

## Lesson 3: Economic Issues

### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- ❶ How can you tell the difference between a healthy economy and a weakened one?
- ❷ What are the most significant economic issues impacting Canadians?
- ❸ What could the federal government do to help young Canadians over the next several years?

### OVERVIEW

Governments use fiscal policy, including government spending and taxation, to support economic growth and to address social issues.

In this lesson, students deepen their understanding of the economy by discussing the characteristics of a healthy economy compared to a weak economy. Next, students discuss the current state of our economy and learn about which social and economic issues are impacting Canadians and the country as a whole. Afterward, students discuss different actions the federal government could take to support families or young Canadians using a *Dilemma Dialogue* discussion protocol.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- describe the features of a healthy vs weak economy;
- identify current economic and social issues facing the country; and
- propose solutions or actions the federal government could take to support Canadians and address current issues.

### Starter

Using a *Rank-Order* discussion protocol, students will rank public policy issues in order of importance for Budget 2025. This discussion protocol is useful for reflecting on a series of variables and allows students to compare their perspectives with others and learn why people make the choices they do.

a) Review the definition of a public policy issue and the list of sample issues (Activity 3.1). Ask students to select five issues they believe the government should focus on addressing in the next budget. Then, have them rank the issues in order of most to least important and explain their reasoning.

b) Divide students into pairs or small groups and ask them to compare their rankings. Students should explain their choices even if there is consensus since they may have different reasons.

c) Reflect on the activity through a whole class discussion. Guiding questions:

- Were there points of consensus/agreement?
- Were there cases where you had the same priorities but for different reasons?
- Did hearing someone else's viewpoint make you want to change your rankings?

## Essential Learning

1. Watch the '[Economy and Fiscal Policy](#)' video. Ask students to create a Sketchnote while watching the video and give them a few minutes afterward to complete it.

### TEACHER NOTE:

*Sketchnotes are rich visual notes created from a mix of handwriting, drawings, including icons and shapes, and visual elements like arrows, boxes, and lines. Sketchnotes allow students to visually synthesize and summarize the ideas in their own way for increased retention. ([Sample Sketchnote](#))*

2. In pairs or as a class, have students use Activity 3.2 to demonstrate their understanding of the economy, including economic vs. non-economic activities, and a healthy vs. weak economy.

- Economic activities involve exchanging money, such as making, providing, buying or selling goods or services. It includes professions and employment.
- Non-economic activities do not involve monetary exchange or financial gain, such as recreation, religious and cultural activities.
- A healthy economy has jobs for most people (low unemployment), fair wages, successful businesses, stable prices, and growth in buying and selling goods and services.
- A weak economy has many people without jobs, too many unsold goods, rising prices, and fewer people buying things.
- Inflation is a general increase in the prices of goods and services in an economy. When the prices of things like food, clothes, and other items go up over time, money doesn't buy as much as it used to.

3. Discuss the current state of our economy. Questions to prompt discussion:

- Have you noticed signs of economic growth or decline over the last year? If so, how?
- Would you say that our economy is healthy or weak? How do you know?
- In the next few years, do you think Canada's economy will become worse off, better off or stay about the same? Why?

4. Watch the '[Major Issues for Budget 2025](#)' video produced by CIVIX, which includes commentary from youth journalists, experts and politicians. This video features several perspectives on some of the important issues facing Canada today, but there are many more issues that could also be considered – including the current issues of tariffs, trade wars and Canada-U.S. relations.

*The issues discussed in the video (produced in early-January 2025) include: affordability, housing, national security, climate change, defence spending, foreign aid and sustainability.*

Afterward, ask students to share their thoughts and questions. Some terms may need to be reviewed for clarity. Suggested discussion prompts:

- What did you find most interesting?
- Did you agree or disagree with any of the commentators?
- Do you have any questions about what was said?

5. Using a *Dilemma Dialogue* discussion protocol, discuss steps that the federal government could take to support families and young Canadians. This protocol gives students the opportunity to think deeply about a challenge and explore possible solutions.

a) Present students with the following dilemma: “The federal government is exploring different choices and actions for Budget 2025 and wants to hear from young Canadians. What actions could the federal government take to help families and young Canadians over the next five years?”

b) Divide students into small groups. Ask groups to assign a timekeeper.

c) Before getting into the possible actions, ask students to think about the challenges that young people or families face today. Each group member should take one minute to share their initial thoughts. Consider providing some sentence stems. For example:

- I think the main challenge facing young Canadians is...
- I think the biggest challenge facing families is...
- I wonder if...

e) After listening to one another, students should discuss the challenges as a group for 5 minutes. At this stage, students should not propose solutions. Instead, they should focus on digging deeper into the challenges. Possible guiding questions:

- What are the underlying factors to the challenges?
- What background information do you need to think about?
- Would students from another part of the country agree with us? What biases and assumptions are we bringing that might affect our thinking?

f) Afterward, ask students to propose solutions to the challenges they have raised. Have each group decide what they think some of the best solutions might be to support young Canadians and/or families over the next five years and beyond.

g) Debrief the activity as a whole class. Reflect on the proposed solutions, and ask students to explain their reasoning. If groups came to significantly different conclusions, explore what underlying assumptions and values might have influenced their decisions.

## **CONSOLIDATION**

Ask students to revisit their rankings from Activity 3.1 and consider revising the order based on the learning and discussion from the lesson.