the founders and administrators of the Save Saskatchewan Libraries Facebook group, told the *Library Journal* that it was important that the group be non-partisan:

We had a strategy of being officially non-partisan... We were able to attract a lot of people to our movement who voted for [the Saskatchewan Party] in the last election, a lot of rural people who their base is, by being officially non-partisan and pretty much staying pretty clean. Not that we weren't critical of the government, but we didn't let anything get too crazy or too much political rhetoric. We kept it really accessible.¹

They focussed on one thing: restoring library funding.

Meanwhile, a petition began to circulate across the province. It was created in accordance with *The Referendum and Plebiscite Act*, and demanded a province-wide vote on the cuts. Over 32,000 people signed it before the effort was withdrawn. As well, draft letters were created to help people write their own letter to their MLA about the cuts.

People, however, did not just go online, write letters, or sign petitions to voice their displeasure. Public demonstrations were a key element. The first protest happened on March 25th, organised by the labour union representing employees at the Regina Public Library. The most visible action, though, was the province-wide DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) rallies. The idea was simple. On April 7th, people would show up outside their MLA's office or library and read for 15 minutes. Leslie Richards, who thought of DEAR, told the CBC that "there are so many people that are upset and outraged by this... the goal is to rally them together in a peaceful manner."

Grassroots organisation for DEAR began in countless communities. When the day arrived, it was one of the biggest protests in Saskatchewan's history. More than 100 people showed up in Yorkton, 50 in Shellbrook, 200 in Swift Current, 65 in Lumsden, 150 in Estevan, 40 in Fox Valley, and so on... In total an estimated 6,500 people came out in over 70 communities to show their support for public libraries and demand the funding cut be rescinded. For many people, it was their first time taking part in a protest. For some towns, it was the first time a protest had ever taken place in their community.

The letters, petitions, social media posts, and protests were working. A poll conducted from April 11th - 13th showed that support for the ruling Saskatchewan Party had plummeted almost 20 points from the election, down to 44%. The NDP polled at 40%, and the Progressive Conservatives—the all-but-dead predecessor of the Saskatchewan Party—were at a distant but noticeable 7%. To be sure, the library protests were not the only thing hurting the government's popularity but there can be no doubt of the library supporters' impact on public opinion.

The Government Reconsiders

The government recognised how deeply the public was opposed to the budget in general, and the cuts to libraries in particular. On April 24th the government reversed the cuts to library funding.

When announcing the funding restoration, Minister Morgan told reporters:

We're not afraid to admit we made a mistake on something.... We've heard from people pretty clearly that they value the library in its present form. It's important for them not just to have the electronic capability, but they also want to have the physical space to go to.²

The collective effort of thousands of citizens had worked, proving the importance of political engagement.



Discuss

1. Minister Morgan told the *Library Journal* that there was “no doubt” that the protests had a role in the governing party’s change of heart. He congratulated the protesters for their “peaceful and respectful” behaviour.

Studies have shown that peaceful protests are more likely to gain broad public support than violent protests. Why would peaceful protest be more effective?

2. The campaign to restore library funding took place on several fronts. This included social media, letter-writing, petitions, rallies, and letters to local media. What does this tell us about the importance of engaging in politics on multiple fronts?
3. The protest organisers worked hard to avoid inflammatory partisan rhetoric. Do you think this helped their cause? Why or why not?

1. “Public Outcry Saves Saskatchewan Library Funds,” Bob Warburton, *Library Journal*, May 15, 2017. www.libraryjournal.com/?detailStory=public-outcry-saves-saskatchewan-library-funds.
2. “‘We made a mistake’: Sask. government turns back page on library cuts,” Stephanie Langenegger, CBC News, April 24, 2017. www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/sask-libraries-budget-reversal-1.4082965.





SECTION THREE
THE ELECTION
OF
GOVERNMENT



LESSON 3.1

THE PROVINCIAL ELECTION PROCESS

OBJECTIVE

The process and history of Saskatchewan's provincial elections will be explained.

TEACHER'S BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Electing Governments in Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan's system of government is based on the Westminster system of parliamentary democracy, which we inherited from the United Kingdom. This system tends to rely upon political parties. Political parties are voluntary associations of people with similar political views. Political parties and the party leaders—as opposed to individual candidates—are strong motivators for how people cast ballots. One public opinion poll from 2015 found that when people make voting decisions,

- 51% are most strongly motivated by a party's stance on issues
- 33% are most strongly motivated by the party leader
- 16% are most strongly motivated by the local candidate

The strong influence of political parties and their leaders helps explain why independent candidates with no party affiliation rarely get elected to the legislature.

Nominating Candidates for Election

Candidates for office generally hold the views of the political party they represent. Sometimes the party will appoint a candidate to their liking. Other times, party members in each constituency hold a nomination contest to decide who will be their candidate.

When somebody wants to run for a party nomination, the party will vet them. This helps ensure that potential candidates reflect the party's values. Vetting decisions mostly happen behind closed doors. If the party rejects a candidate, they cannot compete in the party's nomination process. The rejection of potential candidates is not an everyday occurrence, but it is not uncommon either.

Even if a person wins a nomination vote, the party has no obligation to let that person stand as their candidate.

For example, in 2020 the NDP removed Sandra Morin as their candidate for the constituency of Regina Walsh Acres. Morin won a nomination contest in 2019. However, then-party leader Ryan Meili had Morin removed as a candidate in September 2020, only a few weeks before the provincial election campaign began. Because political parties are private organisations, the NDP had no obligation to publicly explain the precise reasons for removing Morin as a candidate.

Even if a candidate is rejected by a party, they still have the right to run for office as an independent candidate. Morin chose to do that. Unfortunately for her, she only received 12% of the votes, behind the candidates for the Saskatchewan Party (47%) and the NDP (38%), but ahead of the Progressive Conservative candidate (4%).

To run as either an independent or party-affiliated candidate in a provincial election, candidates must be a Canadian citizen, at least 18 years of age on election day, and have lived in Saskatchewan for six months prior to the election being called. The candidate must also have four voters sign the candidate's nomination papers and have it witnessed by a fifth voter, as well as make a \$500 cash deposit. The deposit is returned if the candidate files all the required post-election reports with the election authority.

Triggering an Election

Saskatchewan has fixed election legislation. Elections are scheduled every four years, on the last Monday in October. If a federal election overlaps a provincial election, election legislation says that the provincial election will be held the first Monday of the following April.

To begin the election, the premier must ask the Lieutenant Governor to dissolve the legislature and "drop the writ."

Elections can be triggered by other means. For example, some votes in the legislature function as an endorsement of the legitimacy of the government. These are called confidence votes. Confidence votes typically include votes on throne speeches, budgets, major changes to the law, and most bills that involve spending money. If a government loses a confidence vote, it loses its right to hold power.

Generally speaking, if the government loses a confidence vote one of two things will happen. Either the government will resign and the Lieutenant Governor will ask another party or coalition of parties to form a new government. Or, the Lieutenant Governor can dissolve the legislature and then call a general election.

Caretaker Government

The Lieutenant Governor must ensure an executive branch of government is always in place. Thus, the premier and ministers keep their ministerial jobs during an election. However, the caretaker convention limits executive powers to routine and non-controversial tasks, or urgent tasks in an emergency. Their power is limited because during an election there is no legislature in place to hold the executive to account.

Electing Members to the Legislature

Voters from each of the province's electoral constituencies cast ballots for a member of the legislative assembly. The number of MLAs and constituency sizes and boundaries are determined through a combination of provincial legislation and an independent commission. In Saskatchewan's first provincial election, there were 25 constituencies, but for most of the province's history there have been about 60. Controversial changes in 1991 that were fought all the way to the Supreme Court increased the seats to an all-time high of 66. Today, we have 61 constituencies.

For political parties, the optimal goal in an election is to form a majority government. A majority government is when more than half of the seats are won by a single party. If a party has a majority, they do not need to rely on votes from other parties' MLAs to get their bills through the legislature. Minority governments, on the other hand, require the support of MLAs who are not in the governing party.

Even though Saskatchewan today has 61 MLAs, the legislative chamber can accommodate 125. Saskatchewan was growing exponentially when construction of the legislature began in 1908. Then-premier Walter Scott envisioned a province that would be home to millions of people, and had the legislature designed accordingly.

Forming a Government

Regardless of the result of an election, the premier in power prior to the writ being dropped remains in power. They have the first opportunity to demonstrate to the Lieutenant Governor that they can gain the support of the legislature. In fact, technically whoever is appointed premier by the Lieutenant Governor could remain in that role until resignation, death, or being advised by the Lieutenant Governor that they no longer require the premier's advice (the constitutional way of saying the Lieutenant Governor fired the premier). In practice, if the governing party loses the premier usually resigns and the Lieutenant Governor invites the party with the most seats in the legislature to form a new government.

Choosing a government becomes more complicated for the Lieutenant Governor if no party emerges from an election with a clear majority. A minority situation will unfold. To determine who forms government, the Lieutenant Governor must be satisfied that a party can provide stable government.

For example, consider if the governing party emerges from an election with the most seats in a minority situation, but a coalition of other parties say they want to form a government. The governing party could argue to the Lieutenant Governor that they have the first right to try and form a stable government. This happened in 1929. In that year's election, the Conservatives entered into a non-competition agreement with the Progressives, and supported several independent candidates. The election resulted in the governing Liberals winning the most seats, at 28. However, forces opposed to the Liberals won 35 seats (24 Conservatives, five Progressives, and six independents).

Five days after the election, the Conservatives, Progressives, and independent MLAs signed an agreement supporting a Conservative-led "Co-operative" government. They called for the Liberals to resign. However, the Liberals believed

they could hang on to power by driving a wedge between the Conservatives and their allies. The Lieutenant Governor agreed that the Liberals should have the opportunity to win the confidence of the legislature. In September, the legislature convened and the Liberals fell in a confidence vote. The Lieutenant Governor then asked the Conservative Party and its allies to form a government. Even though this example is almost a century old, the principle remains a feature of Westminster governance. An almost-identical situation unfolded in British Columbia in 2017.

Saskatchewan saw another minority situation unfold in 1999, albeit this was less complicated. The NDP won 29 out of 58 seats. The Saskatchewan Party took 25 seats, and the Liberals won four. Within days, the NDP made an agreement with the four Liberal MLAs to form a coalition government, thus ensuring a stable majority government.

Because the governing party has the first right to form a government, it is also possible for a government to remain in power even if they lose an election outright. This scenario unfolded at the federal level in 1925. William Lyon Mackenzie King's governing Liberals won 100 seats, coming in second to Arthur Meighen's Conservatives who won 115. The Progressive Party won 22 seats. Instead of resigning, King told the Governor General he would like to meet Parliament and let them decide. King gained the support of the Progressives, and remained Prime Minister until the Progressives withdrew their support in June 1926.

While it is common to hear people say that "the party that wins the most seats should form government," these examples show that our system of government is more nuanced. Forming a government relies upon gaining the support of a majority of members of the legislature, and the party in power before the election has the first opportunity to prove they can command majority support in the legislature.

PROCEDURE

1. Use the overhead [Nominating Candidates for Election](#) to explain how the slate of candidates is formed.

KEY QUESTION

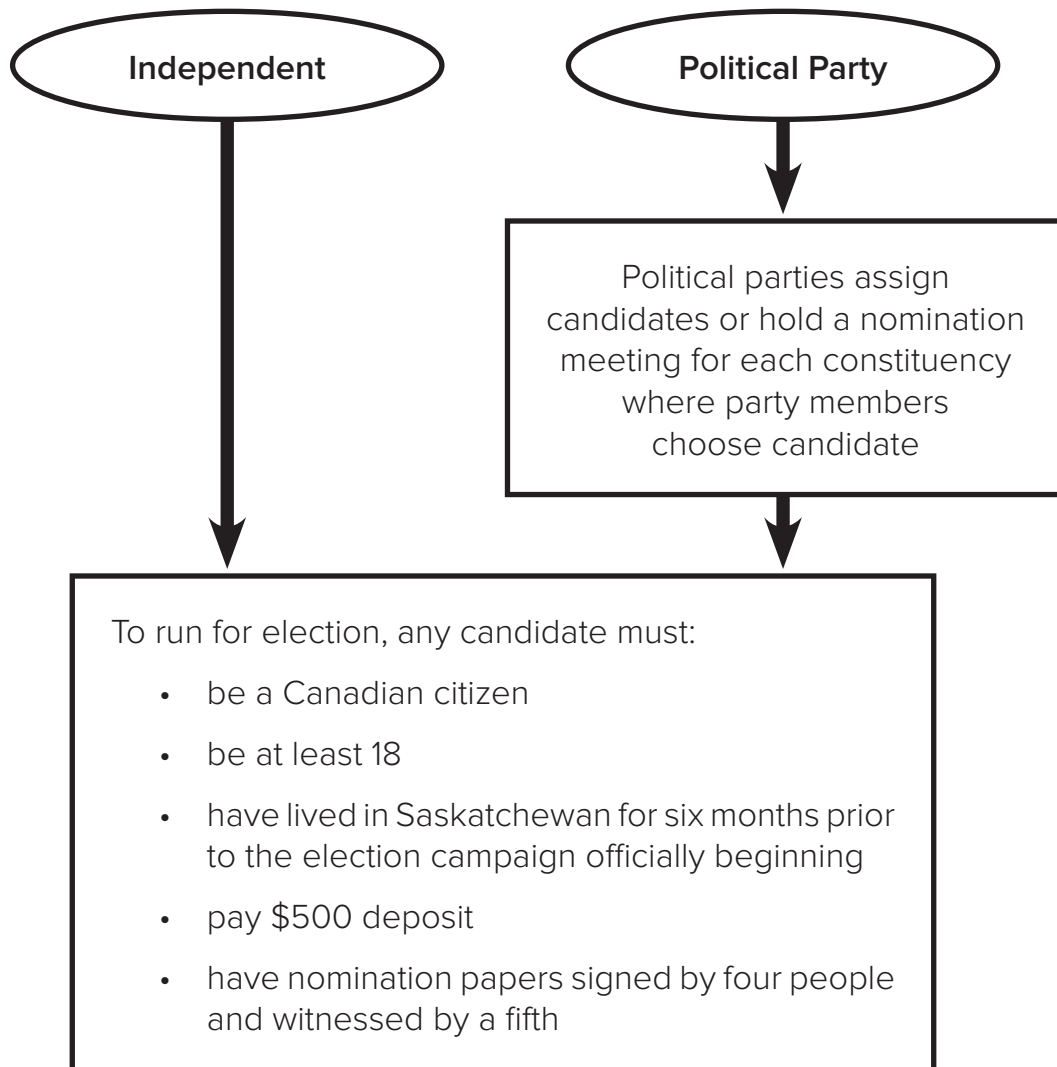
- **Why is it usually more difficult for independent candidates to attract votes?**
2. Use the overhead [Triggering an Election](#) to explain how elections begin, then assign [The Fix is In? Fixed Election Legislation](#) to consider the merits and drawbacks of fixed election legislation.
 3. Use the overhead [Forming a Government](#) to explain possible outcomes for elections, then assign [Thinking about Forming a Government](#) for discussion or independent student work.
 4. To build understanding of the history of Saskatchewan elections, use [Saskatchewan Elections: A History](#) in conjunction with [Saskatchewan Election Crossword](#).
 5. [Saskatchewan Elections: A History](#) can be a launch point for researching a political party, government, politician, or election in Saskatchewan history. One starting point could be "Saskatchewan's Klan Years" from *The PLEA: Curb Your Fanaticism*. Find it at teachers.plea.org

FURTHER EXPLORATION

6. The closing chapters of Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* are, in historian Jack Granatstein's words, "the definitive analysis" of Canada's 1911 federal election, and holds relevance for how voters and politicians behave in all elections. For activities to consider elections and voter behaviour, check out *Sunshine Sketches: The Learning Resource*. Find it at teachers.plea.org
7. Government House, the office of Saskatchewan's Lieutenant Governor, has several education programs and resources that help explain the role of the Crown in Saskatchewan. Find out more at <https://governmenthousesk.ca/school-programs>
8. Artificial Intelligence will no doubt have an impact on elections now and in the future. The CBC recently created a documentary *AI at the Ballot Box*, exploring the possibilities and risks AI poses to democracy. Find it at www.cbc.ca/player/play/audio/1.7187484

NOMINATING CANDIDATES FOR ELECTION

Candidates may either run as an independent or for a political party



TRIGGERING AN ELECTION

- Fixed election legislation requires an election every four years on the last Monday of October
- Elections may be held sooner if:
 - the government chooses to ask the Lieutenant Governor for an election; or
 - government loses a vote of confidence and the Lieutenant Governor is not convinced another party can form a stable government
- The date may also be changed to the first Monday of April if a federal election overlaps the provincial election

THE FIX IS IN? FIXED ELECTION LEGISLATION

For decades, the date of a provincial election was never quite certain. When a premier felt the time was right, they would approach the Lieutenant Governor and ask for an election. While there was an expectation of an election about once every four years, the only limit that the premier faced was the constitution: a provincial election must take place at least once every five years.

Sometimes, premiers called early elections if political circumstances were in their favour. Ross Thatcher (1967) and Allan Blakeney (1978) called elections 3.5 years into their terms. Other times, premiers who appeared to be headed for defeat hung on to power. J.T.M. Anderson (1934) and Grant Devine (1991) called elections after five-year terms.

This discretion led to constant speculation. The public, the media, and the opposition parties were trapped in a guessing game: when would the election be called? Meanwhile, Elections Saskatchewan—the independent agency that runs provincial elections—faced planning difficulties, especially with regard to arranging polling locations and hiring staff.

To help end all this, in 2007 fixed election date legislation was put into place. The law originally scheduled provincial elections for the first Monday of November, every four years. Changes to the law now peg provincial elections for the last Monday of October, every four years.

AVOIDING CONFLICTS

Saskatchewan’s fixed election law prevents provincial elections from overlapping with federal elections. If a federal election is scheduled for the same time as a provincial election, the provincial election will be moved to the following spring.

However, conflicts still exist. The current provincial election cycle puts our provincial vote in a perpetual conflict with two other major elections.

First, municipal and school board elections are held at the beginning of November, every four years. This means that only two weeks after a provincial election, voters must again go to the polls to elect urban and rural municipal councils and school boards.

Second, the American presidential elections take place at the beginning of November, every four years. Of course, we do not vote in American elections. Even so, the American presidential race is the most-watched election campaign in the world, taking up a lot of our political attention.

IS IT ALL MEANINGLESS?

Fixed election legislation does not supersede constitutional rules. The fixed election law states that nothing in it “alters or abridges the power of the Crown to prorogue or dissolve the Legislative Assembly.”

This means, for example, that if the government falls in a vote of no confidence before the fixed election date, the legislation will not halt an election from taking place.

This also means that the premier is still free to call an election whenever they please. In fact, Premier Scott Moe openly considered calling an early election in April 2020, pointing out that he still retained that power even though the legislation said the 2020 election should be in October. Courts have affirmed that fixed election legislation does not restrict an early election call.

In fact, fixed election legislation cannot even prevent a premier from holding onto power past the fixed election date. The government could remain in office so long as the legislature passed a new law that voided the “fixed” election date. The only limit the government would face is the constitution, which requires a provincial election at least once every five years.



USEFUL OR NOT?

Fixed election legislation has not changed the basic foundations of how elections are triggered in our system of government. But it does provide some general guidance for the scheduling of elections. This creates some basic order which helps everyone plan for elections, which may be the greatest merit of the legislation.

Discuss

1. Should Saskatchewan's fixed election legislation ensure that provincial and municipal elections are scheduled far apart? Why or why not?
2. Should Saskatchewan avoid scheduling elections around the same time as American presidential elections? Why or why not?
3. Newfoundland and Labrador has a unique clause in their fixed election legislation. If a premier leaves office in the middle of their term, an election must take place within a year. Is this a good idea? Why or why not?



FORMING A GOVERNMENT

- Voters in 61 constituencies choose their local representative to form the legislature
- If one party elects a majority of members (at least 31), they will become a majority government
- If no single party elects a majority, the sitting premier still has first chance to demonstrate to the Lieutenant Governor that they can form a stable government
- A stable government could be:
 - Minority government, where support for legislation is gained on an issue-by-issue basis
 - Coalition government, where two or more parties agree to a governing partnership

THINKING ABOUT FORMING A GOVERNMENT

WE ELECT MLAS, NOT PREMIERS

We do not directly elect the premier. Instead, 61 elections happen in 61 constituencies across the province, to choose 61 Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs). Usually, the party with the most elected members forms government. The leader of that party becomes the premier.

1. Why do you think there is such an intense focus in politics on parties and their leaders?
2. What is the risk of not paying close attention to who you vote in as your local MLA?

COMPROMISE: MINORITY AND COALITION GOVERNMENTS

Sometimes no party will win enough seats to form a majority government. If this is the case, usually a minority or a coalition government will form. Minority and coalition governments are common, having ruled most everywhere from Israel to Japan to Brazil to the United Kingdom, and beyond. Saskatchewan has twice been governed by a coalition, from 1929 - 1934 and from 1999 - 2003.

1. A majority of MLAs must support a bill for it to become the law. This means that minority and coalition governments must take diverse views into account when crafting laws.
 - a) Do you believe compromise between political parties can create better laws?
 - b) Can there be times when compromise is not the best solution?
2. A coalition or minority government takes many views into consideration when creating laws, arguably more views than a majority government will take. However, taking a broader approach does not guarantee everyone will be satisfied.
 - a) Even if you do not support a law, is it important to respect it? Why?
 - b) What can be done to change a law that you do not believe in?



SASKATCHEWAN ELECTIONS: A HISTORY

DECEMBER 13TH, 1905

Saskatchewan's first election took place three months after becoming a province. The Liberal Party, led by Walter Scott, formed the province's first elected government. Scott was a Member of Parliament representing the area of Saskatchewan in Wilfred Laurier's federal government. Frederick Haultain, the former premier of the Northwest Territories, led the Provincial Rights Party. Haultain was linked to the Conservative Party and had advocated for Alberta and Saskatchewan to be one province named Buffalo. He begrudged Laurier for creating two provinces, and fought Saskatchewan's first election by opposing federal interference in provincial areas of jurisdiction.

Results:

Party	Leader	Candidates	Elected	Popular Vote
Liberal	Walter Scott	25	16	52.25%
Provincial Rights	Frederick Haultain	24	9	47.47%
Independent		1	-	0.28%
Total Seats			25	

AUGUST 14TH, 1908

The number of MLAs expanded to 41, reflecting the rapidly growing population. The Liberals ran 40 candidates in 41 constituencies: William Turgeon ran in both Prince Albert City and Duck Lake. He won Duck Lake but lost Prince Albert. At the time it was common for candidates to run in multiple constituencies to help ensure their election. If the candidate won in two or more constituencies, they would resign from all but one. By-elections would then be held to find representatives for the vacated constituencies. This practice is no longer allowed.

Results:

Party	Leader	Candidates	Elected	Popular Vote
Liberal	Walter Scott	41	27	50.79%
Provincial Rights	Frederick Haultain	40	14	47.88%
Independent-Liberal		1	-	0.67%
Independent		2	-	0.66%
Total Seats			41	

JULY 11TH, 1912

The Provincial Rights Party morphed into the Conservative Party of Saskatchewan, and continued to campaign for expanding provincial jurisdiction. Only 53 members were elected out of the 54 seat legislature. Results in the constituency of Cumberland were declared void and a by-election was held at a later date to fill the seat.

Results:

Party	Leader	Candidates	Elected	Popular Vote
Liberal	Walter Scott	53	45	56.96%
Conservative	Wellington Willoughby	53	7	41.98%
Independent		5	1	1.06%
Total Seats			54	



JUNE 26TH, 1917

Walter Scott resigned due to mental health challenges and allegations about receiving kickbacks from government contracts. Scott's replacement, William Martin, was new to the provincial Liberals and distanced the party from previous scandals. Importantly, this was Saskatchewan's first provincial election where women could vote. The right was granted in 1916, and not long after that women were able to vote in a provincial plebiscite on prohibition.

Results:

Party	Leader	Candidates	Elected	Popular Vote
Liberal	William M. Martin	58	51	56.68%
Conservative	Wellington Willoughby	53	7	36.30%
Non-Partisan League		7	-	3.87%
Independent		10	1	2.36%
Labour	William G. Baker	2	-	0.79%
Total Seats			59	

JUNE 9TH, 1921

The Conservative Party fell into disarray, hindered by a growing anti-party mood in the province. It split into several pieces, with many party members running as independents. This fray benefited the Liberals. Meanwhile, William G. Baker won the Labour Party's first seat in Saskatchewan, a party originally meant to represent working people's interests. Labour had great success in the United Kingdom, but fizzled in Canada. Labour candidates often ended up aligning themselves with Liberals upon election. Thus, Baker next ran as a Labour-Liberal in 1925. He eventually ran as a Liberal in 1938.

Results:

Party	Leader	Candidates	Elected	Popular Vote
Liberal	William M. Martin	60	45	51.39%
Independent		35	7	25.73%
Progressive		7	6	7.52%
Conservative	Donald Maclean	4	2	3.94%
Independent Conservative		3	1	3.48%
Independent Pro-Government		1	1	Acclamation
Labour	William G. Baker	3	1	3.34%
Non-Partisan League		3	-	2.06%
Independent Labour		1	-	0.93%
Government		1	-	0.84%
Independent Non-Partisan		1	-	0.77%
Total Seats			63	



JUNE 2ND, 1925

The Saskatchewan Liberals became unpopular under Martin’s leadership. Meanwhile, the Saskatchewan Grain Growers’ Association—a powerful group with ties to the provincial Liberals—was threatening to form its own political party. This spurred the Liberals into choosing a new leader, Charles Dunning. Dunning was the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company’s manager. The farmer-based Progressive Party formed official opposition.

Results:

Party	Leader	Candidates	Elected	Popular Vote
Liberal	Charles A. Dunning	62	50	51.51%
Progressive		40	6	23.04%
Conservative	J.T.M. Anderson	18	3	18.35%
Independent		6	2	3.51%
Labour-Liberal		1	1	1.90%
Independent Liberal		1	1	1.07%
Independent Conservative		1	-	0.62%
Total Seats			63	

JUNE 6TH, 1929

Two governments followed the 1929 election. The Liberals won a minority, and were given the first chance to form a government. Three months after the election, the Liberals faced the legislature. They lost a vote of confidence, and the Conservatives and Progressives along with some independents formed a coalition known as the Cooperative government.

Results:

Party	Leader	Candidates	Elected	Popular Vote
Liberal	James Gardiner	62	28	45.56%
Conservative	J.T.M. Anderson	40	24	36.44%
Independent		17	6	9.06%
Progressive		16	5	6.92%
Liberal-Labour		1	-	1.16%
Economic Group		3	-	0.54%
Independent Liberal		1	-	0.32%
Total Seats			63	



JUNE 12TH, 1934

The governing Conservative coalition was battered on many fronts. The Great Depression made their time in government difficult, and the president of the Saskatchewan Conservative Party Association campaigned against his own party, dissatisfied with Anderson's Cooperative government. Meanwhile, the Farmer Labour Party, the precursor to the modern-day NDP, emerged. It was created by the Saskatchewan section of the United Farmers of Canada and the Independent Labour Party. They campaigned for public health care and financial protections for farmers. The hard times and intense political interest pushed voter turnout to an all-time high of nearly 85%.

Results:

Party	Leader	Candidates	Elected	Popular Vote
Liberal	James Gardiner	56	50	48.00%
Conservative	J.T.M. Anderson	52	-	26.75%
Farmer-Labour	M.J. Coldwell	54	5	23.96%
Independent		3	-	0.69%
Labour	William G. Baker	1	-	0.33%
United Front		3	-	0.24%
Independent Liberal		1	-	0.03%
Total Seats			55	

JUNE 8TH, 1938

The Great Depression spurred all sorts of political movements. The Communist Party of Saskatchewan made its first election appearance: two candidates ran as independents while three others ran under the Unity Party banner. Meanwhile, the Social Credit movement, a right-wing populist party that governed Alberta from 1935 - 1971, elected its first members in Saskatchewan. The Farmer-Labour Party joined the national Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, becoming the Saskatchewan CCF. Despite the Conservatives, Social Credit, and the CCF agreeing not to compete against each other in several constituencies, the Liberals swept back to power.

Results:

Party	Leader	Candidates	Elected	Popular Vote
Liberal	William Patterson	53	38	45.45%
CCF	George Williams	31	10	18.73%
Social Credit	Joseph Needham	40	2	15.90%
Conservative	John Diefenbaker	24	-	11.87%
Independent Labour		3	-	2.73%
Unity		3	2	2.24%
Labour Progressive		2	-	1.93%
Independent		2	-	0.91%
Independent Conservative		1	-	0.19%
Independent Social Credit		1	-	0.05%
Total Seats			52	



JUNE 6TH, 1944

Because of World War II, the election was held six years after the previous one. The Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association, which had aligned itself with the Liberals, lost clout with farmers, helping the CCF sweep to power. They formed North America's first socialist government. The Communist Party changed into the Labour Progressive Party due to being banned in Canada in 1940 under the *War Measures Act*.

Results:

Party	Leader	Candidates	Elected	Popular Vote
CCF	Tommy Douglas	52	47	53.13%
Liberal	William Patterson	52	5	35.42%
Progressive Conservative	H.E. Keown	39	-	10.69%
Labour Progressive		3	-	0.52%
Independent		5	-	0.18%
Social Credit	Joseph Needham	1	-	0.06%
Independent Liberal		1	-	0.00%
Total Seats			52	

JUNE 24TH, 1948

The Liberals accused the CCF government of being Russian communists, following "a direct line laid down from Moscow." Liberals campaigned on the slogan Tucker or Tyranny, and attempted to consolidate the anti-CCF vote by having a handful of Liberals and Conservatives run as joint Conservative/Liberal candidates. Only one of these candidates won, Alexander McDonald. He joined the Liberal caucus.

Results:

Party	Leader	Candidates	Elected	Popular Vote
CCF	Tommy Douglas	52	31	47.56%
Liberal	Walter Tucker	41	19	30.60%
Social Credit		36	-	8.09%
Progressive Conservative	Rupert Ramsay	9	-	7.63%
Independent		5	1	2.23%
Liberal-PC		3	-	1.92%
Conservative Liberal		1	1	1.05%
Independent Liberal		1	-	0.66%
Labour Progressive		1	-	0.26%
Total Seats			52	



JUNE 11TH, 1952

The Liberals were unsuccessful in trying to paint the CCF as Russian operatives, so instead they tried to paint the CCF as corrupt. The Minister of Finance, Clarence Fines, was their primary target. The tactic proved unsuccessful, as the CCF returned to office with their highest share of the vote ever.

Results:

Party	Leader	Candidates	Elected	Popular Vote
CCF	Tommy Douglas	53	42	54.06%
Liberal	Walter Tucker	53	11	39.27%
Social Credit		24	-	3.90%
Progressive Conservative	Alvin Hamilton	8	-	1.97%
Independent-PC		1	-	0.29%
Independent		3	-	0.28%
Labour Progressive		2	-	0.21%
Independent Liberal		1	-	0.02%
Total Seats			53	

JUNE 20TH, 1956

The Social Credit party returned to the legislature, on the coattails of their rise to government in British Columbia. Social Credit flooded Saskatchewan with outside cash and Alberta and BC party members to bolster their cause.

Results:

Party	Leader	Candidates	Elected	Popular Vote
CCF	Tommy Douglas	53	36	45.25%
Liberal	Alexander McDonald	52	14	30.34%
Social Credit		53	3	21.48%
Progressive Conservative	Alvin Hamilton	9	-	1.98%
Independent		2	-	0.85%
Labour Progressive		2	-	0.10%
Total Seats			53	



JUNE 8TH, 1960

Saskatchewan’s so-called medicare election saw the Canadian Medical Association vigorously campaign against the CCF proposal for universal health care. They spent \$100,000 on television, radio, and newspaper advertisements—the equivalent of over a million dollars today—and put leaflets in their offices filled with spurious claims like patients would be reassigned to new doctors based on their name, and the government would nefariously use private patient medical records. Except for Social Credit who were firmly opposed, all other parties held tepid stances on the medicare issue. 1960 also marked the first provincial election where Indigenous people could vote, a right Tommy Douglas granted without full approval of Indigenous people.

Results:

Party	Leader	Candidates	Elected	Popular Vote
CCF	Tommy Douglas	55	37	40.76%
Liberal	Ross Thatcher	55	17	32.67%
Progressive Conservative	Martin Pederson	55	-	13.95%
Social Credit	Martin Kelln	55	-	12.35%
Independent		3	-	0.21%
Communist		1	-	0.06%
Total Seats			55*	

*one result was declared void so only 54 members were elected out of 55 seats.

APRIL 22ND, 1964

Tommy Douglas resigned as premier in 1961 to lead the federal New Democratic Party. His successor Woodrow Lloyd successfully implemented medicare, but could not hold back the Liberals in the subsequent election. Ross Thatcher, a former CCF MP, led a Liberal campaign framed around expanding free enterprise. The Conservatives were asked by the Liberals to form an informal coalition against the CCF for the election campaign, but they declined. Their leader won the seat of Arm River, becoming the first Conservative elected to the legislature since 1929.

Results:

Party	Leader	Candidates	Elected	Popular Vote
Liberal	Ross Thatcher	59	32	40.40%
CCF	Woodrow Lloyd	59	25	40.30%
Progressive Conservative	Martin Pederson	42	1	18.90%
Social Credit	Martin Kelln	2	-	0.39%
Communist		1	-	0.01%
Total Seats			59	



OCTOBER 11TH, 1967

Prior to 1967, Regina, Saskatoon, and Moose Jaw were multiple-member-at-large constituencies. On a single ballot, people could vote for as many candidates as there were seats in the city. The top vote-getters would become MLAs. This changed so that Regina, Saskatoon, and Moose Jaw were divided into several separate constituencies. Shortly after the election, the CCF became the New Democratic Party.

Results:

Party	Leader	Candidates	Elected	Popular Vote
Liberal	Ross Thatcher	59	35	45.57%
CCF / New Democratic	Woodrow Lloyd	59	24	44.35%
Progressive Conservative	Martin Pederson	41	-	9.78%
Social Credit		6	-	0.30%
Total Seats			59	

JUNE 23RD, 1971

With 45 of the seats available outside of Saskatchewan’s three largest cities (Saskatoon, Regina, and Moose Jaw), Ross Thatcher tried to paint the NDP as more concerned with organised labour than with farmers. The tactic failed, the Liberals lost, and Thatcher passed away only three weeks later.

Results:

Party	Leader	Candidates	Elected	Popular Vote
New Democratic	Allan Blakeney	60	45	55.00%
Liberal	Ross Thatcher	60	15	42.82%
Progressive Conservative	Ed Nasserden	16	-	2.13%
Independent		1	-	0.04%
Communist		1	-	0.01%
Total Seats			60	

JUNE 11TH, 1975

Allan Blakeney easily won a second term for his government, claiming an established leader was needed for dealings with the federal government. However, the Progressive Conservatives began a comeback, arguing that “nobody can hate a party that’s been out of office for four decades.” Between the 1975 and 1978 elections, two Liberal MLAs (Gary Lane and Colin Thatcher) left the Liberals to join the Progressive Conservatives.

Results:

Party	Leader	Candidates	Elected	Popular Vote
New Democratic	Allan Blakeney	61	39	40.07%
Liberal	David Steuart	61	15	31.67%
Progressive Conservative	Dick Collver	61	7	27.62%
Independent		5	-	0.64%
Total Seats			61	



OCTOBER 18TH, 1978

The NDP argued for greater public control of resource development, while the other parties argued for greater private control. For the first time in the province’s history, not a single Liberal was elected to the legislature, set back by a messy leadership contest between Ted Malone and Tony Merchant along with the unpopularity of Liberal Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. The Progressive Conservatives also suffered some disarray after the election. Dick Collver resigned as leader then broke away from the PCs to form the short-lived Unionest Party in 1980. The party advocated for western Canada to join the United States. A second PC MLA joined Collver, forming a two-seat caucus in the legislature. The party disbanded in 1982.

Results:

Party	Leader	Candidates	Elected	Popular Vote
New Democratic	Allan Blakeney	61	44	48.12%
Progressive Conservative	Dick Collver	61	17	38.08%
Liberal	Ted Malone	61	-	13.78%
Independent		2	-	0.02%
Total Seats			61	

APRIL 26TH, 1982

The NDP campaigned on the theme Tested and Trusted to emphasize the province’s low unemployment and robust economy. The Conservatives countered that the NDP were tired and rusted, and promised lower taxes. Meanwhile, the Aboriginal People’s Party emerged but failed to elect any members despite an endorsement from the Canadian Union of Public Employees. The Western Canada Concept—a western separatist party—also failed to elect any members. Nevertheless, two MLAs elected as PCs switched parties to sit as WCC members, but they were never popular with the WCC membership and were soon expelled from the party.

Results:

Party	Leader	Candidates	Elected	Popular Vote
Progressive Conservative	Grant Devine	64	55	54.07%
New Democratic	Allan Blakeney	64	9	37.64%
Liberal	Ralph Goodale	64	-	4.51%
Western Canada Concept	Ray Bailey	40	-	3.26%
Independent		8	-	0.30%
Aboriginal People’s Party		10	-	0.22%
Total Seats			64	



OCTOBER 20TH, 1986

The NDP won more votes than the Progressive Conservatives, but the PCs won more seats. This marked the only time in Saskatchewan’s history that the winning party won a majority government while the official opposition won more of the popular vote.

Results:

Party	Leader	Candidates	Elected	Popular Vote
New Democratic	Allan Blakeney	64	25	45.20%
Progressive Conservative	Grant Devine	64	38	44.61%
Liberal	Ralph Goodale	64	1	9.99%
Western Canada Concept	Hilton J. Spencer	9	-	0.08%
Independent		3	-	0.07%
Alliance		6	-	0.04%
Communist		1	-	0.01%
Total Seats			64	

OCTOBER 21ST, 1991

1991 was a near-reversal of the 1982 election. The NDP returned to power, as the public balked at the enormous provincial debt and poorly-thought-out PC programs like Fair Share Saskatchewan, a plan to move 2,000 civil servants from Regina to rural areas. Despite Grant Devine urging people not to vote Liberal for fear of splitting the “free enterprise” vote, provincial Liberal support more than doubled under the leadership of Lynda Haverstock.

Results:

Party	Leader	Candidates	Elected	Popular Vote
New Democratic	Roy Romanow	66	55	51.05%
Progressive Conservative	Grant Devine	66	10	25.54%
Liberal	Lynda Haverstock	66	1	23.29%
Independent		8	-	0.11%
Independence (Western Canada Concept)		1	-	0.01%
Total Seats			66	



JUNE 21ST, 1995

As part of the NDP's efforts to steer the province from the brink of bankruptcy, the legislature was reduced from 66 to 58 seats. The changes to the electoral map left some incumbents to fight nomination battles against colleagues from their own party in the redrawn constituencies. To distance themselves from their record in government and a constant drip of former PC MLAs being charged with fraud, the Progressive Conservatives branded themselves as The New PCs. The rebranding could not keep the Liberals from taking their place as official opposition, winning 11 seats and placing second in 41 others.

Results:

Party	Leader	Candidates	Elected	Popular Vote
New Democratic	Roy Romanow	58	42	47.21%
Liberal	Lynda Haverstock	58	11	34.70%
Progressive Conservative	Bill Boyd	58	5	17.92%
Independent		4	-	0.17%
Total Seats			58	

SEPTEMBER 16TH, 1999

In 1997, four of the five sitting Progressive Conservative MLAs aligned themselves with four disaffected Liberal MLAs to form the Saskatchewan Party. The Liberals carried on, but the PC's put their party into hibernation, merely running paper candidates to keep its official party status. The Saskatchewan Party gained the most votes but came in second in seat count. The NDP was reduced to a minority, and forged a coalition with the Liberals.

Results:

Party	Leader	Candidates	Elected	Popular Vote
Saskatchewan Party	Elwin Hermanson	58	25	39.61%
New Democratic	Roy Romanow	58	29	38.73%
Liberal	Jim Melenchuk	58	4	20.15%
New Green Alliance	Neil Sinclair	16	-	1.01%
Progressive Conservative	Iris Dennis	14	-	0.40%
Independent		2	-	0.10%
Total Seats			58	



NOVEMBER 5TH, 2003

The Liberals disavowed their coalition with the NDP and ran a full slate of candidates in an election where the Saskatchewan Party was considered the favourite. However, concerns about the Sask Party privatising crown corporations led to a fourth consecutive term for the NDP. The Liberals were shut out of the legislature.

Results:

Party	Leader	Candidates	Elected	Popular Vote
New Democratic	Lorne Calvert	58	30	44.68%
Saskatchewan Party	Elwin Hermanson	58	28	39.35%
Liberal	David Karwacki	58	-	14.18%
Western Independence	Bruce Ritter	17	-	0.61%
New Green Alliance	Ben Webster	27	-	0.55%
Independent		5	-	0.47%
Progressive Conservative	Iris Dennis	11	-	0.16%
Total Seats			58	

NOVEMBER 7TH, 2007

With the economy entering a boom, the NDP promised to create a universal pharmacare program to ensure prescription drugs would be affordable for all citizens. Meanwhile, the New Green Alliance changed its name to the Green Party (though remained unaffiliated with the federal Green Party) and ran a nearly-full slate of candidates, the Marijuana Party made its only appearance in a provincial election, and the PCs actively campaigned for the first time since 1995. None of these factors could stop the Saskatchewan Party's rise to power.

Results:

Party	Leader	Candidates	Elected	Popular Vote
Saskatchewan Party	Brad Wall	57	38	50.92%
New Democratic	Lorne Calvert	58	20	37.24%
Liberal	David Karwacki	58	-	9.40%
Green	Sandra Finley	48	-	2.01%
Progressive Conservative	Rick Swenson	5	-	0.18%
Western Independence	John Nesdoly	8	-	0.13%
Marijuana	Nathan Holowaty	5	-	0.11%
Total Seats			58	



NOVEMBER 7TH, 2011

A resource-based economic boom helped push the governing Saskatchewan Party to the highest-ever share of the popular vote in a Saskatchewan general election. The Liberals continued to sink, and for the first time in their history placed fourth, behind the Greens. Even though the PCs placed fifth overall, of the four smallest parties they received the most votes per candidate.

Results:

Party	Leader	Candidates	Elected	Popular Vote
Saskatchewan Party	Brad Wall	58	49	64.25%
New Democratic	Dwain Lingenfelter	58	9	31.97%
Green	Victor Lau	58	-	2.87%
Liberal	Ryan Bater	9	-	0.56%
Progressive Conservative	Rick Swenson	5	-	0.33%
Western Independence	Dana Arnason	1	-	0.01%
Independent		1	-	0.01%
Total Seats			58	

APRIL 4TH, 2016

The popularity of Brad Wall’s Saskatchewan Party—especially in rural areas—helped make the 2016 election a foregone conclusion. However, this certainty in the election’s result also pushed eligible voter turnout down to 53.5%.

Results:

Party	Leader	Candidates	Elected	Popular Vote
Saskatchewan Party	Brad Wall	61	51	62.36%
New Democratic	Cam Broten	61	10	30.20%
Liberal	Darrin Lamoureux	61	-	3.59%
Green	Victor Lau	58	-	1.83%
Progressive Conservative	Rick Swenson	18	-	1.28%
Independent		5	-	0.39%
Western Independence	Frank Serfas	4	-	0.07%
Total Seats			61	



OCTOBER 26TH, 2020

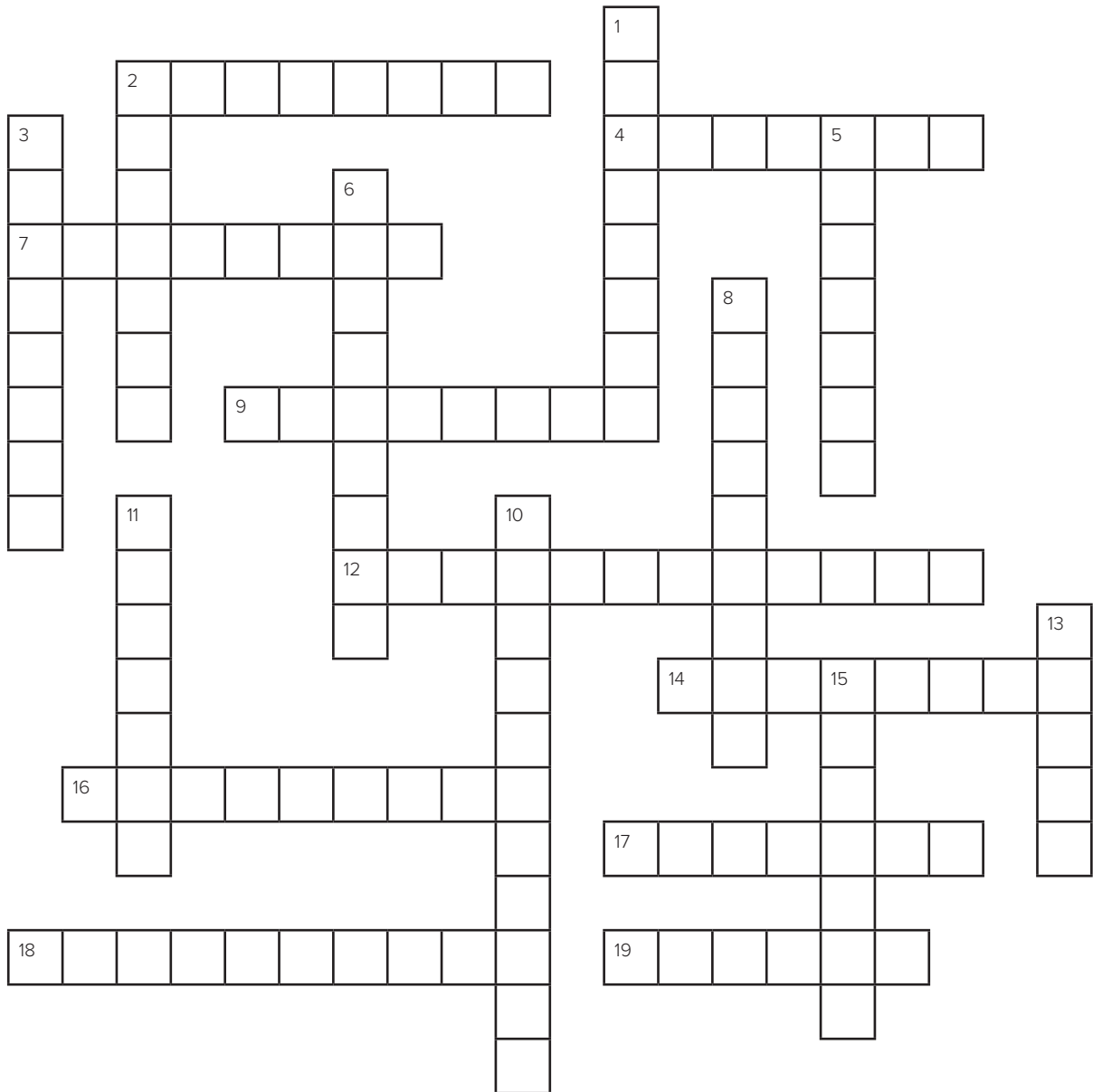
The 2020 election was largely considered a foregone conclusion from the outset. Only seven seats switched hands, mostly in Saskatoon. The only notable changes were shifts in the votes of smaller parties. The Buffalo Party, another western independence party, came in second in four rural constituencies and third in 11 others, including a relatively strong show in Kindersley. Meanwhile the Progressive Conservatives and Greens came in third in 21 and 14 constituencies, respectively.

Results:

Party	Leader	Candidates	Elected	Popular Vote
Saskatchewan Party	Scott Moe	61	48	60.67%
New Democratic	Ryan Meili	61	13	31.59%
Buffalo	Wade Sira	17	-	2.54%
Green	Naomi Hunter	60	-	2.25%
Progressive Conservative	Ken Grey	31	-	1.89%
Independent		3	-	0.24%
Liberal	Robert Rudachyk	3	-	0.08%
Total Seats			61	



SASKATCHEWAN ELECTION CROSSWORD



ACROSS

2. This Liberal was premier, opposition leader, and again premier. He has a dam named in his honour.
4. This premier won more elections than any other.
7. This Conservative premier tried to publicly distance himself from the support offered to his party by the Ku Klux Klan.
9. This opposition leader lost three elections to Walter Scott.
12. Despite having formed governments in Alberta and British Columbia, this political party has only elected a total of five members to the Saskatchewan legislature.



SASKATCHEWAN ELECTION CROSSWORD... CONTINUED

14. The precursor to the modern NDP won its first five seats under the leadership of this person.
16. This opposition leader was one of only two in Saskatchewan's history to win the most votes in an election, but not win enough seats to take government.
17. This was the only Saskatchewan premier to win an election with less than 40% of the popular vote.
18. This Liberal leader later went on to become the Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan.
19. This person led the Progressive Conservatives to the biggest landslide victory, seat-wise, in Saskatchewan history.

DOWN

1. This Progressive Conservative leader ended a 30 year spell of no Conservatives being elected to the Saskatchewan legislature.
2. This provincial Liberal leader also served as a federal Liberal MP from 1974-1979 and 1993-2019.
3. This premier battled five elections as NDP leader, winning three of them.
5. This political party won nine consecutive elections in Saskatchewan, even though they did not hold government consecutively through this time.
6. This political party made its first appearance in a Saskatchewan provincial election in 1938.
8. Although Ross Thatcher was Saskatchewan's first premier born in Saskatchewan, this premier was the first one born in the territory that is now present-day Saskatchewan.
10. This Conservative Party leader led the party to no seats in 1938, but later went on to lead the federal party to the biggest majority government in federal history.
11. As part of his election campaign, this Progressive Conservative leader argued that "nobody can hate a party that's been out of office for four decades."
13. This CCF leader became premier after Tommy Douglas moved on to federal politics, but subsequently led the CCF to two consecutive defeats.
15. This person came to Saskatchewan in 1902 penniless and with no knowledge of farming, was Minister of Agriculture by 1916, and by 1922 was leading the province.



LESSON 3.2

CONSIDERING HOW WE VOTE

OBJECTIVE

Students will learn that voting is a democratic right and consider if it is a democratic responsibility.

PROCEDURE

1. As a class, brainstorm reasons why it is important to vote.
2. Bridge class discussion into reading of Considering Voter Turnout.

KEY QUESTIONS

- **Is mandatory voting a good idea? Why or why not?**
 - **What are the benefits and drawbacks to having voters physically cast a paper ballot? What about online voting?**
3. To introduce how to participate in the voting process without casting a ballot for a candidate, read Declined Ballots. Reviewing Lesson 2.6: Participating in the Political Process will be useful for Question 1 of this handout.
 4. For consideration about building voter turnout, read Considering a Lower Voting Age.

FURTHER EXPLORATION

5. To learn about the granting of Indigenous people with the right to vote in federal elections, and the resistance many Indigenous people had to this right, check out the case study Indigenous People and the Right to Vote in Lesson One of Democracy and the Rule of Law. Find it at teachers.plea.org
6. CBC has a discussion with panellists who believe that the voting age should be lowered. Find it at www.cbc.ca/player/play/video/1.6274294.
7. Elections Canada has a useful and comprehensive guide to A History of the Vote in Canada. Find it at www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=res&dir=his&document=index&lang=e.
8. Elections Saskatchewan has information for how people who have just turned 18 can register to vote. Find it at www.elections.sk.ca/voters/future-voters/.

CONSIDERING VOTER TURNOUT

Virtually every resident of Saskatchewan who is a Canadian citizen 18 years or older has the right to vote in our provincial elections.

When voting, citizens need to prove their identity and address. They may do this by showing one piece of government-issued photo ID with a name and address (for example, a driver's license) or showing two original documents with the voter's name, from a list approved by Elections Saskatchewan. One of these documents must have the voter's address (for example, you could use a Saskatchewan health card and power bill).

If a voter cannot provide identification, another eligible voter can vouch for their identity and place of residence, so long as both of them are assigned to vote at the same polling district. An eligible voter can only swear an oath for one other person.

Identification requirements can create obstacles to voting. People such as the homeless or students living away from their hometown may not have the documentation needed to vote, and obtaining it can be difficult. These problems must not be overlooked or minimalised: while we need to ensure that fraudulent ballots are not cast, we also need to find ways to ensure everyone can exercise their right to vote.

Despite how easy it is for the masses to vote, a surprising number of people fail to exercise this right. The percentage of eligible voters casting ballots fell sharply in the mid-1990s, and has yet to return to its historical levels.

One way to increase voter turnout is to make voting mandatory, like in Australia. Australians who do not cast a ballot are fined unless they have a valid reason for not voting. This has led to roughly 95% voter turnout.

Mandatory voting increases turnout. However, requiring people to vote restricts our freedom. It takes away the right to freely sit out an election. Not voting can be a legitimate form of political protest.

In Saskatchewan, we have chosen to voluntarily encourage people to vote. One method to encourage turnout is providing greater access to polling stations. In the province,

- advance polling stations are opened for five days prior to the election
- polling stations are set up in seniors' and personal care homes
- polling stations are opened in hospitals for patients
- people who are homebound due to a disability (and their caregivers) may vote by appointment in their homes
- people can cast their ballot in person as an "absentee voter" at their returning office up until nine days before election day
- people can vote by mail

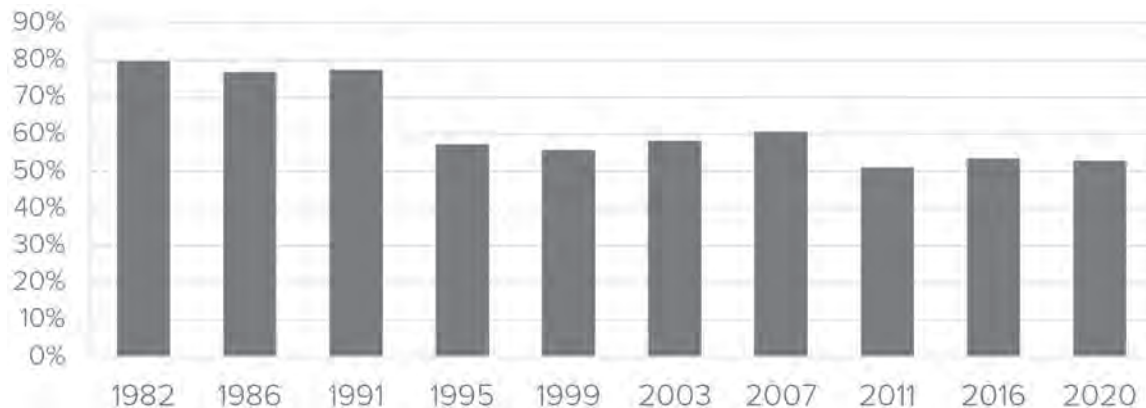
Nevertheless, other things could be done. For example, having advanced polling stations at universities and colleges could encourage younger people to vote.



Voter turnout can be impacted by many factors, not all directly related to accessible voting. For example, the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy pointed out that in the 2020 provincial election:

- some constituencies where the election's outcome appears foregone (such as inner-city constituencies that almost always have landslide NDP victories) tended to have low turnout
- urban constituencies on city fringes made up of young families with above-average incomes and education levels tended to have higher turnout
- rural ridings where the Buffalo Party placed second to the perpetually-winning Sask Party candidate had high turnouts, suggesting the importance of mounting challenges to the status quo

ELIGIBLE* VOTER TURNOUT IN SASKATCHEWAN



* Eligible Voters includes registered voters and people not registered to vote.

TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

Technology could change the ways we vote. Our current method of casting ballots is based on norms developed in the 19th century. Voters are given a paper ballot, they mark who they are voting for, and place it in a ballot box. When the polls close, the ballots are counted by hand. Scrutineers from candidates and political parties are invited to oversee the counting process. If a result is close, a judge may be asked to re-count the votes.

This is how we have voted and counted ballots in Saskatchewan since our first territorial elections in the 1800s. Elections Saskatchewan—the independent agency that oversees Saskatchewan elections—recently tried to change how votes are counted, by using electronic vote counting machines.

To make the case for changing to electronic vote counting machines, Elections Saskatchewan cited the efficiency of using electronic machines, and noted that several provinces use these methods to count votes. As well, Saskatoon and Regina use electronic counting methods for civic elections. It was also shown that electronic counting



is more accurate than counting ballots by hand. They ran a trial in three recent byelections, and reported no problems.

However, the government was concerned that the integrity of elections—or at least the perception of integrity—could be negatively impacted by using electronic vote counting. They denied the election authority's request to change over to electronic vote counting.

VOTING ONLINE

A more radical change that has yet to be seen in Saskatchewan provincial elections is online voting. Being able to vote over the internet would make the process easier and could possibly increase voter participation.

Estonia was the first country to try online voting for a national election, in 2007. It has proven so popular there that about half of all votes are now cast online. Voter turnout in Estonia has also increased, although the research is not clear as to whether or not the increased turnout is the result of online voting. Closer to home, online elections have been implemented in several Ontario municipalities, and these elections have gone off without a hitch.

Detractors fear that online voting is less secure than casting physical ballots. Computer systems could be hacked, and even the principle of the secret ballot could be at risk. In Saskatchewan, Elections Saskatchewan has not proposed online voting.

Regardless of how or if we vote, we can be confident in the accuracy of election results in Saskatchewan. Our provincial elections have been virtually free from allegations of fraud and vote-counting irregularities. Citizens should carefully consider any changes proposed to our voting process, but should also be confident in Elections Saskatchewan, the province's election oversight body.

Paper ballots were first used in Rome in 139 BCE. Our modern system where voters are provided with a standard paper ballot that they secretly mark and immediately place in the ballot box originates in New South Wales, Australia, in 1858.

Prior to the Australian experiment, voters brought their own ballots to polling stations, marked with their candidate of choice. Sometimes, political parties would even print ballots for their supporters to use. Because the bring-your-own ballot method was open to all sorts of fraud, ballots were usually cast publicly. In fact, it was common practice to use glass jars as ballot boxes, to see what was being dropped inside.



DECLINED BALLOTS

For many reasons, some people choose not to vote. This is their right. However, voting is important to a well-functioning democracy. For citizens who do not want to vote for a particular candidate, they have options other than not showing up.

REJECTED BALLOTS

When a ballot is marked improperly or illogically by a voter, it is considered a rejected ballot.

Ballots are rejected during the counting process for such reasons as being marked for more than one candidate or being defaced. While this is commonly referred to as a “spoiled ballot,” under Saskatchewan’s electoral law a spoiled ballot is something different. A spoiled ballot is a ballot retained by the deputy returning officer and not counted. Ballots can be considered spoiled if there is a printing problem with the ballot. Ballots can also be considered spoiled if a voter improperly fills it out, and exchanges the improper ballot for a new one.

With rejected ballots, it is impossible to know the voter’s motivations. Some voters may have been genuinely expressing dissatisfaction with the candidates or with the system of government in general. Other rejected ballots are simply the result of people making genuine mistakes when filling in their ballots.

To help clarify when a voter is purposely expressing dissatisfaction, some jurisdictions have embraced the idea of the declined ballot.

DECLINED BALLOTS

When a voter receives a ballot at the voting station, they have the option of declining their ballot. To decline a ballot, the voter must give the ballot back to the election official without filling it in, declaring that they wish to “decline their ballot.” When this happens, the election official must record the ballot as declined.

Voters can decline their ballots in Saskatchewan’s provincial elections. However, those ballots are not counted specifically as a “declined ballot.” Instead, the ballot is counted but lumped in with all the rejected ballots. This means that when the election results are published, the public has no way of knowing how many ballots were purposely declined and how many ballots were rejected for other reasons.

Other jurisdictions recognise that declining your ballot is a unique form of political expression. For example, in Alberta and Manitoba election results include a breakdown of rejected ballots and declined ballots. Ontario goes one step further, by breaking down rejected ballots, declined ballots, and ballots left blank but placed in the ballot box.

DECLINED BALLOTS AND THE SECRET BALLOT

Secret ballots are a cornerstone idea of liberal democracies. When the public votes in elections, there is a risk that they may be intimidated or threatened for their political choices. By making your ballot secret, only you know who you voted for. Secret ballots were first used in Canada’s 1874 federal election.

While declining your ballot is a legitimate form of political expression, it is not a secret process. Voters must publicly declare their desire to decline a ballot and hand it back at the polling station. On the other hand, voters who cast a vote for a candidate or deface their ballots do so in secrecy. The public nature of declining a ballot can be seen as undermining people’s right to political privacy.



DECLINED BALLOTS... CONTINUED

Manitoba's election laws acknowledge the issue of secret ballots by allowing voters to write "declined" on their ballot and placing it in the ballot box. This way the voter retains their political privacy while having their ballot counted as declined.

WHY DECLINE YOUR BALLOT?

Declined ballots offer voters a chance to fulfill their democratic responsibility of voting, while concurrently allowing an opportunity to officially register their political dissatisfaction. Such expression is especially useful for citizens in jurisdictions that publicly report declined ballots separately from other rejected ballots. Thus, it is possible to participate in the voting process without actually endorsing any particular candidate or party.

Discuss

1. Declining a ballot is a legitimate political expression. However, citizens should consider several things before declining their ballot.
 - a) Should citizens learn about and speak with all candidates in their constituency before declining their ballot?
 - b) Getting involved with a political party is a way to change politics from the inside. Is this a more constructive way to effect political change?
 - c) What other constructive ways can citizens participate in the political process if they are dissatisfied with the candidates or the system of government as a whole?
2. In 2014, an Ontario citizen launched a non-partisan campaign called "Decline Your Vote." It was meant to raise awareness of declined ballots for that year's provincial election. The campaign appeared to have had an impact: 31,399 ballots were declined, compared to just 2,335 declined ballots in the previous provincial election.
 - a) Do you think more people would decline their ballots if they were aware of the option?
 - b) Whose responsibility is it to make people aware of the declined ballot option?
3. In Saskatchewan, declined ballots are counted separately from other rejected ballots. However, when election results are published declined ballots are lumped into the "rejected" category. Would it be useful if Saskatchewan's election laws were changed so that declined ballots were reported separately?
4. What do you think would happen if declined ballots outnumbered ballots cast for candidates in an election? In other words, what would happen if declined ballots "won"?
5. Under what circumstances do you think it is okay to decline a ballot?



CONSIDERING A LOWER VOTING AGE

Struggles for the right to vote are as old as democracy itself. When the western concept of democracy emerged in Athens around 2500 years ago, only a handful of adult male citizens could vote. It was not until the 19th and 20th centuries that the right to vote was substantially liberalised.

Movements to grant women the right to vote were on the forefront of expanding voting rights. New Zealand was the first modern-day country to grant this right in 1893. Saskatchewan women gained this right in 1916. Then-premier Walter Scott's wife, Jesse Florence Read, signed a petition in support of women's suffrage in 1909. Scott was on side with his spouse, and encouraged women to gather support around the province to pave a path for the right to vote.

Women were one of several groups in society who gained voting rights in the 20th century. In Canada's early years, legislation specifically allowed for the discrimination against minority voting rights. This meant the federal government could arbitrarily say who could and who couldn't vote. For example, Doukhobors could not vote until 1945. Chinese and Indo-Canadians did not receive this right until 1947. Japanese Canadians were given the right to vote in 1948. It wasn't until 1960 that Indigenous Canadians no longer had to give up their Treaty rights and renounce their status under the *Indian Act* in order to vote in a federal election.

The provincial government granted voting rights to Indigenous people that same year.

Further voting rights were gained in 1988, when the right to vote was granted for those in mental health care facilities. In 2002, the Supreme Court ruled that prisoners have the right to vote.

For young people, expanding the right to vote has also been a point of contention. It was not until 1970, following the lead of the United Kingdom, that the Canadian voting age was reduced from 21 to 18.

More recently, the idea of lowering the voting age to 16 has been floated but has gained little traction. A private member's bill was put forth in the House of Commons in 2005 to have the federal voting age lowered, but it did not pass. In 2008 the concept was proposed in Nova Scotia but went nowhere. In 2023, the Ontario Superior Court rejected a Charter challenge by a group seeking to have the voting age lowered to 16. And in 2024, the Chief Electoral Officer of the Northwest Territories has said that the voting age should be lowered but there has yet to be any action taken towards this.

Arguments for a younger voting age include:

- teaching civics in conjunction with enabling voting would ingrain a sense of duty and habit in voting
- if younger people began to vote, politicians would be more inclined to address their needs
- young people already have many other adult rights such as driving

Arguments against a younger voting age include:

- young people lack the adult maturity to make a decision about governance
- voter turnout amongst young people is low, so granting them the vote would accomplish little

A few places around the world have voting ages lower than 18. For example, Austria, Brazil, and Cuba all have minimum voting ages of 16. Scotland and Wales allow 16-year-olds to vote in Scottish and Welsh Parliament elections, as well as local council elections. East Timor and Sudan have provisions to allow 17-year-olds to vote. As well, the newly-elected government in the United Kingdom has promised to lower the voting age to 16.



Discuss

1. Almost all young people learn about voting and elections throughout their time in school. However, they do not get the chance to vote until years later.
 - a) Will this time-lapse between learning and actually voting make you less likely to vote as an adult?
 - b) Are young people mature enough and ready to vote?
2. People under 18 have some but not all responsibilities of adults. Many laws acknowledge this. For example, the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* generally deals with young people differently than adults. As well, Saskatchewan's alcohol laws deal with people under 19 differently than adults.
 - a) Would lowering the voting age strengthen arguments for changing other youth-related laws? Why or why not?
 - b) If liquor or criminal laws were changed due to a recognition of the maturity of young people, would those changes necessarily be in your best interests?
3. What would be the broader consequences of young people voting?



LESSON 3.3

SMALLER POLITICAL PARTIES AND LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATION

OBJECTIVE

Students will learn about the first-past-the-post electoral system, the kinds of legislatures it produces, and some of the reforms that have been suggested to better-reflect election results for bigger and smaller parties.

PROCEDURE

1. Brainstorm a list of parties running for election. If the list is incomplete, share with the class the missing parties.
2. Use the overhead Smaller Political Parties to introduce how we have more political choice in Saskatchewan than what is often perceived.

KEY QUESTIONS

- **Why do smaller parties and their candidates tend to get less support than mainstream candidates? Discuss these possibilities...**
 - Local candidates have become less important during elections as the campaign focuses on the leaders
 - Major media only pays attention to the main parties
 - Individuals do not have or make time to thoroughly research all candidates
 - Smaller parties often do not operate province-wide campaigns like the major parties

- People tend to vote for parties that they believe have better chances of winning
- Smaller parties simply have views that represent a fringe opinion
- What instances in Saskatchewan history have seen smaller parties become major parties?

It may be worthwhile to examine the policies of one or more smaller parties to enlighten or follow-up this discussion. Activities in Lesson 3.4 will help guide such an examination.

3. Bridge discussion of lack of representation of smaller political parties in the legislature to a discussion of the first-past-the-post voting system, using Electoral Reform.
4. There are healthy debates on the best types of electoral systems. Students may embark on research projects that critically examine different types of voting. This could include:
 - variations of proportional representation (PR), such as single transferrable vote, party-list PR, and mixed-member constituency PR
 - run-off voting, including instant runoff voting
 - first-past-the-post

An excellent starting point to understand various voting systems is the Law Commission of Canada's 2004 report *Voting Counts: Electoral Reform for Canada*. Find it at <http://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/J31-61-2004E.pdf>

FURTHER EXPLORATION

5. Several provinces have held plebiscites and referendums on electoral reform. For a case study on the experience in Prince Edward Island, check out "Setting Minimums: PEI Votes on Electoral Reform" in Lesson 3 of *Direct Democracy*. Find it at teachers.plea.org
6. To learn about the right to run for office as a protest candidate, check out *The PLEA: Running Jokes*. Find it at teachers.plea.org
7. A civil society group is launching a Charter challenge to the first-past-the-post voting system. Find out more at www.charterchallenge.ca.

SMALLER POLITICAL PARTIES

Most people are aware of the two largest political parties in Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Party and the NDP. However, there are seven registered political parties in Saskatchewan:

- Buffalo Party of Saskatchewan
- New Democratic Party, Sask. Section
- Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan
- Saskatchewan Green Party
- Saskatchewan Party
- Saskatchewan Progress Party
- Saskatchewan United Party

In addition, some constituencies may have independent candidates running for office with no official political affiliation.

Smaller political parties have not had much success in gaining seats in the legislature. This has been especially true since the 1940s.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Elections in Saskatchewan are based on what is called the first-past-the-post (FPTP) system. Under FPTP, the candidate with the most votes in each constituency becomes the MLA for that constituency.

For example, consider the results of this hypothetical three-way race in a constituency:

Candidate A: 37% of the votes

Candidate B: 35% of the votes

Candidate C: 28% of the votes

Candidate A is elected and will take a seat in the legislature.

In a general election, this voting process happens in every constituency across the province. The party with the most winning candidates across the province will usually form the government.

A problem with the first-past-the-post system is that the number of seats each party takes in the legislature does not reflect the number of votes each party receives across the province.

To better understand the discrepancy between votes cast and seats gained, look at the results from the 2020 provincial election. Compare the percentage of seats each party won to their percentage of the popular vote:

Party	Popular Vote	# of Seats Won under FPTP	% of Seats Won under FPTP
Saskatchewan Party	60.67%	48	79%
New Democratic	31.59%	13	21%
Buffalo	2.54%	0	0%
Green	2.25%	0	0%
Progressive Conservative	1.89%	0	0%
Independent	0.24%	0	0%
Liberal	0.08%	0	0%

The Saskatchewan Party won 79% of the seats with 61% of the vote. Meanwhile, people who voted for other parties were under-represented in the legislature, if they were represented at all.

In Saskatchewan, first-past-the-post elections almost always put the party with the most votes into government. However, FPTP has once ended in government by the second-place party. In 1986, the NDP won the popular vote but the Progressive Conservatives won the most seats and formed government. Somewhat differently, in 1999, the Saskatchewan Party won the popular vote but the NDP won the most seats. To form a majority government, the NDP formed a coalition with the third-place Liberals. Together, the NDP and Liberal vote accounted for 59% of the popular vote.



ELECTORAL REFORM

Many people have advocated for electoral reforms to remedy the perceived problems of first-past-the-post elections.

One proposed reform is proportional representation (PR). There are several types of PR, but they all have one common goal: parties are given seats based on their popular vote. For example, if Party A receives 55% of the vote and Party B receives 45% of the vote, Party A is granted 55% of the legislature's seats and Party B is granted 45% of the legislature's seats. This more accurately reflects voter intentions on a province-wide basis.

A different proposed reform is run-off voting. There are several types of run-off voting, but they all have one common goal. In run-off voting systems, a candidate must receive 50% or more of the vote to take a seat in the legislature. When votes are counted, if no candidate receives 50% of the vote, the bottom candidate is dropped off the ballot and a run-off process begins: sometimes the run-off process is a new election with fewer candidates. Other times the run-off process is accomplished by having voters mark in their second choice: when the bottom candidate is dropped off the ballot, the second choice of their supporters is counted.

The run-off process continues until a single candidate has 50% or more of the votes. Unlike PR, run-off systems tend to favour larger parties.

Discuss

1. Is first-past-the-post a fair way to choose a government? Explain.
2. Currently, we vote for individual candidates at the constituency level. The winner is expected to represent all their constituents in the legislature, whether or not they voted for them. Does this fact make proportional representation less important?
3. Would you be more inclined to vote for a smaller party if you thought your vote would have a higher likelihood of electing somebody, even if it wasn't your local candidate?





LESSON 3.4

CONSIDERING PARTY PLATFORMS

OBJECTIVE

Students will research issues facing Saskatchewan and consider where parties stand on them.

PROCEDURE

1. Brainstorm issues that are important to the people of Saskatchewan. Single out issues which can be changed, controlled, or influenced by the provincial government. The background information on the separation of governmental jurisdictions, found in Lesson 1.2, will be useful for determining jurisdiction.
2. Break students into groups to determine which issues they find most interesting. Using Public Policies: Issues and Stances as a guide, students should research campaign literature, party websites, news articles, and social media to find party stances on these issues.
3. Assign each student group to one particular issue to thoroughly examine. Students should prepare a brief presentation to their class.

PUBLIC POLICIES: ISSUES AND STANCES

During the 1993 federal election campaign, then-Prime Minister Kim Campbell was asked about her government's plans to cut social programs. In response, Campbell famously said "this is not the time, I don't think, to get involved in a debate on very, very serious issues."

Opposition parties and the media quickly attacked Campbell for avoiding a conversation about an issue during an election campaign.

Admittedly, her statement may have been fair. Societal issues are complex, can rarely be explained with a single snappy line, and usually require thoughtful solutions. Nevertheless, many people only take an active interest in politics and governance during elections. Thus, elections are a time to debate serious issues. Whether or not we debate serious issues seriously is another question entirely.

Several issues relevant to life in Saskatchewan will emerge during this election campaign. Choose a handful of issues you find interesting and important. For each issue, answer the following questions:

1. Examining the Issue
 - a) What is the issue?
 - b) Why is it an issue to you? Is it an issue for other people as well?
 - c) Which political parties have addressed this issue?
 - d) What is the policy/stance of each party towards this issue?
 - e) If the issue has not been addressed by one or more parties, why do you think that is the case?
2. Deconstructing the Party Stances
 - a) Who will benefit the most from each party's solution to the issue?
 - b) Who will benefit the least from each party's policy?
 - c) What problems are left unresolved by the proposed solution?
 - d) What problems could the solution create?



LESSON 3.5

LOCAL CANDIDATES

OBJECTIVE

Because we elect a local representative in every constituency in the province, students will learn about the candidates vying for election in their constituency.

PROCEDURE

1. Write the name of the premier or leader of the opposition on the board. Ask students to raise their hands if they know who that person is. Next, write the name of the local MLA on the board, and have students raise hands if they know who that person is. Use this informal survey to discuss how local MLAs are often lesser-known than their political leaders.
2. Assign Local Candidates Research Guide. Methods of completion could include breaking students into groups to create presentations/bulletin boards/reports on a particular local candidate.
3. Some questions in the Local Candidates Research Guide could be better-answered by candidates in person. Teachers may wish to organise an all-candidates forum in their school, or a class trip to such a forum. This will help students and the community learn more about local candidates.
4. Once students have fully considered all the candidates in the constituency, lead class discussion of the following questions:
 - Which candidate would make the best local MLA?
 - Does the best local candidate necessarily come from the party you think is best for the province as a whole?

LOCAL CANDIDATES RESEARCH GUIDE

The role of a member of the legislative assembly is important. They propose and vote on laws, advocate for their constituents, and bring attention to pressing needs of the province as a whole.

Unfortunately, local candidates often are overshadowed by their parties and their leaders. This is a problem: when citizens vote in a provincial election, they are voting for a local representative. It is key to know about your local candidates.

For each candidate vying for election in your constituency, consider the following questions:

1. Who is the candidate?
2. What has the candidate done outside of politics that would make them a good local representative?
3. Has the candidate made themselves available to the public, such as by appearing at local candidate forums, holding meetings, and giving interviews on social media or to local media?
4. What policies is the candidate focussed on?
5. How do the policies the candidate supports help your constituency? How do the policies help the province as a whole?
6. Does the candidate have ideas that are unique to your constituency, or are they just repeating their party's policies?
7. MLAs have to balance the views of their constituents, the political party whose platform they stood behind to get elected, and the needs of the province as a whole.
 - a) What would the candidate do if a party policy was different than what most of their constituents wanted?
 - b) What would the candidate do if the needs of the province as a whole were in conflict with a local need?
8. Would you trust this candidate to research, debate, and vote on the laws that govern the province?



LESSON 3.6

POST-ELECTION ANALYSIS

OBJECTIVE

Election results will be analysed so students can consider what the results mean for themselves, the community, and the province.

PROCEDURE

1. As a class, read through and/or watch pertinent election results as reported in legacy and social media.
2. Analyse the results of the election.

KEY QUESTIONS

- If there was a parallel election held in class, compare the results of the students' vote to overall election results.
 - What factors contributed to the wins and losses?
 - What promises were made by the winning party and candidates? How should they be held accountable for these promises?
 - What were the most significant events of the campaign?
3. Reconsider legacy and social media election coverage studied in Lessons 2.4 and 2.5.

KEY QUESTION

- Did the media have an influence on the election results? If so, how?

4. Reconsider voter turnout studied in Lesson 3.2.

KEY QUESTIONS

- What was the voter turnout across the province? In your constituency? How does this compare to other elections?
 - What factors influenced voter turnout?
5. Reconsider proportional representation studied in Lesson 3.3.

KEY QUESTION

- What percentage of the vote and what percentage of seats did each party win? What does this say about our electoral system?
6. Break down the gender and ethnicity of all candidates and the winning candidates, and compare it to the province as a whole. Statistics Canada's census profile of Saskatchewan can provide current data. Find it at <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=Saskatchewan&DGUIDlist=2021A000247&GENDERlist=1,2,3&STATISTIClist=1&HEADERlist=0>

KEY QUESTIONS

- Did one party proportionately elect more women and minorities than another?
 - Will the legislature look like the province as a whole?
 - Did a disproportionate number of women or minorities lose their campaigns? If so, can you point to reasons why?
 - Is a candidate's identity more important than their policies and beliefs?
7. Reconsider George Bernard Shaw's quote from Lesson 1.1: "Democracy is a device that ensures we will be governed no better than we deserve."

KEY QUESTIONS

- Do we deserve the local MLA we elected?
- Does Saskatchewan deserve the government we have formed?

ANSWER KEYS

LESSON 2.1—MLAS IN SASKATCHEWAN HISTORY

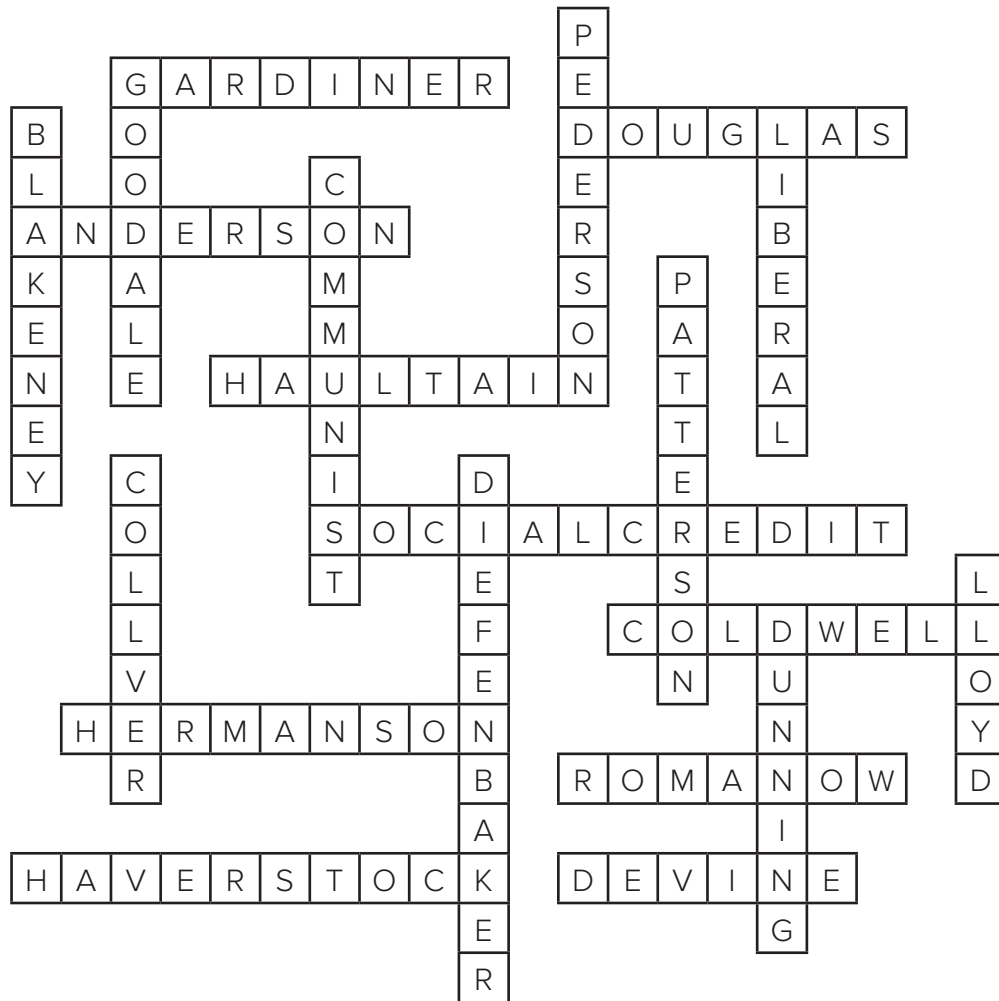
1. i) Ramsland Building, Yorkton
2. e) Motherwell Building, Regina.
3. a) Brockelbank Place, Tisdale
4. d) C. F. Fines Building, Regina
5. j) L. F. McIntosh Building, Prince Albert
6. b) Grant Devine Dam, near Alameda
7. h) Francis Alvin George Hamilton Building, Regina
8. c) Rt. Hon. John G. Diefenbaker Bridge, Prince Albert
9. g) Sturdy-Stone Building, Saskatoon
10. f) Dave G. Steuart Arena, Prince Albert
11. l) Roy Romanow Provincial Laboratory, Regina
12. k) W. Ross Thatcher Building, Moose Jaw

LESSON 2.2—PRIVATE MEMBER'S BILLS IN SASKATCHEWAN

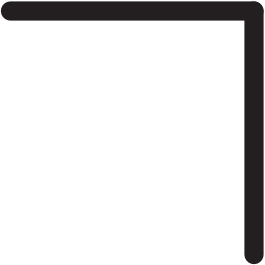
Question 2

The only bill passed was *The Protection of the Wild Ponies of Bronson Forest Act*.

LESSON 3.1—SASKATCHEWAN ELECTION CROSSWORD



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Legal Information for Everyone