

## Lesson 3: Political Perspectives and Budget Priorities

### BIG IDEA:

The political spectrum is a means of characterizing beliefs, values and priorities, and provides a conceptual framework to view and evaluate political parties and public policies. Politics is rife with controversial issue and opposing arguments and it is important to question each other's viewpoints while also respecting the opinions of others.

### LEARNING GOALS:

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

- Understand the different political ideologies that exist in Canada;
- Compare and analyze the positions and priorities of Canada's political parties;
- Demonstrate critical thinking skills and decision-making skills about public policies; and,
- Identify where they fit on the political spectrum.

### SUPPLEMENTARY TOOLS:

- Activity Sheet 3.1: Graphic Organizer
- Slide Deck F: The Political Spectrum
- *Party Perspectives* videos (video responses from federal political party representatives)
- Student Budget Consultation survey (paper and online versions available)

### ACTIVITIES:

#### Hook: 5-10 min

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 government services and support. Encourage students to share their reasoning or initiate a friendly debate. Additional questions:

- What services in which they currently receive would they be willing to forgo for lower taxes (e.g., doctor visits, surgery, employment insurance and maternity benefits, children benefits, subsidized public transit, garbage pick-up)?
- Which services would they pay higher taxes for in order to receive (e.g., free university/college, dental visits, childcare)?

#### Background: 10-15 min

Guiding questions: What is the political spectrum? Where do you think you sit on the political spectrum? (Resource: Slide Deck F - The Political Spectrum)

- 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.
- The spectrum can be viewed with two distinct scales: social and economic. The economic scale is often defined by the wide range of opinions on taxation, government debt, the role of government with regards to wealth inequality and creating jobs.
  - Left-leaning views – government can positively impact the economy, there is good value in social services and a larger government, higher taxes may be necessary, inequality should be prevented.
  - Right-leaning views – Smaller government and less government services and intervention in the economy, inequality is not a concern, governments should not go into debt.

### Working On It: 20-40 min

1. As a class, watch the *Party Perspectives* videos on the Student Budget Consultation website to introduce students to the different perspectives offered by Canada's federal political parties in relation to the upcoming budget.
2. Afterwards, students can complete Activity Sheet 3.1 in groups or pairs. Students can choose to use the graphic organizer to summarize the priorities of each party, or to record their opinions on the views shared.
3. 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?

### Action: 25-30 min

1. Provide an introduction to the 2018 Student Budget Consultation survey. Students will be asked to answer questions related to their own budget priorities. Their opinions, along with thousands of students across Canada, will be shared with the Department of Finance and used to help shape the 2018 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.

### Consolidation: 5-10 min

Have a closing discussion about political perspectives regarding Canada's federal budget. Alternatively, ask students to prepare a written reflection.

- Would you rather have lower taxes and fewer services, or more services and higher taxes? Defend your position.
- Which political party's fiscal policy do you agree with most and why?
- What have you learned about politics through the Student Budget Consultation? What else do you want to know?
- What have you learned about yourself and your views? What or who do you think has shaped your views the most?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

- A. Using a graphic organizer (Activity Sheet 3.1), organize the views of left-leaning and right-leaning individuals according to the major economic policies (e.g., debt, inequality, government services, government intervention in the economy, individual taxes, corporate taxes).
- B. Have students review their results from the political spectrum questions from the Student Budget Consultation Survey and compare them against the views of young Canadians who participated in last year's Student Budget Consultation (Slide Deck 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 Canadian youth who participated in last year's Student Budget Consultation?

- C. 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 2018 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](http://www.parl.gc.ca)