

# Lesson 3

## Political Perspectives



### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 **What is the relationship between beliefs and values, and positions on political issues?**
- 2 **How can we analyze the policies and proposals put forth by political parties?**

### OVERVIEW

In a democratic society, people have different beliefs and values, which influence their position on political issues.

In this lesson, students will examine the political spectrum and different views on economic or fiscal issues. Afterwards, they will evaluate the proposals put forth by political parties during the 2019 federal election. In the culminating activity, students analyze different editorials or opinion articles about the Liberal Party's promises.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- Explain how beliefs and values shape positions and actions on political issues;
- Evaluate the policies and proposals put forth by the governing party and opposition parties during the 2019 federal election;
- Analyze media commentary about the Liberal Party's promises.

## Starter

1. Review the idea of elections and **party platforms**. During an election campaign, political parties share policy ideas and declare actions they will take if elected. This is called their platform. Voters take into account these policies and commitments when deciding who they will vote for.

Discuss: Do you recall any commitments made by the parties during the 2019 federal election? Did any party policies or promises shape your voting decision in Student Vote Canada 2019?

2. Re-cap the results of the October federal election using Handout 3.1. The Liberal Party formed government, winning 157 out of 338 seats. Because they have less than 170 seats, they will need the support of other parties (in the form of votes in the House of Commons) to pass laws and legislation, including the 2020 Budget.

Discuss: What are the challenges and opportunities with a minority government? Do you think a minority government is a good thing for the country? Why or why not?

## Activity

1. Using Slide Deck E, review the concept of the **political spectrum** and different sides of the economic/fiscal scale.
  - The political spectrum provides a way to characterize different views and beliefs, and to distinguish between actions on political issues and different ideologies.
  - The political spectrum can be constructed with one or more dimensions. One common method is to have one dimension (x-axis) for fiscal/economic policies and one dimension (y-axis) for social policies, which creates a quadrant.
  - **Left-leaning economic 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, policies that might be considered bad for businesses but are intended to alleviate social or environmental problems, are important for the greater good.

- **Right-leaning economic views** – government intervention in the economy should be minimal, smaller government and less government services is the better approach, inequality is not a concern, governments should not go into debt, regulation on businesses is not necessary because the free market provides sufficient incentives for businesses to pursue important social and environmental outcomes.
2. In pairs or small groups, have students review the Liberal Party's platform (fiscal plan) shared during the federal election, which outlines proposed investments and revenue adjustments for 2020-21, and beyond (Handout 3.2). Using Activity 3.3, ask students to analyze some of the commitments using the following guiding questions:
    - Select three commitments that you think are most important and analyze the potential impact. Is it wide-reaching or limited? Who are the main beneficiaries? Is the benefit short-term or long-term?
    - Select two commitments you think are less important at this time and explain your thinking.
    - Select one commitment that would influence you or your family the most. Explain your answer.
  3. Have students review some of the suggested policies made by the opposition parties during the federal election. Handout 3.4, summarizes a few policy proposals for each party in the House of Commons. Afterwards, have students discuss which two policies they would like to see included in this year's budget.

### TEACHER NOTE

Additional research can be conducted by using the party websites or Pollenize Canada 2019 (<https://pollenize.org/en/elections/canada-2019>). The 'Party Perspectives' videos from the EXTENSION ACTIVITY can also be used.

## Consolidation

Ask students to read two editorials or articles from columnists providing commentary on the Liberal Party's platform or one specific policy, and/or a policy put forth by one of the opposition parties. Afterwards have students fill out Activity 3.5.

Sample articles (below and next page):

- "The Liberal platform: Some good, some bad, all familiar," *Globe and Mail* (September 30, 2019)
- "Liberals should forget micro promises and focus on big picture," *Toronto Star* (September 30, 2019)
- "EDITORIAL: Trudeau's platform is tax, borrow, spend," *Postmedia* (September 29, 2019)
- "Promising back-to-back deficits isn't political suicide in Canada anymore," *CBC News* (September 30, 2019)
- "Deficits can mean pain ahead, or they can be an investment in the future: Don Pittis," *CBC News* (October 1, 2019)
- "Opinion: Planting two billion trees in Canada will be a tall order," *Globe and Mail* (November 29, 2019)
- "Reality check: The Liberals want to plant 2 billion trees to get to carbon neutral. Will it work?" *Global News* (September 27, 2019)
- "Six things to know about the Liberal plan for a tree-planting bonanza," *Brantford Expositor* (September 27, 2019)
- "Justin Trudeau's taxpayer-funded camping proposal isn't such a bad idea," *Toronto Star* (October 2, 2019)
- "John Ivison: Liberals' camping scheme an exercise in stupidity that takes nannyism to new heights," *National Post* (September 26, 2019)

## Extension Activity

'Party Perspectives' videos

1. Watch the Liberal 'Party Perspectives' video to get a sense of what priorities may be addressed in the upcoming budget, and the need for collaboration with opposition parties and other levels of government.
2. Watch the 'Party Perspectives' videos of each opposition party, featuring pundits and past and current party officials, speaking about what they expect to see in the upcoming budget, and what their party would need to see to potentially secure their support.
3. Discuss: What do you think of the different perspectives? Should the government collaborate with all parties, or just enough to pass the budget? What do you anticipate will happen?