

Elections in Canada

— Grades 4-8 —

Written by Frances Stanford

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At A Glance

Overall Expectations	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Lesson 5	Lesson 6	Lesson 7	Lesson 8	Lesson 9	Election Project
Language Skills										
Reading comprehension	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Summarize events/details	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
Communicate orally	•		•		•			•		•
Communicate in writing	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Vocabulary development	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•
Reasoning & Critical Thinking										
Make comparisons	•									
Develop opinions and personal interpretations	•	•		•	•	•		•		•
Make inferences (e.g., why events occurred)	•	•	•		•	•				
Develop research skills		•				•				
Analyze and evaluate historical information	•	•	•	•			•	•		
Recognize the validity of differing points of view	•				•	•		•		•
Use graphs and diagrams							•			
Understanding Big Ideas										
Understand what an election is and why they are held	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•
Understand how to hold an election	•	•	•	•			•	•		•
Understand how Canada's political system is organized	•	•	•	•	•	•		•		
Understand how to campaign for an election	•					•	•			•
Understand what a platform is						•				•
Describe the roles and responsibilities of people involved in an election		•	•	•		•	•			
Analyse, synthesize, and interpret election results	•							•		
Understand the history of elections in Canada	•	•	•	•	•	•			•	
Understand some of the problems and issues associated with elections	•	•	•	•		•	•	•		

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OVERALL EXPECTATIONS

BIG IDEAS:

- understand what an election is
- understand how to hold an election
- understand why elections are held
- understand how to campaign for an election
- understand what a platform means and be able to write a platform
- understand the platforms of the political parties in Canada
- describe the roles and responsibilities of the people involved in an election
- analyse, synthesize and evaluate election results
- use appropriate vocabulary to describe their inquiries and observations
- formulate questions to facilitate research on issues and problems arising from elections

WAYS TO USE THIS RESOURCE:

The information in this unit has been provided to enable a teacher to make reproducible handouts or overheads for large group lessons which may also be used to supplement the teacher's knowledge of elections. The information may be used in any order the teacher wishes and in any format. The teacher can select the amount of information needed by their class.

A dictionary of election terms has been included. Reproduce this for student use if needed. (Pages 6-10)

The lesson plans provide ideas on how to introduce, teach, and reinforce the various aspects of elections in Canada. A follow-up is provided for each lesson. Not all lessons need to be taught and not all follow-ups need to be completed. Use your own discretion and choose those that meet the curriculum requirements.

Specific curriculum outcomes have been placed at the beginning of each lesson. Some reproducible lesson plans and sheets may have to be adapted to meet the needs of diverse learners.

PLANNING AHEAD

Collect any of the following materials that pertain to the teaching of this topic:

- pamphlets and posters used in an election campaign
- a copy of a sample ballot
- a ballot box
- a map of Canada showing the electoral districts
- a map of your province showing the electoral districts
- cartoons that are used in newspapers at the time of an election
- a blank map of Canada and its provinces for students to label
- sample political platforms which have been used by politicians in Canada
- videos of television advertising by candidates in elections

Hold an election in the classroom to expose the students to the voting process. It would be especially fitting if this unit could coincide with a federal, provincial, or municipal election. The students could take the positions of the different political parties and campaign throughout the school. An election day could be held at school.

To get you started, purchase our resource *The Classroom Election (SSJ1-63)*. It includes all the information you need to get started and run a successful election in your school. Individual lesson plans can be purchased at our estore: estore.onthemarkpress.com.

BULLETIN BOARD DISPLAYS

Maintain an ongoing bulletin board throughout this unit adding to or changing the details whenever necessary. Display any or all of the following:

- a map showing the electoral districts of Canada and/or your province and/or your town or city
- a picture of key government leaders
- a timeline showing the major political parties in power since 1867
- a sample voters' list

WEB SITES

- www.educationworld.com
- www.en.wikipedia.org
- www.cbc.ca
- www.ndp.ca
- www.liberal.ca
- www.greenparty.ca
- www.conservative.ca

GUEST SPEAKERS

1. Make sure that you contact your guest speaker well in advance of this unit to ensure that he/she is available to come to your classroom to speak to the students. A guest speaker could be your federal Member of Parliament, your local Member of Provincial Parliament, or a member of your local municipal government.
2. Have students prepare appropriate questions in advance and discuss these questions in class to ensure that they are appropriate for the occasion.
3. Send a newsletter home with the students to inform the parents of the topic the students will be studying. Some of these parents may have information pertinent to the unit or may be able to speak to the class on issues related to the topic.

ELECTIONS IN CANADA POSTER SET

These posters are the **perfect companion** pieces for our election book!

Teach about all levels of Canadian elections with these 17" x 22", full-colour posters, with bonus activities on the back.

The 8 Poster Set includes: The Right to Vote, Political Party Platform, Government Structure, Countdown to a Federal Election, How to Vote in a Federal Election, Constituencies, Campaigning & Media, and Prime Ministers.

SS1701





Constituencies

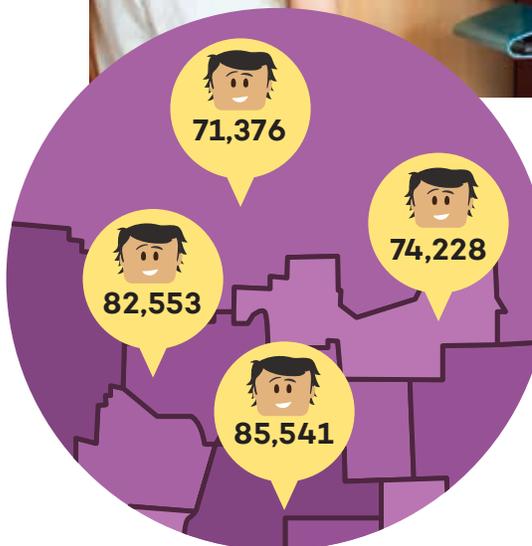
Canada is divided into electoral districts that are also called constituencies or ridings. The boundaries of these districts are chosen so that, as much as possible, every member of Parliament has about the same number of constituents or voters in each district. This makes the election system fair across the country.

Parts of the country in which there are more people have more members of Parliament to represent them. This means that Quebec and Ontario, which have the largest populations, have the greatest numbers of members of Parliament. There are 105 members from Ontario and 75 from Quebec.

A city riding in Ontario, fairly small in area, could have almost 250,000 constituents, while the whole Yukon has less than 29,000 constituents. Members of Parliament who represent huge northern ridings receive extra money to help them cover the additional cost of serving such a large area. In a city riding, an MP can drive to meetings, while in a rural area, an MP may have to rent a plane or a helicopter just to visit the constituents once a year.



Census numbers are used to re-adjust the boundaries and the number of the electoral districts in the country. This process is called redistribution. The intention of this process is to keep the ridings about equal in the number of people they represent. It takes into account population changes as well as population shifts from one part of the country to another. A recent example of how this population shift can take place occurred when the Moratorium on Atlantic cod was announced in 1992. A large number of people from the Atlantic provinces moved to other



Every 10 years, the Canadian government counts the number of people living in Canada. This is called taking a **CENSUS**.



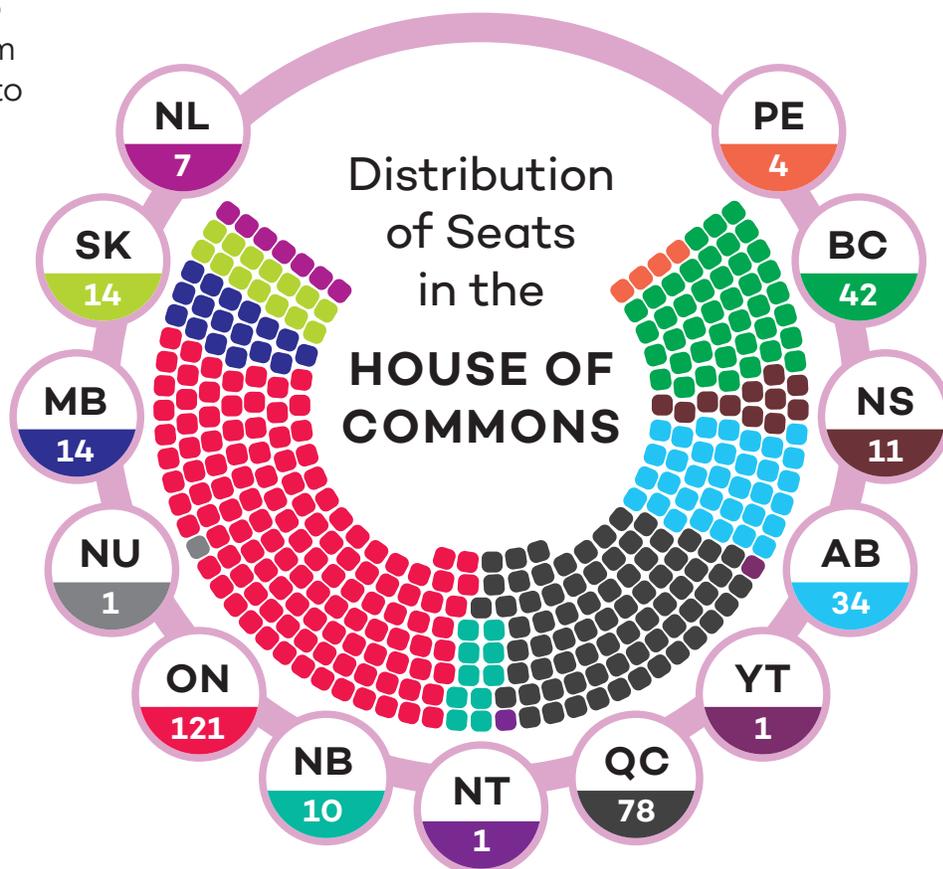


provinces such as Ontario and Alberta to find other kinds of work. Redistribution is handled by a special government department called the Electoral Boundaries Commission which is part of the responsibility of the Chief Electoral Officer.

After the census was taken in 1996, the number of electoral districts in Canada was 301. Only 31 of these districts retained the same boundaries they had before the census was taken. There are currently 308 electoral districts after a redistribution in 2004.

Each electoral district in Canada elects one representative. The Representation Act of 1985 established the procedure by which the boundaries of electoral districts would be established. It took the number of electoral districts which existed at that time – 282 – deducted the three constituencies of the Yukon and the Northwest Territories, thus arriving at the number of 279. This number was then divided by the total population of the ten provinces, which gave an election quotient or quota. This quotient was then divided into the population of each province or territory to establish how many seats in the House of Commons it would have. To protect small provinces two safeguards were put in place: first, no province shall have fewer members in the House than it has senators, and second, no province will have fewer seats in the House of Commons than it had in 1976.

Within each province, the boundaries are drawn up by an independent commission chaired by a judge. This is to prevent the government from rearranging the boundaries to suit it. This practice is called gerrymandering and was common in Canada before the 1960s.



Constituencies



Part A: Write a definition for each of the following:

1. **census:** _____

2. **redistribution:** _____

3. **Electoral Boundaries Commission:** _____

4. **The Representation Act of 1985:** _____

5. **constituencies:** _____

Part B: Fill in the correct word on each line to complete the sentence. Choose words from the word list provided. Not all the words will be used.

365	Ontario	realignment	Governor General
25	Newfoundland	redistribution	Chief Electoral Officer
10	Quebec	Prime Minister	308

1. There are _____ electoral districts in Canada.
2. _____ and _____ have more MPs than the other provinces.
3. A census is taken every _____ years.
4. When the boundaries of electoral districts are re-adjusted the process is called _____.
5. The electoral boundaries are the responsibility of the _____.

