

Lesson 3: Political Perspectives and Budget Priorities

OUTCOME:

Students will learn about how political views impact perspectives on fiscal policy, and have the opportunity to share their own views about the 2017 federal budget.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:

Upon completion of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Compare and analyze the positions and priorities of Canada's political parties.
- Develop critical thinking skills about public policies and offer their own opinions about budget priorities.
- Understand the different political ideologies that exist in Canada.
- Identify where they fit on the political spectrum.

SUPPLEMENTARY TOOLS:

- Worksheet 3.1: Analyzing Perspectives
- PowerPoint F: The Political Spectrum
- Political party perspectives (video responses from federal political party representatives)
- Student Budget Consultation survey (paper and online versions available)

ACTIVITIES:

Hook: 5-10 min

1. Ask students if they would prefer to pay more taxes and have more government services and support, or if they would prefer to have lower taxes and less services and support. Encourage students to share their reasoning or initiate a friendly debate.
2. Explain to students that the political spectrum is a means of characterizing beliefs, values and priorities, and that it provides a conceptual framework in which to view and evaluate political parties.

There are actually two distinct scales of the spectrum: social and economic. The economic scale is often defined by the wide range of opinions on personal taxation, taxation on companies, whether the government should go in to debt, whether the government should do something about wealth inequality and whether the government should try to create jobs or simply leave that to the private sector.

3. Discussion: Do students know where they sit on the political spectrum? How do they know?

Essential Learning: 15 min

1. As a class, watch the videos on the 'Party Perspectives' page of the Student Budget Consultation website (<http://budgetconsultation.ca/party-perspectives/>) and introduce students to the different perspectives offered by Canada's federal political parties in relation to the upcoming budget. Afterwards, students can complete Worksheet 3.1 in groups or pairs.

2. Ask students to share their reflections with the class:

- Which political party's opinion/position did you agree with the most?
- How does each party's response reflect their position on the political spectrum?

Consultation Survey: 25-30 min

1. Provide an introduction to the 2017 Student Budget Consultation survey. Students will be asked to answer questions related to their future employment, spending priorities and options for supporting families and economic growth. Their opinions, along with thousands of students across Canada, will be shared with the Minister of Finance and used to help shape the 2017 federal budget.
2. Provide students 20-25 minutes to fill out the paper or online survey. The online survey is compatible with smartphones and tablets.

Debrief: 10-15 min

Have students review their results from the political spectrum questions and compare them against the views of Canadians (PowerPoint F). Discussion questions:

- Were you surprised about where you sit on the political spectrum? Do you think it is accurate?
- Did you feel more strongly about some value statements than others? Or did you feel like you were in the middle?
- Where do you fit compared to the majority of Canadians (PowerPoint F)?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

- A. What specifically do students want to see in the 2017 budget and why? CIVIX invites students to create their own pitch or submission to the Minister of Finance. It could be written, video or any other format. Students can submit entries individually, in small groups or as a class. There is no limit to the number of entries per school.

Please share your submissions with CIVIX by email (hello@civix.ca). The deadline for submissions is December 16, 2016.

- B. Divide the class into groups and assign each a party represented in the House of Commons. Each group should conduct research into the party's fiscal policies and prepare a plan for the 2017 federal budget. Afterwards, have each group present their findings or have an in-class debate.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- Student Budget Consultation website – <http://budgetconsultation.ca/>
- Student Budget Consultation survey – <http://budgetconsultation.ca/survey/>
- Parliament of Canada – www.parl.gc.ca