Our Government, Our Election
Second Edition

Version 2.0 (2016)

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Table of Contents

Introduction.................................................................................................................................................. 1
Learning Programs about Democracy......................................................................................................... 2
Other PLEA Publications............................................................................................................................ 4

SECTION ONE: THE PURPOSE OF GOVERNMENT

1.1 WHAT IS DEMOCRACY? .......................................................................................................................... 7
1.2 WHY LAWS? ........................................................................................................................................... 11
1.3 PUBLIC GOODS AND SERVICES ......................................................................................................... 17
1.4 PAYING FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES ............................................................................................ 23

SECTION TWO: THE MECHANICS OF GOVERNMENT

2.1 THE STRUCTURE OF PROVINCIAL GOVERNANCE ........................................................................ 33
2.2 CREATING LAWS IN SASKATCHEWAN .............................................................................................. 41
2.3 OPPOSITION PARTIES .......................................................................................................................... 47
2.4 THE MEDIA AND POLITICAL COVERAGE ........................................................................................... 51
2.5 CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT ....................................................................................... 59

SECTION THREE: THE ELECTION OF GOVERNMENT

3.1 THE PROVINCIAL ELECTION PROCESS .............................................................................................. 65
3.2 CONSIDERING THE VOTING PROCESS ............................................................................................... 87
3.3 ELECTORAL REFORM ............................................................................................................................ 93
3.4 CONSIDERING PARTY PLATFORMS ....................................................................................................... 97
3.5 LOCAL CANDIDATES ............................................................................................................................. 99
3.6 POST-ELECTION ANALYSIS ................................................................................................................. 101

Answer Keys ............................................................................................................................................... 103
Introduction

As teachers, it is important that we encourage students to become voters. Even more importantly, we should encourage them to become well-informed and conscientious citizens. With this belief, PLEA has substantially revised Our Government, Our Election to better engage students in government, politics, and the electoral process in a Saskatchewan-specific context.

This second edition of Our Government, Our Election helps teach about government, politics, and the law-making process, regardless if it is an election year. Designed with Saskatchewan's high school Social Studies in mind, its lessons and materials include necessary background information, overheads, and student handouts. Answer keys are provided, but only when appropriate.

Our Government, Our Election is divided into three sections, each with a specific focus.

SECTION ONE: THE PURPOSE OF GOVERNMENT
Section One is designed for studying the foundational purpose of government in society. These lessons enable consideration of:
• 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 considers how laws are made and how governments can be held to account. These lessons enable consideration of:
• 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 considers how we elect our governments. The first three lessons can be taught inside or outside election periods, while the last three lessons are more brief in nature and meant to be taught concurrently with the events of a provincial election. These lessons enable consideration of:
• forming governments;
• processes involved in voting;
• proportional representation;
• party election platforms;
• local candidates; and
• election results.

PLEA believes teachers are the professionals best-suited to facilitate student learning. Thus, these materials are not meant to be prescriptive nor holistic. Rather, they are suggestions for how to approach these topics. Because there are many other excellent resources on governance and elections, inclusion of multiple resources is encouraged.

Your feedback on this or any other learning resource from PLEA is always appreciated. As the professionals most closely connected to Saskatchewan's students, teachers' insights will only help improve further publications. Drop us a line at plea@plea.org.
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Learning Programs about Democracy

THE SASKATCHEWAN TEACHERS’ INSTITUTE ON PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

The Saskatchewan Teachers’ Institute on Parliamentary Democracy is a unique professional development opportunity for all Saskatchewan teachers. This demanding and informative week at the Saskatchewan legislative assembly greatly enhances understandings of our system of governance. The institute is hosted and coordinated by the Office of the Speaker with the support of all members of the legislative assembly and Saskatchewan’s Ministry of Education.

Participants will experience an insider’s view of governance as they observe our parliamentary system at work and meet with those who determine the political agenda for government and opposition caucuses. The information sessions are conducted by the Speaker, ministers, MLAs, caucus and legislative officials. Highlights include:

- A tour of historic Government House and a banquet hosted by the Lieutenant Governor, who will speak about the role of the Queen’s representative and how constitutional monarchies function;
- A briefing on the cabinet and legislative process while seated around the table in the cabinet room;
- A behind-the-scenes tour of the Court of Queen’s Bench where members of the Judiciary and the Chief Electoral Officer will discuss their work and roles;
- Meetings with elected officials including house leaders, caucus chairs, whips, party leaders, and cabinet ministers;
- Attendance and introduction in the House during Routine Proceedings and Question Period;
- Meeting with media representatives to learn about the role of media in a democracy;
- Workshops to evaluate social sciences resource materials;
- Group discussions and networking opportunities with colleagues from across Saskatchewan.

WHAT TEACHERS SAID ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE

“I will take back a better understanding of our democratic process and a will to make my students aware of it as well as an appreciation of our system of government. I feel passionate about it now!”

“I am in awe... this is the first conference that I have ever been to that I found everything interesting and useful! In 26 years it is the first conference I have attended every session and enjoyed them all!”

“As well as the great (resource) material, I will take back a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm.”

“I found everything super. By far the BEST P.D. I have ever been at in my teaching career.”

“This was such a valuable institute! It was a chance in a lifetime, being treated like dignitaries! The inside look at parliamentary democracy has made me a better teacher!”

The Saskatchewan Teachers’ Institute on Parliamentary Democracy is held every year. Application forms are available at www.legassembly.sk/speaker/ssti

For more information contact the Office of the Speaker at speaker@legassembly.sk.ca.
SAKSCHEWAN YOUTH PARLIAMENT

Saskatchewan Youth Parliament (SYP) is a non-partisan, non-profit, youth-run organization. SYP provides youth from across the province with the opportunity to expand their knowledge of parliamentary procedure, while fostering good leadership and public speaking skills. The organization’s inclusive environment is based on cooperative learning and mutual respect, which in turn facilitates the creation of many long lasting friendships.

SYP members become more confident as they become more informed individuals. Debating current events increases youth awareness concerning national and provincial issues, and SYP’s general atmosphere sparks overall political interest. Notable SYP alumni include John Diefenbaker and Lorne Calvert.

SYP hosts three mini sessions, which are held on weekends throughout the province. One of the three mini sessions is a tri-provincial event that is held during November in Saskatoon. The most prestigious event of the year is the annual Christmas Session held over the holiday break in Regina at the Saskatchewan legislature. This is truly a unique and extraordinary opportunity for youth to debate in the legislative chambers. Christmas Session also consists of a special dinner at Government House with the Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan.

For more information find them on social media or e-mail dlo@saskatchewanyouthparliament.com.

THE SASKATCHEWAN ELOCUTION AND DEBATE ASSOCIATION

The Saskatchewan Elocution and Debate Association (SEDA) is a non-profit, charitable organization that promotes debate and speech activities in English and French. SEDA is active throughout the province with students from grade 5 to the university level. Their goal is to provide the youth of Saskatchewan with the tools to be engaged citizens with a voice to advocate for their rights and the rights of others.

SEDA provides students with the opportunity to research, analyze, and discuss social and legal debate resolutions, ranging from curfews and spanking to the nature of democracy. The association co-ordinates an annual program for city-wide clubs in Regina and Saskatoon, as well as numerous school-based and home-schooled clubs throughout the province. SEDA hosts speech and debate tournaments and other special activities, including summer day camps, workshops, a historical model legislature, and inter-provincial and international debate opportunities.

SEDA also provides resources to assist individuals, teachers, schools or groups interested in debate and speech. Most of these resources are available free-of-charge.

For more information visit www.saskdebate.com, email info@saskdebate.com, or find them on social media.

THE SPEAKER’S EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH PROGRAM ON PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

The Speaker’s Educational Outreach Program on Parliamentary Democracy promotes awareness and understanding of the Saskatchewan legislative assembly and the democratic process through a non-partisan approach. Targeted to all grades, the Speaker of the Legislature makes personal visits to Saskatchewan schools to help students understand Saskatchewan’s parliamentary process. The Speaker’s Outreach Program also provides a means of bringing the legislative assembly to those who are unable to visit.

Students learn about the role of the Speaker and MLAs, how laws are made, a brief history of the legislative assembly, and much more. The Speaker will also invite the students’ local MLA to speak with students.

Presentations take approximately one hour, and teachers who request a visit must be willing to spend at least one class period in preparatory work.

Schools wishing to participate should submit a request as early as possible in the school year. It may be helpful to consult with other schools in your area on their interest in participating in the program. This would assist the Speaker in coordinating visits to schools in the same area.

For more information contact the Office of the Speaker or check out www.legassembly.sk.ca/speaker/outreach.
Other PLEA Publications

PLEA creates learning resources for Saskatchewan’s various curriculums. Just a few are listed below, and all are available at no charge. Order print copies or download copies at plea.org.

**RENT: THE STUDENT’S GUIDE**
Renters have numerous rights and numerous responsibilities. This guide is useful for all young adults, and of particular interest to teachers of Life Transitions 20/30.

**THE RULE OF LAW**
Nobody is exempt from the law in Canada, regardless of how much power they have. This resource explains how law forms the basis of our governance. It is of particular interest to teachers of Social Studies 30.

**THE BATHROOM BARRISTER**
The law is all around us. This resource illustrates this concept by using a room common to everyone. This resource is of particular interest to teachers of Law 30.

**LEARNING ABOUT LAW WITH THE SIMPSONS**
Network television’s longest-running series can teach us many things about the law. This resource is of particular interest to teachers of ELA B30.

**CANADA’S LEGAL SYSTEM: AN INTRODUCTION**
The legal system may appear complex, but it does not have to be this way. This resource is of particular interest to teachers of Social Studies 8.

**70 YEARS OF THE BOMB**
The 1945 testing of the first nuclear weapon bomb ushered in the atomic age. This resource is of particular interest to teachers of History 20.

**LORD OF THE FLIES: THE NOVEL STUDY**
William Golding’s classic novel offers many lessons about how societies without laws can break down. This resource is of particular interest to teachers of ELA B30.

**MORE JOY IN HEAVEN: THE NOVEL STUDY**
Morley Callaghan’s examination of the downfall of Kip Caley—based on the real-life story of Red Ryan—offers insight into how parole should ideally work in Canada. This resource is of particular interest to teachers of ELA A30.

**MY COOPERATIVE ADVENTURE**
Cooperatives are an innovative way to build productive businesses. This resource is of particular interest to teachers of Entrepreneurship 30.

**TEACHING YOUTH JUSTICE**
Because young people are unique members of society, Canada has adapted criminal law to meet their circumstances. This resource is of particular interest to teachers of Law 30.

**FROM DREAM TO REALITY**
Treaty Land Entitlement explores how land has been set aside for the exclusive use of First Nations, in order to live up to Treaty agreements. This resource is of particular interest to teachers of Native Studies 20.

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Section One

The Purpose of Government
Lesson 1.1: What is Democracy?

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

MATERIALS
What is Democracy?

TEACHER’S BACKGROUND INFORMATION: THE IDEAL OF DEMOCRACY

Democracy is a contested term. The word is rooted in the Greek nouns *demos* “people” and *kratein* “rule.” At first this may seem simple: the people rule. However, in practice this definition becomes complicated. Can every person rule? If not, then which people actually rule? And what gives legitimacy to their rule?

To consider the broad nature of the term democracy, it may be helpful to look outside of Canada. One example is the South American nation of Venezuela. Following the 2013 death of Hugo Chávez—the country’s president who oversaw sweeping reforms—much was written about the state of Venezuelan democracy. Greg Gandin wrote in *The Nation* that Venezuela “might be the most democratic country in the Western Hemisphere.”  There is merit to Gandin’s claim. After all, Venezuelans are a politically-engaged society. Venezuelan presidential elections boast an impressive 80% voter turnout, thanks in part to the country’s electoral commission which actively pursues voter registration. As well, their constitution officially recognizes the role of civil society in shaping the country’s political direction. And Venezuela’s technical processes to avoid ballot-box fraud have been described by Jimmy Carter as “the best in the world.” On the surface, then, it would seem democracy works in Venezuela.

However, in the same week that Gandin made his claim, Francisco Toro wrote in the *New Republic* that Venezuela was “a flawless autocracy.” There is merit to Toro’s claims, too. After all, the Venezuelan government directly funds many groups in civil society including revolutionary unions, universities, radio stations and community councils, thus helping to secure their support. As well, following a 2002 coup attempt against Hugo Chávez, the Venezuelan government revoked the over-the-air broadcast licence for a television station that appeared to have cooperated in the overthrow. And in 2011, Chávez undermined the independence of the judiciary by ordering the imprisonment of a judge who made an unpopular decision that allowed a suspected criminal to flee the country.

Given these considerations, it could also be said that Venezuela is more autocratic than democratic, even if its government is elected by a majority of the people.

Regardless of where one lands in such debates, the above example shows that democracy is very much a contested term. This has led Terrence Ball, Richard Dagger, William Christian, and Colin Campbell to write in *Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal* that the term “democracy” is used so much by so many people, it risks having no meaning whatsoever. To try to add some clarity to what we mean when we say “democracy,” it may be useful to look to its origins and its scope in modern-day Canada.

ORIGINS OF WESTERN DEMOCRACY

The cradle of modern Western democracy is generally considered to be Athens of 5th century B.C. Governed at the city-state level, Athenian citizens had the right to directly participate in political control. Policies were debated and then determined through direct votes in the public square. Such an approach is called direct democracy. In Athens, the right to participate was taken seriously: the state went as far as paying citizens a day’s wages to attend the assembly. However, Athenian direct democracy was not democracy for all. Only Athenian males who owned property—a mere ten percent of the population—held the right to participate.

In the 2,500 years since then, much has changed in the realm of democratic philosophy and democratic empowerment. But it has not been a steady and uninterrupted rise. One only needs to look to the Dark Ages, Charles I’s Eleven Years of Tyranny, or the Nazi regime to find examples of this. For that matter, many thinkers have argued that democracy is currently entering a new phase of retraction. These complexities make it impossible to succinctly trace democracy’s progress from Athens to modern times. Thus, to better-understand Canadian democracy today we will look at the scope of citizen enfranchisement and what representative democracy means.
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ENFRANCHISEMENT

Though the franchise—the right to vote—is generally universal for adults today, most Western governments entered the twentieth century with a tremendous maze of restrictions on voting. On this front, democracy was disturbingly close to its fifth-century B.C. derivative: citizens often excluded from voting included women, minorities, prisoners, young adults, and people without property. Several of these restrictions existed in Canada until the 1970s; some—either overtly or latently—still exist today. When advances in enfranchisement have been made, they were made because of the tremendous efforts of citizens who demanded their rights.

While most adult citizens are now empowered to vote, their form of participation in democracy is wholly different than it was in Ancient Greece. Because the concept of the state has grown—in population, in physical size, and in administrative scope—gone is the direct democracy of the Athenian public square where all citizens directly participated in decision-making. In Canada it has been replaced by representative democracy.

REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

Like the direct democracy of Athens, representative democracy of the Roman Republic can also be traced back to 5th century BC. Representative democracy’s modern framework, however, is best-considered through John Stuart Mill. Mill was a 19th-century philosopher who subscribed to Utilitarianism. This is a liberal philosophy based on the idea that individuals are self-interested and will act in a manner that maximizes their utility.

It is important to note that the concept of humans as purely self-interested is not an uncontested truth, even within Mill’s own writings. For that matter, there is even a growing body of research that has put into question our very understandings of self-interest. As one example, studies have shown that babies have inherent and overriding capacities for empathy and sharing.

Regardless of the contested ideas underlying self-interest, Mill’s theory suggested that representative democracy would promote the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. It would do this through its idea that individuals could elect representatives to government to act on their behalf and to protect their interests. Today, most western governments operate under this premise.

FOUR ELEMENTS OF WESTERN REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

Representative democracy is how Canada is governed at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels. But knowing this still does not define exactly what democracy is in Canada. 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 in Canada, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees our foundational freedoms
- majority rule: the larger number takes precedent over the smaller number, with due consideration given to minority rights in the Constitution Act and now the Charter.

Thus, while it may be difficult to assign a universally-agreed-upon definition to the word “democracy,” Mayo’s framework at least makes it possible to understand the basic parameters upon which Canadian democracy operates. Every 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 ELECTIONS

Because Canadians elect representatives to govern and create laws on everyone’s behalf, government collectively belongs to us as citizens. The Honourable Eugene Forsey summarised this best in his widely-distributed How Canadians Govern Themselves. “Government is our creature,” said Forsey. “We make it, we are ultimately responsible for it.”

When we stop to consider Forsey’s statement, we can begin to understand how broad-reaching and how important our responsibility is when it comes to electing and overseeing governments. Notwithstanding the ongoing debate about the appointed Senate of Canada, every statutory law that is created today is done so through our elected governments. This scope of power is tremendous. Not only do governments create laws as simple as littering bylaws: governments today are even capable of writing and re-writing the foundational

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Major Elements of Democracy</th>
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<tr>
<td>Popular Sovereignty</td>
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<td>Political Equality</td>
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<td>Political Freedom</td>
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laws that create and define the reach and the limits of the state. Remember, the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* was not a dictum passed down by a British monarch: it was created in Canada by elected representatives.

In short then, the rights and responsibilities of Canadians are ultimately defined by laws. Laws are created by governments. And it is citizens who democratically elect governments. This means that we are not subservient to the government or the state: the government and the state are subservient to us.

**PROCEDURE**

1. Brainstorm with students what “democracy” means to each of them. Use varied answers to establish the idea that it is hard to narrow down a precise definition for democracy.

2. Break students into smaller groups and distribute *WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?*. Each group should discuss definitions amongst themselves. Have students share with the class one or two of the definitions of democracy they believe to be most compelling, and explain their reasoning.

3. Ask groups to reconvene so that they can create their own definition of democracy. Bring class together to share definitions.

   **KEY QUESTION:**
   - How was the process of working together to create a definition of democracy similar to the concept of democracy itself?

4. Teachers may add one more round to the definition-creation process by having the class work together as a whole to define democracy.

5. Write the following definition of democracy, as put forth by George Bernard Shaw, on the board: “Democracy is a device that ensures we shall be governed no better than we deserve.”

   **KEY QUESTION:**
   - Why is it important that we learn about governance and elections?
What is Democracy?

It may be impossible to find a definition of democracy that is acceptable to everyone. This reflects democracy’s very nature. Democracy takes different forms, and includes and empowers different people and different groups with varied interests. The concept in itself can be messy and difficult.

Even though it is difficult to assign a precise definition to democracy, that hasn’t stopped people from trying. Merriam-Webster defines democracy as “government by the people; especially rule of the majority” and “a government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodically held free elections.” In Canada, we have generally come to understand that while democracy is the rule of the majority, the majority should not be allowed to trample the rights of minorities.

This definition still leaves questions unanswered. Many writers, academics, and philosophers have also put forth definitions of democracy that are worthy of consideration. Think about the following definitions of democracy. Because some of these definitions may seem complicated, the discussion questions will help guide your consideration.

1. “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 is it imperative in a democracy that everyone has the right to vote and each vote counts equally?

2. “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.”
   - Rubinstein and Adler (1991) The Development of Democratic Culture in a Society with Powerful Traditional Forces: The Case of Israel
   DISCUSS: Saskatchewan is a representative democracy. Representatives are elected to work for the interests of citizens, and vote on legislation on their behalf. Why is it important that elected representatives understand and interact with all the communities and people they serve and not just the people who voted for them?

3. “Democracy makes the sustained achievement of social goals more likely; and social progress makes more likely the survival and development of democracy.”
   DISCUSS: How would you define “social progress” of society?

4. “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.”
   DISCUSS: What are the benefits for society when elected representatives act competitively? What are the benefits when they act cooperatively?

5. “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.”
   DISCUSS: In addition to voting, how can we ensure elected representatives “are responsible to the people”?

   DISCUSS: Why would the “diffusion of power” be important to democracy?

7. “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 (1995) Democratic Schools
   DISCUSS: Why would the common good be a central feature of democracy?
Lesson 1.2: Why Laws?

RATIONALE
To understand why laws are required for societal stability, the purpose of creating laws will be examined.

MATERIALS
PURPOSE OF LAWS, CASE STUDIES ON THE PURPOSE OF LAWS

TEACHER’S BACKGROUND INFORMATION: LEGISLATIVE POWERS IN CANADA
Mel Hurtig once stated that provincial premiers are virtual kings when comparing their power to the power that state governors hold. The basis of the considerable amount of jurisdictional authority held by provinces in Canada can be traced back to at least 1840 when 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).

Canada East and Canada West both had issues with such culturally divergent areas being governed by one legislature. This has led to speculation that Confederation in 1867 was just as much a way of divorcing Canada East and Canada West from their legislative union as it was a unification of British territories north of the United States. The decentralization of powers from a central government to the provincial level was necessary to convince the various British territories to unite under Confederation.

Though a highly decentralized federal government was the result, it should be noted this was not the consensus. Many of the Fathers of Confederation, including Sir John A. Macdonald, unsuccessfully fought for a strong federal government with wide-reaching authority when negotiating the terms of Confederation.

The distribution of powers between the federal and provincial governments was 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 that affect the country as a whole, including:

- 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 directly affecting the well-being of the province, including:

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

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS
The provincial governments can delegate some of their powers to municipalities. Through bylaws and other actions, municipalities can deal with a wide range of matters including:

- 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 these levels of government, there are also First Nations governments for people subject to the federal Indian Act. The structure and authority of First Nations governments differ from community to community, ranging from minimal governance to self-government agreements with Canada.
PROCEDURE

1. Draw a long line on the board. At one end write “birth” and at the other write “death.” Ask students to brainstorm various events that occur in our lives and enter them in chronological order along the line.

2. Have students think of various ways in which laws may influence those life events, and label them below the line. An incomplete example is provided below.

```
Birth  talk and walk  drive  graduate  work  marry  move  retire  Death

Register name  licence  labour  marriage  contracting
requirements  standards  laws  moving company
```

3. Discuss the resulting line and the laws.

KEY QUESTIONS:
- What would life be like without laws?
- Are all laws restrictive?
- Does law unnecessarily interfere with the right to live one’s life as one chooses?
- When do public needs override individual rights?

Teachers interested in the constitutional breakdown of powers may also wish to explore the area of jurisdiction for the laws presented, using the teacher’s background information.

4. Summarize discussion with overhead THE PURPOSE OF LAWS.

5. Read CASE STUDIES ON THE PURPOSE OF LAWS, then assign RENTING A HOME IN SASKATCHEWAN. PLEA’s publication Rent: The Students’ Guide would be helpful for this activity. Print or digital versions are available at plea.org.

FURTHER EXPLORATIONS

6. Teachers looking to more deeply understand the concept of laws would find it useful to check out The Rule of Law. This student-friendly publication explains how the rule of law ensures order in Canadian democracy. Find it at plea.org.
The Purpose of Laws

- Law supports broad social values with 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

When we think of laws, we often think of restricting society from such acts as robbery or speeding. However, the scope of the law is broad. Governments create laws and regulations that are intended to have a positive effect on our lives as citizens.

Even when governments create laws and regulations that are meant to have positive effects, some people will view these rules as too prohibitive. This can prompt people to say such things as “Government should stay out of people’s lives.” Such stances have merit. However, like any debate, one side of the argument should not be considered as the only truth. Sometimes, the absence of law or regulation can be dangerous, too. Consider the following scenarios that illustrate the purpose of laws in our lives:

**JAPAN AND HAITI: TWO EARTHQUAKES, TWO OUTCOMES**

On March 11th, 2011, a 9.0 magnitude earthquake struck Japan. The seventh most powerful earthquake ever recorded, this earthquake and resultant tsunami caused widespread devastation, leaving over 20,000 people dead.

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 of the Haitian deaths and injuries were the result of collapsing buildings.

Karl Stephan, a professor of Engineering at Texas State University 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.”

Japan, on the other hand, had stringent building codes in place alongside routine earthquake and tsunami drills. These codes and preparedness—a high degree of government regulation—ultimately saved lives in Japan. Conversely, Haiti’s lack of stringent building codes and enforcement was a factor in their high death toll.

**CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES: TWO BANKING SYSTEMS, TWO OUTCOMES**

In the fall of 2008, what has been described as the “Great Recession” struck the global economy. Banks in the United States and around the world collapsed. However, the impact on Canada’s economy was much less pronounced than it was elsewhere. One of the reasons was due to regulations placed on the Canadian banking system.

Nobel Prize winning economist Paul Krugman examined the differences between Canadian and American bank regulation. According to Krugman, “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 “happy tedium” was a system of stronger government regulations. For example, Canadian banks had tighter limits on how much money they could lend. As well, Canadian banks were limited in their ability to sell their loans to other banks, forcing them to take direct responsibility for their lending practices. These rules confined the exposure of Canadian banks to risks.

Krugman concluded that “There’s no question that in recent years these 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.” While the more loosely-regulated American banks collapsed in 2008, Canadian banks remained strong.

These scenarios are extreme, but they do illustrate that good can come from having laws and regulations in our lives. Use the following activity to consider the trade-offs that arise when laws regulate our lives.

Renting a Home in Saskatchewan

Rental properties and the regulations surrounding them have been a prominent issue in Saskatchewan, especially for young people. Because many people will rent a home at some time in their life and most people know somebody who rents their home, this issue is important to almost everyone.

Use PLEA’s Rent: The Student’s Guide (find it at plea.org), various local news sources and blogs, and the experiences of people in your community to consider how rental regulations balance the rights of landlords, property owners, and tenants.

1. What kind of regulations are in place for rental properties in Saskatchewan? Make a list of those you deem most important.
2. How do Saskatchewan’s rental regulations reflect these four purposes of laws in our society:
   • Law supports broad social values with 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? Would you change some of them?
4. What would be the potential consequences of having no regulations whatsoever?
Lesson 1.3: Public Goods and Services

RATIONALE

The provision of public goods and services will be considered. This will establish the foundational reasons of why government's role extends beyond creating and enforcing statutory laws.

MATERIALS

Government of Saskatchewan Public Spending,
The Purpose of Public Spending

TEACHER'S BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

FOUNDATIONAL REASONS FOR PUBLIC GOODS AND SERVICES

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

Public goods and services are provided by governments with funds raised through taxation. For example, roads, sidewalks, and bridges are public goods. Many parks, museums, and libraries are publicly-provided. Health care and K-12 education are also public services in Canadian society. Often, public goods and services are financed entirely through government revenue. Sometimes, they also require user fees to offset costs. For example, public transportation usually involves a fee. However, the fee does not cover the entire cost of the service. Because these fees have a higher proportional impact on low-income earners such as students and seniors, discounts are often provided for these citizens.

According to the Henry George Foundation of Great Britain, "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 of the example of public transportation. It provides an affordable means for individuals to travel to work, shop, or socialize. There is also the added benefit of reducing the number of vehicles on roads. Similar considerations can be given for the value of fire and police services or sewage and sanitation systems. Their value cannot be simply measured by their financial cost.

Due to their importance to a functioning and healthy society, other reasons why governments provide goods and services include:

- these goods would not or cannot be adequately provided by the private sector
- the risk to society of market failure is high

For example, even if a private provider was to build the infrastructure to supply an entire community with water, if that provider went bankrupt the public could be left without access to safe water. By contrast, a functioning society would not be at risk if there was a collapse in the provision of pantyhose, thus government would not involve itself in the manufacture and distribution of such goods.

As can be seen, public goods and services serve a unique social purpose. This unique purpose extends beyond just providing things that improve our lives: public goods and services also have a democratic function. Each member of the public is an equivalent owner. This gives every citizen a democratic say in how these goods and services are provided.

PROCEDURE

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

KEY QUESTIONS:

- Are citizens unable to attend public school if they are unable to pay?
- Would that be different if schooling was not a public good?
- What would the short-term and long-term consequences be if education was not publicly provided, but rather based on ability to pay?
Lesson 1.3: Public Goods and Services

RATIONALE
The provision of public goods and services will be considered. This will establish the foundational reasons of why government’s role extends beyond creating and enforcing statutory laws.

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   • Would that be different if schooling was not a public good?
   • What would the short-term and long-term consequences be if education was not publicly provided, but rather based on ability to pay?
2. Using background information, briefly discuss the concept of public goods and services. The overhead Government of Saskatchewan Public Spending can help illustrate this point.

3. Lead classroom reading of The Purpose of Public Spending.

4. Teachers may wish to have students research and report on the goals, benefits, and critiques of a public provision of goods or services. Possibilities for topics are numerous, such as health care, parks, electricity, broadcasting, or liquor sales. 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 EXPLORATIONS

5. Teachers looking to teach about the promotion and protection of fairness in delivery of government services would be well-advised to check out the resources provided by Ombudsman Saskatchewan. The Ombudsman’s resources, linking to Saskatchewan curricula, offer:
   - information about the global history of the role of the Ombudsman
   - case studies about how the Ombudsman both here and abroad have ensured fairness for citizens
   - guest speakers for classrooms and schools

Learn more at www.ombudsman.sk.ca.

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Government of Saskatchewan Public Spending
(in millions of dollars)

- Health: $5,507 (39%)
- Environment and Natural Resources: $242 (2%)
- Education: $3,661 (26%)
- Protection of Persons and Property: $626 (4%)
- Social Services and Assistance: $1,210 (8%)
- Transportation: $544 (4%)
- Other: $568 (4%)
- Debt Charges: $305
- Agriculture: $721 (5%)
- Community Development: $532
- Economic Development: $257

Total expenses: $14.173 billion

Source: Government of Saskatchewan Provincial Budget 2015/2016
The Purpose of Public Spending

Public spending serves many functions for our society. 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 senior’s drug plans, farm income stability programs, and provincial parks. The list is very long: in total, the Government of Saskatchewan spends over $14 billion a year.

To 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 building and maintaining roads as part of government’s public responsibility, there are many positive results:

- **Costs are reduced**
  - the theory of “economies of scale” would suggest it is cheaper to build roads through central planning than to build them piece-by-piece
- **Citizens have greater mobility**
  - this allows more freedom, facilitating travel by foot, bike, or vehicle with greater ease
- **Businesses generate wealth**
  - access to and from business is created for customers, employees, and suppliers
- **Society has more freedom**
  - by freeing individuals and businesses from the direct task of creating their own road network, society has more time to devote to their own interests
- **Perhaps most importantly, all citizens have an equivalent say**
  - if suggestions about or problems with the road arise, each person is entitled to be heard as an equal owner of the road and a moral equivalent as a citizen

The above example of roads, although simplified, illustrates Nobel Prize winning economist Amartya Sen’s research on the purpose of public spending. According to Sen, in countries where public spending is higher, citizens are generally healthier and better-educated. He believed when government adequately provides basic services, citizens are free to pursue individual choices that bring about personal and social development.¹

In addition to fulfilling individuals’ needs, public spending can also have an equalizing effect on society. 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 stabilization programs help protect farmers and farm communities from fluctuations beyond their control, such as weather and global market shocks
- health care and education ensures that services essential to life are generally equal, do not require direct payment, and are provided by democratic and publicly-owned means

Thus, when government provides goods and services to all citizens, the middle-class and the poor have access to the same services as the rich. And research has shown that this can benefit everyone in society, including the rich. *The Spirit Level*, Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett’s study of equality in societies, found that when the gap between the rich and the poor narrowed, life was better for everyone in that society, rich or poor. In more equal societies, crime rates were lower, drug abuse was less prevalent, child well-being was higher, educational achievement was stronger, communities exhibited higher degrees of mutual trust, and people lived longer and healthier lives.²

1. Development as Freedom, 2009
2. The Spirit Level, 2009
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1 Development as Freedom, 2009
2 The Spirit Level, 2009

CONSIDER

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 does the provision of 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

RATIONALE

The relationship between public goods and taxation will be explored to create understandings of how we pay for public services.

MATERIALS

Government of Saskatchewan Revenue

"Tax freedom day?" Not, Universality vs. Means Testing

TEACHER'S BACKGROUND INFORMATION: PROGRESSIVE PERSONAL TAXATION

A major theme in recent public discussion has been society's rising income and wealth inequality. With their rallying call of "We are the 99%" the Occupy movement contributed much to this awareness. The central argument behind this slogan is that following World War II, all levels of society shared in the significant economic growth of Western democracies. However, in the 1970s the richest few began to take a disproportionately larger share of this growth. The shift in who controls wealth has led to inequality levels 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 has followed this trend. A report from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development indicated that in 1982 the top 1% in Canada accounted for 8% of the country's total wage earnings. By 2012, their share had increased to 12.2%.

Not surprisingly, when the share of income rises for the rich, so to does their share of society's total wealth. According to 2012 Statistics Canada data, 10% of the population own half of the country's wealth.

While there will always be some degree of wealth inequality in market-based democracies, many experts have identified the trend of wealth concentration as problematic. As discussed in Lesson 1.3, when societies become more economically unequal, the well-being of individuals begins to diverge. Literacy, life opportunities, and even life expectancy become worse for the poor.

Perhaps even more alarming from a democratic perspective, however, is that the growth of wealth disparity can lead to a breakdown in social cohesion.

WEALTH AND SOCIAL COHESION

Warnings of societal breakdown due to wealth inequality have come from the highest levels of governmental organizations. For example, at a 2014 hearing of the United States Senate Joint Economic Committee, Janet Yellen—the chair of America's central bank—said 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."

Yellen's statements are backed up by research. For example, a 2014 study published by the American Political Science Association 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.

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 or more specifically Saskatchewan. This is especially true given the looser political financing laws and greater income inequality in the United States. However, the broader point should not be missed: Every person's 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 democratic majority.

1 http://www.thenation.com/article/bernie-sanders-asks-fed-chair-whether-us-oligarchy/
2 http://journals.cambridge.org/download.php?file=%2FPPS%2FPPS12_03%2FS1537592714001595a.pdf&code=580426554dc482cc83c2e95bce65491e
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MATERIALS
Government of Saskatchewan Revenue, Were you happy working for the government until June 10?, “Tax freedom day?” Not, Universality vs. Means Testing

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1 http://www.thenation.com/article/bernie-sanders-asks-fed-chair-whether-us-oligarchy/
2 http://journals.cambridge.org/download.php?file=%2FPPSS%2FPPS12_03%2F51537592714001595a.pdf&code=580426554dc482cc83c2e95bce65491e
TAXATION AS AN INEQUALITY MITIGATOR

Lesson 1.3 examined how steep economic stratification in Canadian society is partially stymied by governments providing public goods and services. Because public goods and services are universal in nature, they help put all members of society on a more equal footing while bringing about society’s collective interests and building an understanding of mutual responsibility. To illustrate this, consider public health care. At least in concept, a wealthy Canadian CEO should have the same interest in seeing good-functioning public health care as would a poor Canadian widow. This is because they both rely upon the same system.

However, even if both the CEO and the widow have the same interest in having the health care system function well, the CEO is better able to financially contribute to this system. 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, the lowest income earners (those earning about $16,000/year) pay no provincial income tax whatsoever. Those who earn more than $16,000 pay 11% tax on every additional dollar earned over $16,000 up to about $45,000. For those earning more than $45,000, they pay 13% on every additional dollar earned up to $127,000. Finally, there is a top tax bracket of 15% on earnings over $127,000.

Canada’s federal income tax structure is very similar. Thus, when provincial income tax is combined with federal income tax, the top income tax rate in Saskatchewan is 48%.

Higher tax rates in each bracket are what makes Canada’s tax system progressive. However, the system’s progressivity has been declining for fifty years. In 1965, there were 17 income tax brackets. In 1987 there were 10. Today there are only four.

Along with the reduction in tax brackets has come a reduction of tax rates, especially for the wealthy. In fact, in 1965 the top tax rate in Canada was 80%. While this may seem exceptionally high, Nobel Prize-winning economist Paul Krugman has pointed to research that suggests the ideal tax rate to generate optimal public revenue may actually be somewhere between 70 and 80% for the highest earners.

Other ways Canada’s tax system has become less progressive is the nature in which income from capital gains is taxed. Generally speaking, the above tax rates only apply to labour. When money is earned from selling property or investments, they are usually subjected to capital gains tax. However, only half of capital gains earnings are subject to tax. (As recently as 2000, 75% of these earnings were subjected to capital gains tax.) As well, a variety of tax shelters such as Tax-Free Savings Accounts have been created to avert paying any taxes whatsoever on capital gains. Because by definition the “wealthy” have wealth, they are more likely to realize greater benefits when taxes are lowered on capital gains.

That being said, not all changes to the income tax system have been at the expense of progressivity. It is worthwhile to note that the Province of Saskatchewan’s basic personal income tax exemption has risen from just under $9,000 in 2007 to the $16,000 it is today. As well, changes at the federal level for 2016 added a new, higher tax bracket for those earning over $200,000 a year. So to claim that tax trends have been entirely to the benefit of the wealthy at the expense of the poor is not true.

Overall though, despite a few tweaks, the long-term trend has been declining progressivity in income taxes. While some view this as problematic, others argue the system is still progressive enough. There may be merit to the arguments that the rich are contributing their fair share. Data from 2010 showed that in Canada the top 1% of income earners paid 21.2% of all the country’s personal income tax revenue. The Top 10% paid 54.8%. Meanwhile, the bottom 50% contributed 4% of the country’s entire income tax revenues.

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 agreed we are mutually-responsible to one-another, and as such those with more ability to pay should pay more. How we came to this conclusion as a nation can be partially explained through our political history.

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 British Empire Loyalists who opposed the American Revolution and fled to 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 While some may see this as an inherently left-wing position, it actually links back to the roots of Canadian conservatism. According to Charles Taylor, Canadian conservatism descended from the British Tory tradition and was 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 over the past thirty years.

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. Rallying calls for the 99% have certainly been made and heard across Canada. Given the rise in inequality, these calls are not without merit. Even so, because of Canada’s unique political history our situation—at least right now—is more level than that of the United States.

PROCEDURE

1. With the class, compile a list of goods and services that the students have made use of in the past 24 hours. Of this list, determine which are public goods and services, provided by government.

2. 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.
   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 the consequences of your decision be?

3. Use the overhead GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN REVENUE to break down sources of public money.
   KEY QUESTIONS:
   • Are all government revenues direct taxes on citizens?
   • What is the single-biggest source of government revenue?
   • Do all people pay an equal amount of income tax?
   • Do you think the overall distribution of government revenue sources is fair? Should certain sectors or certain groups such as corporations be contributing more? Less?

4. Using teacher’s background information, narrow the discussion to the idea of progressive income tax. This information will help inform a class discussion of UNIVERSALITY VS. MEANS TESTING.

5. To begin 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 EXPLORATIONS

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 plea.org.
Were you happy working for the government until June 10?

By Charles Lammam and Milagros Palacios
Appeared in The Calgary Sun, June 11, 2015

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 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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“Tax freedom day?” Not
by Neil Brooks and Linda McQuaig
Appeared in The Toronto Star, June 27, 2005

Tax Freedom Day has come and gone. Feel any richer yet? A month 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 Loblaw’s 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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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 be 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.
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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: The Structure of Provincial Governance

RATIONALE
To understand how governments are elected and laws are made, students will build an understanding of the basic structure of government in Saskatchewan. This lesson primarily focuses on the roles of elected members of the Saskatchewan legislature, though it also touches on the role of the Lieutenant Governor and the Judiciary.

MATERIALS
The Three Branches of Government, Saskatchewan's Governance: An Overview, Considering MLAs and Ministries, Politicians in Saskatchewan's History

PROCEDURE
1. Using the overhead The Three Branches of Government, introduce students to governance in Saskatchewan.
   KEY QUESTIONS:
   • Can you name any provincial politicians? (This is a good opportunity to help students distinguish between Canada's three levels of government as well as First Nations governments, a distinction defined in Lesson 1.2)
   • What do you know about these people and the work they do?

2. To expand on student understandings of Saskatchewan's provincial politicians, read Saskatchewan's Governance: An Overview.
   KEY QUESTIONS:
   • Is it the job of elected representatives to consider issues for the people, or consider issues with the people?
   • MLAs are often engaged with the community. Have you seen or read about an MLA at work in the community? If so, where and how?

3. To learn about a few past MLAs and MLA candidates in Saskatchewan, assign Politicians in Saskatchewan's History.

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. 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 Canada's Legal System: An Introduction. Find it at plea.org.
6. The Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan Visitor Tours are an excellent opportunity for students to better understand the workings of the provincial government. Learn more at www.legassembly.sk.ca/visitors/public-tours.
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Saskatchewan’s Governance: An Overview

In Saskatchewan we elect people to be members of the legislative assembly (MLAs). This group makes up just one branch of the government: the Legislative branch. Overall, Saskatchewan has three specific branches of government: the Legislative, the Executive, and the Judicial. All of it is overseen by the British Monarchy.

To understand how this structure of governance works first requires a quick look back at our relatively recent history. As trans-Atlantic exploration grew following Columbus’s “discovery” of the Western World in 1492, European countries began to lay claim to various First Nations lands in what is now known as Canada. Britain, France, Spain, Denmark, and Russia all made claims to parts of these lands. Slowly, Britain took control of the vast majority of the territory, through war, negotiation, and treaties. As the British gained control, they put in place governing institutions that recognized the British monarch (or Crown) as the head of state.

These various British colonies slowly began a process of unification. As the colonies grew in population and in political power, they were granted more and more independence from Britain. However, the basic constitutional structure kept the British Monarch as the head of state.

Meanwhile, as the power of the colonies (and later a unified Canada) was growing, the power of the British monarch was declining. Real power was moving into the hands of elected representatives. This meant that decisions that the monarch once made were now being made by elected governments.

All of this led to Canada’s current system of government where the monarch remains the head of state. However, instead of making the rules, the monarch is trusted with certain responsibilities. These include:

• ensuring the provinces always have a government in place, and
• signing off on all laws passed by provincial governments.

In Saskatchewan, these tasks are handled by the monarch’s representative, the Lieutenant Governor. Even though the Lieutenant Governor’s role as head of state is largely ceremonial, the position remains as the highest constitutional power in Saskatchewan. Below the Lieutenant Governor in this structure of power are the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial branches of government. Each one will be looked at in more depth.

Executive Branch

The Executive branch of government in Saskatchewan consists of the premier and cabinet ministers, 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 government bureaucracy and enforcement of provincial laws.

THE PREMIER

The premier is the head of Saskatchewan’s government. Most often, the premier is the leader of the political party with the most elected MLAs. The premier’s duties include but are not limited to:

• 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 organizations, labour organizations, business owners, etc.) to advance the social and economic prosperity of the province.

CABINET MINISTERS

Each cabinet minister leads a specialized department or portfolio of government. For example, the Government of Saskatchewan’s Minister of Health is responsible for the provincial health department.

The Three Branches of Government

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<th>The Crown</th>
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<td>LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR</td>
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<td>Appoints and dismisses governments and gives Royal Assent to laws</td>
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CABINET MINISTERS

Each cabinet minister leads a specialized department or portfolio of government. For example, the Government of Saskatchewan’s Minister of Health is responsible for the provincial health department.
Cabinet ministers 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.

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

- 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 Executive. 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.

There have been few instances of Saskatchewan having cabinet ministers who were not elected to the legislature. Of these, the most interesting was Herb Pinder’s seven-month term as Minister of Industry and Information.

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.

However, a recount revealed Pinder had actually lost to Walker by two votes. The Liberals questioned the neutrality of the recount and began court proceedings to declare the election result for the Hanley constituency null and void.

Rather than having questions linger about the legitimacy of his victory as the courts considered the case, Walker resigned his seat and forced a by-election for that December. Pinder and Walker again faced off, with Walker proving victorious. Upon losing the by-election, Pinder resigned his cabinet position.

CONSIDER

1. The premier is the primary representative of Saskatchewan nationally and internationally. What kind of qualities are necessary for such a person?
2. The cabinet is the most politically-powerful group of people in the province. Why is it important that when a premier selects the cabinet, the group as a whole is 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 the 61 MLAs elected to represent our interests. These 61 MLAs include the twenty or so people who will be appointed to the Executive branch of government: though they have added responsibilities, the premier and cabinet are elected to the legislature.

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 is accountable to the Legislative. 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 MLAs, 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 the vote will be cast so that as little change happens as possible.

CONSIDER

1. Although it is the opposition’s job to “oppose,” occasionally they will support government initiatives. Similarly, at times the government will support opposition initiatives. Why is it important that elected representatives 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 operates independently from the other two 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 never 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. While this is tradition, one of the reasons this has remained so is because it allows judges to concern themselves with coming to fair decisions based on the facts of each case and what the law says. Judges do not have to concern themselves with making popular decisions or with pleasing campaign contributors. They simply have to concern themselves with the law.

Because the Judicial branch is independent of the other branches of government, they can protect the principle of the rule of law. The rule of law stipulates that just like citizens, government must obey the law. When citizens believe government is violating their rights, the judiciary can be a neutral arbiter.

CONSIDER

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. How does this ensure that laws are properly interpreted by judges?
Politicians in Saskatchewan History

It is common practice for governments to name buildings, public infrastructure, and other civic sites in honour of those who have committed their lives to public service. Below are descriptions of past MLAs or candidates for MLA in Saskatchewan. Match the building to the person it is named after. You may want to see if you can find the building on an online map program.

1. Saskatchewan’s first female MLA.
2. Saskatchewan’s first provincial Minister of Agriculture and founder of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers Association. He went on to become the federal Minister of Agriculture in Mackenzie King’s Liberal government.
3. The long-time MLA who served the Tisdale constituency from 1938 to 1967. He is recognized as a pioneer in the growth and development of Saskatchewan’s potash, oil and uranium industries.
4. A former Regina teacher and principal who became the first Minister of Finance in Tommy Douglas’s government.
5. Following involvement in organizing the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, the Prince Albert Board of Trade and Agriculture Society, he established the Department of Co-Operation and oversaw significant growth in the number of cooperatives and credit unions in Saskatchewan.
6. The fourth premier of Saskatchewan, who went on to become federal Minister of Agriculture in the government of William Lyon Mackenzie King.
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 - 1988, losing only one election in that time.
8. This former prime minister ran in elections that included town councillor in Wakaw, mayor of Prince Albert, MLA, and MP. Other than Wakaw councillor, he lost all of these elections before he finally became an MP in 1940 in a constituency in which he had never lived.
9. These were the two CCF MLAs elected in Saskatoon in 1944, one of whom worked towards restorative justice programs in Saskatchewan’s prisons.
10. This leader of the Saskatchewan Liberal Party began his life in politics as a city councillor and ended it as a senator.

a) Brockelbank Place, Tisdale
b) Gardiner Dam, Lake Diefenbaker
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
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
- applicable aspects of their personal interests
- their ideal vision for Saskatchewan

B) PROFILE OF A MINISTRY
Select a government ministry in Saskatchewan. Links to all major government departments can be found at www.saskatchewan.ca/government. 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 organizations, 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.
- For your selected ministry, find an MLA that would make a good cabinet minister for that department. Justify the reasons as to why this MLA is suited to the ministry.
Lesson 2.2: Creating Laws in Saskatchewan

OBJECTIVE
With a basic understanding of the structure of governance, students will now be introduced to the process of creating statutory laws.

MATERIALS
How Laws are Made, Private Members' Bills in Saskatchewan

TEACHER'S BACKGROUND INFORMATION: STATUTORY LAW VS. COMMON LAW
Most of us think that the laws in Canada are passed by parliament, provincial legislatures, or municipal councils. 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,
- The Consumer Protection and Business Practices Act,

There is a certain kind of law that is not written in a statute but instead is a record of the past decisions of judges. This is known as common law. This practice comes from a time in England before there was a Parliament with the power to pass legislation. Judges then 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.

The practice of using previous judges' decisions, called "case law," is part of the Canadian legal system. This law applies not only where there is no statute to cover a particular situation, but also where a statute needs interpretation.

Governments try to make laws 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 courts may be asked to interpret or define the meaning of these words.

In Canada, we have a precedent system. When judges are asked to interpret laws, they look at the decisions of other judges in earlier cases to see what meaning the words of the statute have been given in the past. Lower courts follow higher court decisions. Similar legal problems are decided similarly. Our precedent system allows lawyers to advise not only about what the law says, but also how a court should apply that law if a similar situation has occurred before.

Let's look at a simple example. Suppose a city wanted to have a park where its citizens could by law spend time enjoying nature in a peaceful, safe place. To help do this, the city council passed a bylaw stating "No team sports may be played in the park." While the law may seem clear enough at first, questions may arise in certain situations. Would the law apply to our people throwing a frisbee, a relay team informally practicing 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 guide for a judge deciding on a game of tag. Judges will also look at what the lawmakers intended the law to do when it was passed. This is a simple example, but it helps to illustrate the fact that interpreting the law is rarely a straightforward matter.

Common law is used in all Canadian provinces except Quebec and all of the United States except Louisiana. Many other Commonwealth countries around the world also use the common law system. All of them inherited their justice system from England, where the common law comes from. They are sometimes called "common law countries" or "common law jurisdictions."
Lesson 2.2: Creating Laws in Saskatchewan

OBJECTIVE
With a basic understanding of the structure of governance, students will now be introduced to the process of creating statutory laws.

MATERIALS
HOW LAWS ARE MADE, PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BILLS IN SASKATCHEWAN

TEACHER’S BACKGROUND INFORMATION: STATUTORY LAW VS. COMMON LAW
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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.

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PROCEDURE

1. Review the purpose of having laws in society, as discussed in Lesson 1.2.

2. Read *How Laws are Made*.

   **KEY QUESTIONS:**
   - What is the importance of a three-staged process to review legislation?
   - 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 Members’ 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 EXPLORATIONS**

5. Teachers wishing for additional consideration of the sometimes subjective nature of laws and the role of the judiciary should check out the activity “Interpreting Laws” in *Just Law*. Find it at 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 these laws. Saskatchewan’s written laws—also called statutes—are created using a defined process, 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.

These bills are not created on mere whims. Usually, they are developed through a larger planning process. Because in a democracy the will of the people is supposed to set the course for government, this process is ideally rooted in the governing party’s election platform and ideology.

The first step in the legislature for the development of laws is the Speech from the Throne. While it does not contain any specific bills, it does outline the government’s coming priorities.

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 specializes 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 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

At the next stage, called second reading, the minister or MLA proposing the bill explains what it is supposed to achieve. At this stage the principle and object 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 of the reasons why 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 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.
There are normally no limitations on the length of time that a bill is debated in the Saskatchewan legislature. The purpose of debate is to critically analyse bills while bringing about public awareness and scrutiny of proposed laws. 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 that limits the total amount of time for debating a measure. Majority governments can generally move for closure of a bill’s debate.

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

CONSIDER

1. Should the Lieutenant-Governor have the right to withhold Royal Assent on bills passed by the democratically-elected legislature?
2. There is usually little chance of a private member’s bill becoming law. Why would a member propose legislation?
3. Think back to the definition of democracy. Even if a government is certain that a majority of the members of the legislature will be voting for a bill, why is it important that MLAs thoroughly debate that bill?

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 modern history. The last time it was practised in the United Kingdom was by Queen Anne in 1707. In Canada, the only time it has been practised was in Prince Edward Island in 1945.

The Lieutenant Governor’s other option is to practise 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 is somewhat more common. It was originally intended so that the federal government could intervene in legislation that posed a threat to the wider interests of the country as a whole. As Canada matured as a nation, a need for such powers became obsolete. Reservation of royal assent has been used 79 times in Canada, with most of those instances happening before 1900.

Only once in Saskatchewan’s history has a Lieutenant Governor practised the right of reservation of royal assent, refusing to sign a bill into law. This happened in 1961 when 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 whether the bill was in the public interest. Bastedo’s constitutional advisors told him that Bill 56 was valid legislation. Nevertheless, Bastedo reserved Bill 56 and sent it to the Governor General.

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

   - 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 225 (1999) - The Farm-inputs Costs Monitoring Act**
   - created a council to monitor the prices of goods and services used to operate farms.

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.

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

    - 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.

**CONSIDER**

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 for private members and not just the cabinet and premier to be able to put forth legislation?
5. Private member’s bills cannot oblige the government to spend money. Why 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

RATIONALE
To understand the role that loyal opposition plays in Saskatchewan's governance, the concepts of how opposition parties hold the government to account will be explored.

MATERIALS
Question Period – Debate or Spectacle?, Considering Question Period, video of Question Period, Hansard

PROCEDURE
1. Discuss with students how politicians spend many hours in the legislative chamber, in committee meetings, and in their constituencies. However, a large portion of media coverage of politicians and almost all coverage of legislative proceedings occur during the half-hour window known as Question Period.

2. To illustrate the tedious and rather non-acrimonious nature of much of the political work in Saskatchewan, teachers are well-advised to share a brief clip of a legislative committee. Committee meetings are streamed live at www.legassembly.sk.ca/legislative-business/watch-legislative-proceedings and archived at www.legassembly.sk.ca/legislative-business/meetings/.

3. Read Question Period – Debate or Spectacle? as a class.

KEY QUESTION:
• Do you think the government should get advanced notice of the opposition's questions in Question Period?

4. View a session of Question Period in conjunction with the activity Considering Question Period. Question Period is live-streamed and archived at www.legassembly.sk.ca/legislative-business/watch-legislative-proceedings. Transcripts of Question Period proceedings are found in Hansard at www.legassembly.sk.ca/legislative-business/debates-hansard.

FURTHER EXPLORATIONS
5. Teachers interested in expanding their students' knowledge of debate and parliamentary procedure can introduce the Saskatchewan Youth Parliament program. Find more details on page 3 of this resource, or check out their website at www.saskyouthparliament.com.
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Question Period proceedings

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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. This is a forum where the opposition parties question the government on issues of the day. Question Period has been referred to as political theatre.

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 the goal of the opposition is to eventually form government, questions in Question Period are often purposely designed to discredit the government and its policies. The opposition gives no advance warning to the government about what questions it will raise. They try to catch the government off-guard on issues of the day, and point out differences between what the government has said it will do and what it is actually doing.

Questions are usually based on current events. Because of this, staff advisors for both the opposition and the government monitor trends in the province, largely through what is being talked about in mainstream and participatory media. This helps the opposition prepare questions, and the government prepare responses.

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 use their title, such as “Minister of Labour,” or “Leader of the Opposition.” If they have no title, then their constituency is used, such as “Member from Cannington.” This keeps with parliamentary tradition: it is a sign of respect and helps to avoid personalizing debate.

During procedures in the legislature, members are immune from slander or libel laws. This means that members can make accusations or statements about other members without fear of legal repercussions. This does not mean, however, that MLAs can say anything they wish. Sometimes, MLAs have to retract statements and apologize for what has been said if it does not fall within the legislature’s protocol. For example, members cannot accuse others of lying, nor can they use obscenities. Both are considered unparliamentary language.

In 2005, a new sound system was installed in the legislature to record proceedings. Shortly after, a microphone picked up opposition agriculture critic Lyle Stewart referring to deputy premier Clay Serby as a “lying s.o.b.” This unparliamentary language required an apology to the deputy premier and to the assembly, along with the withdrawal of his remarks. Stewart brought some levity to the situation. He began his apology by stating “First of all kudos, Mr. Speaker, to the new sound system in the Assembly and to whoever designed and installed it.”

Activity 49

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 while considering the following questions.

1. Do you think the questions dealt with issues important to the people of Saskatchewan? Should different matters have been dealt with?
2. Did the responses seem relevant to the questions? Find an example of a relevant response and an irrelevant response.
3. In instances where the question was not answered, did you notice any general techniques that were used to avoid giving an answer?
4. Did you notice any theatrics by opposition or government members? If so, what?
5. Did the Speaker of the House have to intervene and ask for order?
6. Consider Question Period as a whole. Does it serve a valuable function for our democracy? Justify your answer.
Question Period – Debate or Spectacle?

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Lesson 2.4: The Media and Political Coverage

RATIONALE

The importance of the media in a democracy will be explored. Students will learn about the media's role in scrutinizing government. They will also learn why citizens should scrutinize the media itself.

MATERIALS

The Media and Political Coverage, Thinking Critically About the Media

TEACHER'S BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A BRIEF HISTORY OF JOURNALISM

We may expect journalism to be a neutral, objective, and non-partisan account of events. However, this is not consistent with journalism's history. America's leading media historian Robert McChesney explored this issue in his 2008 book *The Political Economy of Media*.

According to McChesney, journalism has a history of partisanship. In fact, that was its original purpose. Prior to 1900, numerous partisan newspapers permeated society with different ideological ideas. "Freedom of the Press" was meant to preserve every newspaper's right to disseminate its political opinion. Government even subsidized printing and mailing costs for all newspapers to ensure diversity of opinion. McChesney noted that a "partisan press system has much to offer a democratic society as long as there are numerous well-subsidized media providing a broad range of opinions" (p. 27). By the end of the nineteenth century, every major North American city had numerous newspapers, each espousing political viewpoints of their owners.

However, the press transformed at the end of the century. Newspaper publishers changed their primary purpose from disseminating ideas to becoming a profit-based business. With this new overriding purpose, owners consolidated papers to increase the efficiency and reach of advertising. As papers shut down, the ones that were left were generally predisposed to espouse the viewpoints of business interests. Ideologies that did not put a primary focus on profit began to vanish from newspapers.

Critique emerged about how this new business model silenced broader political debate. Notable was Upton Sinclair's 1919 book, *The Brass Check*. It exposed how the journalism of the few newspapers that were left simply promoted the values and desires of newspaper owners, the owners' bankers, and the paper's advertisers. Gone were the numerous ideological perspectives of the 1800s.

Owners recognized the need for their newspapers to appear neutral. If newspapers could be seen as trustworthy sources of information, readers would not have to worry that the consolidation of media was leading to a monopoly on news provision in their community. Thus, a push began to create schools of journalism. The theory was that trained editors and journalists who were granted autonomy from the newspaper owners could hold professional standards that would separate the owner's political beliefs from the news. McChesney observed that: 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)

The ownership of the media, according to McChesney, has structural power that latently if not overtly shapes its content.
Lesson 2.4: The Media and Political Coverage

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF JOURNALISM
We may expect journalism to be a neutral, objective, and non-partisan account of events. However, this is not consistent with journalism’s history. America’s leading media historian Robert McChesney explored this issue in his 2008 book The Political Economy of Media.

According to McChesney, journalism has a history of partisanship. In fact, that was its original purpose. Prior to 1900, numerous partisan newspapers permeated society with different ideological ideas. “Freedom of the Press” was meant to preserve every newspaper’s right to disseminate its political opinion. Government even subsidized printing and mailing costs for all newspapers to ensure diversity of opinion. McChesney noted that a “partisan press system has much to offer a democratic society as long as there are numerous well-subsidized media providing a broad range of opinions” (p. 27). By the end of the nineteenth century, every major North American city had numerous newspapers, each espousing political viewpoints of their owners.

However, the press transformed at the end of the century. Newspaper publishers changed their primary purpose from disseminating ideas to becoming a profit-based business. With this new overriding purpose, owners consolidated papers to increase the efficiency and reach of advertising. As papers shut down, the ones that were left were generally predisposed to espouse the viewpoints of business interests. Ideologies that did not put a primary focus on profit began to vanish from newspapers.

Critique emerged about how this new business model silenced broader political debate. Notable was Upton Sinclair’s 1919 book, The Brass Check. It exposed how the journalism of the few newspapers that were left simply promoted the values and desires of newspaper owners, the owners’ bankers, and the paper’s advertisers. Gone were the numerous ideological perspectives of the 1800s.

Owners recognized the need for their newspapers to appear neutral. If newspapers could be seen as trustworthy sources of information, readers would not have to worry that the consolidation of media was leading to a monopoly on news provision in their community. Thus, a push began to create schools of journalism. The theory was that trained editors and journalists who were granted autonomy from the newspaper owners could hold professional standards that would separate the owner’s political beliefs from the news. McChesney observed that:

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)

The ownership of the media, according to McChesney, has structural power that latently if not overtly shapes its content.
PROCEDURE

1. Have students consider the shortcomings of second-hand information. To demonstrate, play the Whisper Game (the teacher whispers a statement to one student, the student whispers it to their neighbour, and so on). Compare what the final student heard to what was originally said. Bridge this to discuss how news coverage is—in essence—second-hand information.

2. Read The Media and Political Coverage as a class.
   
   KEY QUESTIONS:
   
   • What kinds of news sources are available that address issues facing Saskatchewan?
   
   • What are the qualities and weaknesses of traditional media? How do these qualities and weaknesses compare to participatory media?
   
   • Think back to Lesson 1.3 (Public Good and Services). Given the importance of the internet in providing information society needs to make informed choices, should access to the internet be a true public good—democratically controlled by the public and available to everyone at no charge?
   
   • Do you think people consider the validity of the source when re-tweeting or otherwise posting news stories and information onto their social media accounts?

3. Assign Thinking Critically About the Media segments. These are ambitious areas of study, so it may be useful to break this apart into a jigsaw activity or have students engage in this work over several days.

4. Once students have completed the four Thinking Critically About the Media segments, have the class brainstorm a list of critical considerations when using the media to understand a current event. Use this list as a means to develop a class-created guide for analyzing media coverage.

FURTHER EXPLORATIONS

5. OpenMedia.ca is a community-based organization that “safeguards the possibilities of the open Internet.” Their blogs and campaigns can be useful resources for building student digital literacy. Check them out at www.openmedia.ca.

6. 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 Seventy Years of the Bomb. Find it at plea.org.

The 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 in government and in society. This is why society relies on the media. It helps them learn about their community, stay informed of what governments are doing, and keep powerful institutions in check. As such, the media provides knowledge that has a significant influence on citizen behaviour.

In order to provide society with knowledge that is accurate, the media must be free to pursue stories without interference or control by government. This freedom is an essential cornerstone of democracy. In Canada, we are fortunate to have a media system free to report the news without government interference. This is enshrined in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Saskatchewan has several traditional media outlets that help fulfil this purpose. Many communities are served by weekly newspapers and/or community radio stations. They are predominantly owned by local companies or non-profit community organizations. Then there are the larger daily newspapers, and major radio and TV stations. They are predominantly owned by large corporations. There is also the public broadcaster, CBC/Radio-Canada. It differs from the other traditional media outlets because it is owned by the public and has a legislated mandate to provide the country with cultural and informational programming in both official languages.

These traditional media outlets do not hold a monopoly on news coverage. The growth of the internet as an information platform has dramatically changed the way we use media. News is no longer a one-way flow. So-called “participatory media” allows audiences a means to interact with information providers and with fellow audience members. At the most basic level, this has led to traditional media outlets using more audience-provided content such as video clips. On a more interactive level, this has resulted in traditional media websites hosting active discussion sections where readers debate the news of the day.

Even more transformative, however, is how participatory media allows people to bypass traditional media and become information providers on their own. People who have basic computer literacy and internet access may create, collect, and disseminate content. The result has been a rise of user-created videos, blogs, and podcasts. And for those citizens not interested in creating their own content, they can still share the news they deem most important by posting links on their social media accounts.

In a very short period of time, participatory media has created new ways to create, consume, and disseminate news.

PROVINCIAL POLITICAL COVERAGE IN SASKATCHEWAN

While participatory media has changed the face of news, Saskatchewan’s larger traditional media has certain strengths when it comes to providing the public with provincial political information. This is largely due to the Press Gallery: a group of reporters that cover politics from the provincial legislature. Much of Saskatchewan’s news and analysis of our provincial government originates from their reporting.

Press Gallery reporters watch Question Period, legislative proceedings and committee work whenever possible. They also take part in scrums with politicians in the hallways of the legislature. (A scrum is an unstructured questioning of politicians. Reporters surround a particular MLA or minister—usually in the hallways or rotunda of the legislature—to ask questions.)

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 organizations 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.

Because of the Press Gallery’s dedicated role, they play an important role in democracy. Their first-hand accounts of the legislature often acts as society’s window into government. Unfortunately, the number of reporters that media places in the Press Gallery has been steadily declining for several years.
CONSIDERING BIAS IN MEDIA

The expansion of online sources of information serves as a reminder of freedom of expression in Canada. Outside of libel or hate speech, everyone is free to create and report the news. However, being free to create and report news does not mean that the media is free of 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 while other issues and ideas will be neglected. This is an inescapable fact, either in traditional or participatory media. Because choices must be made in creating news, there will always be some degree of bias in the media.

In the case of traditional media, it is important to remember that reporters are concerned with getting the facts right and being responsible in their news coverage. However, numerous studies throughout the twentieth century indicated that news coverage tends to be biased towards the interests of the media’s ownership. Given that the ownership of media is ultimately responsible for choosing who is hired as editors and reporters, this is to be expected.

That being said, most major news organizations still have a great deal of audience trust. Helping this is traditional media’s editors and boards whose job is to ensure the news is accurate.

While traditional media has editors and boards who scrutinize their work, participatory media generally does not. Blogs, tweets, and videos often have little or no screening before publication. This has resulted in a healthy skepticism about news in general. Tom Standage, Digital Editor at The Economist, described this well. He told CBC Radio One’s Spark that participatory media allows anyone to publish, even if they are wrong. This “makes you question all the information you get and it makes you think about how you assess trustworthiness of information in general.” In short, regardless of the source, it is always a good practice to check the information for accuracy and bias.

None of this means that people—either in traditional or participatory media—are inherently careless in their work. However, no news report can possibly envelop all perspectives on any issue. And often, well-intended people make mistakes. This is why it is vital to seek out multiple perspectives. Importantly, this includes reading sources that may challenge our own existing beliefs and our own inherent biases.

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 press release. It said, in part:

> 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 6:00 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.
Thinking Critically about the Media

MEDIA OWNERSHIP AND THE THREATS OF MONOPOLIZATION

In the 1970s, the concentration of media ownership began to emerge as an issue in Canada. The concern was that too few media companies owned too many news outlets. Since these concerns were first raised, even more mergers and acquisitions have taken place. The result has been reduced diversity of media ownership in Canada.

In 2006, the Senate’s Final Report on the Canadian News Media found that in general Canada was well-served by its news services. However, the report pointed out that there are “areas where the concentration of ownership has reached levels that few other countries would consider acceptable.”

1. Make a list of the media serving your community. For each media outlet, consider the following questions:
   a) Who is the owner?
   b) What other forms of media do the owners have a stake in?
   c) Do you think the media outlet would reflect the values and priorities of its owners? Why or why not?
   d) Do you think the values and priorities of the owners necessarily reflect yours? Why or why not?

2. By law, Canadian media is almost entirely Canadian-owned. Do you think restricting foreign ownership of Canadian media is a good idea?

3. The largest media companies in Canada control many of the dominant sources of information. For example:
   - Bell Media controls CTV, TSN, and MTV Canada.
   - Rogers controls SportsNet, CityTV, and Macleans Magazine.
   - Shaw controls Global Television, Teletoon, and the Food Network.

   These companies also control many of the “pipes” that stream these services. For example, Shaw is a dominant provider of internet and cable TV, and Bell and Rogers are dominant wireless providers.

   a) Sometimes owners use their “pipes” to favour their own services. For example, Global television—owned by Shaw—is not offered on Bell Mobile TV. How does this limit access to information?
   b) Democracy is dependent upon a well-informed citizenry. Should the owners of the “pipes” be allowed to control the information that travels through them?
   c) SaskTel is a Crown Corporation, owned and controlled by the public. Is it important for democracy that SaskTel remains a public good?

4. Participatory media has given a voice to many people who are not part of the traditional media complex. However, just like traditional media, the most popular participatory platforms (such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, WordPress, and Blogger) are controlled by large corporations.

   a) The private corporations that own participatory media platforms have control over what users say on those platforms. What limits have they put in place?
   b) Facebook now owns Instagram. Google now owns YouTube and Blogger. What are the possible consequences of too few corporations controlling too many platforms?
The Senate’s Final Report on the Canadian News Media considered how the consolidation and downsizing of major media outlets was impacting Canadian news coverage. When discussing how this affected journalism, the report noted that:

Some witnesses, in particular officials from large media companies, argued that concerns about ownership concentration and consolidation were misplaced, and that there was no evidence of harm from recent changes in the structure of ownership in the media sector. Other witnesses, mainly journalists, pointed out several areas of concern. One example is the closing of news bureaus—international, national and provincial—and, more generally, the centralization of news coverage. These practices, it was argued, reduce the diversity of both news and analysis available to Canadians.

A study of news coverage of the 1999 provincial election in Saskatchewan seemed to reinforce the journalists’ concerns.

Gerald B. Sperling and Kevin Wishlow examined the Regina Leader-Post, the Saskatoon StarPhoenix, and Regina’s CBC, CTV, and Global TV stations during the 1999 provincial election in their study “Politics and the Media in Saskatchewan.” They found that overall, dominant in Saskatchewan’s media were themes of tax cuts and pro-business issues. Largely if not entirely absent were consideration of the opposite sides of these issues, such as taxation on corporations and the rich, the struggles of poverty, and the rights of workers.

Sperling and Wishlow concluded that “there is little or no competition of ideas in Saskatchewan, at least in the mainstream print and television media . . . As the three party leaders quibbled over the best way to cut taxes, the media failed to operate in the public interest and move the debate beyond superficial name-calling and rhetoric.”

1. Consider the results of Sperling and Wishlow’s study and the Senate report.
   a) Does it appear that journalists’ concerns about cutbacks in the media are valid?
   b) How would citizens be better served by broader analysis in their news?

2. Pick a specific news story about a current Saskatchewan political issue. Find many different sources to compare the coverage. Include blog posts if possible.
   a) What elements of the story have been reported by all media outlets?
   b) What elements are in some stories but not others?

3. Are there issues related to this story that are completely absent from all coverage?
   a) Do you see any evidence of a bias towards any particular perspective?
   b) If there are differences in the news stories, can you think of reasons why this would be?

4. Examine the comment boards on each of your chosen news stories.
   a) What kinds of things are said in the comment boards? Do the statements challenge the narrative of the news report?
   b) Do the comments use facts to back up their statements? How can the statements be verified?
   c) Do the people making the comments use their real names?
   d) Is the discussion civil?
Thinking Critically about the Media

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

Opinion Columns and Editorials are different than regular news stories. They are specifically designed to share a perspective and influence audiences.

Opinion columns are found in most newspapers. The writers—called columnists—will share their opinions on events of the day. For example, the Saskatoon StarPhoenix and Regina Leader-Post feature a regular column by Doug Cuthand, who offers a First Nations’ perspective on current events.

Editorials are found in major newspapers. They are unsigned articles written by the newspaper’s editorial board. These articles present the newspaper’s “official” opinion on a particular topic. Editorial influence is not supposed to influence the work of journalists.

BLURRING LINES

The fair and open exchange of ideas in opinion columns and editorials is essential to journalism and to society. However, in recent years the line between journalism and opinion has been blurred.

At one time, editorials and opinion pieces were found in special segments on TV and radio broadcasts, and on a dedicated page in newspapers. Often this is no longer the case. Citing the United States’ Fox News as the worst offender, Jonathan Schell, author and visiting fellow at Yale University, cautioned that “News and commentary are mingled in an uninterrupted stream of political campaigning. Ideology trumps factuality. And major Republican figures, including possible contenders for the party’s presidential nomination, are hired as ‘commentators.’”

The same blurring of the lines happens in participatory media. This is especially true with blogs. Sometimes blogs are original journalism. Other times they are opinions on the news of the day. And quite often, they are a mixture of both. Unlike traditional media, bloggers generally have no obligation to separate what constitutes journalism and what constitutes editorial.

Because government generally does not and should not interfere with free expression in the press, it is the responsibility of citizens as consumers to choose news and information responsibly. They should also be aware of the difference between editorial and opinions and journalism.

1. Do you think it is important to clearly separate what is journalism and what is opinion/editorial?

2. Find an opinion/editorial that appeared in Saskatchewan media.
   a) Is it made clear to the audience that it is, indeed, an opinion/editorial?
   b) What is the topic?
   c) What facts does the opinion/editorial use to support its stance?
   d) Who stands to benefit from this stance?
   e) Who stands to be disadvantaged from this stance?
   f) Do you agree or disagree with the piece? Why or why not?

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1 http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/jschell9/English
Thinking Critically about the Media

PARTICIPATORY MEDIA AND ITS DEMOCRATIC LIMITS

For most of the past 150 or so years, traditional media such as television, radio, and newspapers have been a one-way form of communication. Viewers, listeners, and readers were largely confined to receiving information provided from authoritative sources. With the expansion of the internet, this has changed. Participatory media is the new norm. It is a form of media that gives the audience an active role in creating and analysing content. Examples of this include online comment boards, wikis, or viewer tweets that appear in real-time on news programs such as CBC’s Power and Politics.

While participatory media may seem new, Tom Standage, the digital editor of The Economist, has suggested that it is actually the normal way that societies have communicated throughout history. The last 150 years of traditional media communicating at people in a one-way fashion has merely been a historical blip. Consider these two examples of how today’s participatory communication may be history repeating:

*The spread of Martin Luther’s ideas during the early 16th century*
Martin Luther’s ideas spread rapidly largely due to the invention of the printing press. Like much modern media, Martin Luther was not being paid to have his ideas spread. Instead, his pamphlets would be reprinted and passed along because people were interested in what he had to say. This is similar to how people re-tweet other people’s Twitter posts or share Facebook posts.

*The coffee houses of 17th-century London*
For about a penny—which was the price of a cup of coffee—people could congregate at coffee houses to learn about and discuss issues. Social class was supposed to be left at the door at these coffee houses. This is similar to how comment boards and social media platforms allow almost everyone to participate. Perhaps different, though, was that at the coffee houses everybody was expected to be polite to one-another.

While these historical examples are not perfect parallels to participatory media today, they do show how participatory media uses methods that are similar to how information was shared in the past.

1. The 15th and 16th century philosopher Erasmus complained that pamphlets such as Martin Luther’s were short and written in common language. This was in contrast to the more in-depth approaches of books and other forms of learning. Does the brief nature of media like Twitter allow for more ideas to be communicated, just in less detail? Or does it just simplify our understandings of complex issues?

2. Platforms such as Facebook or Twitter allow anybody to post links. However, there is no guarantee that what is being posted is true.
   a) When somebody posts a link to an article, can you know if they have read the entire article? Should people read things thoroughly before posting them?
   b) What strategies can you use to ensure you are reading and posting trustworthy information?
   c) How can you avoid existing in an online “echo chamber” of ideas and ensure that you are exposed to a diversity of viewpoints?

3. Who is excluded from using participatory media? Think of issues such as access to technology and wealth disparity. How can we find ways to include everyone?

4. Think about the exclusions discussed in question 3. Given them, is the internet a truly democratic space?
Lesson 2.5: Citizen Participation in Governance

RATIONALE
Because citizen involvement in government goes beyond casting ballots, students will consider other ways to develop political consciousness.

MATERIALS
Participating in the Political Process

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: “It is important to express your thoughts about how we are being governed.” Ask students to stand in the column with the stance they most agree with. Allow class discussion of various stances, then give students opportunity to change their position. Ask those who moved to share why they changed their opinion.

2. Read Participating in the Political Process as a class.
   KEY QUESTIONS:
   • What kind of interest groups and political groups exist in the community?
   • Why would it be useful to voice not just opposition to government decisions, but also to voice support when you agree?
   • In addition to expressing opposition, why is it important to propose alternatives?

3. To demonstrate the effectiveness of citizen engagement in the political process, lead class reading of Case Study: Bypassing the Saskatoon Public Library.

4. To broaden understandings of citizen participation in society, have students participate in any of the listed activities in Participating in the Political Process. For example, students could observe a rally put on by organized labour or a civil society group, write a letter, speak at a public meeting, volunteer with a community advocacy group, or report on or create posters with political messages.

FURTHER EXPLORATIONS
5. Teachers interested in teaching for political consciousness may be interested in reading Paul Orlowski’s “Teaching For and About Democracy, Including Its Flaws.” Find it in Democracy & Education, Vol. 18 No. 2.
Participating in the Political Process

Governments are created by citizens to act for citizens, so we are all empowered to have a say and become involved in how we are governed. While voting may be the most widely-exercised method of active citizenship, it is certainly not the only one. There are many other ways to influence our governments.

**INTEREST GROUPS**
Interest groups are people who come together over common concerns. They are members of what is called “civil society”: the non-governmental, non-business organizations that influence and shape society. Many interest groups exist at the local, provincial and national level, ranging from local heritage societies to advocacy groups for minority rights. By supporting such groups you can help them focus government attention on particular issues.

**POLITICAL PARTIES**
By joining a political party you can learn more about the political and law-making processes at work in Canada. You can also influence that party’s policies and candidate selection. All major parties also have youth chapters that provide an opportunity for young people to get involved.

**PARTICIPATORY MEDIA**
Platforms such as Facebook or Twitter and online comment sections in the media create a space where citizens can voice their thoughts on issues they find important. Not only does this influence fellow citizens, but it can also have an influence on politicians and the media organizations that provide the space.

**POLITICAL RALLY OR PROTEST**
Political rallies and protests are an essential component of democracy. They are part of our right to peaceful assembly guaranteed in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and can help raise awareness about a particular issue. Even if one does not believe in a cause, attending a rally or protest as an observer can be a useful way to understand the multiple viewpoints that make up society in Canada.

**POSTERING**
Many communities allow public spaces for display of posters. As citizens we can make use of these spaces for posting information about issues, concerns, and causes relevant to the community.

**CONTACT GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES**
Writing letters and emails, signing petitions, and visiting government representatives are all effective ways to express your opinion on matters that concern you. MLAs—like all elected representatives—represent the concerns and interests of their constituents, so it is important to let them know your thoughts.

**CREATING PETITIONS**
Petitions are a way for public policy issues or personal grievances to be officially presented to the Saskatchewan legislative assembly. By collecting signatures, people can create awareness and sometimes make changes in law happen. In Saskatchewan, there is a prescribed format for petitions so that they can be accepted by the legislature. The rules are outlined at www.legassembly.sk.ca/about/petitions-guide.

**PLEBISCITES**
Much like how democratic issues were decided in Ancient Greece, plebiscites are a method of direct democracy. A plebiscite is a province-wide vote on a particular issue of public interest or concern. If at least 15% of the electorate signs a petition requesting that a question concerning a matter within the provincial government’s jurisdiction be put to the public for a vote, the province must do so. It is then directly up to the people to decide on the issue.

These are just some of the ways to participate in our democracy. Our democratic system relies upon participation by informed citizens. Every citizen who becomes informed and gets involved helps us all by strengthening the democratic system we live under. And remember, the reasons for participating do not have to necessarily be opposition to something. If government is doing something you support, you should not hesitate to show your support.
Case Study

BYPASSING THE SASKATOON PUBLIC LIBRARY

Political engagement can take on many forms and often involves engaging in several different ways. It also can involve finding common interests across different groups. Consider this as you read the following case study about how citizens of Saskatoon stopped their government from diverting $750,000 in taxes designated for the public library into the construction of a freeway overpass.

THE BACKGROUND
Since 1966, the Francis Morrison branch of the Saskatoon Public Library has served as the city’s main branch. Intended to serve the public for 25 years, the current facility is now inadequate. At 78,000 square feet, it is only half the size of what a 2004 report revealed is needed to operate efficiently. As Saskatoon StarPhoenix reporter Darren Bernhardt outlined:

Rows of book stacks and irreplaceable archival material for the Local History Room line the basement where flooding is a risk. Public materials and shelving run the length of corridors restricted to staff. Book trolleys choke every corner and up to four staff members share work desks while others are relegated to makeshift offices in the windowless basement.¹

Due to the space crunch, the library has been forced to turn away donations and even important archival material such as old city blueprints. However, the city has been slow to commit to a new main branch. After redirecting $15 million in federal grants earmarked for library expansion into developing the River Landing area, city council approved a plan to redirect a further $750,000 of taxes designated for the public library into the construction of a freeway overpass.

THE CITY’S PROPOSAL
The problems for the library began when First Pro Shopping Centres approached city council in 2006. First Pro wanted to build a “big-box power centre” anchored by Walmart on the south end of the city. However, the developer’s proposal was contrary to the recommendations of the city’s $120,000 public study on the feasibility of commercial development.

Ignoring what their own study recommended, city council approved the developer’s proposal in a 10-to-1 vote. Council rejected the study because they “didn’t think the pace of development should be determined by bureaucrats so much as by those who were willing to risk their money.”²

Soon, complications from approving the proposal surfaced. One major problem was that the development would create traffic congestion. If it was to go ahead, construction of a freeway overpass would have to be fast-tracked. Unfortunately, the city lacked the cash reserves to build the overpass. While the developer said they would pay for 20% of the cost of the overpass, the city was still stuck with 80% of the bill and no funds to pay for it.

To get around this problem, city decided to borrow the money. They planned to pay the loan back by diverting all tax revenue from the big box development for seven years. This included all taxes dedicated to the library and the school system. However, the plan soon ran into problems. As StarPhoenix columnist Randy Burton revealed:

This happened in such a rush that it was all done over the telephone. The library board didn’t even hold a meeting to approve the deal. At the time, the board was under the impression that the province and school boards would also divert education taxes to the interchange. The province wanted no part of it, and in order to make up the shortfall, the city moved to a 15-year diversion deal on municipal and library taxes.³

With the plan rejected by the province, the city decided to more than double the amount of municipal and library taxes to be dedicated to the overpass. The city took the position that “if a development doesn’t occur, then we’ve got nothing, whereas if we can assist in a development then at least we’ve got the tax base coming in the future.”⁴

¹ Bernhardt, D. (2007, August 15). Library naming rights could be up for grabs; Frances Morrison looks for way to fund $34-million expansion. The StarPhoenix.
THE OPPOSITION

As public understanding grew that the city was using library tax dollars to build a freeway overpass for a Walmart, public pressure for the city to drop the plan also grew. A civil society group called ShEEP (Should Exploitative Economics Persist) was on the forefront of bringing concerns about the plan to the public. This included voicing concerns through local media and through making contact with City Council. In addition, dozens of letters in opposition to the plan were written to city council, the public library board, and the *Saskatoon StarPhoenix* by the public-at-large.

Opponents were primarily concerned with the diversion of library taxes into a freeway overpass, especially given the need for a new central branch. However, the concern did not end there. Many questioned the need for yet another Walmart in the city. Others took issue with the city tossing aside the recommendations of its own urban planning report to accommodate a multi-billion-dollar developer. And some were concerned with the relationship between the developers and city council: one ShEEP member observed that the relationship between council and a representative of the developer may have been too close, noting that at a public meeting they were “quite chummy.”

THE RESOLUTION

Opposition to the city’s plan reached its peak at a protest at Saskatoon City Hall on March 13, 2006. Approximately 100 protesters—including representatives from the union representing library and municipal workers, members of ShEEP, and the general public—came to city hall with the aim of stopping the tax diversion and hopefully stopping the Walmart from being constructed. While the concerned citizens were unsuccessful in halting the development, city council did rescind their motion to divert library taxes to the freeway overpass.

The work of these concerned citizens, however, did not expedite the construction of a new library. The undersized main branch still stands as the library’s headquarters today.

CONSIDER

1. Opposition to the city’s plans came from several fronts. This included:
   • workers’ unions
   • voluntary civil society groups
   • concerned individuals

   While the core issue was the diversion of library taxes into a freeway overpass, opposition extended into such areas as the relationship between city council and corporate interests, and the need for more big-box retail in general.

   a) What does this assembly of different people tell us about the importance of co-operation to bring about change?

   b) Not everybody got exactly what they wanted. How does this reflect the nature of democracy in a diverse society?

2. The opposition’s battle took place on several fronts. Public awareness was built through such things as formal speeches to city council, letters to local media, letters to the library board, and a protest in the city’s public square.

   a) What do the multiple fronts of engagement tell us about the importance of engaging in politics on multiple fronts?

   b) What tools do you have at your disposal to build awareness, and to bring about social and political change?

3. If common citizens do not politically engage, who will have the most influence in a democracy?

---

THE OPPOSITION

As public understanding grew that the city was using library tax dollars to build a freeway overpass for a Walmart, public pressure for the city to drop the plan also grew. A civil society group called ShEEP (Should Exploitative Economics Persist) was on the forefront of bringing concerns about the plan to the public. This included voicing concerns through local media and through making contact with City Council. In addition, dozens of letters in opposition to the plan were written to city council, the public library board, and the Saskatoon StarPhoenix by the public-at-large.

Opponents were primarily concerned with the diversion of library taxes into a freeway overpass, especially given the need for a new central branch. However, the concern did not end there. Many questioned the need for yet another Walmart in the city. Others took issue with the city tossing aside the recommendations of its own urban planning report to accommodate a multi-billion-dollar developer. And some were concerned with the relationship between the developers and city council: one ShEEP member observed that the relationship between council and a representative of the developer may have been too close, noting that at a public meeting they were “quite chummy.”

THE RESOLUTION

Opposition to the city’s plan reached its peak at a protest at Saskatoon City Hall on March 13, 2006. Approximately 100 protesters—including representatives from the union representing library and municipal workers, members of ShEEP, and the general public—came to city hall with the aim of stopping the tax diversion and hopefully stopping the Walmart from being constructed. While the concerned citizens were unsuccessful in halting the development, city council did rescind their motion to divert library taxes to the freeway overpass.

The work of these concerned citizens, however, did not expedite the construction of a new library. The undersized main branch still stands as the library’s headquarters today.

CONSIDER

1. Opposition to the city’s plans came from several fronts. This included:
   - workers’ unions
   - voluntary civil society groups
   - concerned individuals

   While the core issue was the diversion of library taxes into a freeway overpass, opposition extended into such areas as the relationship between city council and corporate interests, and the need for more big-box retail in general.

   a) What does this assembly of different people tell us about the importance of co-operation to bring about change?

   b) Not everybody got exactly what they wanted. How does this reflect the nature of democracy in a diverse society?

2. The opposition’s battle took place on several fronts. Public awareness was built through such things as formal speeches to city council, letters to local media, letters to the library board, and a protest in the city’s public square.

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3. If common citizens do not politically engage, who will have the most influence in a democracy?

Lesson 3.1: The Provincial Election Processes

RATIONALE
Students will learn about the process of electing a government and consider it in Saskatchewan's historical context.

MATERIALS
Electing Governments in Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Elections: A History, Saskatchewan Election Crossword

TEACHER'S BACKGROUND INFORMATION: ELECTING GOVERNMENTS IN SASKATCHEWAN
Saskatchewan's system of government is based upon the Westminster system of parliamentary democracy, the system of governance of the United Kingdom. This system tends to rely upon the operation of political parties.

Political parties—as opposed to individual candidates—are often the basis for how people vote in general elections. While candidates independent of political parties often run for office, most candidates who stand for election to the legislature belong to a political party.

NOMINATING CANDIDATES FOR ELECTION
When candidates run in an election, they generally are seen to hold the views of the political party they are representing. Thus, parties must endorse their candidates. To do so, parties usually hold nomination contests where their members decide who will run in each constituency. Occasionally, political parties will reject candidates if they believe the candidate does not represent the party's views. For example, this happened in 2003 when the Saskatchewan Party rejected the nomination of Grant Schmidt.

Grant Schmidt was an outspoken minister in the Grant Devine Progressive Conservative government of the 1980s. Schmidt returned to practicing law following his election loss in 1991. However, in 2003 he decided to make a political comeback. Schmidt ran for and won the Saskatchewan Party nomination in the Melville-Saltcoats constituency. The party, however, refused to endorse his candidacy. They said he supported policies that were not those of the Saskatchewan Party. Another nomination contest was held, and Schmidt was not allowed to take part.

Even if a candidate such as Schmidt is rejected by a party, their right as a citizen to run for office is not taken away. Candidates can run for office as independent candidates, and Schmidt chose to do that. Unfortunately for him, he only received 19% of the votes, behind the candidates for the Saskatchewan Party (39%) and the NDP (32%), but ahead of the Liberal candidate (10%).

To run as either an independent or party-affiliated candidate in a provincial election, candidates must be 18 years of age, and have lived in Saskatchewan for six months prior to the election's beginning. 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 $100 cash deposit. The deposit is returned only if the candidate gains 50% of the vote.

TRIGGERING AN ELECTION
Saskatchewan has fixed election legislation. Barring special circumstances, this means elections are to be held every four years, on the first Monday in November. To begin the election, the premier must go to the Lieutenant Governor and ask for the legislature to be dissolved and an election to take place. The legislation mandating fixed election dates only applies in the situation of stable majority governments, though. Elections can be triggered by other means, especially in the case of a minority government.

For example, some votes that take place in the legislature are considered so vital to the government's continued leadership role that they must have the backing of a majority of the Legislative branch. If the government does not have their support, it will fall. These matters result in what is known as a confidence vote. Confidence votes typically include votes on budgets, major changes to the law, and most bills that involve spending government money. The notion of confidence votes is closely tied to the notion of responsible government. The government is responsible to the majority of members of the legislature. This helps ensure government is responsible to the public.
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wishes of the majority of voters. It also provides an orderly means for the people’s elected representatives to remove a government from power if they are acting contrary to the desires of the majority.

Generally speaking, if the government loses a confidence vote one of two things can happen. The government can admit defeat and resign in order for another government to be formed by another party or group of parties that commands the support of the majority of MLAs. Or, the premier can ask the Lieutenant Governor to dissolve the legislature and call a general election, even if four years have not passed since the previous election.

CARETAKER GOVERNMENT
The Lieutenant Governor must ensure there is always a government in place. In fact, the Executive branch of government remains in place during an election. This means that the premier and ministers keep their jobs as the Executive while they run for election as MLAs. However, during this time there are limits to what they can do. These limits are spelled out in the caretaker convention. The convention defines the limits of the Executive’s powers during an election period. They may perform routine and non-controversial tasks, or urgent tasks if an emergency should arise. The caretaker convention limits the power of the Executive during an election because during the campaign there is no Legislative branch in place. Hence, the Legislative is unable to hold the Executive to account.

ELECTING MEMBERS TO THE LEGISLATURE
In Saskatchewan’s system of governance, voters from each of the province’s electoral constituencies cast ballots for a member of the legislative assembly to represent them. The number of constituencies has changed over time. In Saskatchewan’s first provincial election, there were 25 members elected. By 1991, the amount of seats peaked at 66. Due to budgetary considerations, the number of seats was reduced to 58 in 1995. The province added three seats for the 2016 general election.

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 political party. If a single 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 non-government MLAs.

Even though Saskatchewan has 61 MLAs, the legislative chamber was built to accommodate 125. Saskatchewan was growing exponentially when the legislature was built. Then-premier Walter Scott envisioned a province that would be home to several million people. Therefore, Scott had the legislature designed accordingly.

FORMING A GOVERNMENT
Following the election—regardless of the result—the government that existed prior to the election remains in place. It has the first opportunity to demonstrate to the Lieutenant Governor that its members can form a government that will have the support of legislature. In fact, technically whoever is appointed premier by the Lieutenant Governor can remain in that role until resignation, death, or the premier being advised by the Lieutenant Governor that she or he no longer requires the premier’s advice (which is a constitutional way of saying the premier was fired by the Lieutenant Governor). In practice, however, the contemporary custom is much different. If the governing party loses they will usually resign and the Lieutenant Governor will invite the party with the most seats in the legislature to form a new government.

This 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 will be able to provide a stable government without holding a majority of seats. The process for determining this can be complex.

For example, if the premier’s party holds the most seats in a minority situation, they could argue to the Lieutenant Governor that they would be able to gain sufficient support from other parties on an issue-by-issue basis to form a stable government. This happened after Saskatchewan’s 1929 election. James Gardiner’s Liberals won the most seats, but failed to return with a majority. Gardiner was given the chance to govern with a minority government. Gardiner’s minority was short-lived, though, as the Liberals fell in a confidence motion three months after being elected. The Lieutenant Governor then turned to J. T. Anderson’s Conservative Party, who formed a coalition that governed the province until 1934.
The premier may also wish to demonstrate to the Lieutenant Governor that she or he can form a stable coalition between two or more parties. Coalitions can ensure that a majority of elected members support the government and legislation will pass. In Saskatchewan, this happened in 1999 when Roy Romanow’s NDP won the most seats (29 out of 58) but not an outright majority of the seats. The NDP formed a coalition government with the 4 Liberal MLAs who were elected, thus ensuring a stable majority.

It is also possible for a government to remain in power even if they outright lose an election. While this scenario has not unfolded in provincial politics, it has at the federal level. In the October 1925 federal election, William Lyon Mackenzie King’s Liberals campaigned for re-election. They won 99 seats, coming in second to Arthur Meighen’s Conservatives who won 116. The Progressive Party won 24. Instead of giving up government, King told the Governor General he would like to meet Parliament and let them decide. King believed he could gain the support of the Progressive Party’s members of parliament. King remained Prime Minister until June of 1926, when his government lost the support of the Progressives due to a scandal. The Governor General gave Meighen the opportunity to form a Conservative government. However, Meighen’s government quickly lost the support of the Progressive Party. With no party able to gain the confidence of the house, another election was called.

PROCEDURE

1. Using Teacher’s Background Information and the overheads NOMINATING CANDIDATES FOR ELECTION and TRIGGERING AN ELECTION, lead class discussion of electing governments in Saskatchewan.

   KEY QUESTIONS:
   • Why do independent candidates have a more difficult time winning elections?
   • What are the merits and drawbacks of fixed election dates?
   • How fixed are these “fixed” dates?

2. Use overhead FORMING A GOVERNMENT to explain possible outcomes from elections, then assign THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT FORMING A GOVERNMENT for further discussion.

3. To gain student understandings of the history of Saskatchewan elections, use Saskatchewan Elections: A History in conjunction with Saskatchewan Election Crossword.

4. Using Saskatchewan Elections: A History as a launch point, teachers may wish to have students research a political party, government, politician, or election in Saskatchewan’s history. Excellent starting points for research could include the CBC Digital Archives’ Showdown on the Prairies—A History of Saskatchewan Elections found at www.cbc.ca/archives or the Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan found at http://esask.uregina.ca.

FURTHER EXPLORATIONS

5. Government House, the office of Saskatchewan’s Lieutenant Governor, has several educational programs and resources, including resources on the Crown’s role in Saskatchewan. Find out more at www.governmenthouse.gov.sk.ca/educational-programs.
Nominating Candidates for Election

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

**INDEPENDENT**

**POLITICAL PARTY**

Political parties hold nomination meeting for each constituency where party members choose candidate.

To run for election, any candidate must:

- be at least 18
- have lived in Saskatchewan for six months prior to the election’s beginning
- pay $100 deposit
- have nomination papers signed by four people and witnessed by a fifth
Triggering an Election

- Fixed election legislation requires an election every four years on the first Monday of November

- Elections may be held sooner if:
  a) the government loses vote of confidence, and
  b) the Lieutenant Governor is not convinced another party can form a stable government

- The date may also be changed if the election will coincide with another major election, such as a federal election
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:
  a) Minority government, where support for legislation is gained on an issue-by-issue basis
  b) Coalition government, where two or more parties agree to a partnership to govern

Thinking Critically About Forming a Government

1. Why is it important that voters learn about their local candidates running to be an MLA?
2. What are the consequences for democracy if we too-heavily focus on party leaders?

Minority and Coalition Governments

Minority governments and coalition governments are common around the world. Minority governments have led Britain and Canada, for example. Coalition governments are even more common. Japan, Israel, Brazil, India, Pakistan, Britain, Australia, and Germany—to name a few—have been or are currently being governed by coalitions. Saskatchewan has twice been governed by a coalition, from 1929 - 1934 and from 1999 - 2003.

1. Because the support of a majority of MLAs is required to pass laws, minority and coalition governments must create policies that take into account the desires of other parties.
   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. Even if a coalition government or minority government takes broader viewpoints into consideration when creating laws, it is not guaranteed that the law will be satisfactory to all citizens.
   a) Even if you do not support a law, is it important to respect it?
   b) What can you do to change a law you do not believe in?
Thinking Critically About Forming a Government

ELECTING MLAS AND PARTY LEADERS
In the Westminster parliamentary system, the general public does not directly elect the premier. For example, the only citizens in Saskatchewan who can vote for Brad Wall are those living in the constituency of Swift Current. When voters cast ballots, they are voting for a local member of the legislature to represent their interests. That being said, party leadership and party policies are very important factors in how voters cast their ballots.

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   a) Even if you do not support a law, is it important to respect it?
   b) What can you do to change a law you do not believe in?
Saskatchewan Elections: A History

Since becoming a province in 1905, Saskatchewan has had 27 general elections. This is an overview of their history. Elections Saskatchewan archives voting results at www.elections.sk.ca.

December 13th, 1905
The Liberal Party formed Saskatchewan’s first elected government. The Liberals were led by Walter Scott, an MP representing the area of Saskatchewan in Wilfred Laurier’s federal government. The former premier of the Northwest Territories, Frederick Haultain, led the Provincial Rights Party. Haultain had strong ties to the Conservative Party and advocated for Alberta and Saskatchewan to be one province named Buffalo. He begrudged Prime Minister Laurier for creating two provinces, and fought Saskatchewan’s first election on opposition to federal interference in provincial areas of jurisdiction.

RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Walter Scott</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>52.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Rights</td>
<td>Frederick Haultain</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>47.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Seats 25

August 14th, 1908
The number of MLAs was expanded to 41, reflecting Saskatchewan’s rapidly growing population. The Liberals ran 40 candidates in 41 constituencies: Liberal William Turgeon ran in both the Prince Albert City and Duck Lake constituencies. He won Duck Lake but lost Prince Albert. At the time it was not uncommon 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 new representatives for the vacated constituencies. This practice is no longer allowed.

RESULTS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
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<th>Popular Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Walter Scott</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>50.79%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provincial Rights</td>
<td>Frederick Haultain</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>47.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent-Liberal</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 actually elected out of the 54 seat legislature, as the constituency of Cumberland’s results were declared void and a by-election had to be held at a later date to fill the seat.

RESULTS

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Walter Scott</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>56.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Wellington Willoughby</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>41.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Seats</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>54</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*one result was declared void so only 53 members were elected out of 54 seats.

JUNE 26TH, 1917
Walter Scott resigned as Liberal leader amid failing mental health and scandals over alleged kickbacks from government contracts going to people with Liberal connections. Scott’s replacement, William Martin, was new to the provincial Liberals. He successfully distanced the party from previous scandal. Women were granted the right to vote in 1916, making 1917 the first Saskatchewan election in which women voted. However, women first exercised this right in a 1916 province-wide plebiscite on prohibition.

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>William M. Martin</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>56.68%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Wellington Willoughby</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>36.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Partisan League</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>William G. Baker</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Seats</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>59</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
JUNE 9TH, 1921

The Conservative Party fell into disarray by 1921. It split into several pieces, with many party members running as independents. This fray benefited the Liberals. Meanwhile, William G. Baker won a seat for Labour. Because Labour was poorly organized in Canada, it was common for Labour candidates to align themselves with Liberals upon election. Thus, Baker next ran as a Labour-Liberal in the 1925 election. He eventually ran as a Liberal in 1938.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>William M. Martin</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>51.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25.73%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Donald Maclean</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Conservative</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Pro-Government</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Acclamation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>William G. Baker</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Partisan League</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Labour</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Non-Partisan</td>
<td></td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>0.77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Seats 63

JUNE 2ND, 1925

The Saskatchewan Liberals began to suffer under Martin’s leadership. Even though the party had severed its ties with the federal Liberal party, Martin still openly supported federal Liberal candidates. As well, the Saskatchewan Grain Growers’ Association—a politically-powerful group with ties to the provincial Liberals—had been threatening to form its own political party. All this helped lead the Liberals to choosing a new leader, Charles Dunning. He was chosen partially because as the first manager of the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company, he could strengthen the Liberal connection with farm communities. The Progressive Party, a farmer-based party, became official opposition.

RESULTS

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Charles A. Dunning</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>51.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>James Anderson</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18.35%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Conservative</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.62%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Total Seats 63

JUNE 6TH, 1929

Two governments followed the 1929 election. James Gardiner won a minority, though a strong second-place showing came from the Conservatives, led by J.T. Anderson and receiving support from the Ku Klux Klan. However, when the Liberals faced the legislature three months after the election, they lost a vote of confidence. The Conservatives and Progressives along with some independents formed a coalition known as the Co-operative government to rule the province.

RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>James Gardiner</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>45.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>James Anderson</td>
<td>40</td>
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<td>36.44%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.16%</td>
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Total Seats 63

JUNE 12TH, 1934

The Great Depression took its toll on the governing Conservative coalition, who lost all their seats as the Liberals were swept back into power. The Farmer-Labour Party, the precursor to the modern-day NDP, emerged in this election and became the official opposition. The party was created by the Saskatchewan section of the United Farmers of Canada and the Independent Labour Party, and campaigned for public health care and financial protections for farmers. Its leader, M. J. Coldwell, ran in Regina but failed to win his seat.

RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>James Gardiner</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>48.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>M. J. Coldwell</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23.96%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.69%</td>
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<tr>
<td>United Front</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-</td>
<td>0.03%</td>
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Total Seats 63
**June 9th, 1921**

The Conservative Party fell into disarray by 1921. It split into several pieces, with many party members running as independents. This fray benefited the Liberals. Meanwhile, William G. Baker won a seat for Labour. Because Labour was poorly organized in Canada, it was common for Labour candidates to align themselves with Liberals upon election. Thus, Baker next ran as a Labour-Liberal in the 1925 election. He eventually ran as a Liberal in 1938.

**RESULTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>William M. Martin</td>
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<td>45</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Seats</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>

**June 2nd, 1925**

The Saskatchewan Liberals began to suffer under Martin's leadership. Even though the party had severed its ties with the federal Liberal party, Martin still openly supported federal Liberal candidates. As well, the Saskatchewan Grain Growers’ Association—a politically-powerful group with ties to the provincial Liberals—had been threatening to form its own political party. All this helped lead the Liberals to choosing a new leader, Charles Dunning. He was chosen partially because as the first manager of the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company, he could strengthen the Liberal connection with farm communities. The Progressive Party, a farmer-based party, became official opposition.

**RESULTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Charles A. Dunning</td>
<td>62</td>
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<td>51.51%</td>
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<td>23.04%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>James Anderson</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>18.35%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3.51%</td>
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<td>Labour-Liberal</td>
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<td>1.90%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent Liberal</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1.07%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Seats</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**June 6th, 1929**

Two governments followed the 1929 election. James Gardiner won a minority, though a strong second-place showing came from the Conservatives, led by J.T. Anderson and receiving support from the Ku Klux Klan. However, when the Liberals faced the legislature three months after the election, they lost a vote of confidence. The Conservatives and Progressives along with some independents formed a coalition known as the Co-operative government to rule the province.

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<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>James Gardiner</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>45.56%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>James Anderson</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>36.44%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.92%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Labour-Liberal</td>
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<td>1.16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent Liberal</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>0.32%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Seats</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>63</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**June 12th, 1934**

The Great Depression took its toll on the governing Conservative coalition, who lost all their seats as the Liberals were swept back into power. The Farmer-Labour Party, the precursor to the modern-day NDP, emerged in this election and became the official opposition. The party was created by the Saskatchewan section of the United Farmers of Canada and the Independent Labour Party, and campaigned for public health care and financial protections for farmers. Its leader, M. J. Coldwell, ran in Regina but failed to win his seat.

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<tr>
<th>Party</th>
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<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>James Gardiner</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>48.00%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>James Anderson</td>
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<td>54</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>William G. Baker</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.33%</td>
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<tr>
<td>United Front</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.24%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent Liberal</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>0.03%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Seats</td>
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</table>
JUNE 8TH, 1938

The Great Depression spurred many political movements as people looked for solutions to harsh social and economic conditions. The Communist Party of Saskatchewan made its first election appearance under two fronts: two candidates ran as independents while three others ran under the Unity Party banner. As well, 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 (CCF) movement, becoming the Saskatchewan CCF. The CCF formed the official opposition.

RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
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<td>Joseph Needham</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>15.90%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>John Diefenbaker</td>
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<tr>
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</table>

JUNE 6TH, 1944

Provisions allow for a government to not hold an election during times of national emergency. Because of World War II, this election was held six years after the previous one. The Saskatchewan Grain Growers’ Association—strongly linked with the Liberal Party in Saskatchewan—lost clout as the primary voice of the Saskatchewan farmer. This weakened Liberal support and contributed to the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation’s (CCF) sweep to power. They formed the first socialist government in North America. The Communist Party changed into the Labour Progressive Party due to its banishment in Canada in 1940 under the War Measures Act.

RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCF</td>
<td>Tommy Douglas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Seats</td>
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</table>
JUNE 24TH, 1948
A handful of Liberals and Conservatives joined forces and ran as Conservative Liberal candidates in an effort to defeat CCF candidates. Only one of these candidates won, Alexander McDonald, and immediately joined the Liberal caucus. McDonald went on to become the leader of the Saskatchewan Liberals from 1954 - 1959.

RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCF</td>
<td>Tommy Douglas</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>47.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>41</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>0.26%</td>
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<tr>
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JUNE 11TH, 1952
With the province generally happy with CCF governance, Walter Tucker failed to gain power for the provincial Liberals. He resigned as leader and returned to being a federal Liberal MP, representing Rosthern.

RESULTS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>CCF</td>
<td>Tommy Douglas</td>
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<td>42</td>
<td>54.06%</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>39.27%</td>
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<td>24</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>1.97%</td>
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<td>0.29%</td>
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<td>Independent</td>
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<td>0.28%</td>
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</table>
**June 20th, 1956**

The 1956 election saw the return of the Social Credit party to the legislature, following their rise to form government in British Columbia in 1952. Despite running a full slate of candidates, they only won three seats. Much like John Diefenbaker, Conservative leader Alvin Hamilton was unable to elect members to the Saskatchewan legislature. He went on to serve many terms as a federal Conservative MP.

**Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCF</td>
<td>Tommy Douglas</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>45.25%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Alexander McDonald</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30.34%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>53</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.48%</td>
</tr>
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<td>1.98%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>0.85%</td>
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<td><strong>Total Seats</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>53</strong></td>
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</table>

**June 8th, 1960**

Tommy Douglas resigned as premier in 1961 to lead the federal New Democratic Party (NDP) and was replaced by Woodrow Lloyd. Lloyd successfully implemented Tommy Douglas’s medicare program. While Lloyd was successful in implementing medicare, he was unable to secure re-election for the CCF. The Liberals regained power under Ross Thatcher, a former CCF MP, by framing the election on expanding free enterprise. The first Conservative was elected in 30 years, while the Social Credit Party fell into disarray.

**Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Ross Thatcher</td>
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<td>17</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Woodrow Lloyd</td>
<td>55</td>
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<td>40.76%</td>
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<td>Progressive Conservative</td>
<td>Martin Pederson</td>
<td>55</td>
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<td>13.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Credit</td>
<td>Martin Kellin</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Seats</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>55</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*one result was declared void so only 54 members were elected out of 55 seats.*
April 22nd, 1964
The Liberals finally regained power in Saskatchewan under Ross Thatcher, a former CCF MP. The Liberals framed the election on expanding free enterprise in the province. The first Conservative member of the legislature in 30 years was elected, while the Social Credit Party fell into disarray. Like the 1912 election, one constituency’s result was declared void so only 58 members were elected out of 59 seats.

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Ross Thatcher</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>45.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCF</td>
<td>Woodrow Lloyd</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>44.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive Conservative</td>
<td>Martin Pederson</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Credit</td>
<td>Martin Kellin</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Seats</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>59</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* one result was declared void, so only 58 members were elected out of 59 seats.

October 11th, 1967
Ross Thatcher’s Liberals increased their majority in the legislature after the 1967 election. It was the first election where each of Regina, Saskatoon, and Moose Jaw were divided into multiple constituencies. Previous to 1967, the cities had a multiple-member-at-large system for choosing MLAs. Shortly after the election, the CCF became the New Democratic Party.

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Ross Thatcher</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>45.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Democratic</td>
<td>Woodrow Lloyd</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>44.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive Conservative</td>
<td>Martin Pederson</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Credit</td>
<td>Martin Pederson</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Seats</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>59</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
JUNE 23RD, 1971

With 45 of the seats available outside of Saskatchewan’s then three largest cities (Saskatoon, Regina, and Moose Jaw), Ross Thatcher tried to paint the NDP as more concerned with organized labour than with farmers. The NDP successfully convinced voters that it was time for a change. Ross Thatcher passed away only three weeks after losing the election.

RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Democratic</td>
<td>Allan Blakeney</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>55.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Ross Thatcher</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>42.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive Conservative</td>
<td>Ed Nasserden</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Seats</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Democratic</td>
<td>Allan Blakeney</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>40.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>David Steuart</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>31.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive Conservative</td>
<td>Richard Collver</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Seats</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OCTOBER 18TH, 1978

This election was fought around control of the province’s resources. 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, Liberals did not elect a single member to the legislature. They were suffering from their federal counterparts under Pierre Trudeau being unpopular in the west, as well as internal divisions over the leadership race between Ted Malone and Tony Merchant.

RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Democratic</td>
<td>Allan Blakeney</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>48.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive Conservative</td>
<td>Richard Collver</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>38.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Ted Malone</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Seats</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APRIL 26TH, 1982
The NDP campaigned on the theme “Tried 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. They won the biggest landslide in Saskatchewan history. 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. However, two breakaway PCs briefly sat as WCC MLAs before the election.

RESULTS

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

OCTOBER 20TH, 1986
Allan Blakeney stayed on as leader of the NDP to rebuild the party after the loss in 1982. While the NDP won more votes than the Progressive Conservatives, the Progressive Conservatives won more seats. It 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Democratic</td>
<td>Allan Blakeney</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>45.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive Conservative</td>
<td>Grant Devine</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>44.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Ralph Goodale</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Canada Concept</td>
<td>Hilton J. Spencer</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliance</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>0.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Seats</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>64</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
October 21st, 1991

In a near reversal of the results of 1982, the NDP were returned to power. The substantial provincial debt and “Fair Share Saskatchewan,” an unpopular decentralization program that was to move government operations from Regina to rural areas were some of the reasons behind the defeat. Despite Grant Devine urging people not to vote Liberal for fear of splitting the “free enterprise” vote, provincial Liberal support strengthened.

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Democratic</td>
<td>Roy Romanow</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>51.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive Conservative</td>
<td>Grant Devine</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Lynda Haverstock</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence (Western Canada Concept)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Seats</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>66</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

June 21st, 1995

As part of the NDP’s efforts to steer the province from the brink of bankruptcy, the size of the legislature was reduced to 58 seats from 66. This seat redistribution left some incumbents having to fight nomination battles against colleagues from their own party. The Liberals became the official opposition, winning 11 seats and placing second in 41 others.

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Democratic</td>
<td>Roy Romanow</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>47.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Lynda Haverstock</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive Conservative</td>
<td>Bill Boyd</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.17%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Seats</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>58</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**SEPTEMBER 16TH, 1999**

An alliance of Progressive Conservatives and disaffected Liberals formed the Saskatchewan Party leading up to the election. The Saskatchewan Party was able to take advantage of rural anger that an election was called during harvest. They won the most votes but failed to win the most seats. The NDP was reduced to a minority, and forged a coalition with the Liberals. The Progressive Conservative Party fielded what are called “paper candidates” in this election, as they agreed to not actively contest two elections upon the formation of the Saskatchewan Party. The New Green Alliance—a left-leaning group disillusioned with the NDP—also fought their first election. They later morphed into the Green Party of Saskatchewan.

**RESULTS**

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

**NOVEMBER 5TH, 2003**

When the 2003 election was called, the Saskatchewan Party was considered the favourite to win. However, due to concerns about crown corporations being privatized, and a very focussed NDP campaign in what they believed were “winnable” constituencies, the NDP won a fourth term. The Liberals, however, were completely shut out despite disavowing their coalition agreement with the NDP.

**RESULTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Democratic</td>
<td>Lorne Calvert</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>44.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan Party</td>
<td>Elwin Hermanson</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>39.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>David Karwacki</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Independence</td>
<td>Bruce Ritter</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Green Alliance</td>
<td>Ben Webster</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.55%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive Conservative</td>
<td>Iris Dennis</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.16%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Seats</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>58</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
November 7th, 2007

With growing resource revenues, the NDP promised to instate a universal pharmacare program to ensure low-priced prescription drugs to all citizens. However, the 16 years of rule by the NDP fuelled a desire for a change in government, bringing the Saskatchewan Party to power.

RESULTS

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

November 7th, 2011

Fuelled by a resource-based economic boom, the governing Saskatchewan Party achieved the highest-ever share of the popular vote in a Saskatchewan general election. Meanwhile the NDP fell to its lowest share of the popular vote since 1938. With over 96% of the vote going to these top two parties, significant analysis of the smaller parties is difficult. However, it is interesting to note that for the first time in their respective histories, the Greens placed third and the Liberals placed fourth. And even though the Progressive Conservatives placed fifth, of the four smallest parties they received the most votes per candidate.

RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Leader</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan Party</td>
<td>Brad Wall</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>64.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Democratic</td>
<td>Dwain Lingenfelter</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>31.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Victor Lau</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Ryan Bater</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive Conservative</td>
<td>Rick Swenson</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Independence</td>
<td>Dana Arnason</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Seats</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>58</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Saskatchewan Election Crossword**

**ACROSS**

4. This Liberal was premier, opposition leader, and again premier. He has a dam named after him today.

7. Although Ross Thatcher was Saskatchewan’s first premier born in Saskatchewan, this premier was the first one born in territory that is now present-day Saskatchewan.

9. 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.”

11. This premier won more elections than any other.

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 Conservative leader tried to publicly distance himself from the support offered to his party by the Ku Klux Klan.

16. This opposition leader was one of only two in Saskatchewan history to win the most votes in an election, but not win enough seats to take government.

17. This person led the Progressive Conservatives to the biggest landslide victory in Saskatchewan history.

18. This opposition leader lost three elections to Walter Scott.
1. 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.

2. This Liberal leader later went on to become the Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan.

3. This provincial Liberal leader went on to become the Minister of Public Safety in the federal Liberal government led by Justin Trudeau.

5. This was the only Saskatchewan premier to win an election with less than 40% of the popular vote.

6. This political party won nine consecutive elections in Saskatchewan, even though they did not hold government consecutively through this time.

7. This Progressive Conservative leader ended a 30 year spell of no Conservatives being elected to the Saskatchewan legislature.

8. Despite having formed governments in Alberta and British Columbia, this political party has only elected a total of five members to the Saskatchewan legislature.

9. This political party made its first appearance in a Saskatchewan provincial election in 1938.

10. The precursor to the modern NDP won its first five seats under the leadership of this person.

12. This premier battled five elections as NDP leader, winning three of them.

14. 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.

Lesson 3.2: Considering the Voting Process

RATIONALE

Although voting is only one component of a functioning democracy, democracy requires people to exercise their right to vote. Because of this, issues surrounding the ways citizens can participate in the voting process will be considered.

MATERIALS

Considering Voter Turnout, Declined Ballots, Voting Age: Should it be Lowered?

PROCEDURE

1. As a class, brainstorm reasons why it is important to vote.

2. Bridge class discussion into reading and discussion of Considering Voter Turnout.

3. To introduce how voters do not necessarily have to vote for a candidate or party to participate in an election, have class read Declined Ballots. Reviewing Lesson 2.6: Participating in the Political Process will be useful for Question 1 of this handout.

4. For further consideration about building voter turnout, lead class reading of Voting Age: Should it be Lowered?

FURTHER EXPLORATION

5. The CBC Archives has an examination of voting history in Canada, Voting in Canada: How a Privilege Became a Right. Find it at www.cbc.ca/archives. As well, Elections Canada has produced a comprehensive book A History of the Vote in Canada. It can be found on Elections Canada’s website.
Lesson 3.2: Considering the Voting Process

RATIONALE
Although voting is only one component of a functioning democracy, democracy requires people to exercise their right to vote. Because of this, issues surrounding the ways citizens can participate in the voting process will be considered.

MATERIALS
Considering Voter Turnout, Declined Ballots, Voting Age: Should it be Lowered?

PROCEDURE
1. As a class, brainstorm reasons why is it important to vote.
2. Bridge class discussion into reading and discussion of Considering Voter Turnout.
   KEY QUESTIONS:
   • What difficulties would students or homeless people face in having the proper identification for voting? How could this be remedied?
   • 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 voters do not necessarily have to vote for a candidate or party to participate in an election, have class read Declined Ballots. Reviewing Lesson 2.6: Participating in the Political Process will be useful for Question 1 of this handout.
4. For further consideration about building voter turnout, lead class reading of Voting Age: Should it be Lowered?

FURTHER EXPLORATIONS
5. The CBC Archives has an examination of voting history in Canada, Voting in Canada: How a Privilege Became a Right. Find it at www.cbc.ca/archives. As well, Elections Canada has produced a comprehensive book A History of the Vote in Canada. It can be found on Elections Canada’s website.
Considering Voter Turnout

Most Canadian citizens over the age of 18 who live in Saskatchewan can vote in Saskatchewan’s provincial elections, provided that they have lived in Saskatchewan for six months prior to the day the election was called. When voting, citizens must provide their identity and address by either:

- showing one piece of government-issued photo ID with a name and address (for example, a driver’s license); or
- showing two valid original documents with the voter’s name from an approved list. One of these documents must also have their address (for example, a Saskatchewan health card and power bill)

If a voter cannot provide these, they can have another eligible voter swear an oath that vouches for their identity and place of residence. An eligible voter can only swear an oath for one other person. A full breakdown of these rules can be found on the website of Elections Saskatchewan, the province’s impartial and independent election management organization.

While these rules can create difficulties for people such as the homeless or students living away from their hometown—and these difficulties must not be overlooked or minimalized—the majority of Saskatchewan citizens have the documentation required to vote in their pockets. For most people, there are few barriers to voting.

Despite this, a surprising number of people in Saskatchewan fail to exercise their right to vote. According to Elections Saskatchewan, the percentage of voters casting ballots fell sharply in the mid-1990s, and has yet to return to its historic levels:

![Voter Turnout in Saskatchewan](image)

One solution to increase voter turnout would be to implement mandatory voting. Some countries, such as Australia, have done this. Unless an Australian voter has a valid reason for not voting, they are subject to a small fine. This has led to voter turnout around 95%.

Requiring people to vote, however, could be seen as heavy-handed. Another way to encourage voter turnout is improving access to voting stations. Elections Saskatchewan does many things on this front. In addition to opening polling stations across the province on election day, Elections Saskatchewan:

- provides advance polling stations for five days just prior to the election
- sets up polling stations in seniors’ and personal care homes
- sets up polling stations in hospitals for hospital patients
- allows people who are homebound due to a disability and their caregivers to vote by appointment in their homes
- allows people to vote by mail

Some people have advocated for doing more, such as having polling stations at universities and colleges during provincial elections (this was done for the 2015 federal election) to encourage younger people to vote.
Declined Ballots

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

REJECTED BALLOTS

A rejected ballot is one that is marked improperly or illogically by the voter. 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 either the options available or 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 with the candidates or the system of government as a whole, 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 is the case, the election official must record the ballot as declined.

Voters can decline their ballots in Saskatchewan’s provincial elections. However, our election laws do not result in those declined ballots being specifically reported when election results are reported. Instead, the count of declined ballots is lumped in with all the rejected ballots. This means that the public has no way of knowing how many ballots were purposely declined and how many ballots were rejected for other reasons.

Several other jurisdictions recognize that declining your ballot is a unique political expression that should be publicly reported. For example, in Alberta and Manitoba election results include a breakdown of rejected ballots, declined ballots, and ballots left blank but placed in the ballot box.

DECLINED BALLOTS AND THE SECRET BALLOT

Secret ballots are important so that people do not find themselves being subjected to intimidation or threats for their political choices. In Canada, secret ballots were first used in the 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. This is in contrast to other voters who cast a vote for a candidate or deface their ballots: their decision is secret. The public nature of declining a ballot can be seen as undermining people’s entitlement to political privacy.

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 dissatisfaction with all the candidates or even the system of government in general. 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.
CONSIDER

1. Voting is one tool in democracy’s toolkit. While declining a ballot is a legitimate political expression, there are considerations and actions citizens can make 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 reported declined ballots 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?
Voting Age: Should it be Lowered?

Struggles for the right to vote are as old as democracy itself. When democracy emerged in Athens around 500BC, direct voting on issues was only allowed for adult male citizens who had completed military training. Similarly in England, the country’s early democratic processes only gave landowners the right to vote. Voting liberalized over the years in most developed nations, allowing more and more people to vote. New Zealand was the first modern-day country to grant women the right to vote in 1893. In Saskatchewan, this right was granted in 1916. Then-premier Walter Scott’s wife signed a petition in 1909 for this right, and Scott encouraged women to gather support around the province to pave a path for women’s right to vote. This achievement, however, was not the end of the struggles for the right to vote in Canada.

Canadian legislation specifically allowed for the discrimination against minorities with regard to voting rights. This meant the federal government could arbitrarily limit voting rights. 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 Aboriginal Canadians were no longer required to give up their Treaty rights and renounce their status under the Indian Act in order to vote.

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 all prisoners have the right to vote.

Expanding the right to vote to younger people 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. Since then, the idea has been floated of lowering the age to 16. These discussions have gained little traction, though. A private member’s bill was put forth in the House of Commons in 2005 to have the voting age lowered, but it did not pass. As well, in 2008 the concept was proposed in Nova Scotia but went nowhere.

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 have to better address their needs
• young people are already instilled with 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
• young people lack sophisticated political knowledge

A few jurisdictions across the world have moved the voting age below 18. Austria, Brazil, and Cuba all have voting ages of 16. A few other countries—such as East Timor and Sudan—have provisions for 17 year olds to vote. Globally, though, voting ages below 18 are very rare.

CONSIDER

1. Almost all young people learn about voting and elections 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. The law acknowledges this unique role of youth. 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. Would lowering the voting age strengthen arguments for changing other youth-related laws? Why or why not?

3. What would be the broader consequences of young people voting?

4. Given the arguments against a younger voting age, would it be fair to introduce some kind of competency test for all voters?
Lesson 3.3: Electoral Reform

RATIONALE
Students will learn about how the first-past-the-post electoral system produces legislatures that misrepresent voting intentions, and some of the solutions proposed to this problem.

MATERIALS
Smaller Political Parties, Reasons for Electoral Reform

PROCEDURE
1. Brainstorm with class a list of parties running for election. If the class list is incomplete, share with class missing parties.
2. Lead class reading of *Smaller Political Parties*. It may be worthwhile to have students examine the policies of one or more of the smaller parties in Saskatchewan to better-enlighten the discussion.
4. There is healthy debate on the best type of electoral system. Teachers may be interested in having students embark on research projects that critically examine different types of voting systems. This could include:
   - the many variations of proportional representation, such as single transferrable vote, party-list PR, and mixed-member constituency PR
   - run-off voting, including instant run-off voting
   - first-past-the-post
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   - the many variations of proportional representation, such as single transferrable vote, party-list PR, and mixed-member constituency PR
   - run-off voting, including instant run-off voting
   - first-past-the-post
Smaller Political Parties

Most people are aware of the two largest political parties in Saskatchewan. But these are not the province’s only political parties. Currently, Saskatchewan has six registered political parties:

- Green Party of Saskatchewan
- New Democratic Party, Sask. Section
- Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan
- Saskatchewan Liberal Association
- Saskatchewan Party
- Western Independence Party of Saskatchewan

In addition to these parties, come election time some constituencies may have independent candidates with no official political affiliation who will vie for office.

Looking back at Saskatchewan’s elections, few smaller political parties have had much success in getting their representatives elected to the legislature. This has been especially true since the 1940s. Sometimes the reason for this is simply because some smaller parties have views that represent only a small minority opinion. However, there are several reasons why candidates for smaller parties often get very few votes.

Discuss whether or not you believe each of the following points to be a reason why smaller parties and their candidates tend to get less support than mainstream candidates:

- Local candidates have become less important during elections as the campaign focuses on the leaders.
- The 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.
- Smaller parties do not reflect the beliefs of a critical mass of people.
- People tend to vote for people that they believe have better chances of winning.
Reasons for Electoral Reform

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

For example, consider the result 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.

Because Saskatchewan has a first-past-the-post electoral system, in a general election this process happens in every constituency across the province. The party that wins the most seats will usually form the government.

When all the votes across the province are added up, it becomes clear that the number of seats each party takes in the legislature does not reflect what voters actually voted for. To better understand this, let’s look at the result from the 2011 provincial election. Compare the percentage of seats each party won to their percentage of the popular vote.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
<th># of Seats Won under FPTP</th>
<th>% of Seats Won under FPTP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan Party</td>
<td>64.25%</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Democratic</td>
<td>31.97%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>2.87%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>0.56%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive Conservative</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Independence</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen, in 2011 the Saskatchewan Party won 84% of the seats in the legislature with 64% of the vote. Meanwhile, people who voted for other parties were under-represented in the legislature, if they were represented at all.

**ELECTORAL REFORM**

Because of the problems with first-past-the-post, many people have advocated for electoral reform.

One proposed reform is proportional representation (PR). There are several types of PR, but they all have one common goal. In PR systems, the percentage of the popular vote each party receives is the percentage of seats each party is granted in the legislature. 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. Under proportional representation, the make-up of the legislature would more accurately reflect the proportion of the votes that each party received.

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, candidates 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. This dropping-off process continues until a single candidate has 50% or more of the votes. Unlike PR, run-off systems tend to favour larger parties at the expense of smaller ones.

**CONSIDER**

1. Do you think our current first-past-the-post system is a fair way to choose a government? Why or why not?
2. Would you be more inclined to vote for a smaller party if you thought your vote would have a higher likelihood of electing somebody?
Lesson 3.4: Considering Party Platforms

RATIONALE
Because an understanding of local and provincial issues is important for citizenship, students will learn about issues facing Saskatchewan and consider where parties stand on them.

MATERIALS
Public Policies: Issues and Stances

PROCEDURE
1. As a class, brainstorm issues that are important to the people of Saskatchewan. Single out issues which can be changed, controlled, or influenced by the provincial government. Teachers may want to review the teacher's background information on the separation of governmental jurisdictions, found in Lesson 1.2.
2. Break students into smaller groups to determine which of the brainstormed issues they find most interesting. Using Public Policies: Issues and Stances as a guide, students should research campaign literature, party websites, and news articles to find mainstream and smaller party stances on these issues.
3. Assign each student group to one particular issue to re-examine thoroughly. Students should prepare a brief presentation to their class.
Lesson 3.4: Considering Party Platforms

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3. Assign each student group to one particular issue to re-examine thoroughly. 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.”

The opposition parties and the media quickly attacked Campbell for avoiding a conversation about an issue on the campaign trail. Admittedly, her statement may have been fair from the perspective that issues facing our society are complex and require thoughtful solutions. However, the reality remains that for many people, elections are the only time they take an active interest in politics and governance. Thus, elections are the time when the most people get involved in debates on “very, very serious issues.”

Several issues will be of relevance to Saskatchewan 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 policy?
   b) Who will benefit the least from each party’s policy?
   c) Is anybody left behind by each party’s policy?
Lesson 3.5: Local Candidates

RATIONALE
Because of the importance of local representatives in the governance process, students will learn about the candidates vying for election in their constituency.

MATERIALS
LOCAL CANDIDATE RESEARCH GUIDE

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.
2. Assign LOCAL CANDIDATE RESEARCH GUIDE. Methods of completion could include breaking students into workgroups to each create a presentation/bulletin board/report on one local candidate.
3. Teachers may be interested in organizing an all-candidates forum in their school. This would enable students to explore the stances of local candidates more closely and provide an opportunity for students to ask them questions.
Local Candidate Research Guide

The role of a member of the legislative assembly is important. Unfortunately, their election is often overshadowed by their party and their leader during a campaign. Regardless, when citizens vote in a provincial election, they are voting for their local representative. This underscores the importance of understanding who your local candidates are.

Once elected, MLAs research, debate, and vote on the laws that govern our province. They also bring attention to various issues facing our province, and can shape public opinion. Locally, they are responsible for helping constituents when they face issues that are related to the provincial government. They also advocate on behalf of local interests. However, because they are elected representatives of Saskatchewan, they must take into account the broader interests of the province as a whole when making decisions.

Because the local representative is the person you elect to represent your interests in the legislature, it is important to have a good understanding of the candidate’s stances on the issues. For each of the candidates vying for election in your constituency, consider the following questions:

1. What has the candidate done outside of political work that would make them a good representative for your constituency?
2. What kinds of information have you received from each candidate during the campaign?
3. How do the policies that each candidate supports help the people of your constituency? How do these policies help the province as a whole?
4. Do the local candidates have ideas that are unique to your constituency, or do they just follow the overall policy of their corresponding political party?
5. How would each candidate deal with an issue where their party policy differed from what their constituents wanted?
6. Has the candidate made themselves available to the public before and during the campaign?
7. Is there a particular candidate in your constituency who you think would make the best MLA? Why do you believe that?
Lesson 3.6: Post-Election Analysis

RATIONALE
The significance of the election results will be analyzed so students can consider what the results mean for their communities and for the province.

MATERIALS
*Media coverage of results, Saskatchewan census data*

PROCEDURE
1. As a class, read through and/or watch pertinent election results as reported in traditional and participatory media.
2. Analyze 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 could be considered the most significant events of the campaign?
3. Reconsider voter turnout studied in Lesson 3.2.
   KEY QUESTION:
   - What was the total voter turnout? How does this compare to other elections?
4. 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?
5. Break down the gender and ethnicity of all candidates and then of the winning candidates. Teachers may be interested in using Statistics Canada’s community profile of Saskatchewan in order to comparatively break down the province into various subgroups. Find it at www.statcan.gc.ca.
   KEY QUESTIONS:
   - Did one party proportionately elect more women and minorities than another?
   - What will the legislature as a whole look like?
   - Will the elected members accurately represent the gender and ethnic make-up of the province?
   - Did a disproportionate number of women or minorities lose their campaigns? If so, can you point to reasons why?
6. Reconsider the definitions of democracy studied in Lesson 1.1. Share with class George Bernard Shaw’s quote “Democracy is a device that ensures we will be governed no better than we deserve.”
   KEY QUESTIONS:
   - What aspects of the election results are you happy about?
   - What aspects of the election results disappoint you?
   - Think about participating in the political process (Lesson 2.5). In what ways can you help improve our government?
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) Gardiner Dam, Lake Diefenbaker
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

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

Douglas Garden
MUNST
Y
Paterson
O
M
A
W
D
Un
B
A
K
N
E
Lloyd
C
R
I
T
C
W
N
I
N
I
E
F
B
A
K
E
Anderson
Herman Deverse
Haulin
H:
E:
R:
S:
C:
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W:
I:
E:
F:
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A:
K:
E
Anderson
Herman Deverse
Haulin
H:
E:
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W:
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E:
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B:
A:
K:
E
Anderson
Herman Deverse
Haulin
H:
E:
R:
S:
C:
L:
W:
I:
E:
F:
B:
A:
K:
E
Answer Keys

LESSON 2.1 - MLAS IN SASKATCHEWAN HISTORY
1. i) Ramsland Building, Yorkton
2. e) Motherwell Building, Regina
3. a) Brockelbank Place, Tisdale
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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
Notes