

Lesson 4

Political Perspectives



GUIDING QUESTIONS

- ❶ **What is the relationship between beliefs and values, and positions on political issues?**
- ❷ **How do the party perspectives compare to one another?**
- ❸ **Where do you stand on the political spectrum?**

OVERVIEW

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

In this lesson, students will examine the political spectrum and different views on economic issues. Afterwards, they will analyze the budget perspectives of all of the political parties currently represented in the House of Commons. In the culminating activity, students offer their own opinions through the 2021 Student Budget Consultation survey and analyze their views compared to other young Canadians.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- explain left-leaning and right-leaning economic views;
- analyze the policies and budget perspectives of the government and opposition parties;
- express their opinions on prioritizes for the budget 2021; and,
- evaluate where they stand on the political spectrum.

Starter

1. Review the results from the 2019 federal election and introduce the current party leaders (Slide Deck E).
2. Remind students that while the Liberal Party won the election, they have a **minority government** because they have less than half of all the seats in the House of Commons. In order to pass and enact any legislation, such as a budget bill, they must have support from more than half of all Members of Parliament. This requires the government to seek support from the opposition parties.
3. 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 scale.
 - The political spectrum provides a way to characterize different views and beliefs, and to distinguish between actions on political issues and different ideologies.
 - **Left-leaning economic views** – government can positively influence the economy, there is 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 (e.g., carbon tax, emission-reduction measures) 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 avoid large deficits (during normal circumstances), strict regulation on businesses is not necessary because the free market provides sufficient incentives for businesses to pursue important social and environmental outcomes.
2. 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, and priorities for the post-pandemic economic recovery.

The representatives featured belong to each party in the House of Commons, including:

 - Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister and leader of the Liberal Party of Canada)
 - Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition and leader of the Conservative Party of Canada)
 - Jagmeet Singh (Member of Parliament and leader of the New Democratic Party)
 - Annamie Paul (Leader of the Green Party of Canada)
 - Gabriel Ste-Marie (Member of Parliament and Finance critic of the Bloc Québécois)
3. Afterwards, students can complete Activity Sheet 4.1 in groups or pairs. Students should summarize the priorities of each party and respond to the questions below. Students can also use Flipgrid to create video responses to the questions.
 - What were the key messages from each political party? How do they compare with each other?
 - Based on their video message, can you figure out where the party is positioned on the political spectrum?
 - Which party do you think is more likely to support the Liberal government's budget and why?

TEACHER NOTES

Flipgrid is a website that allows teachers to create "grids" to facilitate video discussions. Each grid is similar to a message board where teachers can pose questions, and their students can post video responses that appear in a tiled grid display.

4. Introduce the process of the Student Budget Consultation survey.
 - Students will be asked to respond to questions about spending decisions and budget priorities.
 - Their opinions, along with thousands of other students throughout Canada, will be shared with the Department of Finance, and all political parties, so they can better understand what young Canadians want to see as the country moves forward during this critical time.
 - After completing the survey, students will have a chance to preview some results pages to see where they sit on the political spectrum (economic dimension) and see how their views compare to other young Canadians on five specific questions.
5. Provide students with 15-20 minutes to fill out the 2021 Student Budget Consultation survey, and an additional 5-10 minutes to review some of the results and compare to other young Canadians who participated in last year's Student Budget Consultation.

TEACHER NOTES:

- The online survey is compatible with smartphones and tablets.
- Background information is provided within some questions to provide context and support critical thinking. Select 'Learn More' to see the background information.
- Paper copies of the survey are available on request. Please contact CIVIX by email at hello@civix.ca to coordinate timing.

6. Have a closing discussion about participation in the consultation and the results of the political spectrum questions.
 - Were you surprised about where you were placed on the political spectrum based on economic issues? Do you think it is accurate?
 - Did you feel more strongly about some value statements than others? Explain.
 - What life experiences and people have shaped your political views the most?
 - Why do you think it is valuable to participate in government consultations?

Consolidation

Have students fill out the reflection card (Activity 4.2).

- Three things I learned about federal budgets and the economy in Canada;
- Two priorities I would like to see addressed in the 2021 budget; and,
- One way that this experience has developed my opinions or helped me better understand my own perspective.